

Link to Lifeline

MARCH 2008 UPDATE FROM HARARE

It is hard to put a figure to it but it is certainly true that the business of living here takes up more than 60% of our time. That is the daily routines that form the background to life in more normal circumstances and which are done in the context of other activities. Many of these normal things are a mission here. - getting fuel, getting money from the bank, buying basic foods, making a phone call, sending an e-mail, looking for ordinary things that you need to buy. Anything out of the ordinary may take up a whole day, if it proves possible.

We are not complaining about these "conditions of our warfare" [2 Timothy 2: 3-7] but wanted to try and explain why we have not been as regular in corresponding as we used to be - and that was not always as it should have been. We are now in the 9th year since the economy began to decline. So we have had time to adjust our way of thinking and our way of life and the things we do. Some things we can see coming and do something about them. Others just happen and the famous Zimbabwean saying comes into play - "we'll make a plan."

"NORMAL" LIFE IN HARARE

Some time ago it became clear that Southern Africa was going to have a power crisis. Lack of investment to fulfil promises and meet rising expectations and demands meant that dependence on neighbouring states for electricity would have to end. Now South Africa is facing huge industrial problems through load-shedding and today it was announced that even hospitals would have power cuts. So 18 months ago we bought a generator that can cope with our basic household demands. It has run for 350 hours since then and we only use it for short periods. We supplement it with our two camping gas burners and use the generator to keep the freezers, lights and computers going. We have a week with no cuts then a week with several cuts lasting half a day. We have had two periods of 10 days without power since December.

It was also clear that water was going to be in short supply and some areas of Harare had water only on alternate days. Other areas have been without water for weeks or months. So we invested in a borehole. We now have the means to supply others when they have cuts and to keep us going. Water cuts often come at the same time as power cuts because the pumping stations are affected.

Other things like supplies of food and fuel we are not able to deal with so easily. But we make a plan. We know someone who does this or someone who can get that and a network of informal trading has developed that bypasses the normal system. We were given a bread-maker and were able to get bread flour when we visited South Africa so we now have bread most of the time.

The power cuts make communication difficult when the phone system is out of action. Most people rely on cell phones here but the networks are so overloaded that it is almost impossible to make a call especially in the daytime. The landline network is continually breaking down so we just get a dialling tone back after trying to dial a number. So email is difficult and we can go for days without access unless I go to our church office and their system is working.

LIFELINE ACTIVITIES

Procedures are another source of difficulty. I went to Zambia last week to take some more literature to the Lifeline office in Lusaka. We have been doing this for 15 years and Ron Davies was doing it before that with no problems. This time we were told that we needed an import permit for the tracts and lessons even tho they were for free distribution. How do we get a permit? You can't - you have to have an agent. How do we get an agent? We found one and started negotiations - at somewhat of a disadvantage since they realised we could hardly have gone back with the literature. Nearly 3 hours later and \$US85 lighter we had our permit. Then we had to pay the Carbon Tax. The payment has to be for the whole year - even for a one day visit 150,000Kw worked out at \$US42! All of this in the midst of total confusion with hundreds of lorries trying to get through the border, 35°C temperature and the offices closing for lunch. The same sort of thing happens on 50% of our border crossings.

One of the reasons we had to go last week was that the Zambian government had decreed that foreign cheques can no longer be paid into ordinary bank accounts. A forex account is needed with a minimum deposit of 2000USD. I had left a cheque for Nixon for his support and the office running costs when I was last in Lusaka in early December 2007. The bank did not tell him that it was not acceptable until after the New Year holiday. By the time we got his registered letter in Harare 3 weeks later, he had been without money for a month. At that time in early February we were getting Christmas cards from UK and USA that had been posted at the beginning of December. The saga went on until we satisfied all the minute requirements of the banking system for making a transfer from UK to Nixon's account. So I was taking cash with me as the transfer had still not come through when we left for Lusaka.

The literature work in Zambia continues to be fruitful. We are discussing with Emmanuel Press in White River RSA a partnership with them transferring their Zambian students to our office in Lusaka - to save them the international postage both ways - and their most comprehensive basic course being introduced to all the students in Zambia. They would partner with us in support of Nixon and the office and introduce their procedure with a view to eventually taking the work back to where it started.

We have a new literature office at the house in Beira but have so far not been able to find anyone to replace the office manager, Guillerme, who died recently after a long illness. We still have a stock of paper at the Baptist Publishing House in Bulawayo which means that we can quickly restock the Beira office when we find someone with a vision for

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literature and basic admin skills to run the office. In the meantime Pastor Anacleto and Jeff Wakeman continue the training program for leaders augmented by occasional seminars when visitors come to the house.

In Zimbabwe the literature program is suspended until the economic situation is back to normal. The [leadership](#) training program continues in both Bulawayo - based at George Moyo's church and in Gweru - under to leadership of Pastor Addmore Ncube. We are now considering starting a new program in Harare. I visited Addmore this week to take some more books for the student's library, some food and some more fixtures for the improvement of the house where he stays. This was bought by Lifeline a few years ago to provide a base in Gweru. The price we paid now looks totally ridiculous and it was good investment as pressure on accommodation is very high and the rents take advantage of that and the prevailing economic climate. We are gradually improving things for Addmore and his family. They had a problem with water supply - being at the highest point of their area they only received water for a couple of hours at night when demand was lower. Last year I was able to get a 250litre tank made to fit in a space they had available and was able to get it supported and plumbed in before Christmas. We also put a 210 litre drum underneath the tank to store water for toilets and bathroom. I had a message from Addmore in January saying there had been no water in all of Gweru for 10 days but they still had enough for the next week. Addmore has also had some more cupboards installed in the kitchen and our next task is improvements to the bathroom and toilets. After all the adversity of recent years it is encouraging that the Lifespring church, led by Addmore, now has more than 80 members.

In December I was also able to get 100kgs of maize seed when there was none in the shops and so was able to supply Addmore, and several others of the pastors we work with, to enable them to grow some food for their families for the coming year. Their crops were established before the torrential rains around Christmas that washed away many people's crops.

MONEY AND INFLATION ASPECTS

One of the ways in which people live very differently here is in their handling of cash. It is not easy to explain all the consequences of 100,000% inflation or their effect on us. As an example, fuel - assuming that there was any - was selling in mid-January for \$Z3 million/litre. By the end of the month it was \$6m then in February it went from \$9m to \$12m, this month it went to \$15m and I am told it is now \$20m. So no one holds on to cash.

It is a situation made for exploitation. So it is necessary to make several enquiries before any purchase. I recently took one of our friends who stays with us to get medication for his asthma. He had been told \$Z30m for an inhaler. The shop was closed so we went around to get other prices. The first was \$87m which we thought was bad. The next was \$110m for the same thing. We then went downtown and found it for \$30m so of course we bought two. The medication Mavis bought for the treatment of my malaria recently was \$105m. I thought it would be as well to have some for myself and the pastors I work with as we are frequently travelling into areas where malaria is prevalent. The cheapest price was \$255m and others ranged up to \$375m. I think I will buy drugs in Mozambique in future.

HEALTH MATTERS

I have now made substantial progress in recovery from the malaria I got on my last visit to Tete in Mozambique in mid-January. I was completely wiped out for two weeks with no strength or motivation. Now I am back on the exercise program and swimming each day and have about 85% of my strength back. So thank you for your prayers and encouragement.

So by the Grace of God we continue to live and work here and to see people transformed and churches planted and growing. It is a great encouragement to visit as I did today one of the churches we planted out at this time last year and see the progress they have made. To see an established community of Christians with a flourishing children's ministry, many people serving, a praise and worship team developing, plans for replacing their hired tent with a thatched structure in the school where they meet. The school will use it and they will pay no tent hire or rent to the school. They now have 250+ people who attend regularly and 140 are in cell groups. They now have 14 cell groups and plan to have 28 by the end of the year so everyone in the community will have a cell group near to them. This story is repeated in several other places and I have the privilege of working with them and seeing their progress. Next week Mavis and I will be in Joburg to visit the church there which has grown to over 500 people in two years since it was planted.

LATER APRIL UPDATE.

Fuel went up from Z\$68,000,000/litre to Z\$100,000,000/litre at the beginning of April!

TelOne - the phone company - improved our service just before Easter by giving us digital lines. Unfortunately our old line was removed in anticipation of the improvements, the new line that replaced it belonged to someone else and was withdrawn, the other line was not installed and so for three weeks we have had no phone.

Please remember the Fords in prayer as the Base has had a break-in that looks like an inside job. It's most unsettling to think someone or some people were prowling around the grounds while you are asleep inside.

Greetings from Harare - and some prayer news. When Mavis tried to leave for early morning prayer today she found the electric gate open about 30cm and Kogen's bike lying just inside it. When we looked for him we found Kogen still getting ready for work and not aware of his bike being missing from its place.

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We later found that some of the fuel stored for our generator in small containers had also gone. Three 5 litre containers of diesel would fetch 2.7 billion dollars on the black market so they were worth taking. They were hidden away so someone must have had local knowledge. Also the dogs did not bark and although the bike must have been taken along the gravel path outside our window we did not hear anything either. Whoever it was got in by lifting the electric gate so that the rack was clear of the driving gear wheel and then moving it forward. It is quite heavy and there was only a limited clearance opposite the gear wheel for the gate to be lifted sideways. He must have been reading his Bible about Samson and the gates of the city. I have now concreted some bricks in the narrow gap to make it impossible to move the gate sideways.

We will also chain it shut at night or when we are away. So we are grateful to God that this weakness in our security has been exposed before we make our trip to UK later this month. We continue to value all your prayers for both of us and those who stay with us in the midst of all that is happening here now. Loxley & Mavis.