

Dear brethren, family and friends,

December, 2020

First of all, we want to wish all of you a very happy year ahead, especially that we will be able to freely gather with our loved ones and brethren, hug one another – maybe even shake hands!

To get some ideas on what to include in this letter I looked at last year's letter. Guess what was the first thing I noticed? Not a word about Covid-19! Each day Linda and I pray for all of us to be safe, for those who have lost ones to be comforted, and for those who are sick to recover. We also pray that this tragedy will cause the fallen in faith to rise up, repent and serve the Lord faithfully and for the lost to seek Him, obey the Gospel and join the ranks of those serving Him. We pray for and thank God for all the brave workers taking care of the many who are sick and for the researchers working to produce and distribute a safe vaccine. May God bless us all to be strong through this time and not get tired of doing what we need to do to remain safe.

Because of Covid-19 and us having Linda's 96-year-old-mother staying with us, Linda has only been in the car a handful of times for medical appointments. I only go out once a week to pick up our groceries at Walmart. When we have guests, or medical people come to see Mom, we meet with them on the back porch. Linda's mom is getting weaker each day, reminding me of a toddler, if one can imagine a 120-lb toddler, just learning to walk on very weak legs, struggling to put one foot in front of the other, and not understanding how to avoid falling. It is very sad to see this great lady, who has done so many good works in the past, struggle to even express herself; however, it is wonderful that she has no physical pain. Most of the time she feels she needs to go "home," to school, or to work. One good thing about Covid-19 is that we can use it as a reason as to why she can't leave the house, but just seconds later it is again, "I must go!" On a happier note we can say she does light up, if but for a moment, when I bring her a bunch of flowers from the garden – and we had flowers up until mid-December! Fortunately, she often sleeps from 10 PM till midday. Linda and I can both truly say we are happy that we came from our work in Africa to look after Mom. It is God's will that we care for her, and we have both learnt much from it.

On the twenty-ninth of October, I was blessed to enjoy my eightieth birthday. Last year our children spoke of us celebrating it together, but Covid changed that. However, Joseph, Kristen, Caleb, Lydia, and four-month-old Ethan, whom we had not yet met, isolated themselves for several days, and flew up to see us a week before my birthday in the plane Joseph got for work purposes. Joe also took me for a flight over the western side of Saint Louis. While we were in flight quite a strong wind came up. I could see Joe had been trained well and had good control of the plane, especially landing in that cross-wind. We really enjoyed our time together. I had a great birthday: all our children and 12 of our 13 grandchildren Zoomed in for it. Our children chipped in together and bought me a 12-inch upright wood planer as a birthday gift. It has already proved to be very useful. I had sold the 220-volt one I had in S. A.

The brethren at Kirkwood where Linda and I worship have a Sunday morning Zoom worship that includes prayer, singing, Bible study and preaching. Sunday afternoon services are at 3pm and 5pm at the building and include the Lord's Supper. Masking and social distancing is observed. The congregation also has a midweek Bible study at the building and on Zoom. I recently taught one of these Bible classes and I am scheduled to teach one next quarter on the healing of the lame man in Acts 3. We also take part in a Zoom study on Tuesday evenings. Linda teaches a ladies Bible class with about a dozen ladies on Zoom every second Thursday afternoon. Her main goal in this is to develop enthusiastic Bible students and teachers. Linda and her friend Sandi are well known for this in Southern Africa. In January 2020, Chuck Bartlett, who preaches for the congregation, began a TV program each Sunday at 6 am where people can write in and receive answers to their Bible questions. Many Bible studies have resulted from it, and quite a few baptisms, and we praise the Lord for that.

We spend quite a lot of time in contact with our brethren in SA via emails, Messenger and WhatsApp. Many of them want to know when will we return. They know and are happy that we remain here as long as Linda's mother needs us. They also know that because of my age, when we come, it will only be to

work there about three months a year. We do still have a car and our small camper in storage there at a brother's house. Lord willing, we both look forward to such times. I do love the country of my birth but the USA has blessed me so much. I came to college here and met so many wonderful people, especially Linda, my wonderful wife of 46 years. Then also I thank God for all our US brethren who supported us to work in SA where we raised our four children. I also enjoy the challenge of teaching the lost in this truly great country. I hand out correspondence courses and adverts for the local congregation's TV program everywhere I go. As a result, there is one lady who is on lesson 3 of the course and a man with whom I am corresponding about Bible topics.

As 2020 draws to a close, we have much to be thankful for. Despite this strange and sad year, our hearts are filled with joy and peace, and we wish the same for you.

Les (and Linda) Maydell

PS. January 2, 2021

I wrote the letter above just before Christmas, thinking to send it on New Year's Day. On December 26<sup>th</sup>, Linda's mother suffered a massive stroke which left her totally incapacitated. Her peaceful appearance was so wonderful compared to the anxieties and frustrations her disease had imposed on her. Instead of calling 911, we called Hospice and they were amazing. They had a nurse come to admit her within two hours, and a hospital bed delivered the next morning. For the next 6 days we were able to care for her at home, with daily visits by the Hospice nurse. Last evening, her son Robert and his wife Ellen were at her bedside and told her good-bye when they left to go home for the night. I was with Linda shortly thereafter when she suddenly took a turn for the worse, and Linda was able to hold her and bid farewell as she drew her final breaths and passed to her eternal home. Again, Hospice was so helpful to come immediately and do everything that needed to be done.

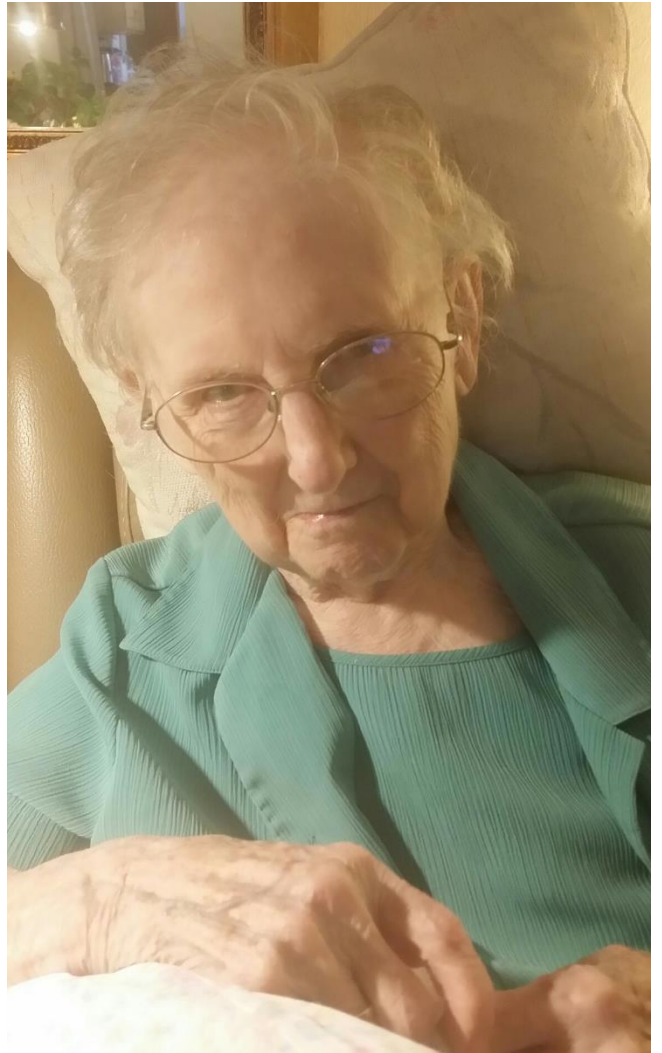
Thank you for your prayers. So many of them were answered. The Lord was merciful to spare Mom more years of suffering, and to grant us the health and opportunity to keep her safe with us at home to the end. We are indeed blessed. We are thankful for Mom's many years of loving service and all the good lessons she taught us, but especially for bringing Linda's family to a knowledge of the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

Also, in the past week, we have lost two dearly loved brethren in South Africa. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, brother Hendrik Morris passed away in his sleep. Although in his 80s, he was still busy doing what he had always done – he was one of the best workers in the kingdom I ever knew. Yesterday, brother John Mohlala, whom I baptized into Christ about 40 years ago, passed away after a long illness. He was part of the Maboloka congregation which started as a result of the correspondence course. Although we grieve with the brethren who were close to them, we rejoice with these men as they have gained what they lived for: a home with God.

*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. – 1 Corinthians 15:58*



Mom on her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday 06.06.20.



Virginia Louise holding Lydia Louise, October 2020.





Abigail (11) and Nathan (15) Murrell.

Caleb (3), Lydia (2) and Ethan (born in June)  
Maydell





Levi (13), Noah (11), Titus (14), Rose (9), Lily (1 ½), and Gloria White.



Indi (13)  
Mela (11)  
Ellie (8)  
Harbig



Les with  
his 8-foot-  
tall dahlia  
and  
squirrel-  
proof  
birdhouse

