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Office of University
Communications

May 7, 2018

Jake and Hannah Keller

While Jake Keller Serves with Military in Iraq, Hannah Keller Volunteers in Africa

Military wives often wonder what they will do while their husband is deployed. The answer for Hannah Currin Keller, a 2012 alumna of Gardner-Webb University, was to follow God's direction. Hannah is volunteering in West Africa for nine months, while her husband, Jake, a 2013 GWU alumnus, spends the next year serving in Iraq with the 878th National Guard Engineering Company based out of Kings Mountain, N.C.

Hannah left her job as a nurse in outpatient surgery at Watauga Medical Center in Boone, N.C., to care for people in Mango, Togo. "I felt the Lord leading me to step out in faith and see what opportunities were available to serve in medical missions," she related. "I found Hospital of Hope through Samaritan's Purse World Medical Mission. I saw they have a desperate need for nurses. It was hard to leave my familiar home and wonderful workplace to go to an unknown environment, but I knew I was doing what God wanted me to do."

Hospital of Hope is a 66-bed Christian hospital that needs volunteer nurses to serve until all the Togolese nurses are trained. Hannah will be working in the adult and pediatric wards and the intensive care units. Since opening in 2015, the hospital has treated and shared the gospel with 11,500 patients.

Jake, a native of Gaffney, S.C., and Hannah, originally from Rolesville, N.C., chose to attend Gardner-Webb, because the University's Christian values aligned with their own. They were introduced by mutual friends and were drawn to each other's desire to serve others and honor God. They were married a semester before Jake graduated in 2013.

Both Jake and Hannah appreciated when their GWU professors prayed before tests or at the start of class. They were also inspired by the support and advice their professors gave. Hannah felt well-prepared for her first nursing job, and Jake was challenged to pursue a different career path. His degree was in music performance, but his GWU piano instructor, Janey Pease, suggested he consider additional studies in music therapy.

Jake and Hannah Keller's wedding

“If not for her, I may not have taken the leap to go on to graduate school. She believed I could and that is what prompted me to apply,” Jake affirmed. “Gardner-Webb helped prepare me by giving me a solid foundation in music. I grew as a person and developed a solid work ethic at GWU that I was able to take with me to graduate school.”

While pursuing his master’s degree, Jake joined the National Guard. “The educational incentives assisted with payment of student loans, and I also had a strong desire to serve my country and give back,” he asserted. “I believe that was instilled in me by attending Gardner-Webb and seeing the many ways the school gives back to the community. Being in the National Guard allowed me the opportunity to serve, gain valuable experience, and continue my education.”

After completing an internship in hospice and palliative care, Jake became a board-certified music therapist and received a second bachelor’s degree in music therapy from Appalachian State University in Boone. He has completed one semester toward his master’s degree and will finish when he returns from Iraq. While deployed, he will give guitar lessons, develop his repertoire, assist in chapel and share his music in other ways. “I will also record data on how I utilize music while on deployment,” Jake informed. “I hope to share this data with other music therapists in order to strengthen what we know about how music therapy can be used when working with veterans.”

On the days when Jake and Hannah feel discouraged or lonely because of their 5,000-mile separation, the couple will rely on their faith. “Prayer and knowing that the Lord will be by our side during the entire process gives me strength to endure any possible threat or danger that may come our way,” Jake declared. “There may be prolonged times that my wife and I may not talk to each other, but I believe that we will be able to have peace within and be able to trust the Lord to direct our paths as we are temporarily separated in different parts of the world.”

Hannah added that she will claim God’s promise in her favorite scripture verse, II Corinthians 12:9: “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I may boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”