

Mission Partner Communiqué - January 2005

"Teach me, Lord, teach me!"

I'm here, Lord! I made it!

I'm again atop this mountain in Chipata, Zambia! The view...why, it's breathtaking! From where I am standing I have quite a stunning vantage point. Now that I've climbed this mountain yet again, yet again I ask of you, Lord: *teach me to number my days aright.*

I know that I'm not the first to ask this, Lord. Moses did so a long time ago. I don't know if he offered this prayer standing on the brink of a new year, but I'd like to do so. After all, that is the very mountain upon which I stand today. Looking at a new calendar year is like standing atop a mountain overlooking a land yet to be explored. New territory. Vast potential. Unforseen opportunities. Exciting discoveries. So much lies ahead. *Lord, teach me to number my days aright.*

I've already jotted some notes on my crisp, clean calendar. Tiny words in little boxes. Meetings. Birthdays. Holidays. Family visits. Preaching dates and travel itineraries. I know it won't all happen the way I plan it. It never does. If my old calendar bespeaks of the new one, there will be postponements, cancellations, additions and even a bit of confusion that will mark the days of my life. *Lord, teach me to number my days aright.*

Much is before me, Lord. Standing on the edge of 2006, I try to grasp the big picture as it stretches out before me. The Lutheran Church of Central Africa strikes a stunning pose of your hand at work: Graduates with their theological feet on the ground; Parish unions calling full-time workers; Congregations building parsonages; Preaching Stations applying for synod membership; Mission Outreach and membership in reach. Teachers teaching, preachers preaching and students learning. What I'm hearing are the growing pains of a maturing church. *Lord, teach me to number my days aright.*

I feel honored to be here, Lord. Thank you, not only for my place and my gifts, but also for my time. I don't know how many days you'll give me, but you mentioned some round figures of seventy and eighty years. You gave my grandfather ninety-four. Many others, you have granted less. I trust that you know just the right amount of time for each person. Not one day more, nor one day less. *Lord, teach me to number my days aright.*

I look over my shoulder to see from where I have come. What a winding path! Though not straight nor smooth, I believe you are accomplishing what you desire to be accomplished! My plans are many, but yours prevail! I'm thankful for that! I'm thankful for all that is behind me: all my sin, all my failures, all my transgressions. I'm thankful that they are not just left on my doorstep for me to trip over them when I walk out of the house. They are far behind me. In the distant past. Not just hidden, but gone. Gone even from your memory. Forgotten. Thank you, Lord. Thank you for telling me so. Thank you for saying it and then repeating it! You know that I need to hear the good news of forgiveness again and again. *Lord, teach me to number my days aright.*

Lord, there are many people who are praying for my family and me; many who are as thrilled as I to see your gospel work going on here in Zambia. They, too, are fellow missionaries. Prayer warriors. Mission Partners. Fellow citizens of a Promised Land. For some, their days are drawing to a close. For others, they have just begun. Still others are halfway up the

mountain wondering if it's worth the climb. Give to each one the gift for which Moses prayed and for which I am praying: a heart of wisdom. A heart that beats with the love of God; a heart that pulsates with a living faith in Jesus Christ; a heart that knows that even when it stops pumping, it has nothing to fear! For it rests in the heart of the One who has saved it.

Lord, teach me to number my days aright. Amen.



View from the top of Kanjala "hill" in Chipata - near our house