

# February update 2023



This was supposed to be sent as a Christmas update but it's now turned into a fairly belated New Year's greeting! So, 'Happy 2023' to you all! Awa'difo eli o'dirisi!

We hope your year has started well.

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## A family Christmas

For us, the highlight of the last couple of months has been having family come and stay with us here in Arua. Verity's Dad and sister came to stay for two weeks over Christmas, followed a week later by another of her sisters and her brother-in-law.

It's been lovely spending time together, sharing our life here and strengthening the boys' relationships with their extended family. Our day-to-day life here isn't very exciting and there aren't that many 'things' to show visitors when they come. It was a privilege just to be able to share in walks around our community, meeting our local shopkeeper friends and market vendors and take them to church, as well as spending time with some of our ex-pat friends. They were also glad to meet Morris, the visually-impaired student we support, when he popped in to visit.

We enjoyed getting out for walks above Kuluva hospital, a place we enjoy escaping to for a bit of peace and quiet. It was made all the more special as our brother-in-law has good family friends whose great-grandparents were the original AIM missionaries who founded the hospital in the 1940s!



Celebrating Christmas Day with Verity's sister, Alicia, and her Dad, Chris

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## Big cats and river spats

Another highlight was being able to visit Murchison Falls National Park with both sets of visitors and managing to see lions and a leopard for the first time – the boys were especially excited to be able to tick that off the list.



Auntie Alicia in charge of the crew...

Prior to family arriving, we'd felt pretty stressed with an ongoing lack of power and water and problems with our car after Tom had an encounter with a ford on the way back from visiting a health centre, 3 hours' drive away, in Moyo. Praise God, he was able to find local mechanics to fix the initial problem, helped by Paul, a visiting Mission Associate who had happened to need a lift back from Moyo on the same day as well.

After more breakdowns on the way to Kampala to collect family, the car was finally fixed properly and they eventually made it back up to Arua. We're thankful that it has been working fine ever since.



The edges of the road were a lot harder to see 30 minutes before this photo...

It's been so special to be with family again and we're so thankful they were able to visit. Saying goodbye has been hard though and has had the older two boys asking more and more when we will be returning to the UK for good. They have both been increasingly struggling with being here since we returned to Arua at the end of the Summer.

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## "... the Lord establishes their steps"

As we've mentioned previously, life here can often feel so much more unsettled and unpredictable than our previous setup back in the UK. We are aware that's not just because we've moved countries but because of the more flexible nature of our roles here. This brings greater freedom but also requires more thought in how best to spend our time.

The New Year is often a time for reflecting and looking forward and we're in the middle of what seems like yet another assessment of the details of what God's calling for us here looks like. After months of prayer and trying to adjust the role to make room for more clinical work, Tom officially resigned as Diocesan Health Coordinator before Christmas. He now has more freedom in how he can use

his time, to support the health centres here, without the administrative obligations that came with the role.

In many ways we are thankful for the relative instabilities of life here as they make us lean into God and search his wisdom. We were recently reminded of a quote from Spurgeon: 'I have learnt to kiss the wave that throws me against the Rock of Ages.' Looking back over the last three years of being in Uganda, we can see the truth in this and are grateful for how God has been our consistent rock in the more unsettled times.



Many aspects of life do continue to move along as before, however. The three older boys are (mostly) enjoying school and spending afternoons with neighbourhood kids and ex-pat friends; Joel has recently had the opportunity to join a mini preschool on 2 mornings a week, with two of his little buddies, run by an American friend and Amara continues to bring us all joy, keeping us on our toes as she crawls about the house, breaking into her brothers' bedrooms and eating dirt from the cracks in the concrete floor!

We are both involved in overseeing the rolling-out of the Wise Choices Programme in the different archdeaconries over the next few months. We're looking forward to meeting up with the newly-trained trainers tomorrow to talk through their plans. To read more about the need for this programme, please see our most recent link letter (click [HERE](#) and scroll down to download the PDF under latest updates).

As a family, we've been following a daily Lectio Devina app and often find the themes and verses very timely. We were looking at Jesus as a human, just after saying goodbye to family, and were reminded that he felt sad, that we can come to him in our sadness and he understands and comforts us. Eli had been particularly upset earlier in the day and it was a comfort to all of us to hear this. We are so thankful that the boys feel able to talk to us in detail about how they're feeling and pray that they would know that God cares and understands as their heavenly father too.

Thank you so much for your emails, prayers and words of encouragement. We pray that you would know God with you and before you as you step into the plans He has for you this year.

Blessings,

Verity, Tom, Ezra, Eli, Simeon, Joel and Amara

### **Prayer requests:**

Thank God for all of his blessings in the last few months – for good friends, colleagues, health and the chance to host family.

For us to hear God's voice as we work out His plan for us in 2023. Proverbs 16:9- 'In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.'

For Ezra and Eli as they feel most heavily the weight of being away from family and struggle with some aspects of life here.

For daily strength and patience for Verity with the children.