

Dear brethren,

I plan to send a general report as well, but I thought I should first send the brethren who support us an in-depth report about Linda's mother and how that impacts our future work.

When we think about our work for the Lord in Southern Africa, and your fellowship in that work, our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and appreciation for your love and concern shown to us in support and prayers and encouragement. We also praise God who is faithful: not once did we lack any necessary thing, and actually our needs were abundantly supplied. This enabled us to focus on our work, and the Lord has richly blessed us with health and strength and open doors to serve Him and His children. Many of you have had fellowship with us in this work for over 40 years.

When we think about our work for the Lord in Southern Africa and our family, our hearts are again filled with thanksgiving and appreciation. Our children have continued to serve the Lord in adulthood, and the Lord has blessed them in their family lives so that our hearts were free to concentrate on how to help others instead of worrying about our children. Linda's mother was widowed in the second year of our marriage at age 54. She had been a stay-at-home mother, but pulled herself together, entered the workforce, and managed to provide for herself and for a quite a bit of her retirement. The Lord has blessed her with 93 years of good health and, in the past 8 ½ years, the ability to live in an independent section of a retirement home. Occasional medical "hiccups," as well as the greater chunk of the financial part of Mom's care that was not covered by her retirement (we also contributed to a lesser amount), was taken care of by Linda's brother Robert and his wife Ellen, who both work full-time. These family members enabled us to continue to live and work in Africa. However, with Mom's last illness and the subsequent escalation in her dementia, her days of independent living are pretty much over. To complicate matters, Ellen's mother fell several months ago and broke both femurs. She also has other health issues as well as some dementia, and Ellen's hands are full caring for her – to the point that she had to give up her job. (Her other two sisters live hundreds of miles away.)

Over and above the prohibitive cost of assisted living/memory care (which we cannot afford), we do not think putting our mother in such a facility is what the Lord would have us do – at least not unless it were absolutely necessary. When we married, I promised Linda's mother that if ever she needed us, we would be there for her. By the grace of God, she has done well to care for herself through all these years, and I believe that time has come for us to care for her – and, as you can imagine, it will not be possible for her to come to Africa for us to continue living there. What we have been doing during our visit so far is for Linda to do whatever is necessary to get Mom adjusted to being back in her apartment (she got confused from her time in rehab), get her medication at the right times, make sure she goes to meals, clean up whatever needs to be cleaned up, etc. Mom has a desk in her living room area where I can sit and work on lessons

while Linda takes care of her needs. As her confusion lessens, Mom is able to do a bit more for herself, and we are moving towards being there half days instead of full days, phoning to make sure she gets up, and having someone come check to see if she has had her medication after breakfast. Hopefully in a few weeks, she will be able to manage some days with phone calls only and a nurse/aide to check on her twice a day, give her a shower, etc. Other days, like when she has an accident, needs laundry done, is too confused to get herself to meals, or has a doctor appointment, someone will have to intervene. We are hoping that those days will not be too many after we depart for South Africa (which puts a big strain on Ellen), and that Mom will not have another medical “hiccup” in the near future. This will give us time to get my green card (which must be applied for from *outside* the USA), pack up our personal belongings, sell what needs to be sold, and move to the USA. Even in the past 2 weeks, Mom’s leg suddenly swelled – she had a very large deep vein thrombosis, was put on a very high dose of anti-coagulant, and had to be watched carefully so that she did not fall. During the week that she was on the heaviest dose, she was extra-ordinarily confused and needed a lot of help. So we feel that moving to the USA is something that can no longer be put off. Our long-term plan is to keep Mom where she is as long as possible, which will hopefully be possible with Linda coming to see her on a daily basis and helping her maintain “independent” status as far as the facility is concerned. Moving Mom will cause her dementia to nosedive, and we do not want that for her – it is painful enough to watch her as confused as she is at present. However, we know the time will come when she will have to be moved, at which time we plan to move her in with us and care for her as long as we are able.

This decision was not hard to make: it was the obvious decision to make. Emotionally, the decision is heart-wrenching: leaving the work and brethren we have grown to love so much, leaving a whole different way of life and starting over. However, we know that the Lord will help us and will surely find ways to use us to work for Him, even in the USA, even when I am 77 years old. And we pray that our work in South Africa and Zimbabwe is not over. We plan to keep our camper, since we do not know how long Mom will be with us, and there may be an opportunity in a year or two for us to return and do some work, at least for a few months each year. We also plan to continue to write material which we hope will be helpful for brethren to use in classes in Africa, especially in congregations where there is no full-time preacher, and to make ourselves useful in whatever way congregations in the area can use us. Financially, the decision is difficult, but even then, we know the Lord will make a way. Already He has provided the amazing hospitality of the Gershensons. They have offered us their mobile trailer to use indefinitely. We can park it in a RV park about 4 miles from where Mom is now – and we can live there cheaply for as long as Mom can stay where she is. Living in such a place means we do not have to buy furniture or large appliances. When the time comes for Mom to stay with us, we will have to get an apartment, but should be able to use her furniture to furnish our apartment with the basics – and the familiar furniture would also help her adjust to her move.

Knowing that neither of us would have Social Security or Medicare, we have tried to be prudent and save for a time when we could “retire” if necessary. Thanks to your generosity, and an

article we once read about how to pay off double your equity each month to save thousands in home loan costs, we were able to pay off our house several years ago and put that money into retirement. We were not allowed to have IRAs, so instead got an annuity in the USA that matures when Linda turns 65. Lord willing, that will be in July 2019. Should we decide to take it in July 2018 instead, our life-time monthly benefit decreases by about a third, about \$1000/month. So that is something we do not wish to do! Besides the annuity, we have some savings which our son-in-law invested for us that will bring us some income and some savings we were hoping to use to buy a place to live in the USA when we retire, a good used car, etc. On the negative side, it will be quite costly to move our personal belongings, and we will have to replace virtually every electrical item we own: fridge, stove, washer & dryer, sewing machine, lamps, kitchen appliances, etc. (This is because the electricity in Africa is 220V instead of 110V.) We will also have to eventually buy furniture as we think it will be cheaper to buy furniture here than ship the furniture we have in SA. The other problem is taxes: In South Africa I pay virtually no tax. In the USA, on top of federal income tax, I will have to pay self-employment tax (15%) as well as MO state income tax (6%), retro-active to the beginning of 2018.

For these reasons I am kindly requesting that those who support us consider continuing to do so, at least until the end of the end of 2018, and possibly even to the time when we can officially retire in 2019. However, we will completely understand if you feel you need to channel your money in other directions, and we trust in the Lord's provision for us in other ways that we do not yet know.

When we think of all the years of our work together, we can do nothing but give thanks, praise and glory to the God who made it all possible – and pray for Him to bless us to still be useful in His work, although it now needs to be in a different way.

As always, your fellow-servant in Christ, Les Maydell.

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