

DRU'S VIEWS

Thirty-fourth Edition – February 2011

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me. I will be found by you,” says the Lord. “I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and bring you home again to your own land.” Jeremiah 29:11 – 14

Lifesong School

The first weeks of 2011 have been very challenging for Lifesong School in Zambia. Our classroom construction project is far behind schedule (why am I not surprised?), so the new 5th grade class is meeting in temporary, cramped quarters. The typhoid outbreak devastated us in January, but by the power of prayer of thousands of the faithful, it has been kept under control. However, we are in the height of malaria season; nurse Cristobel treated 130 cases of malaria in January among our 212 students.

Unexpected increases in expenses have brought us to our knees in prayer for God’s guidance and provision. The government announced the third week in January that minimum wages have been nearly doubled retroactive to January 1st. This affects 12 of our staff. We also learned that government-required housing allowances are 30 percent of base salary rather than the 25 percent we were paying; staff living over 2 km from school are to receive an additional 20 percent as transportation allowance. And we were told by the labor department that our teachers’ salaries are too low. On top of all of that, the price of gasoline went up this week from \$7.20 to \$8.10 per gallon. Where all of this will end, I do not know. I am sure it will have a negative impact on all of the ministries and businesses in this country. I know of people who have already lost their jobs and friends who are talking of closing their business. Prices of food and other goods will quickly increase, leaving people unable to provide even the basic needs for their families.

In spite of the trials we face, there are still daily events that put a smile on my face. I thought I had the register for the new school year completed; then I learned that some of the children had other ideas. Little Charles moved himself back to the babyclass (the kindergarten kids are much bigger than he is), and Martha went back to kindergarten so she could be with her best friend! One day my little buddy, Eddie, wasn’t himself, so I took him to the sick bay. When Cristobel asked him what was wrong, he replied, “I’m afraid of the sun!” Actually, he did have a fever, so he was treated and the next day was fine! Our sick bay was overcrowded this month, sometimes with 3 or 4 children in each bed and some lined up on benches in the hallway. I thought, “This is never going to end!” So when I walked past the 5th grade classroom, I wasn’t surprised to find one of the students, Eric, lying on the floor surrounded by very serious looking classmates. Then I saw nurse Cristobel standing over him. I ran in to see what had happened and was told, “We’re having a First Aid class!” Whew! I participated as a possible heart attack victim, but when I told Cristobel I needed a pillow, she told the class that her patient wasn’t very “serious.”

Little Webby has become very attached to me. Whenever I arrive at school he comes running to my car with his arms out ready for a hug. He then follows me wherever I go, usually into the computer room. One day, he kept trying to get closer and closer to me; eventually he squeezed in the chair with me. He then looked up at me with those big brown eyes, put his hands on either side of my face and leaned in to give me a great big, wet kiss right on the mouth!

Our vegetable garden continues to thrive, and the maize is several feet over my head. It was only a few weeks ago that I found the children putting fertilizer on each plant. One had a stick to poke a hole in the soil, while his partner followed with a bowl of fertilizer and a spoon to dip it in the hole. For someone who grew up in Illinois and Iowa and is used to giant tractors and equipment, this simple means of farming made me think of how blessed we are in the U.S. Or maybe not? The children were having a fun time and each one knew he was playing a part in producing a bumper crop!



Life at Kafakumba

Our new women’s bible study started last month. It has been the answer to my prayers. We meet each Tuesday afternoon—women from the U.S., New Zealand, Zambia and the Congo—to study God’s word and share our ideas and concerns. We’ve learned so much from each other and are becoming fast friends. We also are growing closer through our regular “Clean Up Kafakumba” days and our monthly family potlucks. This month we were told to make something “exotic.” I’m thinking about meatloaf. It will seem exotic to the Africans!

I have several varieties of indigenous Zambian fruit trees in my backyard. Unfortunately, none of them bear fruit that I care to eat—too sour! But the Zambians love them. So when I got tired of hearing the hard fruits falling on my tin roof all day and night, I beckoned to the children to come and help. I gave them each a plastic bag, and Peter climbed the tree to shake the limbs. They each went home with a big bag of fruit and a smile on his face, and my days and nights are again peaceful.

“My Children”

Since Kafuti’s college is only a 15-minute drive from Kafakumba, he has been coming to spend the weekend with me on a regular basis. He arrives with a full bag of laundry and a big appetite. One day he said to my neighbors, “My mom says she’s spoiling me, but she’s not; she’s teaching me how I should live.” Hopefully I’m helping him set goals that will inspire him to always do his best so that he can take good care of his own family someday. Sadly, he called the other night to tell me that six of his classmates were



killed in an automobile accident. Such a tragic loss of wonderful young people with promise; it is a common occurrence here, as I see terrible accidents every day on my drive to Kitwe.

Joseph is taking night classes to re-write his grade 12 exams, which we thought he had failed two years ago. Last week he went to get his official results, and we discovered he’d passed all of his classes—not with high marks but he did pass. So we are encouraged that he will do well and improve his marks this time so that he can get into college someday. In the meantime, he is working part-time at Lifesong School. He helps with art classes, sports and even sits in the classroom when a teacher is absent. He loves the work and the children, and the staff appreciates his help. Last Sunday he was the guest preacher at one of the United Methodist churches in the area. He was nervous and said he didn’t know what to talk about. I told him to just share his own story of how Christ rescued him and transformed his life. He will be an inspiration to many. He’s come a long way from that former child soldier we found in the streets of Kitwe so many years ago.

Sneak Peaks

- Kafuti was trying to repair the locomotive of the little plastic train he bought as a gift for his young neighbor, Mike. After some detailed work, and my assistance in pushing down the little part he pointed to with his tongue, he reassembled the train, put it on the track, and it started to go. He said, “Now I have defeated the Chinese.” (Almost everything you buy here is “Made in China.”)
- At 6:15 one morning, I found the edible variety of termites all over the front porch. I tried to sweep them up with their discarded wings but they were still alive. So I sprayed them with insecticide. A few minutes later, I heard noises outside. The children who visit me throughout the day were on my porch grabbing the termites to eat! I shouted at them to go away—I couldn’t imagine how terrible it would be if they got sick or even died from eating my poisoned termites! It never occurred to me that I was destroying a valued source of protein.

Personal

When I returned to Zambia in August 2007 after a 3-year absence, my friends and family asked, “How long you will stay this time?” My response was that as long as I was healthy and felt like I was needed and could make a contribution, I would stay. A few months ago I started thinking perhaps it was time for me to go. As I began to feel I had become ineffective in my ministry, I prayed for God’s guidance. A volunteer arrived in August who is much more qualified than I to do the accounting and business work. Then just before Christmas I learned of a family situation that requires my assistance. Therefore, I will be returning to the United States on April 29th. Right now I have no idea where I will settle; that will depend on where I am able to find work. In this economy, I realize that might be difficult and I will have to take whatever I am able to find. If anyone hears of a position that is open, I’d love to know. My skills are primarily in the clerical area, although I’ve been told I have a gift for communication. I have a deep concern for marginalized people, especially the elderly and children. So perhaps I could work as a teacher’s aide or a personal caregiver. I am open to whatever God calls me to do. The verses from Jeremiah 29 give me hope and assurance that God is going before me to prepare the way, and that this is truly his will for me at this time.

Prayer Requests

- Pray for the management of Lifesong, that they will be able to meet the financial and emotional demands placed on them in this trying time.
- Pray for the health of our children and their families, especially that the typhoid outbreak will be contained and the malaria season will not result in any loss of life.
- Pray for my kids in school, that they will be serious in their studies and will be able to stay healthy and focused.
- Personal prayers for me as I struggle with the details of leaving my home and work and the emotional strain of the pending separation. Also that I will be able to organize for the ongoing support of my former street children who are totally dependent on me for their needs.

“I know God will not give me anything I can’t handle. I just wish that he didn’t trust me so much.” – Mother Teresa

In His service,

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