

HEART FOR AFRICA
"TRANSFORMING BIBLICAL PREACHING ONE PASTOR AT A TIME"
MAY 2021

*"And the grace of our Lord
was exceedingly abundant,
with faith and love
which are in Christ Jesus."*

1 Timothy 1:14

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Blessings in the Unexpected

From a biblical perspective, grace is defined as God's favor toward the unworthy, or unearned favor from the Lord. Surely, there are myriad of more comprehensive or theologically rich definitions, but these simple, concise statements are quite sufficient for our purpose. We owe our salvation to God's grace, and this same grace motivates our deep love for God that expresses itself in willing obedience to the Lord's commands and grateful service on His behalf. Grace is 1) from God, 2) all about God, and 3) lavishly poured out by God on the people of God! He promises us grace when we need it and seek it. But, one of the most remarkable things is how He generously pours it out unexpectedly during times when we need it most. Hardship can completely overwhelm us; we can hardly keep our head above the waves let alone have the presence of mind to approach God's throne of grace. God sends His grace in His perfect timing and way.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

His grace refreshes us when we are running short on motivation; it reinvigorates us when our energy tank is running on empty; it restores us when we stumble; and His grace reestablishes us when our faith takes a hit. To be quite honest, this has certainly described our lives over the past year. So many challenges, so many difficulties, so many times when our faith was flagging and our hope was struggling to stay afloat. Then He would pour out His great grace in unexpected ways as blessings—as a sign that He is there in the struggle fighting *with* and *for* us—surrounding us with songs of deliverance! Let us share a few of these stories of grace.

"For the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."
Deuteronomy 20:4

Working with youth has been a great blessing and often reinvigorated us over the past 10 years, but some years they have also provided us a great challenge. For 3.5 months we would labor among these precious 17/18-year-olds, hoping they would receive God's Word. But sometimes their obstinance, disrespect, and lack of enthusiasm for spiritual things would sap our energy and leave us feeling empty. Last month the Lord brought us a



2021 "Training for Life" students

wonderful class of 25 spiritually hungry students. Several spiritual leaders have risen up among them, encouraging their peers to deepen their faith through daily devotionals and time in the Word. We have never experienced a class like this one in our entire time serving the Lord in this program – we are re-invigorated and renewed in our hope!

The Lord has also brought us an incredible group of students for the latest Certificate in Church Planting class in Moshi. These young men and women have a passion for Jesus and an unequalled willingness to deepen their knowledge of the Lord and His ways through rigorous Bible study and application of biblical truths. They are contagious to be around. We sat in the back of their class as they received the teaching, and we took meals with them. We even hung around after dinner to hear them preach during their practical preaching exercises. We saw confidence and composure in the Word, compassion for and a keen awareness of their audience, and great diligence in their sermon development work. They brought us the unexpected blessing of restoration!



New Church-Planting Class of students



Even as we were writing this newsletter, a four-person team from the local immigration office showed up unannounced on our doorstep bright and early. The first time this happened several years back, it was an unnerving experience where we were treated brusquely and were concerned about deportation. This time, the Lord used these immigration officials to bless us. Yes, they scrutinized our paperwork and questioned us, but they had a different spirit about them. They received our answers with nods of approval and even told us they appreciated the work we were doing. Things are truly looking up for us when it comes to immigration, which gives us hope for the future. God is good!

Finally, the Lord has blessed us in unexpected ways through one of our ministers (Pastor Fredy) and his bishop—a humble man of God named Somi with 800 churches under him. Last year Bishop Somi requested that the ICM-Africa Bible College program serve as the



sole education program for his entire denomination. We agreed and established a temporary college on his property that begins operating this June. I asked Fredy to get with Bishop Somi and prepare a list of students for this first class. As of today, he has brought us not just one class of students, but *three full class lists* of pastors waiting to begin! It normally takes months to put together one class! The “temporariness” of this location just got extended, and Bishop Somi has offered his land and other facilities if we will build a dedicated classroom there! We are so encouraged by this response; another unexpected blessing from an infinitely gracious God.

In other news, there have been many seminars throughout the country, and the ICM Women’s Program has picked up speed. Our plans to visit Uganda this month

(10th-17th) are still confirmed, so we’re looking forward to conducting our Level 3 and 4 Preaching Seminars to pastors there and selecting individuals for the first class of ICM-Africa Bible College students. We are also in the midst of planning trips to Liberia and hopefully Israel later this year.



May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, and thank you for continuing to pray for and support His work through us.



Left: Pastor Fredy

Top: Two men from Bishop Somi’s denomination discuss construction of classroom with Jim

Above: Janice & Edward with women’s ministers

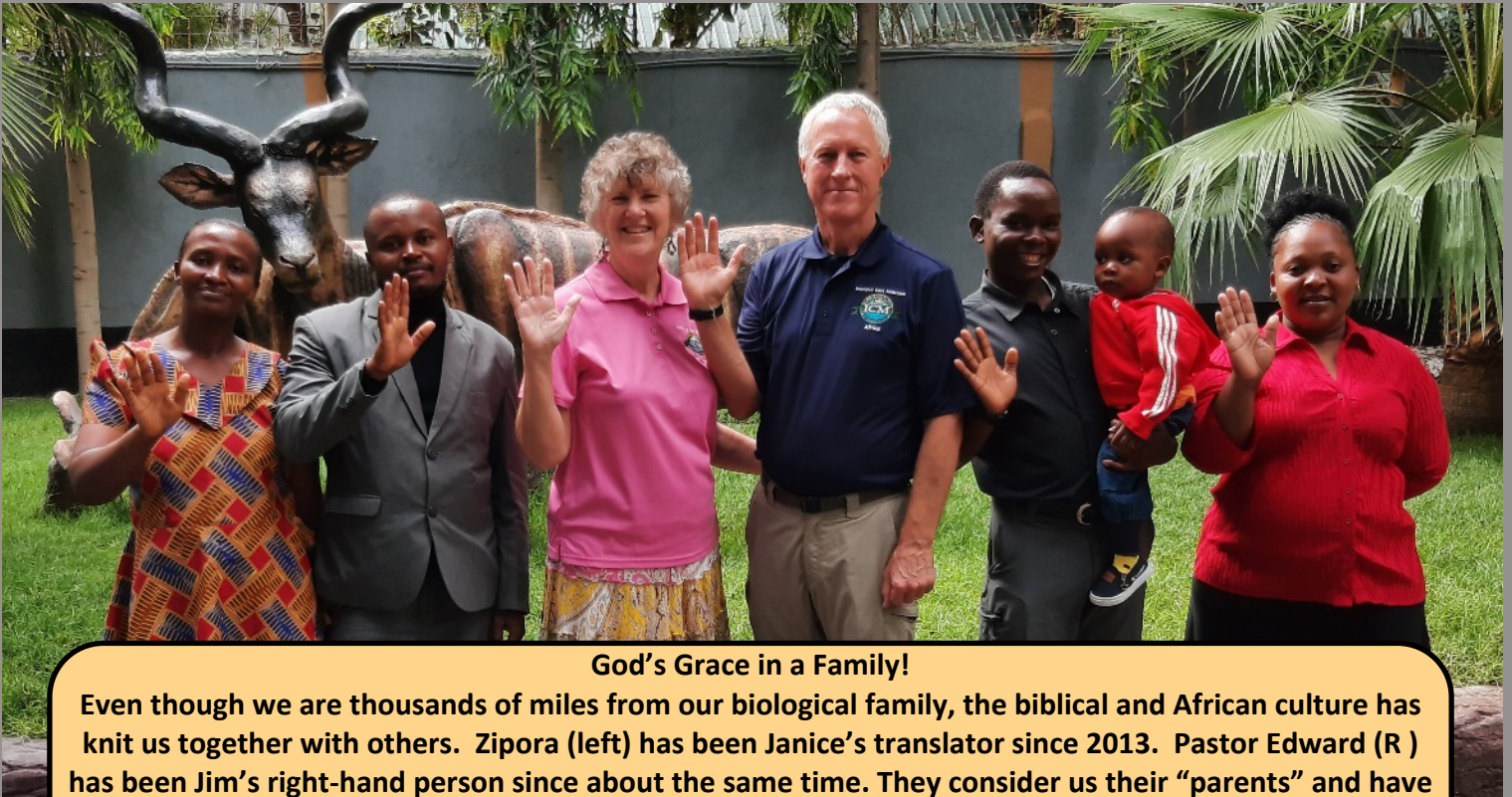
Below: Attendees at recent marriage seminar



Catch up on our personal journey through our website news, and find many more pictures there.

www.jimandjanicelarson.com

Picture of the Month



God's Grace in a Family!

Even though we are thousands of miles from our biological family, the biblical and African culture has knit us together with others. Zipora (left) has been Janice's translator since 2013. Pastor Edward (R) has been Jim's right-hand person since about the same time. They consider us their "parents" and have provided us with a son- (Gideon) and daughter-in-law (Grace), as well as 4 grandchildren...so far. God is good! The recent marriage seminar was a rare opportunity to get a "family" picture.

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On-line giving available through our website



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PRAYER REQUESTS

- For the funding of the construction of our next classroom (\$10,000) in Tanzania.
- Pray for our trip to Uganda May 10-17 and wisdom about moving forward with a new campus there this year.
- Praise that we had about 100 couples attend the marriage seminar last month, and several of the husbands made public promises to treat their wives differently based on the Scriptures taught and discussed. That is a major breakthrough in this culture! God's grace abounds.
- The Mt Meru climb (see last month) was postponed to May 3-6, so please keep Jim and the team covered during that time.