

PARTNERPLAN

Keith & Ida Waddell - Zambia October 2021

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Dear Family and Friends

The Lord says, "I will make you wise. I will show you where to go. I will guide you and watch over you." (Psalm32:8) ICB

This is a time of transition for both of us. We are about to hand over our offices as Education and Health Secretaries to our successors and return to Mwandi to take up our positions as Mission Partners Special Needs and Health Support. The Methodist Church has sent Mrs. Gina Siatwinda-Oliver to take over as Health Secretary from Ida. She and her husband and girls arrived in Zambia at the beginning of the month and moved into our house at the former Synod HQ. We cleared the house at the end of August and moved our possessions back to Mwandi.



Ida and I are up in Lusaka again this week. We travelled up from Mwandi for a CHAZ Board Meeting, the Senior Management Meeting, the Education Secretaries Forum and local Clinic Board Meetings at Chipembi and Kafue. The Forum will meet with the Permanent Secretary, then the new Minister of Education. Ida has used the time to handover to Gina. I was asked at the Management meeting to continue in post until we leave on furlough on 2 November and appoint someone to act in my absence as I normally do, until they find a successor for the Education Secretary's position.



We have just one more trip planned before furlough. In mid-October Ida will come to Lusaka for the CHAZ Conference and Board Elections. This has been postponed for almost two years. I will continue on to the Copperbelt for an Immersion Board Meeting at St Andrew's Secondary School which has recently become a grant-aided educational institution.

At Mwandi we are making progress with the Doctors' flats and we have found that there is a small regular local market for blocks over and above the Mission Projects.

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A solar system to provide lights and some sockets was installed in a classroom at Mwandi Primary, funded by Houston and Kilellan Kirk, a similar one funded by a Fife church will go to Mbereshi Primary once the new 1x3 classroom block is wired.



Other generous gifts to our schools were two projectors and white-board screens to Mwandi Primary and Secondary, a shipment of PPE to all our schools for staff and pupils' protection, prior to their opening in early August.



We continue to gratefully receive parcels of knitted articles and baby clothes for our Maternity Units. They come from busy hands in the East Neuk, Houston and Kincardine and are a blessing to many new-arrivals whose mothers find it a struggle to provide new clothes for them.

Another wonderful gift is a themal coagulator for the Cancer Treatment Unit at Mbereshi from Callender Kirk. American Churches are also funding a piped oxygen system for Mwandi and work has started on the housing for the sterilisers supported by Churches in St Andrews. More oxygen cylinders have been ordered and the UCZ is on the waiting list for when they become available. There is a world shortage and they are being bought up by Governments and big companies as soon as they are produced.

We too have tiled the kitchen and scullery at our house in Mwandi and installed a small solar system for lights, fridge-freezers and a few sockets for some other low voltage household implements.

The third wave of Covid-19 here has receded, and we are enjoying a window with very few cases (45) today, zero deaths and 418 active cases. Worryingly, however, there has been slow progress and uptake of vaccination, with only 3% of the targeted 10 million reached and the fourth wave is predicted to be with us in November.

The UCZ issued its 5th Pastoral Letter on 6 September which further relaxed some of the restrictions it had earlier imposed, while continuing to monitor the situation carefully. Holy Communion is now permitted but under strict adherence to the Public Health guidelines. Section Bible Studies may meet in smaller groups outside and distanced. Any other small meetings are to be held outside too or in a well-ventilated building, masked and distanced too.

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We are looking forward to being in Scotland for the COP26 Conference and we have been working here on a presentation for a UCZ partner regarding a pilot Solar Farm to be built at Mwandi. A variety of stakeholders in the community have been interviewed regarding their views towards solar power. They have been very supportive and positive towards it. If financial support can be found then this will help ensure access for the hospital schools and village to a more affordable sustainable and cleaner energy source for all in line with Sustainable Development Goal No 7 on Energy.

In the political field the major development was the defeat of the Patriotic Front Government and incumbent President Edgar Lungu by the United Party for National Development Presidential Candidate Hakainde Hichilema by 2.8m to 1.8m votes. The high cost of living, unemployment, austerity, national debt and corruption were major issues. The comparative youth of the electorate was also a factor in that young people voted overwhelmingly for change. Zambia showed itself as a true peace-loving and democratic society and there was a smooth passing of the instruments of power from the 6th to the 7th Republican President and the third occasion where the opposition assumed power over the ruling party.

The new Government has a difficult job ahead to address these issues. Inflation and Covid-19 has increased the number of people living in absolute poverty. Only 12% of the working population are in formal employment the other 88% is absorbed by the informal sector who mostly live a hand to mouth daily existence. The minimum wage has remained at K1100 per month while the basic needs basket for a family of 5 has risen to K8442. Since the election the Kwacha has strengthened going from K22 to K16 to the US Dollar and Sterling from K32 to 22.

In a number of peripheral rural areas food security remains a problem, mainly in the South and West. This has been affected by flooding in the North and drought in south and West, locusts, Covid-19 and high in-put prices have all contributed to 5.1m of the population under stress and 1.5m in crisis. That gives you a taste of the socio-economic environment faced by the new administration.

During this time many Zambians have shown themselves to be people of faith and goodwill with compassionate hearts, sharing a common hope for peace and reconciliation and committed to nonviolence, knowing that violence is always a defeat for humanity. For that we are truly grateful.

With our love

Keith, Ida, Mubita and Ellie