

# There and Back Again

## David Ford's Wycliffe Newsletter



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My Aunt Debbi and Uncle Rob



### Tidbits

*This has been a particularly challenging season for me. Tidbits seemed like the best format to share about some of my recent struggles—as well as a couple pieces of positive news.*

#### Death in the extended family

My uncle Rob (husband of Dad's younger sister Debbi) passed away on February 5, following a three-year battle with prostate cancer that had metastasized to his liver. When first diagnosed three years ago, he was given only a few months to live; but he underwent a series of non-traditional treatments that enabled him to continue running his local painting business and living a fairly normal life until the last couple of months. He was able to spend some really quality time with each of their five grown children, along with a few grandchildren. Rob genuinely cared for everyone he met and would often provide helpful spiritual guidance for those struggling to live out their Christian lives. The family will be having a "Celebration of Life" service on April 6; unfortunately, I won't be able to attend, but most of my Ford relatives will be there. Rob is the first relative of my parents' generation who has passed away.

#### Habtu gets a visa

My dear friend Habtu (whose story I shared in my April '22 issue) finally has a visa to the US! He has been trying to get this visa since 2011, when he was accepted with full scholarship as a Masters student at an American university...but was denied the visa to travel there. His work for Compassion International requires him to attend meetings in the US annually...except he's still never been granted a visa. At last, he was granted one. While the main purpose of his trip in May/June is to attend Compassion's meeting in Colorado, he will use vacation time to spend several weeks visiting other friends...especially my parents. Our house in Virginia will be his home base, and he will get to sleep in my new bedroom before I will.

#### Home Assignment planning

I am making progress on planning for my Home Assignment in the US this fall, so far focusing on the first portion, the roadtrip to Holland MI and back that will occupy all of September. I've already purchased my plane ticket, having found a pretty good deal on the direct flight with Ethiopian Airlines. (This will actually be my first time taking this flight since I moved to Ethiopia; before now it's always been way more expensive than options with other airlines involving layovers.)

#### Death of my laptop

One of the challenges this season was the spontaneous death of my laptop in February—incidentally while it was in 'surgery' with our SIL IT technician to finally fix a totally unrelated screen display problem, for which I had been waiting 3 months for the right replacement cable to come from America! This was the first time during my missionary career in Africa that I have not been able to carry out a planned replacement of an aging laptop during Home Assignment time in the US, before it ceased operating entirely.

While the data on the hard drive is intact, getting a replacement machine is a challenge. One cannot buy new laptops here; any replacement must be ordered from the US, and can only be delivered if I find a traveler willing to give up several pounds of precious luggage allowance to transport it for me. I have found one willing church friend, expected to return from the US in April. Until then, I have to make do with one of the IT department's spare laptops as a loan. This long-term limbo makes it very difficult to be productive without the familiarity and permanence of my own device.

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**Typesetting training delays**

I shared in my December Year in Review how I expected to be trained in Scripture Typesetting in the near future. This process is going frustratingly slowly. Originally we (there are 3 of us intended to work in this role) were told the main training would be in January/February. Now it's supposed to be in May, but we still haven't been told the exact dates. In the meantime, we're supposed to have completed a long pre-training course before the actual training begins, but this has been very slow too. Not only is the existing e-learning course extremely old and in need of revision (which I hear is under way in response to my complaints, but which in consequence has me waiting), but it required access to proprietary Adobe software which SIL had agreed to purchase. That process took four months before my superiors could arrange for the funding and a corporate subscription license for me. (And then I finally got Adobe InDesign downloaded on my laptop...about two hours before it died! It does work on my loaner laptop though.)

I do expect that I will eventually be trained for typesetting, and that this will be a very significant and meaningful new role in my career...but right now it is frustrating how slow the process is going.

**Redeemer Church relocation**

Practically since its founding in the early 1960s, my local English-speaking congregation (Redeemer) has shared our space in the Lidetta neighborhood with an Amharic-speaking congregation. What started out as a small local church plant grew and flourished. This has resulted in a good deal of competition for space. But recently our Redeemer leadership (of which I am a part, having served on church council for over 12 years) has been reflecting on how it shouldn't be our right to hinder another congregation's growth.

In that spirit, Redeemer made the momentous decision in March to leave our historic location and cede our share of the property to the Amharic congregation. This is a daunting decision, but one that we feel peace about when looking at the perspective of how it can benefit the other congregation. We have a plan to move to the beautiful Norwegian mission compound in Addis Ababa by May, renting their mostly unused chapel (just large enough for our size congregation) as well as an apartment for Sunday school, office, and kitchen space. Our presence will in turn benefit the Norwegian mission as well, which was one of the founding missions of the Redeemer congregation (known then as the International Lutheran Church of Addis Ababa.)

**Praise and Prayer Requests****PRAISES**

~That after so many years, my friend Habtu finally has a visa to the US and is able to visit my family (as well as his work HQ and several other friends.)

~For the good deal I found for my own flights to/from the US for Home Assignment.

~That I was able to agree with my landlord for another year of renting my apartment here. (At close to 11 years, this apartment is the longest place I have continually resided in!)

**PRAYERS**

~That I would be able to get a new permanent laptop before May. (It has been ordered, but needs to be brought to Ethiopia via a friend.)

~For my aunt Debbi as she continues to deal with the loss of her beloved husband of 43 years, and as she takes over the management of the painting business.

~For my typesetting pre-training and training to be able to proceed, and all be accomplished before my Home Assignment begins August 11.

~For smooth planning of that Home Assignment. With my parents retired, a larger amount of the planning/correspondence burden is now falling on me.

~For Redeemer as we pursue a historic move to a new location on the Norwegian mission compound, in what is intended to be quite a short timeframe.