

DRU'S VIEWS

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“The changes being demanded of us are almost beyond comprehension. For vast numbers of peoples living in the West—the world of the “haves”—it will mean a total reorientation of lifestyles. It will mean learning how to resist the urge to buy and the urge to eat, where submitting to those urges is our custom. It will mean discovering the simplicity which comes from an intentional life lived from inside out rather than from outside in.” James C. Fenhagen, *Mutual Ministry*, Copyright 1977, Seabury Press, Inc.

Although written in 1977, the above observation could be no more relevant that it is today. As I listened to media reports over the past few months, I wondered if we Americans really understand what it means to “do without.” Amidst reports of factory and business closings, mass layoffs and fears of loss of retirement income, I observed shopping mall parking lots with hundreds of cars, popular restaurants filled with families dining out, and gas-guzzling recreational vehicles on the rivers and roads. I don’t believe we Westerners truly understand the meaning of being hungry or unable to provide the basic needs of our families. Here in Zambia, I confront the face of real poverty every day.

Last week, I visited a women’s program in one of the nearby villages. We are now well into rainy season, with rains coming on a daily basis, sometimes with high winds and unbelievable deluges of water. One of the women asked for help. She is a widow, with no means of steady income, caring for three orphaned grandchildren. Her mud-brick house has no roof. The previous night they were soaked by the downpour as they slept. It won’t take too many more storms until the house itself collapses due to lack of protection. The next day, my friend and I went to town and bought plastic sheeting at the mere cost of \$10. It is only a temporary solution, but better than nothing. That night, before we could get it to her, it started to rain. It rained throughout the night, and I, in my comfortable dry bed, had a hard time sleeping—wondering where she was with the children and praying that a neighbor was kind enough to take her in.

The price of basic food staples here has doubled in the past few months. In spite of lower per-barrel prices of fuel, the at-the-pump costs have not dropped—I am paying a bit less than two months ago, only because the local currency has weakened against the dollar. Global economics affect even the poor living in remote areas, and they have no way of understanding the reasons for it. They just suffer.

Life at Kafakumba

I am staying in a borrowed apartment at the UMC Pastor’s Training Center, about 45 km from Kitwe. I am waiting for completion of my little bungalow, probably not until January before it is finished. (See picture below) Advantages of being here include meeting lots of interesting people from around the world, no load shedding (although power outages due to storms are frequent), and opportunities to be involved in some exciting ministries. When I arrived, I was told the water was pure, so I could drink it as it comes from the tap. One day the tank was leaking. John Enright, my host, put on swimming trunks and dove into tank. He swam through the water and temporarily plugged the leak with some plastic grocery bags. Later that evening, I was again told it was fine to drink the water!!!! (I’m boiling it first.)

I travel to Kitwe and stay in my “old” house two or three days each week in order to do my work at Lifesong School. And of course, I must be there to see the children! They come running when I arrive full of hugs and fun. They give me the motivation and energy to do the work that needs to be done.

Since coming to Kafakumba, I’ve been occupying myself by visiting some of the existing projects. One is the women’s program at the UMC in Fiseng. About 20 women come on Monday afternoons for two hours for devotions and lessons in embroidery. On Thursdays they are learning to read and write. I’ve been very impressed by their commitment to improving themselves and their eagerness to learn. I am also visiting God’s Kids, a weekly program for children in different villages in the area. They sing praise to God, hear a bible story and pray. Last Friday, a little 4-year-old girl came in from playing outside and firmly planted her tiny hand on the leg of my clean, light-blue jeans, leaving a perfect handprint. I thought, “I’ve been marked by the hand of God.”

Excitement in Kitwe

We had some excitement in Kitwe last week, and I was thankful I hadn't gone to town. There is still some unrest over the presidential election, and people are saying it was rigged. A Catholic priest runs a local Christian radio station and has a call-in program. He was very outspoken about the election as were his callers, and claimed to have proof that the election was illegal. When the police arrested him while he was on the air, bus and taxi drivers and some of the street people went crazy and started rioting. Shops closed as the police used tear gas to stop the looting, etc. The next day things are calm. This was an isolated incident, only in the Kitwe area among a small percentage of the population. Unfortunately, it made the BBC news, so people have gotten the wrong idea about this normally peaceful country.

Prayer Requests

- For the people of Zambia who are facing great hardships with soaring inflation and predicted flooding this rainy season, threatening starvation and disease,
- For the leaders of this great country, that they will continue the late President Mwanawansa's commitment to development and an end to corruption.
- For Lifesong School as we end our first year and prepare for 2009; we need God's wisdom and direction as we determine which new children will be accepted and as we hire additional staff.
- For our children, that they might remain healthy and be given all the opportunities they so richly deserve to develop and grow mentally, physically and spiritually. That they might become true followers of Christ.
- For my former street kids, that they will have good exam results and be provided a chance to continue their education and the pursuit of their dreams; that they will grow in wisdom and maturity into young men who are a blessing to their country.
- For myself, that I might grow in knowledge of the Lord, committing my life utterly to His service.
- Prayers of thanksgiving for friends who made my time at home last month such a blessing, and for reunion with my precious daughter, whose life is back on track.

Recommended Reading

Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust, Immaculée Ilibagiza, I'd expected this book to be disturbing and depressing. However, I found it to be a magnificent, heartfelt story of love, faith in God and forgiveness. A great read!

I pray you all had a wonderful day of Thanksgiving with family and friends. I was surprised by a last-minute invitation and shared the holiday with Delbert and Sandy Groves and Paul Webster (UMC GBGM missionaries), a couple from the UK, a Franciscan friar, and a volunteer UMC pastor from the U.S. As we shared the things we were thankful for, I was reminded that the best gift of all is that of Jesus who came to show us what God is like, and died so that we might spend eternity with Him.

God bless you,

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