

## Paul's Trip to US

*from Paul...* In February I did something I have not done for almost exactly 12 months, I stepped on a plane and flew to another country! One of my favorite parts of my job is traveling. Not only do I enjoy visiting different places, but I have always found it extremely important to meet people in their location. Context and interpersonal interactions are as important as the content of the discussion.

The international program team has monthly online meetings, and an annual meeting in person each January. I had planned to be in the US for those meetings, but they were held online like so many other activities this past year. I then decided to plan this trip to the LBT office in Missouri for the end of February, mostly expecting that it would also need to be canceled.



Paul and Sarah working through an automation process.

One highlight of my trip was being able to work with Katie Hogan and Sarah Stilwell in person. Katie is the program ministries administrative assistant. We have been working closely the last couple of years to figure out how to organize information that is coming in from the field, curate it, and make it available to the communications and development departments. Sarah is the IT coordinator. A key project right now is automating various processes within the organization. Although we meet virtually several times each week, being together in person allowed us to have deeper conversations about next steps. We were still looking at screens most of the time, but having a whiteboard and other materials available helped us get through more complex topics. I find that in person discussions are energizing whereas online meetings can be draining.

Another highlight was being able to visit with my brother David and his family in their new house. Last August their family left Ghana after being here for seventeen years. For a couple years we lived next door to each other in Tamale and our kids became very close. It was hard to say goodbye to them in August, but it was great to see how they are settling into life in the US.

Travel is definitely not back to normal now. Wearing a mask for almost 30 hours straight is not my definition of a good time.

It became wearying to continue to show proof of my negative COVID test repeatedly, but it was wonderful to see people in person again. The hardest part was still taking proper precautions when what I really wanted to do was give hugs. Ali and I are looking forward to some upcoming trips happening this year. As you read this, Ali is making her first visit to Sierra Leone to visit missionaries in person. Perhaps later this year when I am in the US on work trips, I will also get to see some of you!



Hannah's first day back to in-person school

## Kid's School Update

*from Ali...* Schools were closed early in Ghana's entrance to the pandemic in March 2020 and were not allowed to reopen again until January. We were pleased that Hannah's school easily made the transition to online classes right away last March. It was somewhat shocking for us also to realized that last year was Hannah's first year attending a school and she never even got to finish a year in person! This academic year began online but Hannah returned to classes in person at school by the end of January. Although the school maintains an online option for students, being physically in the classroom has been a great experience for Hannah. There have only been a few COVID cases in the school over the last 4 months and, with the protocols and cohorts that are

# Paul & Ali FEDERWITZ

Hannah, Levi & Eden

## ABOUT US

Paul is LBT's Chief Information Officer and Assistant Director for Program Ministries. He also serves as a computer consultant to missionaries and organizations in West Africa.

Ali is responsible for the home education of our children. She is also a Member Care Facilitator for LBT.

Paul and Ali's ministry is funded solely through donations from individuals and groups.

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in place, there has not been spreading amongst classmates. We continue to feel at peace with Hannah going to school each day.

Levi and Eden keep trucking along with homeschool. We did make some changes at the turn of the new year to accommodate their differing ages and interests. With them each being older and able to do independent work, these changes are much less daunting and do not increase

Ali's responsibilities significantly. Levi is interested in how things work and will disassemble anything he can get his hands on. He is working through some science books on machines, motion, inventions, and technology. It is a good fit for him. Eden on the other hand much prefers nature study. So, she has chosen a course on animals and plants. It is nice for Ali not to hear groaning from either one of them at science time because of the investment they each have in their topics. Surprisingly, we have incorporated more game playing in our school day this year. It's amazing how many skills can be strengthened by playing a board game, not to mention that it refocuses and reenergizes us for the tasks we may not want to do as much.

Hannah and Eden recently leveled up in their Taekwondo skills. They each hold a blue/red belt. They are considered senior belts in their class and this is source of pride and accomplishment for both of them. We are grateful that they have the opportunity to attend Taekwondo classes near our house each week. It has definitely pushed them out of their comfort zones and has taken courage to face each new level. We think Eden may have her sights set on black belt and that goal could soon be in reach for her. There are three levels of red belt before the coveted black. It's likely that it would be dangerous to face one of our girls in a dark alleyway. Beware!



Hannah and Eden demonstrate their Taekwondo skills

## The Erslands are Back!

We were so excited to welcome Michael and Naomi Ersland to Ghana in February. Michael has been serving as a translation advisor to the Komba Bible Translation project in Northern Ghana. He was in the US for an extended period to work on a master's degree. During that time, he also married Naomi Erber who grew up as a missionary kid in Nigeria. Naomi's parents have been our next-door neighbors for the last five years.

It was a joy to have the Erslands in Accra with us for a little more than two weeks. We enjoyed fellowship, meals, and lots of game time together. It wasn't all fun and games; there were orientation tasks as well as grocery shopping and errands to run as they prepared to head to their home in the village. It is also really nice to have LBT colleagues in Ghana again, something we have not had since Paul's brother and his family left in August.



Game time with the Erslands