

# MORIJA TIMES

**MARCH 2018**

*“Why is the LORD bringing us to this land...Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” (Numbers 14:3)*

Dear Friends,

When you read the story of the Israelites' forty years of wandering in the desert, you find plenty of examples where they rebelled and wanted to return to Egypt. Given that they were in bondage there, it might be hard to understand why they would want to go back. But the uncertainty of the future can seem quite daunting, even when compared to a bad and familiar situation. Once out in the desert, the Israelites remembered the delicious foods they enjoyed in Egypt without mentioning being oppressed by the Egyptians (Numbers 11:5). For some of them, a bad but familiar situation in Egypt seemed better than dealing with the stress of who-knows-what in an unknown land.

The familiar can be comfortable because you know what the routine is, who the people are, and so on. The paperwork is mostly done. On the other hand, the unknown and uncertain future is, well, unknown and uncertain. There will be paperwork. One might well imagine how things will be, but imaginations rarely turn into realities. Things could be worse, so maybe it would be better to stick to the familiar. Staying where you are often seems the simpler, safer thing to do. Going in a new direction can be painful and challenging.

For the past 30 years or so, whenever I've gone back to the States, I've always come back to Africa. Now it appears that will change, at least for some time. I'll be leaving Lesotho at the end of June and then have my last home assignment visiting churches and sharing the story of the Global Ministries partnership with the Lesotho Evangelical Church in Southern Africa.

Like many of the winding mountain roads in Lesotho, I'm sure there will be unexpected twists and turns in my post-Africa years. Having stated categorically over 40 years ago that I would never be a teacher, and then subsequently found myself teaching, and enjoying it, for 25 years, I'm reluctant to say anything too definite about what lies ahead. If we really knew all that lies ahead of us, we might not want to proceed, even though everything will work out in the end. No one likes the rough spots life throws at us, but they do help us be thankful for the smooth stretches. So I'm inclined to enjoy the journey, wherever it takes me.



One thing I can probably plan on is that things will not go according to plan. Unexpected and unwanted obstacles will cause plans to be delayed; detours may be needed. After all, the road of life is full of other people (not to mention animals). Barging your way through everything will result in casualties, to yourself and others, so it seems wise to prepare yourself mentally in advance that curves will come your way, rather than suffer the consequences of being ill-equipped for them. Being patient helps. Patience is something I don't always have enough of, but when it is present, the outcomes are definitely better! Patience does pay dividends.

Proverbs 25:15 says that, *“Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.”* One of the Morija Theological School students, Puleng, has taught me about patience and the truth of this verse. Prior to coming to the seminary, she worked in debt collection. Puleng is what I would describe as a friendly, soft-spoken person. Certainly not the type of person I imagine doing debt collection. But she approached the work in her own way. She never used anger or threats to get people to pay. She was patient, kind, gentle and persuasive. Where others had failed, she succeeded. She succeeded so much that her superiors could not believe it. Accounts that had yielded nothing started paying. Puleng eventually started her own business before taking up the call she had to serve God. Her gifts will certainly be a blessing in her ministry.



While Puleng’s patience resulted in payments, God’s patience with us sinners is not meant to make us feel guilty so that we “pay” for our sins. Rather it is to help us repent. As Paul puts it in his letter to the Romans, *“Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you towards repentance?”* (2:4). In this season of Lent, and as we approach Easter, may our remembrance of God’s patience with us help us to be patient with others.

Yours in Christ,

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