December 2014

Dear Family and Friends

Micah 5:5 And he will be their peace.

Since the beginning of Advent it was a busy time for as we prepared to leave Mwandi for our two-yearly furlough. Unfortunately the parents of our foster boys were not released as part of the Indpendence Jubilee as we hoped, as only Zambian citizens were pardoned. So arrangements had to be made for our boys to be cared for in our absence; otherwise they would return to join their mother in prison. We are thankful that the UCZ was able to release Deaconess Mary Nakamba to look after them in our absence and to others who have offered their support and help.

Prior to leaving the main event this quarter has been the Independence Jubilee Celebrations. Ida and I attended the Church Service on Independence Eve, then came home to let Florence away who was baby-sitting. As we do at Hogmanay just before the “bells”, we woke up the excited children and packed them into the car still in their pyjamas and drove them round to the District Commissioner’s Office Grounds across the mulapo (seasonal inlet) from our house. There we joined in a Caterpillar dance and they were given Coke and Fanta to sip as we awaited the countdown. At 1155h we gathered round the flagpole and sang the national anthem as the flag was slowly raised and broken at midnight to cheers and applause. Around half a dozen large rocket type fireworks were released breaking over the night sky in a display of silver, gold, red and green echoing and reflecting our national colours. This brought the day to a fitting conclusion.

On Independence Day after breakfast and dressed for the occasion:

Mubita in Chipolopolo top, Ellie in Girls Brigade Uniform and Ornelle, Omeri, Omedy and Omari all wearing clothes in Zambian colours, we dropped them for the March through the village to the school. They joined their friends. Ida and I were complimented too for our appropriate sartorial elegance, she in a musisi in the Ananmoyo colours and I in the kilt topped by a Golden Jubilee sitenge madiba shirt. The rest of the morning we spent seated under the shade of the trees at the Primary School watching the programme unfold. The continuity was well taken care of by two local teachers, a gender balanced duo at the microphone. After lunch the traditional Mwandi Old Firm Soccer Derby took place with the Chalk Breakers playing the Injectors. On this occasion the School Teachers beat the Hospital Workers 3-1. The result was contested as it was scurrilously alleged that some of the more elderly teachers had players from the Senior Secondary School Team play in their stead!

At school, Keith had the usual end of term papers to set and mark, followed by reports to write. The well at Sikuzu has been capped until the solar panels and control box are purchased on our return from furlough. Arrangements for the payment of school fees, salaries and National Insurance had to be arranged during our absence which meant the compiling of a lengthy handover/to do list to Lawrence and Innocent who agreed to administer for us during this time. Just before we left we heard that our application to the Beit Trust for a grant for a fourth classroom block to accommodate Grade 8 & 9 was approved, so construction of that will begin in the new year.

Ida was kept busy too with the hospital. There were two recent important meetings one in Livingstone with community stakeholders with the Catholic Medical Mission Board 15 Year Programme and the other End of Year Partners Forum with CHAZ and Aids Relief.

Human Resource and Staff establishment matters have kept her occupied as well, trying to ensure that staffing levels remain at appropriate levels as many of the hospital staff are being seconded by the new District with no replacements. She was also able to meet with the Head of Social Welfare at the Ministry who promised that the boys will not be taken out of our custody until we return. It was a fear for us that the family might be returned to the DRC on the parents’ release and not granted refugee status.

After clearing our work at the hospital and school we then turned our attention to filling the larder with dry goods for the boys in our absence. Deaconess Mary arrived on the Sunday just before we left so we had a two day transition period which was useful. On Monday Ornelle celebrated his 9th birthday. After many farewells, we set off in the car to Lusaka on Wednesday Mubita was very excited visiting Scotland again. We dropped off Lisa, the pre-Med from Scotland who had been with us for the past three months at the airport before heading on to Lusaka. At Mazabuka the universal joint for the four wheel drive sheered, so we were delayed for a number of hours until the shaft was removed and we could make our way onward again. We were fortunate this happened less than a kilometer outside town. We were able to contact Gertrude’s daughter, Sheila, who works in Mazabuka, who arranged for a mechanic to come out and do the job there and then at the roadside.

Another good example of the world church in action.

We dropped off Bridget Kasoka at her sister’s house in one of the new suburbs springing up around Lusaka. There has been an amazing transformation in Lusaka with growth and development at an incredible pace. In the centre of the town new glass and concrete multi-storied building and housing areas in the suburbs The area we visited was an extension to Kamwala on the back road to Lilayi. The main roads are now well-tarred with traffic lights at busy junctions on what 5 years ago had been bush on the outskirts of the town. The population of Greater Lusaka is now reckoned at over 2 million; more than doubling in 20 years

We met up with Ruairidh, Fiona, Lucy and Cora at the Gossner Mission where we spent Thursday and Friday together before they set off for Mwandi for Christmas on Saturday. Most of Thursday we spent doing business and meeting people at Synod, though we did have time for all of us to get our hair done. We also had to get Mubita’s Emergency Passport arranged, as his new one had failed to arrive from Durham in time. We have since heard it arrived on Monday and can be collected on our return to Zambia. Friday was less frenetic and we all went to the cinema to see “Penguins”.

We had a fairly uneventful flight from Lusaka to Glasgow via Dubai and stayed with Kirsten in Glasgow before moving into our house in Edinburgh on Wednesday. It is good taking time to catch up with family. We have not been home for Christmas for 10 years. For the next

3 months we will be at 93 Comely Bank Avenue Edinburgh EH4 1EW (0131 332 2242)

Doing some shopping in Glasgow the other day, we see that this season is one of the busiest in the year for businesses and people, for family and friends. While it is a time of great preparations to celebrate a special time, the real occasion is the Incarnation - Immanuel in our own frail humanity in the joy of Christmas. The adoration of the new-born baby at the centre of the Christmas season.

We wish you all a joy and peace- filled time with your family and friends over Christmas and our best wishes for the coming New Year.

With love

Keith Ida Mubita & Catriona