

FEBRUARY 2021



Hello from Cape Town!

The academic year is about to kick off here, having been postponed slightly due to second-wave COVID measures. The delay has been really helpful for gaining the most from this holiday time and for preparing for the year ahead. Thank you for your prayers 😊

The knee operation went well, though more was required than planned. This meant that I stayed with friends from church for two months instead of two weeks! Not only has this been a welcome break from living in residence but it has been altogether revitalising. My very generous hosts have looked after me so well. I've enjoyed their garden, spin bike and pool for knee rehab, alongside the all-important factors of good eating, conversations and laughter as well as doing some Hebrew, puzzles, Scrabble and having an education in cat personalities, Liverpool FC and global politics. In an environment where COVID infections have multiplied significantly and isolation necessary, it has been great to have good company.

We are presently in a lockdown where beaches and parks are closed but all shops remain open. The purchase of alcohol is banned and this has alleviated some of the pressure on hospitals: on New Year's Day at the main hospital in Soweto (South Africa's biggest township), when normally the trauma unit would be filled, it was empty and the COVID unit was full. The presidency has generally managed this crisis well and we are thankful that Cyril Ramaphosa is in office at this time. They now have the enormous task of vaccinating the population as soon as possible. **Please do pray** for God's mercy on the many whose livelihoods continue to be very bruised by the effects of COVID. One of my college fellowship group has lost three family members so please do pray that she continues to hold onto the Lord's faithfulness as she was doing through her losses last year.

College life will resume on 8 February. There is a plan for a mix of on-site and online classes so we will see how that unfolds. It will be nice (despite being masked and hug-less) to be back in residence with fellow students again, new ones included. The journey from the front

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door to my room can take anything from less than a minute to an hour depending on bumping into others on the stairs. You can end up travelling to Namibia, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, across South Africa or even England! **Please pray** for continued opportunities to get to know other students alongside the demands of assignments. One of the highlights of last semester was working in an ethics class on the topic of 'British Colonialism' with a Kenyan, Lucy, and a Zimbabwean, Perish. It was horrifying to hear the stories of what had happened from their countries' perspectives. Their education back home taught them thoroughly what happened but I had never been taught in any lesson on it in my schooling. As Perish said, if you are not pricked you are not motivated to learn more. Singing 'Rule Britannia' is a highly questionable response to what happened. Perish reminded us as Christians that we are new creations and one body and must go forward treating one another as such: this was real grace in action. **Thank God** for Christian family reconciling across the traumas of the past.



Durban friends, these three included, have been great sources of encouragement and fun in the last two years in Cape Town :)

book of James. **Please pray** for the right avenues for this and for God to be at work in us teaching, guarding our tongues, and in those listening.

Looking ahead beyond this final year, I hope to get to visit you all in the spring of 2022. Beyond that I am leaning towards returning to the UK to be nearer my family (a train rather than a plane journey away!). Ideas at this stage (without knowing any how's or where's!) include doing a part-time Masters and having the time to be involved in an inter-cultural church (though I think there will be a lot of culture-learning in general after fifteen years in South Africa!). **Please pray** that I rest in God's good and gracious steadfast love and **thank him** for growing me more over the last year.

With great thanks for all your love, generosity and prayers. Much love to you all,

Nerena

We now enter our third and final year. In this first semester we have some great courses lined up: Deuteronomy (Hebrew), Romans (Greek), African Church History, Christology, Ministry Leadership and Ethics 3 (we'll see exactly what is covered in this!). As always there is more knowledge to cover than the brain and heart can fit in so **please pray** that this final year would be one where what I learn, I live out more. I will be continuing at the same church for this year and hope to be able to have the opportunity to teach God's Word to the ladies in pre-recorded sessions in the