

Oliver family Spring newsletter from Zambia April 2022

Thinking back to the end of 2021, we had a wonderful first Christmas in our new home with a few family and friends at the old synod compound. Santa did not make it as Zambia was at the time on the COVID red list and we heard he was not vaccinated.

We spent new year as a family. The twins suggested we go and bounce up and down on the trampoline during the count down to new year which was so much fun! Chipo and Luyando's school holidays had been extended due to the increase in Covid 19 cases. All schools in Zambia opened on the 24th of January instead of the 9th of January.

I spent most of my time last year travelling round visiting the health facilities, celebrating their achievements and also discovering their many challenges. I completed these visits during February this year. The most common reported diseases are malaria which is a major public health challenge in many regions in Zambia. Other diseases include Covid 19, Tuberculosis, HIV and diarrhoea. Doctors and nurses continue working hard in these rural clinics and hospitals around the country.

After Christmas the Ministry of Health announced the availability of the booster jab which has been a welcome move for the Zambian people. I had my booster in February across the road from our home at the University Teaching Hospital.

As 2021 drew to a close, the weather got hotter and hotter! It has been wonderful to hear the rain falling which it has been incessantly. The sound on the roofing sheets is something special in this part of God's vineyard. The rain brings the temperature down and a new freshness not least as the browns of dead vegetation turn green. Even when the rain is falling, it is still warm enough to dress in what UK would call 'summer clothes'

The month of March began on a good note! The COVID 19 infections in Zambia are reducing. Praise God! We are having fewer complicated hospital admissions. Zambian people still have to wear masks in all public places and are asked to follow Covid rules.

Zambia sadly lost its fourth republican president, Rupiah Banda who was put to rest on Friday the 18th of March 2022. This day has been declared a national holiday.

Luyando and Chipo continue to enjoy being at Chengelo boarding School. They came home for their half term break in February. They demanded to eat only pasta during their break as they eat lots of potatoes, rice and nshima at school. They came back with a few more new words in Cibemba (which is one of Zambia's local language). Shalenipo meaning 'stay well', Shani means 'hi', awe mwandi a random expression equivalent to 'oh my gosh!' Luyando was voted to be a representative of the school council in their year group while Chipo was selected to play football in a neighbouring school during the weekend of 26th March 2022.

Having marked six months in the post on March 10th, I have continued to settle into my new role. The UCZ health facilities are doing a tremendous job in caring and nursing for the large communities in their areas. There are lots of challenges, including lack of equipment and running out of essential drugs now and again, but as always the Lord sees us through these situations.



Above is a map showing the location of the UCZ **seven Clinics and two Hospitals**. We live in the capital (Lusaka) The girls are schooling in Mkushi area (Blue arrow)

A major priority this year is to try and work out ways in which we can make our Health facilities self-sustaining. We are well underway in the process of creating Health Committees in all of the nine provinces of Zambia. The idea is that these health committees will consist of people with different skills e.g carpentry, electricians, plumbers etc who will be able to give their time to visit the clinics once a month and help with the basic maintenance of our Rural health facilities. Ways of income generation will also be discussed in the first meeting as this will give the Health facilities a steady monthly income to help meet their needs. The UCZ also commenced giving monthly grants from March 2022 to all of our 9 health facilities to assist in bridging the gap with the grants they receive from the Zambian government. A huge part of the grants received by the facilities are spent on drugs and electricity bills. A move to solar will be welcome.

Recently we had a Health promotion in Churches work shop which was attended by some of the members of the newly formed health committee members. Their role is to undertake regular visits to the health facilities in order to give a christian presence and to assist in little ways where they can e.g fixing door handles or assisting in the general maintenance of the health facilities and reporting urgent needs to the consistory or to the presbytery. We are very excited that health promotion is being introduced in churches. This enables the church to work in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and has been very effective as the Church has been used as a COVID 19 vaccination hub. The UCZ is also working with Discover Health who have installed pre-fab clinics in four of the churches in Lusaka and 4 hubs in the Copperbelt churches. Services provided on this UCZ church site include HIV testing and counselling, ART under five clinics, COVID 19 sensitisation etc.

Malcolm flew out at the end of January, after we took the Twins back to school. He continues as Superintendent of the Sutton Park Circuit in Birmingham. He recently asked permission to 'sit down'.. a Methodist term for a retiring Presbyterian... and will do so in July this year and then join us at the beginning of August as an accompanying volunteer.

God is good as I am reminded daily when drawing on the treasure of scripture and using the Methodist Prayer Handbook. I often think of a verse that my father was fond of. It comes from Romans 8 verse 28: *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*



Prayer points.

- Pray for Zambian president Hakainde Hichilema so he may have the wisdom to carry Zambia forward in restoring the economy of Zambia.
- Pray for the UCZ and other churches as they all work together in the extension of God's Kingdom
- Pray that the Rural Health facilities may be able to have their needs met so they can give quality care to all the patients that go through

their doors.

- Pray for Jagaimo Rural clinic which is in need of an incinerator so they can be able to destroy medical waste safely and at high temperatures. (They are using an open pit to burn waste which is a health hazard to the community).
- Pray for Chipembi Rural Health clinic is in need of a Mother's shelter (A place where pregnant mothers can come and wait before they are ready to give birth. Presently, they are occupying the beds in the female ward which are needed for other patients with different illnesses). The ambulance is also now broken down.
- Pray for Mbereshi Hospital as it's in need of a new Laundry room as the old one has a huge crack and has been deemed unsafe to use . Four new outpatient toilets are also needed.
- Pray for Mwandu in their dream to expand and move to level two, also in need of a new ambulance.
- Pray for Njase Rural Clinic as it needs some kind of transport to use to refer patients in emergencies.
- Pray for Masuku Rural Clinic in need of a motorbike to use to transport samples to the nearby lab. The Clinic also requires an incinerator.



- Pray for the staff at Lubwa Mission Clinic as they struggle with having to use pit latrines as staff accommodation is in need of sanitation renovation.
- Pray for Arthur Wina Memorial as they are in need of staff accommodation
- Pray for Kafue Clinic also in need of an ambulance to enable them to deal with referrals effectively.

