

# An Update from the Coates Family

December 13, 2022

Dear Friends,

Advent fills me with gratitude. I suppose it's because the season of advent is so infused with goodness, and how can we not feel grateful when confronted by goodness, right? Advent literally means "arrival" or "coming," and as we celebrate the good news of the coming of our Messiah we are confronted by a very different goodness to that which the world celebrates over the Christmas season. The fleeting goodness of great gifts and delicious food is wonderful to enjoy, but it is only a pointer to the enduring, faithful and ever-present goodness of our loving Saviour. As we reflect back on the year it's this theme of our Heavenly Father's ever-present goodness that strikes me.



## Another year of lives shaped and formed by Christ

They say that change is the only constant in life. Well, I suppose that is partially true. We are all changing all of the time, and yet God is always there, always constant, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. It is a beautiful privilege to be so involved in the work that He is doing in young people's lives. This time of year lends to reflection and evaluation, and it is the individual stories that I find most encouraging as I look back.

## Four lives, four testimonies and four ambassadors for Jesus



I wish I had the space to tell you each of these four stories in detail (and so many more beyond these four!). These four young men are graduating in the next few months. From left to right: Kumbee from Namibia in law; Munya from Zimbabwe in finance; Kuda also from Zimbabwe in law, and Levy from Zambia in actuarial science. They have literally spent

thousands of hours in our programmes and our informal (yet formational) spaces over the past few years. It's been a joy to mentor and walk alongside them over the course of their studies, and to see them change as they have submitted their lives to Christ. While it is beautiful to see their love for God grow, it is particularly encouraging to see their perspectives shift and change in terms of how they see their future careers.

Many of our students come from underprivileged backgrounds, so often times their fields of study are chosen to try and alleviate financial pressure in their families. Levy, for example, chose actuarial science because it promised a lucrative career. But over the time he has spent in our Residence Life Programme (RLP) his perspective has totally shifted, and now hopes to use his skills to honour God and in service of others. Kumbee, who has spent the past 3 years in our RLP, is passionate about diplomacy and international relations (what a need there is for this in Africa!) and has been invited by the German government (he is fluent in German) to spend the month of January as their guest in Germany, where he will have opportunity to first-hand encounter the inner workings for their democracy and diplomacy.

I could go into much more detail with all four of them, but you get the idea - they are bright, gifted and characterful young leaders, inspired by God to make a change in their contexts wherever God takes

them. It's been a gift to play a role in their formation, as you have too, through your prayers and support. I'm excited to see how God uses them in the coming years.

### A different strategy for the stressful fourth quarter

The academic year in South Africa climaxes with exams in the fourth quarter, which means stressed UCT students. While we want to equip students to think deeply about Christianity, and much of the year this is a big focus for us through courses, seminars, conferences, etc., in the fourth quarter we have to change tack to meet them where they're at with their limited time and overwhelmed state of mind.



While some of our discussion groups continue, we focus on creating welcoming informal spaces, over meals for instance, where students can share how they are doing, bring their questions to the Word and pray together. I am often amazed at

how God uses these seasons where they are so in touch with their vulnerability.



We also provide as much care and hospitality as we can - study spaces, little snack bags, etc. - which open doors for deeper relationships and rich conversations.



### On the Family Front

December brings with it the summer holidays down south, for which the kids are always very grateful. Michelle is also more than happy to get a break from the homeschooling (having just committed to taking on another neighbourhood pupil next year!).

#### They grow up so quickly!

Clichéd refrains mostly become just that because they capture a common truth, and here is the evidence. Jude turned 21 last week and we can't believe that he is 21 already - it feels like just yesterday that he was the little guy in the picture below. He's doing well in his



software development work placement - we're grateful to see God's goodness to him as a young man now.

He's not the only one growing up quickly of course. As we mentioned last time, Hannah turned 17 recently. One thing that has remained constant throughout her life is her



love of dance. She's come a long way since those first steps.

She was supposed to do an important ballet exam recently through the Royal Academy of Dance for which she had been preparing the whole year, only to be sick over the period of the exam... it will have to wait for next year. She was very disappointed. At least she had a show to look forward to... only to sprain her ankle a week before the show. The disappointments of a dancer.



### Prayer Points:

- Celebrate with us to give thanks for these graduating students who have had their lives so profoundly touched by God, and as we pray that God guides their next steps as they seek to be salt and light in the world.
- Also give thanks with us that my mother has been able to make it through chemotherapy thus far, and that the latest scans show no cancer!
- Please pray that we are able to grow our staff team. There is so much need, and not enough hands, so please pray that God brings the right people to join our team in the right time.

Change will happen in all of our lives. Whether big or small, battling cancer, a twisted ankle at a bad time, graduating university or entering the twilight of our lives here on earth. But what a gift to know that God is ever-present. His faithful goodness meets us and carries us. In that there is *true* joy - may this joy be yours in this precious season, dear friends.

Much love & blessings,  
Adrian, Michelle, Jude, Hannah & Luke

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