

This is our latest posting
Regards
Keith

JESUS IS BIG

This is embroidered onto the pulpit drop at Luanja Church. (Silozi uses the same word “tuna” for big, good or important. You can usually work out the meaning from the context.) Gertrude Kambole, the Consistory Secretary, Mr Museisei an Elder, Ida Mubita and I set out on Sunday. Percy Kaleba, the Youth Pastor stayed to introduce the newly-arrived Minister to Jerusalem Congregation at the Mission. We 5, went to Luanja on a Consistory visit to encourage the local congregation and offer some outside in-put. We have been visiting all the rural congregations in turn in the absence of a permanent Minister.

We were warmly received by the congregation, though they had been struck a bitter blow earlier in the week. A young father of 5 children, and a Church member, who was still under 30 had collapsed and died on the roadside while herding his cattle. It is assumed that it was a heart-attack but there are no facilities for a post mortem to be done. Luanja is about 40 km into the bush from Mwandi. They had buried him on the Friday but were still all reeling from the shock, but it is amazing how the Holy Spirit works and the sermon Keith had prepared on prayer and withdrawing to spend time with God spoke into the situation.

After the Service we were able to visit the home of the young man’s parents and spend time with the family, neighbours and friends who had gathered at the house to offer their support and comfort. We were touched by the quiet, loving and dignified atmosphere in the house, there was sorrow but also joy, not generated by our human effort but as a direct result of the grace of God in the lives of his people.

On Thursday afternoon our new Minister and family arrived in a truck with all their belongings. He is the Rev Wezi Mwanda, and newly graduated from Mindolo Theological College, so Mwandi is his first charge. He has come with his wife, Mary, and young son, Kondwani. He has had a busy time getting to know everybody and visiting all the different ministries of the Church here. This weekend we have a Consistory Meeting where the Interim Moderator, Rev Lubasi, will hand over. All the various Consistory Departments will give their annual report. The meeting will close on Sunday with Morning Worship.

We are at present working to try and reduce the Hospital’s electricity bill. ZESCO the national energy company has increased electricity prices for consumers by substantial amounts over the past two years. There was a 40% rise in August this followed an earlier 35% hike in the same year and they will be permitted to raise them again. We are trying to get all areas of the Mission metered separately. The school has already been done and this week the first classroom block of the High School will be electrified.

We know that carbon emissions and global warming are linked and there are worries here that the rising cost of electricity will force many more people to start using the cheapest source of energy – charcoal. This already is a curse and is being produced on too large a scale and is

leading in many areas to serious deforestation. It is totally unsustainable as there is no re-forestation to replace the trees cut down. You can clearly observe the effects on our road from Livingstone to the Western Province border at Kasaya, where recently a number of settlements have been established. The forest alongside the road is being cleared at an alarming rate and the resulting sacks of charcoal are piled high at the roadside for sale. Fortunately, our Chief is enlightened and has banned charcoal production in his District.

We are now in the middle of our rainy season and there appears to be a more extreme rainfall pattern emerging according to local people. For 10 years from the early 90s our area suffered from regular droughts. For the past 5 years we have had more than average rainfall for the area. The Zambezi too has reached record levels over the past few years suggesting that there has been more run-off rather than the rain sinking through the ground cover into the groundwater. Deforestation would certainly have contributed to this.

Saying that, we need to remember that alternative forms of energy need to be offered and made available to both the rural and urban people. The biggest market for charcoal is in the high density townships in the towns and cities where there is still no widespread electrification. Over 60% of the population of 13 million lives on less than a dollar a day. Formal employment stands at around 25% of the population, so even were electricity available many simply could not afford it anyway.

Please continue to keep Western Province in your prayers. The 92 year old former Prime Minister of Barotseland and alleged treason suspect, Mr Maxwell Mututwa, has been discharged from custody. There remain another 22 in remand in Lusaka.

106 detainees who will now, it is said, be charged with breach of the peace and riotous behaviour have been moved from Mongu to Mumbwa Prison 400km away. There are concerns about their continued detention without trial and their being detained so far away from home and their families.

There has been disquiet expressed too about the police use of live ammunition to disperse the crowds resulting in 2 deaths and a number of gunshot wounds. The local independent Radio Station is still closed though the Roman Catholic Oblate Liseli station has been permitted to continue.