



MAY 2025

SEASONS OF GROWTH AND CHANGE. . .

Praises

- For the start of the rain season and the life that brings (plus relief from dust and heat).
- For generous donors who support us, and the Special Project fund.
- For honey season, which has just finished for us, and for mango season, which is just starting!!
- For some noticeable success for many of the Class One students Sonya works with in Banyo.

Prayer

- For safe travels – in Cameroon and Nigeria – and good health.
- For a good ending to the Cameroon school year (early June) and Nigeria (early July).
- For wisdom in our interactions with our partners – leaders and all others.
- We are trying to arrange a couple of trips/visits – for Walter, Jeff, and one of our partners – that are a bit complicated.

And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:2 (NIV)

After my January/February vacation to see my grandson Cormack – along with full-on Manitoba weather, skating, snowstorms, and -35° weather – I arrived back to find Jeff enjoying the hottest time of year in Banyo. After a few weeks, I tried to escape it for a while. I zipped over to spend a week on the cooler Mambilla Plateau, as I continue to try to encourage the teachers in the school there. I was delighted to help launch a new nursery school teacher, who was trained by our SIL friends here in Cameroon to teach the young ones to gain pre-literacy and literacy skills in their mother tongue. I'm anxious to see how things are going when I return. I did get a small foot injury getting dumped from the motorcycle on the way there, and some food-related illness, but other than that it was a good trip.

March and April have been a time full of holy days for both the Christians and Muslims in this area. While we



don't observe Ramadan, we try to not eat or drink in public during the day so as to not offend. There's a day or two of feasting following Ramadan, and a public holiday that sometimes, like this year, ends up being most of a week, so our scheduled two-week Easter break effectively turned into three. I've been working closely with the Class One teacher this year, and I jealously fight for our



teachable hours, so that drove me a bit crazy. I had big plans to cover a few more things with them that last week before break, since here in Cameroon May is full of PD days, national holidays, and exams, and then school is essentially winding up by the end of May.

Easter also arrived just two weeks after Ramadan ended, around the time rain was starting to fall with some regularity. Local churches had a variety of Lenten and Easter services and celebrations. The people group we work with is still looking to establish their own traditions for things like Easter, so we don't have a huge slate of special services and meetings during holy days. I meet with a few youth every Friday evening, so on Good Friday, we shortened and simplified our format and took time to discuss and reflect on the entire crucifixion story, from Gethsemane to Christ's burial, reading selections from all four Gospels. On Sunday morning with the children, I briefly told the resurrection story and taught them the greeting and response – "Christ is risen!" and "He is risen indeed!!" – in two languages.

The promise of new life and new beginnings is dramatically visible as we watch the brown, dusty, dry environs of Banyo begin to rebound with greenery, even as we remembered and celebrated the death and resurrection of Christ. And while planning and digging and sweating (and delegating) with this newsletter on my mind, there was plenty of time for reflection on the similarities between gardening and spiritual growth.

I am very grateful we have young men looking for work over their holidays and weekends, as well as an experienced man, Abel, who has been working with

them. I'm constantly experimenting with them to try various permaculture farming methods. We've put in piles of work (and mostly organic manures) to gradually turn sections of heavy soil – stony, acidic, and/or infertile soil – into something more productive. It's interesting to walk around the yard and see by the soil colour and texture where we have been effective.

I'm curious to see whether we succeed in growing the corn/beans/pumpkin (or squash) in some areas that were quite barren last year. I'm trying my preferred black beans and navy beans this year. They should grow here, but they are not available in our local markets. But I haven't planted much outside the wall yet, because until the 'time of tying goats and sheep' comes, all those little vegetables are at high risk. I do mess around this time of year transplanting various plants that will grow well here and I also sometimes can share with my neighbors: prolific perennial flowers, bushy variegated plants, succulents, a small cassava relative with edible leaves, and spices like rosemary, basil, and Mexican tarragon. One of the unexpected by-products has been improvement of our driveway, since the boys regularly relocate the small piles of gravel I rake or remove into holes and low muddy spots in the drive.



Croton (new, and well established), Scadoxus multiflorus, (a.k.a., my Dr. Seuss flowers), Caladium (Heart of Jesus), and our honey!

As I listed all the work done around our compound to make it safe, healthy, productive, and attractive, I was struck by the parallel to the Kingdom of God. The soil around the house is not great. A lot is heavy, red soil or rocky laterite. Yet, I continue to work on small sections – to remove the stones, to add compost and manure, to find organic deterrents to pests. Sometimes we've seen noticeable improvement in the harvest from those areas we worked so hard on, and sometimes we still lose whole trees or sections of crops to insects or marauding sheep or goats.



Left and center: soil before improvements. Right: soil after 1.5 years of organic improvement . . . with examples of the gravel we are STILL removing.





When the Gospel reaches a new people group, the spiritual soil may be hard or stony or barren in places. Somehow, I sometimes fail to see that the spiritual and cultural change our people group are undergoing is that similar to the monumental changes I am making to the very structure of my soil. It is slow, incremental, and hard work for everyone. There will be improvements and change, and there will also be setbacks and disappointments.

In our compound, we have learned to wear gloves, especially when lifting stones or logs, to prevent scorpion surprises, and we clear bushy areas that are a haven for snakes. Our friends work the beehive areas in the evening when the bees are least aggressive. But sometimes things still go wrong. One of the youth who works in our yard had a rough week of it – he got stung by a scorpion when he forgot to wear his gloves while moving stones, and a few days later he got about three to four bee stings while helping his dad with the honey harvest from our House of Prayer hives. He definitely yelped when the scorpion stung him, but generally I admired his stoic demeanor.



One of the hospital handymen interrupted a green mamba trying to enter our attic!!

sometimes they just have to stop, let the reaction die down, and then carry on.

We also have a variety of trees and vegetables we nursed from seed over the last part of dry season in the garden area inside our wall. Some plants suffered greatly from the grasshoppers that descend in the late part of the dry season, but most have survived thus far. Some will be transplanted, and then we will see if the ants, beetles, or other insects take them. When we transplant the trees, we have to keep chicken wire

around them till they are a decent size, or the goats and sheep will finish them off.

I keep dedicating a small amount of space for nostalgic things, like trying to get the strawberry plants I inherited to actually produce fruit (so far I've only gotten a few the size of saskatoon berry), to see if Canadian pumpkins can grow big and survive the insects here (the answer is NO), and for more than 5 percent of my radish seed to reach maturity (getting better gradually), but most space goes to more traditional native species, which have a higher rate of success – for obvious reasons.

Again, this reminds me of the Kingdom of God. Some of our carefully nurtured disciples WILL get beaten up by life or societal pressure. Some will not survive spiritually, in spite of us giving the best possible teaching and discipleship.

Also, the living out of the Gospel is going to look different among this people group that it does in my own culture, and while the Gospel – the seed – does not change, culturally relevant and sensitive expressions of the Gospel have a far better chance of surviving and thriving than imported ones.

Last week, we harvested all the avocados (a.k.a. 'pears') from the tree just outside our gate. This is counter-intuitive to me, because I want to just pick them off the tree when they're ready and I want some. But apparently I know nothing about local avocados. Avocado is best harvested while firm and then let ripen off the tree. Otherwise, it's impossible to harvest them

- a) without destroying them with bruises, and
- b) because most of them will mysteriously disappear off the tree before they're completely ripe.

So because I listened to my neighbors, I've been able to share a whole bucket; we've had at least one ripe avocado every day since harvesting, and I am even storing some unripe ones in the fridge. Apparently, this can





affect the flavor and texture, but since most locals don't have fridges, they can't give me much advice on this. I'm going to try, since Jeff and I are both travelling and I hope to still have a few for when we get back.

So, too, we've learned to listen to our national partners for their reaction to our suggestions and ideas as to what is most likely to work in their culture. Sometimes they don't have an opinion. So then, if it's not too crazy, we just try some things and see how they go.

We DO thank you for your regular prayer for our physical safety and health – it's been generally pretty good this last few months, with a few small issues. Thankfully, malaria has not visited us at all recently. If we forget our prophylaxis, a mosquito bite can remind us, but we often don't notice bites – they're not like Canadian mosquitoes!!

Jeff somehow aggravated a tennis elbow condition, so he delegated his raking project to one of the boys to finish and has had some physio treatment and advice. My foot bruise is still not healed, and my bad knee is tight and creaking with notable volume, so I'm on the physio exercise circuit again. I will also admit that our age is starting to be reflected in the time it takes to heal!!

But we do stay active!! Jeff mostly just walks, but I must have some sport outlet. Over the last two years, I helped develop a half-court basketball/badminton court behind the hospital on the helicopter landing area.



This quarter was also a crazy busy time for me with badminton. I worked with a fellow player/coach from the Basic Education office to help train kids in primary school and, for the first time, some from secondary school. We have some rec play times, but through



February and March, we drilled down with a more focused group of players for the FENASSCO games. As it is every year, the games are very chaotic and stressful for those of us trying to get the kids there, and I question my sanity in getting involved in it. But in the end, our two secondary school players took silver at their regional games in April, and three of our four primary school players qualified at the regional competition and went on to Limbe for the national competition. They came home with a team bronze, a bronze girls doubles, and a lifetime of memories. (And now I am taking a coaching holiday and have gotten a few hospital staff hooked on pickleball.)





Much more important travel than these sports events this last quarter, however, were several important elders' and leaders' meetings held among our people group, both in Cameroon and Nigeria. These meetings are helping the diaspora communities to be strengthened in their faith and to understand better what their faith looks like. There are celebrations and growing pains, discussions and differing viewpoints, questions, and hard conversations. These developments are amazingly similar in nature to what we see happening in the book of Acts and the New Testament letters. It is such a privilege to walk alongside our partners in this process and do what we can (when asked) to help the churches/communities figure out their relationships to one another and to discern what the Kingdom of God looks like in their midst. Often, we are humbled to see the Holy Spirit working in and through them, giving them the grace and wisdom needed to move forward.

The amount of travel our friends in the Least-Reached People Group must do for meetings, encouragement, training, etc., is not easy – physically or financially – and it is also sometimes difficult for these small communities to host the needed guests. In 2024, we were able to help with the building of a small guest house in one of the villages that often hosts visitors. We appreciate those of you who support the [Least-Reached People Group special project](#) that helps fund so much of the ministry these people do. If you have never given to this ongoing project fund, please consider doing so, and feel free to contact us with any questions you may have.

As we send off this newsletter to the office on May 1, Jeff and I are on the road . . . in different directions. I am going back to Nigeria to work with the school for a couple of weeks and visit the clinic. I'm also hoping to see the water project currently being worked on, but I am not sure that will pan out. Jeff is travelling with our friend and two young women (his daughter and our house helper) up to a couple of villages in Cameroon we have not been able to get to for a long time. Pray we are effective in the work we need to do and for wisdom as we seek to share spiritual and/or practical truths with the people we visit. We still haven't been able to arrange a trip with Walter Grob to Nigeria, so that is still in the works.

Jeff and I ended April disappointed that we were not able to vote in the Canadian election . . . but not for lack of trying. Getting our voting packages here in a timely



fashion proved, for a second time, to be impossible. YOU, however, CAN send us mail! It will often get here within a couple weeks. Please use the Banyo PO address below and update your missions contacts in your church if they are still using the Bamenda address.

As always, we thank you for your support and ask you to continue to pray for and support us, and your brothers and sisters in this Least-Reached People Group.

Jeff & Sonya Kilmartin

BOX 50, BANYO, ADAMAWA STATE, CAMEROON, WEST AFRICA
#22 9731 174 STREET, EDMONTON, ALBERTA T5T 6G4, CANADA

JEFF.KILMARTIN@GMAIL.COM | KILMARTIN.SONYA@GMAIL.COM | KILMARTINBLOG.WORDPRESS.COM
NABONMISSION.ORG/MISSIONARIES/JEFF-AND-SONYA-KILMARTIN

