

Sent: Sunday, March 06, 2011

Subject: Greetings from Beautiful Zimbabwe

Dear Friends and Family,

Hellooooo? *Can you hear me now?* Don and I are alive and well and still living in Zimbabwe. My apologies for not writing. It's not because I have forgotten you and I really can't complain about being too busy. We are well into our second year here and it seems life has settled into a comfortable rhythm. Things are not as new and exciting as they were the first year. Its funny, people think we are living this wild, exciting adventure in the depths of Africa, but, the truth be told, it's a rather, quiet, laid back existence. The most exciting thing we did today was turn down our resident psych patient for a ride to the police station. He wanted to report to the police that the hospital staff was holding him against his will. (He was wandering around on the hospital grounds when he said this.) This guy was yelling loudly for hours late at night, seeing snakes and being combative. Sadly, there are no psych facilities and no psych medications. The only place for him would be the police holding cell, where he would get no food, no water and no blanket or bed. (Cold, wet cement floor.) In addition, the police don't have vehicles, so we would have to transport him, which is a scary thought in itself. So we wait and hope he improves and doesn't hurt anyone. (OK, maybe my life is a little exciting.)

We have noticed a big improvement in the economy of Zimbabwe since we've been here. We see nicer cars on the road. (I heard they are owned by illegal diamond dealers.) We see the stores full of goods and more and more stores opening up. Not only that, the stores are full of people, so someone must be making money. When we first arrived we couldn't find even the basic supplies for setting up a household. We had our son send us a toilet seat from home! (That's Evan!) We searched for months for a pancake turner, a can opener, zip lock bags, a mirror, clothes hangers, nails, bolts and paint brushes.

I see improvements in the hospital. We have a good doctor. (We could use another.) We are making improvements to the lab and the x-ray department. The nurses are awesome and dedicated and we have a wonderful executive team. We are pursuing being a provider of Medical Aid (insurance for civil employees), which would increase income. All insurance companies went bankrupt during the hyper-inflation days. They are just getting started again.

Don is getting re-acquainted with his Iowa farm roots. He secured some start up funds, bought a tractor and has been orchestrating the farm project on the Mt. Selinda and Chikore Missions. He has corn (maize), beans and much garden produce such as green beans and broccoli. (Yum!) The proceeds will feed the hospital, school and orphanage and the cash products will help to support the mission and the UCCZ Synod.

Civil servants like teachers, nurses, doctors, garbage handlers and police still earn below poverty level wages. They make less than \$200 per month. A doctor makes the same as a garbage handler. They are dependent on "top ups" paid by their employer. They also raise chickens, goats and corn to make ends meet. In spite of it all, they are a happy, resilient, content, society. They have a great sense of humor. When people see me getting frustrated by the lack of power, lack of water, the pot-holed roads (requiring our third set of shock absorbers in a year) or lack of punctuality, they just laugh at me and say, "Welcome to Zimbabwe, Nyasha."

Our friend Sue Heppenstall is here on her yearly work visit from New Hampshire. She stays in Chikore (our sister Mission Station), about an hour and a half from Mt. Selinda over bumpy roads, but we see her often. There are also two other missionaries in Chikore, Rev. Andy Jepson and Math Teacher Lindley Kinerk. Including Rev. Dale and Mary Patrick based in Harare, and a young man, Silas Beardslee, in Rimbi, there are eight American Missionaries here serving UCCZ. That's quadruple from when we arrived!

One fun development: Don and I have helped to Charter a Rotary Club in Chipinge. (The town we shop in, about 35 minutes away.) Its been very fun watching it grow and the people getting to know each other.

Our daughter Mary is thinking strongly about joining us in August for a year. What fun to have family in Africa! Welcome Mary! You will love it!

We remain healthy, mostly happy (would someone send me my grandchildren????) and committed to making a difference in the lives of people here in Zimbabwe.

Thank you to everyone for your interest in our work. I thrive on email communication. Please see FaceBook for some photos of Mt. Selinda.



This is my neighbor, Egness, age 4, carrying water home for her mother.

That's my backyard garden hut. It looks nicer now, after the rains. I have a lovely flower garden.

Best wishes across the miles,
Maryjane Westra

Jesu wandida ini (Shona language - Jesus Loves Me)

Below are the Shona words to Jesus Loves Me. Sunday school classes may have fun learning this. Pronounce things as they are written. Ay for e, eeee for i. Hard J in Jesu, not Yay-su.

1. Jesu wandndida ini, rinodaro Baiberi
Vake nkivo vaduku, Nidiye masimba edu
*Jesu wandida, Jesu wandida,
Jesu wandida, Rodaro Baiberi.*

2. Jesu wakandifira
Nokusarura Denga;
Anozondishambidza

Ndikodzere kupinda
*Jesu wandida, Jesu wandida,
Jesu wandida, Rodaro Baiberi.*

3. Anondiperekedza
Nguva dzose munzira;
Ndikamuda ndotorwa
Kundenga kana ndafa.
*Jesu wandida, Jesu wandida,
Jesu wandida, Rodaro Baiberi.*

From Ventures, Primary School Songbook by Brenda Grtiffiths. 1993.