



René en Marianne Lako

The Netherlands,

July-August 2009, # 125

Running the race together... Heb. 12:1



Dear family and friends,

Its summer and time for an update; since our January/February newsletter we have been in Holland and recently we traveled again to the USA. These months have also not been the easiest ones; it has been a “re-entry” phase and adjusting to “life after mercy ships”. It’s also been a period to re-connect with family, friends and our church.

We mentioned in our previous newsletters that our time in Sierra Leone has come to an end. It will be 30 years in September that we left our home town and joined Youth with a Mission; we realize that missions and international work has taken its toll, I had no idea my body could be so tired (*Marianne*).



A beautiful ship – so many memories

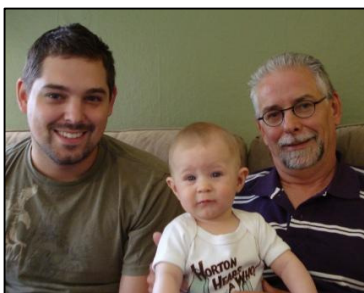
We will forever be grateful for our years on the *m/v Anastasis* and our time with the projects of Mercy Ships Sierra Leone; we have fond memories of the fistula centre and New Steps. The fistula centre and outpatient clinic for children has been taken over by



the fistula center and clinic

another partner and it is our prayer that many women and children will continue to get the needed help and sense God’s love for each one of them. Even though we physically left the projects our thoughts and prayers are often in Sierra Leone. At times we are dealing with feelings like sadness, disappointment, hurt, sometimes anger and we are trying to find healing and restoration in the love of God. One attitude we are trying to live by is: “*Through all that has happened we choose to become better – not bitter*”.

What have we been up to since our last letter? Besides working on our personal relationship as well as giving our departure from Mercy Ships a healthier place in our lives, it has been special to live closer to Mariska, Jacco and enjoying our granddaughters Zoey and Esmee. To be able to go out for a run in the countryside is a bonus we are grateful for as well. Our time in the USA involved counseling as well as orientation to get involved in international Christian relief work. Ideally we would like to be based in the “West” for some time before we would move into a “field” position again. Being in Holland for this season allows us to spend time with our home church, family and friends, our agenda’s are getting fuller with appointments to visit family and friends, some of whom we have not seen for at least 4 years.



Three generations...

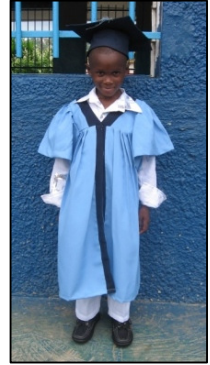
What does our future hold? Not too long ago I read this saying and it fits where we are at: “*faith is taking the first step, even if you do not see the whole staircase*”. At present we feel that we are not yet ready to step into something new right away. We know that we want to follow God into what He has for us. It is our desire to allow the next several months to be a much needed sabbatical after 29 very intense years. At the same time during our time in the States we had some talks with organizations to explore future possibilities and we value your prayers that the right doors would open; and of course we spent time with Stefan, Genae and Porter; he is a great little kid and very cute...

While figuring out what our future holds, getting the rest needed and not jumping into something prematurely, we are thankful for emails and letters we received, thankful for those praying for us and for our sponsors who are still standing with us during this time. René has been able to find some part time work through an agency, which supplements our donation based income. We will keep you informed about the developments in our lives. We are grateful for all that you have done for us and for being an important part of our lives. Please refer to the info below in regards financial support during this sabbatical time.



Joshua at graduation

What about Joshua David? We are very grateful for his placement at the SOS village in Freetown and very thankful that Joshua managed to work hard at school, with the help of his teachers and he now has officially graduated from Kindergarten to group 3; first grade of primary school. Sandra and Evelyn went to the ceremony and took the enclosed pictures. To help Joshua settle into his new living situation he will not go to Evelyn's place during the summer holidays. Just before Joshua's graduation we received the sad news that his caregiver "Aminata" passed away. (Note: *as far as we know Joshua has not been told yet*).



congrats!

We thank God for:

- Our home church in Middelburg, who has journeyed with us for these 30 years
- Each one of you and the part you play in our lives and friendships.
- Our God, who *restores our soul*, and who promises a *hopeful future*.
- A home we have to live in – a true safe haven – during this time
- Food on the table and a car we can use; and of course bikes... after all this is Holland...

Would you join us in prayer for:

- Clarity and direction for our future.
- Our relationship as a couple; restoration and healing after these difficult times.
- Right balance between rest and moving forward.
- Continuity in a part time job for René
- To be able to enjoy this time to the fullest, knowing we need time for self, at the same time it is hard to be still and wait for the things to come.

We are still in a time of transition; while the world has an economic crisis, we feel like we are going through our own personal crisis in a crucial time with new beginnings. We want to hold on to God and put our trust in Him, realizing that we need Him most. We want to ask you to stand with us in prayer. We love to hear from you so please drop us a line, per mail or e-mail. We will also keep our website more active and would love for you to check that out at different times as well. You can even leave a note in the website guest book.

With much love, and with thanks for your ongoing involvement in our lives,

René & Marianne



Freetown, Sierra Leone



on our way to New York



Middelburg, the Netherlands