

Nicci Maxwell

Link Letter no. 13 | July 2021

churchmissionsociety.org/maxwell

CHURCH
MISSION
SOCIETY



The call in action

Dear friends

As I write, Uganda is in lockdown – schools are closed, mass gatherings including church services are banned, overnight curfew begins at 7pm and all transport between and within districts is prohibited. In theory we can only travel as far as we can walk, although health workers and patients are allowed to travel to and from health facilities. Nevertheless, many patients are afraid of indiscriminate action by security services, so Potter’s Village has been relatively quiet for a few weeks. Unfortunately, the longer the lockdown goes on, the more people begin to flout the rules and so many people still don’t wear masks. Around two per cent of the population have had one dose of vaccine and only a tiny minority of those have had two doses.

Test positivity rates locally have been as high as 60 per cent in recent days, despite a national rate reported to be falling. Rapid test kits have run out. A PCR test takes eight days to return a result and people can’t see the point of self-isolation before they have a positive test result. Hospitals are full. Oxygen supplies have run out in most hospitals. We know that the formal statistics are probably a significant underestimate, especially when the daily local radio announcements of deaths and burials have shot up from a “normal” number of fewer than five to more than 20 each day.

I take comfort and encouragement from Psalm 121...

“I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord watches over you – the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

The workload at Potter’s Village had been gradually increasing prior to the new lockdown. We have been seeing lots of children with respiratory problems – perhaps due to coronavirus (we have no tests) but also perhaps related to some cool and extremely wet weather we have had. It has rained a lot! We have also seen many children with malnutrition, which may be related to the hardships endured by many families when jobs and livelihoods disappeared in the first lockdown.



Name: Nicci Maxwell

Location: Kisoro, Uganda

My call: To use my medical skills to show the love of God to the people of Kisoro, Uganda.

My role: Providing paediatric and neonatal medical care to the community, and providing training, mentorship and support to local healthcare workers.



Lake Mutanda – taken during a brief break in the rain on my weekend away

Continued over the page

As advised by the Ugandan ministry of health, we have been working in double face masks, which is very hot and uncomfortable but that was the limit of our PPE until we received a wonderful donation of face shields/visors at the end of June. We can now feel more confident when working with coughing children, using the suction machine or just looking in children's throats in the outpatients department. Thank you to HealthTree Uganda for their generosity and concern for our team's safety. The visors are made just a few hours down the road in Masaka from recycled plastic bottles, which is environmentally friendly too.

My monthly trips to Rutaka Health Centre in the northern part of the district seem to be settling in to a routine. I generally see 10–15 children with everything from coughs/colds to severe malnutrition and complex disabilities. Some families have travelled long distances to access a paediatric opinion and it always saddens me to see how many have spent large amounts of money on investigations and "treatments" that have been of no benefit. Some families struggle to provide adequate nutrition for their children, especially as many have turned their food-growing land over to crops like tea which can be sold, but income is poor and erratic.

Our healthcare project among the local Batwa (pygmy) community is also flourishing. Batwa are using the antenatal and paediatric services we offer at Potter's more and more, which is wonderful and somewhat unexpected. Out of this healthcare initiative we are now seeing opportunities to develop more services to that community in the areas of family planning, child protection/safeguarding, child-headed households, education, sexually transmitted infections and dental hygiene... among others.

As usual it hasn't been all work! I have tried to look after myself with some downtime. Shortly after Easter I was invited to join a group of expat women for a retreat at Lake Bunyoni. Although they all live more than two hours' drive away, we seem to have developed a supportive little community on WhatsApp since the retreat. More recently I had a restful, but very rainy, weekend at Lake Mutanda. The restrictions on international travel mean that many tourist resorts are desperate for business and I was fortunate to stay at a very expensive resort for the same as I pay for my usual "economy" one. My wonderful friends and neighbours, the Rottmann family, have returned to Germany. I am missing them so much already especially our usual weekly "coffee and cake" catch-up on a Friday afternoon. There are no plans for them to be replaced in the near future so please pray that I would soon find another similarly supportive friendship here.

I'm so grateful for the technology that enables me to keep in touch with friends around the world. I was even able to Zoom in to a lesson at a Plymouth primary school recently! I am so thankful for all your prayers and support – it really does make a difference to know that I am held up in prayer. I continue to update my blog almost every week (niccimaxwell.wordpress.com) so please have a look at it if you don't want to wait another three months for the next link letter.

With love to you all, Nicci



Photos from top to bottom: The lovely group of ladies on our retreat at Lake Bunyoni; my new "work face" – two masks and a visor!; one of our littlest neonatal patients has a cuddle with her mum; Rutaka Health Centre, where I do a monthly paediatric clinic

GOING FURTHER WITH CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY

Pioneer Mission Leadership Training at CMS, designed by pioneers for pioneers, equips students for transformational mission in a dynamic and supportive learning community. Find out more at pioneer.churchmissionsociety.org

If you would like to discuss your mailings with us or to receive this link letter on a regular basis, please email supporter.care@churchmissionsociety.org or call 01865 787400

You can give to Nicci at:
churchmissionsociety.org/maxwell

Contact details:

Email: niccimaxwell@aol.com

Blog: <https://niccimaxwell.wordpress.com>

Church Mission Society is a mission community acknowledged by the Church of England Registered Company No. 6985330 and Registered Charity No. 1131655 (England and Wales) and SC047163 (Scotland).