

The Murray Family

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"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."
2 Timothy 2:2

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The President of Zambia, Levi Manawasa, has died after suffering a stroke two months ago.

President Manawasa suffered a stroke (his second) at the end of June. At the time, he was transferred to a military hospital in France, where he was either in a coma or on life support - no one knew for certain because there was a news blackout on his condition. Everyone knew it had to be serious though, for both the BBC and CNN reported that he had died. Zambians are very superstitious about death. Here, folks think that to say that someone is terminally ill or dying is akin to putting a death curse on them. Although this may sound silly to us, we have to remember that this is a culture where people did and still do, put curses on others. Because of this, no matter how hopeless a patient's condition might be, one is always forced to find something positive about their condition. So day after day, the papers reported that the President was stable or improving - comments that failed to reveal anything significant about his condition. Even though his constituency wanted to know the medical facts about their President, no one wanted to hear any bad news. And so we heard almost nothing. Those who dared to ask about a post-Manawasa Zambia were severely rebuked. Unfortunately, this forced optimism left the nation shocked and ill-prepared for his death.

On the political front, the constitution requires that the President be declared unfit to serve in office if he is unable to carry out his duties for 21 consecutive days. In the States, this would have happened as a matter of course, without any regard for the people involved - but not in Zambia. With the above background in mind, even the opposition party was unwilling to say that the President was unable to perform his duties. And so for more than six weeks, the country limped along without a defacto leader. In Zambia, the Vice-president is appointed by the President - making this office considerably weaker than its US counterpart. The cabinet is also appointed by the President, with as much emphasis on cronyism (one's personal relationship to the President) as on one's qualifications. These folks obviously had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo for as long as possible, even voting themselves a raise during the time the President was "absent". Such is politics in Africa - where personalities are usually more important than positions.

After the President's death was finally announced, the country's leadership declared a 21 day period of mourning. They then began to work out the details for the national mourning. Since Manawasa was the first Zambian President to die, there were no precedents and few established procedures. In accordance with a Zambian funeral, there had to be opportunity for people to view the body, to gather with others to share their grief and to pay their respects to their fallen leader. In the midst of this mourning period, plans also had to be made for a special election - for a new President must be elected within 90 days.

All of this makes these interesting days to be in Zambia. Probably the most notable aspect of all of this is the lack of unrest or violence. It appears that there will be an orderly transition of power and that (with a few minor glitches), the constitution will be followed. This is not the pattern for many of the countries around Zambia, making this a haven for both residents and refugees and an example for other nations. It also gives us tremendous freedom to share the gospel and to train the next generation of Zambian missionaries.

We invite you to continue to pray for our family

for Mark

as he will be in the States during October and November

he is still looking for additional churches in which to present our ministry

if you know of a possibility, please contact us by email right away

he is looking for a car to use for a couple of weeks while he is in Indiana

as he finishes teaching his second course - this one an introduction to world missions

as he disciples a core group of men

for Tracy

as she recovers from a serious bout of malaria

as she balances the needs of our home with the many opportunities for ministry

as she gets involved in a program helping poor women and widows to be more self-supporting

by crocheting purses out of plastic grocery bags for sale in the U.S. (they really are attractive)

as she works with children in the neighborhood and nearby orphanages

for Abram

as he works with the youth at church, that they might take their faith seriously

for Noah

as we work our details for him to return to the States and live with my mother

he will be returning with me in October and setting up residence in Alabama

for the children

as they minister in the compound (ghetto) and in orphanages

as they seek to be friends and witnesses to their peers in both the church and community

for Micah and Sarah

as he attends college, works and spends time with Sarah's family

as they begin planning their upcoming June wedding

for Kirstin and Sam

as they look for a church in Orlando

as he continues to look for a job in a tight job market

In His service,

Mark, for the Murrays