

Dear friends and family,

This has been the hardest and slowest-in-coming prayer letter we have had to write since arriving in Madagascar. Back in 2015, we cut short our furlough to return and take over the ministry for Richard and Charity Jertberg as Charity was diagnosed with breast cancer and needed to return to the States for treatment. Since that time it's been a roller coaster of struggles and triumphs. We watched the Lord answer prayers in miraculous ways and faced trials far harder than we expected.



With the two of us trying to keep up a ministry planned for four people, it quickly became obvious that things needed to change or we would soon burn out. We started focusing on preparing the saved men and women in our church to take on more of a leadership role thus helping to ease our burden and prepare them for the time when they will lead on their own. Planning was difficult as we were hoping and praying for Charity's healing and the Jertberg's return, yet never certain what the next day, month or year would hold.

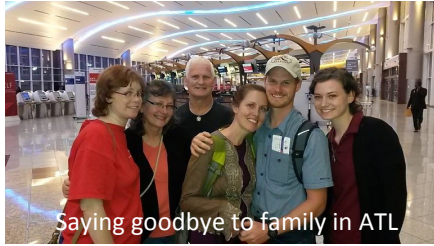
In the beginning of March of this year, Charity's cancer took a turn for the worse and it became evident it would not be long. The church was shocked and grief stricken. However, as is their tradition, they asked us to return to the States for a few weeks to help Richard and Charity in their place. Arrangements were made and the five men I had been training stepped up to lead the church in our month of absence.

We return to the States not knowing if we would be observing a miraculous recovery or helping the family grieve a loss of mother, wife, friend, and servant of God. On April 4th, at 2 in the afternoon, just three weeks after giving birth to a healthy daughter, Kezia Joy, Charity stepped into the presence of her Lord and Savior. The loss has been profound, and yet the peace beyond understanding. We thank the Lord for the two weeks we had with the family before Charity's passing and for being able to be with the family during her death and burial. Most of all, we are thankful that one day we will be with her in the resurrection, and forever.

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Saying goodbye to family in ATL

Where do we go from here?

Since returning to Madagascar shortly after her funeral we have had good and bad days. We are regrouping, praying, healing, seeking the Lord for what He wants. Lately, a large part of the ministry is helping the church to process grief, and teaching them how to sorrow as “those who have hope!” It’s true our ministry team is changing, being re-shaped, but our God and His call has not changed.

We are not sure what the future holds, but we know we have been called to Madagascar, and His work must go on. There has been a renewed emphasis on redeeming the time. There has been a new realization that this is a work for all of the Church, not just the pastor/missionary. And it has become abundantly evident that we need His grace daily. We were please to find the men holding up well in leading the ministry, though I believe it gave them a renewed perspective on studying and preparing.

We look forward to the arrival of our single missionary partner Dani da Costa who has recently finished Malagasy language school. She will be an invaluable asset to the women’s and children’s ministry here. Also we are praying toward the completion of deputation for our new teammates Branden and Laura Bowen, who just welcomed their second child, and are currently at 73% of their needed support! We are hoping they can arrive by January of 2018 or sooner!

Thank you so much for your faithful prayers, support and encouragement through this time of earthly loss and heavenly gain.

Trusting always in Him,

Bobby and Joanna Burdett

