29 June 2015

Dear Family and Friends

**But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining to what lies ahead, Phil 3:13**

Much has happened since our return to Mwandi at Easter and our last partnerplan letter. On our return Keith was appointed Acting Education Secretary for the UCZ and has since been dividing his time between Mwandi and Synod work As regards the Education Secretaries duties, Keith is working through the hand-over notes left by his predecessor and keeping up with admin issues through Rodgers the Admin Sec and Clara the Ed Dept Secretary by phone and e-mail, with monthly visits to Lusaka. Amongst other things, the work covers Human Resource management as well as interviewing for promoted posts issues, and transfers. From schools’ strategic plans some infrastructure work has been set in motion with Gossner Mission and at Mwandi. A draft bursary policy for the children of UCZ Clergy has also been submitted together with the rationale and proposed Terms of Reference for new UCZ Education Service. At Mwandi the major preoccupation since returning was working with Tender Committee to commence our 4th Classroom block. The foundations are set and the sub-structure and slab is now nearly complete. Another time-consuming challenge has involved numerous trips to Livingstone with an increasing sheaf of correspondence regarding the unfreezing of a school bank account for building which was closed without notice by the bank while we were on furlough!

Keith has also been involved in helping with the practicalities of establishing a special needs department at Mwandi, including having a door taken out to allow the removal of woodwork benches from the class that is to be the new Special Needs class before it was painted. Home visits have been undertaken to visit 2 girls suffering from cerebral palsy. Her measurements have been taken and pictures shown to make a suitable chair locally so she can attend school. On other occasion it has meant working with, visiting and supporting management of our educational institution to help with various matters requiring Synod’s in-put. We have also been involved in working to get Food Aid for affected families in the area who suffered a catastrophic loss of crops with the drought in the last season and the establishment of a School Feeding Programme through World Renew. This will be run and organised by the Church.

We met with the General Secretary on Wednesday to discuss our future roles with the UCZ. As we will be moving to Lusaka to undertake our duties at Synod in the new year we will now have to tie off our various projects in Mwandi that need to be finished. Getting everything finished in the time available will be a challenge. Keith will work on the well at Sikuzu, the Church at Mugumwi and the painting of Kandiana before we leave. Prior to going home the well at Sikuzu proved problematic. Another site had to be chosen following our inability to dig through the layer of clay we met. A lack of transport hindered the building of the stand. All the cement and parts had to be transported in. The tank, polypipe and pump are still awaiting the Water Committee to pick them up by scotch-cart from the Mission. The control box and solar panels have yet to be bought. They are not needed till the tank and pipes are all in place. This all needs to be done before packing, moving, unpacking and setting up a new home. We have enjoyed our ten years in Mwandi and were comfortably settled there but we are now reconciled to and happy about the move after going through initially a Jonah period, followed by a Gideon stage. We wanted to try and stay in Mwandi and avoid moving to the city, but our appointment as Education and Health Secretaries, Keith’s Convenorship of the World Partnership Committtee and Ida’s election onto the CHAZ Board have all been fleeces we could not ignore.

Since the opening of the renovated hospital, Ida has concentrated on the administration of the hospital. She has been plagued with equipment breaking down. The steriliser, the mortuary unit, the water pump on the river and the tumble dryers, some suction machines and the old Aids Relief vehicle have all broken down one after the other. More positively Dr Tembo has come which has helped to relieve Ida of most of the clinical issues, though she spent 2 afternoons repairing and servicing the suction machines and incubator. In the theatre we had the annual visit of Dr Peggy Schrieber and her surgical team who undertook 48 procedures such as goitres, hernias and hysterectomies. She is actively working on passing the office to her successor and having things in order. We have just had a team from Independent Presbyterian Church of Birmingham Alabama who have generously helped to renovate staff housing so that the income-generating hospital accommodation can return to its former use as a guest-house for visitors and students.We are awaiting and looking forward to the arrival of Muriel and Jim who are being sent by Hope Park and Martyrs Church in St Andrews to share in the life of the Mission this July.

The 4 Congolese children we have fostered for the last 15 months have been transferred with their parents as refugees to the Refugee Settlement at Mayukwayukwa and not expelled as prohibited immigrants to the DRC where their lives would again be endangered. We are grateful to the UCZ ,UNHCR, Social Welfare and Immigration Departments for their support in this matter. They are in the transit camp and will be given a plot and building materials for their house. It has taken some adjustment for them but we are glad they are now reunited as a family.

Ruairidh and Fiona, Lucy and Cora have settled in Lilongwe and the girls enjoying school and the usual extra-curricular activities. Ruairidh is Country Director for Zambia with World Renew, the Mission wing of the Reformed Church of North America. We are able to see them about twice a year. We met them recently in Lusaka where we were all on Church business and travelled back to Mwandi together. Kirsten, Stuart and Iona are in Lenzie, another child is expected in December. Stuart continues to teach at Strathclyde and Kirsten to run her own business. Gregor is studying divinity part-time at Wrexham sponsored by the Church of Wales and recently received his cassock as a licentiate. Sarah continues to head the Special Needs Department and they expect their first child in September. Catriona is awaiting the results of her finals but hopes to do a year’s internship in Africa exploring development and gender issues before doing her Masters. We will fly home for a short time to attend her graduation. Mubita is making good progress both socially and with skills to help him. Ellie, who lives with us during term time did well again this term at school but will probably accompany us to Lusaka so that she continues with her education. This month Reece and Clara, the twin children of Wheat and Terri Williams have been a godsend to us over this busy period. Wheat and Terri are old friends and supporters of the work at Mwandi from North Carolina.

As we move into this new stage of our lives with its inevitable uncertainties we ask for your prayers for us. We went in faith to Mwandi and we go in faith to Lusaka. We are reminded and encouraged by the faith of God’s people from the past who understood the sovereignty of God and that we are known and loved by him. They did not always understand but said God knows and undertakes. We know God has a purpose for us and will not leave us or forsake us but will lead us and sustain us all the journey through. Pray that we continue to walk in peace and serenity in the direction he is calling us.

With our love

Keith Ida & Mubita