

Hello praying friends and supporters!

We hope this email finds you well. In our last couple newsletters we mentioned that a special financial update would be coming your way. What follows is a rather frank but important letter from us as a family. We hope that you'll receive it with the spirit in which we send it: one of humility and also confidence that this is both the correct path forward and that God is and always has been the Great Provider. Hopefully this will even bring to light some unique challenges never thought of before when it comes to living and ministering in an economy and context not our home. The difficulties of living in "two worlds" will be clear.

We will not bury the lead: we need to increase our support by a minimum of 20% from our current level. We have had the same monthly average support for well over 5 years now. We've never increased it, even though looking at the broader economic indicators in South Africa, we should have increased many times over. Simply put, the cost of living has dramatically changed over the last 5+ years that we have lived here, and our support has not kept pace. A few specific indicators:

Cost of Fuel	110% increase
Ministry miles driven	65% increase
Cost per kWh for electricity	63% increase
Consumer Price Index	21% increase
Personal grocery budget	44% increase

This data is based on when we arrived in South Africa in Sept 2016 compared to now. Given our funding model, automatic cost of living increases like most employers give to make up for some of the above are simply not part of our equation. So it falls to us to continue to raise support. We have not done a good job of that, mostly because of the feeling that we are continually asking for project funds (vehicles, visas, musical productions, camp sponsorships, etc) and we don't want to be perceived as asking for money ad nauseam. However, the simple facts on the ground dictate that we must increase our monthly support.

We must pause and acknowledge the difficulty in such a prospect in the current economic and global climate. Inflation is rising in the US for the first time in decades. And although the US is only now at basically the same rate that inflation rises each and every year in South Africa, that doesn't diminish the pressure being felt by most families across the US, and probably you reading this right now. Fuel and energy prices are rising, like it has for many years in South Africa, but now in a very dramatic fashion. And of course who knows what all the ramifications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine will cause? Whatever the economic repercussions, the entire world will be impacted. We understand all of this and wish we didn't need to make this appeal at this particular time. But it cannot be helped.

The main way we haven't needed to raise an increase in funding is mostly due to an increasingly favourable exchange rate, allowing us to buy more in South Africa today than we could back in 2016 with the same amount of dollars. Unfortunately, the relative strength

of the US economy that drove the favourable exchange rate is diminishing (due to all of the above: inflation, fuel prices, etc), and it seems that the steady increase has levelled off. It doesn't look like it's going to decrease, given there's no strength in the South African economy to pull it back down. It just looks like it won't be increasing for the foreseeable future. And so we cannot keep depending on leveraging the exchange rate to keep things going.

We should also acknowledge that many times over the last 5+ years, that fact that our finances have continued is nothing short of God's miraculous provision, be that from unexpected one-time gifts at the right time, sudden drops in an expense for some reason, or He just simply stretched things to go further than we would have expected on paper. He is always faithful, and we have no fear of the future, for wherever and whoever He sends, He will provide.

And yet he calls us to take part in that provision, to work for our income, and to boldly ask for God's people to support Great Commission workers in an ongoing, sacrificial way. Since we cannot visit the US until the end of the year to have in-person meetings, we must make this appeal remotely. So here's our fundraising initiative in a nutshell:

# 3 INITIATIVE

# 15

\$15 increases  
15 new partners  
15 one-time gifts

The **3:15 Initiative** is our special fundraiser directly for our family and ministry support.

**Why this name?** One of our favorite verses is Genesis 3:15, which is the first promise of the Redeemer to come. It's right at the beginning of the scriptures and so is itself just a beginning, just a

hint, of all that God was going to do in his redemptive plan. It is an unspeakable privilege to serve that Redeemer here in Knysna, South Africa. And though we have been here for over 5 years now, in many respects, the work is just beginning. There is so much more that God is going to do here along the Southern Coast of Africa. And we pray that you'll help us continue to be part of it.

**Ministry snapshots:** Over the next several weeks, we will be sending an email and social media post about once-per-week, with a short (2-3 minute) video highlighting some aspect of ministry or life here in Knysna. It may be directly ministry-related, or just something about life in this amazing country. We want to more effectively and more personally show you all that God is doing here and all that you are part of.

**Financials:** Following on the theme of the initiative, 3 aspects of the number 15

1. We're asking all current individual monthly supporters to consider a \$15 increase in monthly support.

Many of you reading this are already monthly supporters. We are incredibly grateful to you! Quite simply, we could not be here without you. Would you consider increasing your support? If not by \$15, then \$10 or even \$5. Every bit helps and given the large number of individual families that support us monthly, together you can make a huge impact.

2. We're aiming at adding 15 new monthly partners, of any amount.

*Seriously, when we say any amount, we mean it!* Did you know that 60% of our monthly support comes from families contributing \$50 or less? And fully ¼ of our support is through gifts under \$25. Every amount is helpful, \$150/mo or \$10/mo. We won't pretend to understand your particular financial pressures, so we won't make a blanket "ask" for a specific amount. Just know that we are seeking 15 new, committed, long-term partners of any amount to come alongside us for the sake of the gospel in South Africa.

3. And finally, looking for 15 one-time gifts of any amount, with the aim to build up a reserve/travel expenses fund.

We are responsible for all travel expenses when returning to the US; no outside agency provides for that. With now 5 plane tickets (yes Lily is big enough for her own seat!), furlough can get quite expensive. These expenses ought not be put on credit cards so we are looking to begin a reserve fund that we also add to every month. Would you help us kick-start this fund with a one-time gift?

Thank you for reading this far, and for your understanding and prayerful consideration of our requests. We hope that the general situation and need for this course of action makes sense. If you have any questions, please reach out to us! Email, WhatsApp or video call, we would love to hear from you!

Love in Christ,

**The Mello Family, Knysna, South Africa**

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