

LUSAKA DAYS

We have been silent as regards the blog since July when we last reported on the Durban 2016 International AIDS Conference. When we got back both of us were pre-occupied with field work travelling to our respective Health and Education Institutions for the Second Board Meeting of the year

With education many schools have made good progress with building new classroom blocks. The tackling systematically of long-standing infrastructural problems including water reticulation is being systematically undertaken. Shortage of staff and frozen positions are the main human resource problems. With our hospitals and clinics, power-cuts called load-shedding here continues to be a challenge, our long term objectives is to move all our health institutions onto solar energy with ZESCO as back-up.

Our days in Lusaka are very different from those on a rural Mission. I thought we might do a Sunday Times Magazine 'A Day in the Life of..... type article.

We are usually wakened around 5.30 by a call-boy shouting - MTENDERE! MTENDERE! (A call-boy in Zambia is a minibus driver's mate who collects the fares and entices passengers to use that bus and Mtendere is a high-density suburb!) There is a major lay-by, a hub for many minibuses outside Synod, as we are opposite the sprawling University Teaching Hospital. They deliver and pick up staff, patients and visitors throughout the day and early evening. That is the signal for us to make the coffee, check the emails that have come in overnight and scroll down Twitter to get the news headlines: Zambian. International and Scottish.



At 0600h we get Mubita and Ellie up. Mubita is a lark and Ellie an owl. Mubi is as bright as a button but Ellie likes her peace and quiet to come to. By 0630h we are all washed and dressed and the children at breakfast usually fruit juice, cereal and yoghurt. By 0700 Bridget arrives to drive Ellie to St Andrews and Mubita to Chalom, their respective schools. We use next hour to prepare for the coming day domestically and workwise. Between 0730 and 0800h David and Florence arrive. At the moment David has just finished building our garden shed. He is now plastering the office/laundry and shed and laying Kariba stone paving around the house to help keep the red dust and mud at bay.

Florence looks after the running of the house completely which allows us to do our jobs and she also lives in to covers for us when we are in the field. Bridget, David and Florence all came with us from Mwandia

At 0800h we gather in the foyer at Synod for devotions which consists of an opening Hymn and prayer then the welcome and notices from the Administration Secretary. There is a slot for the choir then the Reading and Sermon, most members of staff take a turn at this, and then finishing with a closing hymn and prayer Then off to work in the office.

Much of the morning is taken up with telephone calls making and receiving, answering emails, drafting memos, minutes, reports and project proposals and meeting with people who have made appointments. Both of us are busy consolidating policy documents. The UCZ are constructing a new office block at Woodlands about 3 kilometres away so at the moment the Departments who were

stationed there have moved temporarily to Synod, so all Synod HQ Departments have Woodlands lodgers and naturally Health is squatting in Education.

Lunch hour is between 1300 and 1400h we walk back the 75m to our home. Mubita only attends school for a half-day, so he comes home for lunch. We have a sandwich and fruit. We are often out of the office dealing with human resource issues at the Ministry of Education or Health, pricing teaching, learning and medical materials. Other organisations we are involved with are the Education Secretaries Forum where we are reviewing as stakeholders the Statutory Instrument that set up the Mission Schools, as grant-aided institution and the 2011 Education Act. Ida represents the UCZ on the Board of CHAZ, the Churches Health Association of Zambia that looks after Mission Hospitals.

Synod closes down at 1700h and we head home. Ellie is home too by then. The children watch an hour of TV until supper at 1880h. This is our main meal of the day usually meat, chicken, fish, veg and salad. Though the children like chicken and rice on Monday home-made pizza on Friday and sausage and chips on Saturday!

The 1900h national news on ZNBC is a national institution which most people watch, though the ZNBC is, like the BBC a state/public broadcaster, with its own idiosyncratic spin on the news and national events but people are aware of this.

Night falls quickly here and it is dark by then. Bedtime - prayers and brushing teeth for the children is next. We are usually not long after them.

It is now November and we are anxiously awaiting the rains. The temperatures are up in the high 30s most days. The jacaranda and flamboyant are in bloom as a sign of hope. Thankfully higher rainfall than normal is forecast for Lusaka.