

April 2021

Dear friends,

Just a quick update. I realize that I've not checked in for some time and I'm hearing from several folks as they're seeking to "check-up" on me! I'm very OK and am back in Kenya. I was in the US from March 7th to April 14th. That length of time was not my original plan, but it became so due to a variety of factors.

1. The primary reason I went to the US was to help prepare for a US memorial service for Lynn – which I was able to do in concert with the staff at the church where we had the service. This is the church to which our family belonged when we worked and lived on the East Coast shuttling back and forth between Washington, DC, and New York City, The Falls Church – Anglican. My friend, John Yates, although now retired after forty years, was the presiding pastor that day, and described Lynn as an "absolute realist" (especially as death drew near) with "unconquerable faith" (anticipating her future). It was a lovely service in which two of Lynn's close friends shared touching memories about what Lynn had meant to them. We were able to do an actual in person service where people were well spaced (socially distanced) as well as have the service live streamed. The wonderful blessing was that Amy was able to be with us, along with both of her brothers.
2. The night before the service, we received word that my much older brother had just died in Oregon. It wasn't a surprise, but still a sad event. Two of his daughters had come for their Aunt Lynn's service. He had been in hospice care for a couple of weeks as death came knocking. None of us new when he would go, but God saw it sufficient to take him on that particular evening. During the committal prayers the next day, not only was Lynn mentioned, but also Richard.
3. The evening of the day of the service, we had out-of-town family together with others who had come from afar for an evening of remembering Lynn and swapping stories. We found a Marriott located very close to Shep and Maria's who were most generous with their entertaining space and we were able to gather there.
4. Then, as if we'd not had enough excitement, the next morning, Friday, we received word from Shep that he had just tested positive for Covid! Up until the day before the service, he had been in Ethiopia, helping to mobilize an emergency relief effort for Internally Displaced People (IDP's) from the ongoing conflict there in the Province of Tigray. We, somehow, suspect that he may have picked it up there.

We, therefore, quickly notified folks that had been with us the day before, so that they would be aware should they have symptoms. Now, nearly a month on, there have been no reports of illness from that event so we assume all is well. In the meantime, we moved Amy out of Shep's house, and she and Andrew and I (who had been staying at the hotel with several of the other guests), all moved across town into the house of friends who would be out of town for the next couple of weeks. Whew!

5. The next morning, Saturday, I would take Andrew to the airport to fly back to Oregon and then I'd go back to the house where Amy was and spend the next two days with her. Both she and her brother had been vaccinated and showed no symptoms. Me, I was getting a bad cold, which I assumed had come from the busy-ness of the days leading up to Lynn's service. My throat was sore, I had head congestion, and a dry cough. Fortunately, I had had my first Pfizer vaccination the day after I arrived in the US, and was booked to get the booster on Monday morning, four days after Lynn's service. Early Monday I took Amy to the airport, and then returned to get my booster shot, still feeling

the symptoms of a bad cold. Once I dropped Amy, I bought a thermometer and some cough syrup and returned home and slept. I had a small fever, but that could have come from the booster shot earlier in the day. My plan was to fly to Oregon on Thursday to be with my nieces and nephews in the wake of my brothers passing, but when Tuesday rolled around and I still had the sore throat, congestion, and tiredness, I decided that perhaps I should get tested for Covid myself, just to see. Wednesday morning my results came back and I too had tested POSITIVE! So, I quickly cancelled everything and determined my plan for the next many days was to quarantine. I had plenty of food, so I just stayed quiet waiting to get worse, which never happened. Instead of getting worse, I got better. I surmised it must have been because I had nearly three weeks of vaccine circulating in my body so the symptoms never got worse.

Sadly, Shep's whole family got sick, with a host of the common Covid symptoms: fever, tiredness, loss of the sense of taste (never happened to me) and other flu like symptoms. Fortunately, all had great breathing capacity, so the lungs didn't ever seem to be in doubt. As Shep and the boys began getting better, Maria wasn't. She ended up running a very high fever for six days in a row. On a Wednesday, she and Shep had a video consult with the doctor, and he prescribed an antibiotic just in case she might have pneumonia. If the fever wouldn't break by the next day, she would have to go to the hospital. Fortunately, at 2pm the next afternoon, the fever finally broke, and although very tired and done in, she would continue to improve. She had had pneumonia as a knock-on effect of the Covid.

6. I had been holding a British Airways ticket to return to Kenya departing the US on the 9th, when I heard the news that BA were canceling all flight to and from Kenya because of rising Covid numbers in Kenya commencing on the 9th of April! So, I quickly scrambled to get a new reservation which I was able to purchase going through Germany departing on the 14th. That would give me a few days to get some last-minute errands done before leaving town.
7. I've now been back for just over a week and it's been good to be home. I'm too much of a realist to say "I'm bullet proof" but have now had Covid and two Pfizer shots, so I'm feeling pretty good. Of course, I still wear a mask in public, but am feeling a lot more secure. Covid continues to be a problem in Kenya. While nothing like India, Kenya still has issues (yesterday India had in excess of 350,000 new cases and Kenya had 772), although the positivity rates are beginning to slowly reduce. We are in a lock down situation until May 27th, so they're hoping by that time the country will be in better shape.

I've jumped back into the middle of things here. Zoom calls locally and internationally. Personal one-on-one appointments; doing a little hospitality for a few people at a time; sitting with my colleagues, Ole Ronkei and Gabriel Achayo, working on future plans; and assisting in helping to plan for a virtual Prayer Breakfast at the end of May. So, my cup has been full and filling. But, good to be back.

Finally, many of you have asked about Amy. She had a major scan a couple of weeks ago in London and it proved to be quite positive. There is continued shrinkage in the two tumors in her liver and a couple of new spots in one of her lungs, but not confirmed as of yet as to whether it's cancer or not, but overall she's remained relatively stable. They've agreed to keep her on the same oral chemo medication and have her come back to be tested again in about six weeks. That same week she began to move out of her flat in Wimbledon into a larger furnished place in Fulham. She will share this place with a good friend and be able to receive various ones of us as we visit from time to time. The decision to get in a bigger place was based on the fact that she has decided to live out her days in the UK where her medical care is. She has a prodigious

network of friends there, and with this bigger place, we'll be able to come and go and lodge in her house with ease. Before Shep had Covid, the plan was that he would go to London for a week with his youngest, Matias, and help his sister move. When that that couldn't happen, a wonderful couple whom Amy had come to know in London, who now live in the US, returned to London to help her move. It has been a huge blessing.

Lastly, I have been abundantly blessed by viewing the latest episodes of The Chosen. This is perhaps the best presentation on the life of Jesus I've ever seen. Such an encouragement. If you've not seen this series, Google it to see how you can either get the app or find it on You Tube or Netflix.

Well, that's it. Just wanted to let you know what I've been up to!

Every blessing,

Sam