

Dear Friends and Family,

I've been living in Africa two year now and I still sometimes pinch myself to see if I will wake up from this dream in my bed at Eagle Lake.

I have gotten feed back that some folk back home who heard that we had a terrible adjustment and our life here is nothing but one horrible experience after another. So it set me to asking, how was the adjustment for us? With the benefit of hindsight, I can say it was difficult, but not horrendous; exciting but not terrifying. I can honestly say I had no experiences that could be interpreted as "near death" and most of the scary times were simply lack of experience and lack of a comfort level of our surroundings. Yes, there were new experiences and there was a lot to be learned. Much of the learning were things that anyone who moves to a new community must learn; where to bank, where to shop, where is the cleanest public rest room. But an international move requires additional adjustments, such as; how to find things where there are no maps and no street addresses; how to remember peoples' names when they are unfamiliar to my ear and only last names are used. They often don't even know a first name.

We spend the month of August in Minnesota with our friends and family. I spend 8 days on my sailboat, The Abigail Susan. Don joined me for the Leech Lake Regatta/Race. (After being grounded for 20 minutes, we didn't come in last ... barely.) We ate lots of good, rich American food and gained lots of weight. We hugged grandchildren until they begged for mercy. We especially enjoyed the newest one, Haylee, age 16 months, who kept us laughing one minute and crying the next for missing her early years.

I had an opportunity on my travels to do some further reading on Ministry and Mission service. Ministry at the Margins by Anthony J. Gittins helped me to focus on the experience of missionary work. It reminded me that I am here, less to "do" and more to "experience." I am trying to shed my cultural baggage and be open to new ideas. So often Don and I look at each other and say, "But that doesn't make sense!" What we are saying is, "that doesn't make sense in the eyes of white, middle-class, Americans." We are challenged to look at our experience with new eyes and new sensitivity. John Dunne writes of the adventure in three movements, The Homeland (where we came from physically, spiritually, emotionally), The Wonderland (everything is strange, exciting and wonderful) and The Newfoundland (making sense of the experience.) We have experienced Homeland and Wonderland, but we are still trying to make sense of this experience. One of the biggest challenges I feel is to competently convey this experience to other missionaries, remembering that God calls all Christians

to step outside one's margin of comfort and be missionaries to the poor and disadvantaged. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to explore and search for the state of Newfoundland.

We arrived back in Mt. Selinda late last night after a 24 hour bus ride from Johannesburg. It shouldn't come as a surprise to me, that the mission seemed to function just fine without us. Nonetheless, I am assured we were missed and there is plenty of work to be done.

Don and I are starting our third year in Zimbabwe. Are we making progress toward our goals? With baby steps and constantly readjusting the finish line. This will be a fun year because we are expecting a lot of visitors. Ann Leroux in September. (Well, she's not exactly a visitor, more of an institution.) Pete Piernie and team in October. Our daughter, maybe in October, to stay here and live. (Soon to become an institution, me hopes.) Wade Zick, Youth Director from Minnesota Conference UCC, in January. Rev. Chris Nichols in February. (Chris, it's in writing. Now are committed.) Karen Terry and Rud Wasson, Rotary team from Minnesota. (See Chris Nichols. Ditto.) And several other teams who are making tentative plans.

We will travel back to the Homeland in May of 2012 for four months of Iteneration and two months of family time. While we look forward to it, tremendously, we wonder about the effect of being away from our Wonderland for such a long time. Missionaries must posses a large amount of adaptability, for sure.

As always, if you want to support our work, please visit Global Ministries or consider sponsoring a child at Daisy Dube Children's Home, Mt. Selinda. Thank you to so many of you who have donated money and items or asked us to speak to your group. Crates of Yarn made 105 caps for the babies born at Mt. Selinda. 20/20 Optical donated used glasses, two big bags, too many to count! Kari Ward donated a keyboard, just the right size to be useful yet easy to transport. West Tool made 50 bottle openers. Dennis donated his signature candy bag. Rotary has given money for computers and is working on money for farm equipment. There was also money given for a much needed vehicle. (Ours blew up in August, maybe for the last time, not sure.) My apologies if I have forgotten anyone. THANK YOU TO EVERYONE!

Love,
Maryjane Westra