

# LIFELINE JOURNEY SEPT-OCT 2010

These updates start life as emails back to our home church and other praying supporters. They have been slightly reworked for public consumption, but not too much. We hope they give some clear idea of the what and how of Lifeline in Southern Africa.

There no photos embedded in this report (70kb only). Feel free to contact us at Lifeline in Australia ([shumba@hnlc.org.au](mailto:shumba@hnlc.org.au)).

## 5/9/10 REPORT FROM HARARE AFTER CHINHOYI VISIT

Hie, everybody! The trip across from Sydney last Monday started badly – we sat in the plane at Sydney for over an hour before they found a pusher to move the plane onto the taxiway... Yeah! The MacBank airport at its best! The good news was... that was all that went askew the whole way! The Qantas check-in lady kindly allowed extra weight for the bibles, etc. The flight was smooth; the view of Antarctica clear and spectacular; the flight clawed back 30 minutes to Joburg, so the transfer to the Harare flight went well; and all luggage was also loaded onto the Zimbabwe plane – no theft, and I walked out of Harare airport incident-free. A big thank-you to everyone who prayed for me – it was very, very smooth.

And it only took a day to recover from travel weariness. No jet lag this way – it's always worse going west to east. I am still half on Sydney time – which means waking at 5, rise by 5.30, 1 hour 6k prayer walk at 6am, and even using the opportunity to do some callisthenics before breakfast! My creaky frame is telling me already that I had become lazy in this area of daily life at home!

The Indaba is coming together slowly; yes, this is Africa and there are plenty of things not tied up firmly, but as Peter Zulu said to The power has been off constantly, so the torches Gavin supplied have been very helpful already. I am drinking the coffee Elizabeth packed, and so on it goes... Here's a shot of the Banket seminar where 65 pastors and leaders and servants attended – a good turnout in what has been a very fragmented part of the Body of Christ....

## 12/9/10 FROM MKOBA IN THE MIDLANDS

It is 7pm Saturday night and the power is off once again. The battery on this laptop we have brought for distribution is a reasonable one so we plough on for another hour working by torchlight stuck on your head! The power has been off all day then on and off three times since 6pm! It amazes us to see how Mai Betty Ncube prepares food for her family and us so well under these conditions.... And yes! We are enjoying again her wonderful sadza porridge mixed with locally produced **REAL** peanut butter, and brown sugar!

Since Gavin arrived late Friday night in Harare (safe and sound with all luggage intact), we spent one day orienting him, then two days reviewing the agenda and planning for the Lifeline Indaba coming up next week here in Mkoba. It was quite a difficult thing to do, and it was a big asset having two of us going over the drafts for the review of the 2008 Indaba, the current program, agenda, and technical planning aspects – some with Loxley and then with Addmore here in Mkoba.

There have been cold winds (typical Gweru) blowing here, and we both got covered in dust several times. Our hair was matted like straw, and because there has been no water supply here for five months(!), every drop is precious. We are using approximately **one litre each** for bathing each day. Updating this on Monday morning (Sept 13<sup>th</sup>), we had a touch of heaven last night, when while visiting a minister who has a small dairy farm the other side of Gweru, his wife asked if she could prepare a **BATH** for us!!!! You get so appreciative of things you take for granted at home! New definition of "luxury"... Gavin emerged saying it was a taste of Heaven...

The Saturday Mkoba seminar went ok; the organisation of it left something to be desired, with several telling us they were not aware it was a Lifeline seminar, but we had 49 pastors and active members representing 26 different churches. The theme for the day unfolded on money-handling in church life and ministry; its power to bless and curse. Gavin contributed several practical aspects of what we do at home in our church, and why. Quite a number of questions and comments flowed from that. We were scratching where the itch is in Zimbabwe!

**Typically African story** - Yesterday (Sunday) we separated to minister at two different churches that combine to conduct the Lifeline Ministry Training Programs here in Mkoba. They announced I was "Apostle Jeremy's uncle". Hard act to follow from his visit last year, which obviously had quite an impact! The sight of **many thousands** of people walking to church on Sunday morning in this township amazes us as Australians. **EVERY** school classroom has a church meeting in it (they are the cheapest to rent), so you are met with a cacophony of singing when you pull up! Every group praising Jesus - in total disharmony with each other!

**Good news story** - There has been recent moves to cultivate a lot of the formerly uncultivated land around Gweru. A foreign NGO has offered to fund it. Many acres have been fenced and there are many new boreholes with hand pumps so water can be drawn to irrigate the land. This should bring good crops at the end of the season.

Thanks to everyone for the continued prayers. My throat has been infected for nearly two months and it has deteriorated here with the increased public speaking, etc. Please pray for this as we have a lot of commitments to come – this week in the Indaba, and following that, another three weeks of speaking engagements. We are so cut off, we couldn't even find if the Swans survived another finals' round! Is that suffering for the gospel's sake??? We have just returned from another water-pickup and it's time for breakfast – sadza porridge, with fresh local peanut butter and brown sugar!

## 14/9/10 TUESDAY FROM VASHANDIRI AND THE INDABA

It was so good to catch up with Kefy from home last night after the contingent arrived down from Harare for the Indaba, and hear so much news from home. He travelled well all the way from Sydney, catching up with his family (and Chido's too) in Harare. Our dear friend from Sparrows' Nest, Domingos Caetano, arrived three days early in Harare with Alice, his wife. This is her very first time out of Mozambique, and she is quite excited about being here in the Indaba. In Zimbabwe, few things unfold smoothly! There is almost always a change – and you have to "make a plan" (as the old Rhodes said)!!

## 17/10/10 AFTER THE INDABA

We are sitting in our little room, at 6.30am, power off as usual, typing furiously before the battery goes down in this donated computer. We have had no access to email, so it was only the phone call from Elizabeth and Kathy a few days ago that told us of the Swans' tragedy. We just **KNOW** we were robbed again by Victorian umpires even though we have no idea yet what really happened! The Indaba finished last night with some 30 ministers present (including several Friends of Lifeline from Gweru and Bulawayo). Today I (Brian) had to go to see the Immigration Boss again because the Harare airport visa clerk only gave me 30 days. The Gweru boss angrily told us last time at the airport they are looking for a bribe to extend it (which they are supposed to do for Commonwealth citizens

fee-free). Well, we went to the office and lo and behold! The PA to the boss is now Molly, a Lifeline graduate from the first trip to Mkoba with the Burns in 2003! The clerk demanded another \$US30 and when I protested, Molly spoke to her, and it cost nothing extra (which is correct).

We will leave it for Kefas to bring a firsthand report when he gets home next week, but can I say to everyone who assisted with his airfare (and to Chido for letting him come too) that he was good value here, and injected sound input all along the 3½ days with godly confidence. Some commented on how he has matured in the last two years since the last time. We had a laying on of hands, ministry to quite a few others, and – no kidding – as Gavin led the early morning prayer meetings, one morning, the presence of God was so palpable that nobody made a sound for several minutes! **And this is Africa!** Prophetic words flowed regularly but not excessively, and we were built up in faith. The power's off, and here goes the red alert battery again! Bye!

### **21/9/10 FROM NYAMANDHLOVU**

The weekend went crazily ok in Gweru/Mkoba! Kefas ministered really well in Addmore's church by all reports, and prayed for a lot of people who responded to the word he brought. Gavin and I went to speak at a new church we hadn't been to before. The time and location were explicitly described; we went and no one was there... and none of the churches in that school had ever heard of the church... But... as happens so often here... we prayed for a woman on the roadside who was suffering from a debilitating infection inside, then drove to the Baptist church where we caught up with lots of people, including some who have financially supported Lifeline previously. And met one Christian farmer who has been allowed to reclaim his (now wrecked) farm (first one anyone has heard of having this happen to him). His brother got apprehended by a policeman in Gweru two years ago for failing to indicate as he turned left at an intersection. There was a power blackout at the time and the traffic lights weren't operating. He pointed to the non-functioning lights and said to the policeman, "can't you see there is no power at the moment?!?", and the officer waved him on.....

We drive to Hwange early tomorrow morning (Tuesday) for four days there with the seminar and Sunday at various churches. It's 320kms from here, and most of it is on the edge of the enormous Hwange NP (that's right; you **don't** drive down there at night!).

We have had a good rest day today at Mick's, once again! His home is a respite centre in the South of Zimbabwe.... Gavin has been fixing stuff with him – electrics and computers! - while I prepare for the 3-day seminar in Hwange. Gavin has proven to be an excellent back-up on this trip – as so much of what we have done thus far in ministry has been one-on-one serious discussions with individuals – both hosts and leaders of varying backgrounds. And he's very good at that! We have prayed for many in this environment.

Meanwhile, we are both recovering from a heavy cold Gavin brought with him. But when you see the devastation around you here healthwise, you no complain! The wife of one of Mick's staff was so emaciated by AIDS, she walked out of the compound one day and hung herself on a tree, leaving some children with her husband (who had given her HIV in the first place). He had responded to AZT treatment, but she hadn't.

The weather is heating up and we aren't looking forward to that aspect of ministering in Hwange (last year, Deb, Jeremy, Elizabeth and I suffered for four days in 40+c heat there). Nor the mozzies there (malarial red-zone). Please continue to pray for us - we head to Sinamatela in the National Park for a two night break en route back to Bulawayo before Gavin flies home and I go to Plumtree for another 4 days with the same format as Hwange (minus Gavin's help). Different material though, as Plumtree is where I started these seminars six years ago and we have continued to unfold the NT there in the area of God's purposes for the Priesthood of Every Believer, and the application to church life. We are up to the "doing" stuff now. Both the President and Secretary of the Ministers' Fellowship (who organise the seminars) came at my request to the last day of our Indaba as Friends of Lifeline, and mentioned how blessed they were by the time with the Lifeline people.

We had a total of 30 people attend the Indaba – but some not for the full 3½ days, as half of it was in-house discussion about the role and future of Lifeline. One sad thing to Gavin, Kefas, and me was that – knowing our church covered almost all the (substantial) costs from our missions' giving – almost no one thanked us or asked for their gratitude to be passed on to our giving church back home. The self-centred nature of the church community here is ongoing and a real, deep problem. And these are the more relational ones! It's even worse out in the wider body of Christ here! We have seen and heard validated accounts of autocratic authority here that would make your hair stand on end! For instance, pastors who refuse to let anyone count the offering on Sundays and take it **all** for themselves. Others who move away from their congregational areas to low-density suburbs as soon as they can get enough cash in hand to do so (shades of Michael Knight and Pat Farmer!). And even one pastor buying a **bullet-proof Mercedes** (like the President's!). Spare us, Lord!!

Hopefully, we continue to make some difference in the circles we mix and minister with. We do get continual feedback from individuals on what they are wrestling with in God's Word as a result of attending the seminars and Lifeline Ministry Training Programs – how to apply to NT in their own situation. There was a Lutheran bishops' get-together at Vashandiri while we were using the premises. I felt to go and speak with them. The Dean of a large diocese, who was attending, told me he had attended a seminar two years ago in Beitbridge and was still using the CD we distributed for his devotionals and was thoroughly enjoying it! **THAT's** good feedback!

Already, we have had feedback from several that the style of the Indaba (no speaker – although Andrew Evans really hit the mark with his inspiring input) really enabled the Holy Spirit to speak to them through the discussions, with many people (men and women) contributing in such a manner that it was Jesus who received the praise, and no one else! **THAT** was encouraging to hear!

Our time afterwards together at Henry Jackson's guest accommodation (Kefas, Gavin, and Brian) was really enjoyable. I am not sure if Kefy used earplugs like us though..... It is a dairy farm and we all enjoyed the change of pace and lifestyle. We dropped Kefas at the bus terminal Monday morning, and he travelled back to Harare.

The roadblocks are nowhere near as tense as previous years. But stories of brutality and violence continue to filter through from several rural areas. There is supposed to be an election next year, and we will prayerfully factor any trips away from that time. The guys here want Sam Abalo to come back – big time! When I told them he had already said he was planning that, they were very happy!

Our wives have been able to call us the last two days with all the news. It was so good to hear from them! And Chido told Kefas she was being spoiled so much by her church family, she wanted him to stay away a bit longer! Now **THAT'S** a big wrap for you all!

### **28/9/10 AFTER RETURNING TO MICK'S AT NYAMANDHLOVU**

Greetings from da coal town. Hwange! Gavin and I are back at our hosts' home after the first day of our three-day seminar in the coal town called Hwange. It is one of the hottest places in all of Zimbabwe but we have survived so far – it isn't over 40c like it was last year when Elizabeth and Deb and Jeremy were here with me. It's "only" about 36°!

We had over 30 pastors and wives today, and they were extremely attentive. This year is our third here, and after spending the first visit on “Correctly Handling the Word of Truth”, and the second on “Knowing God”, we began today on the “Priesthood of Every Believer”. They really participated! Including several of the women – doesn’t sound like much at home, but here, where the women mostly still sit separate and don’t speak when men are present, we had a very engaging day. There is a big national event all over Zimbabwe on Sunday arvo – it is an extension of the former Minimum Tillage training that Loxley was involved with 15 years ago. They now call it Farming Foundations and it has really taken off under the leadership of the same gifted farmer (Brian Oldrieve).

After I laid out some opening biblical principles on the subject of the Priesthood of Every Believer, Gavin spoke at length on the application of the it as we have sought to develop it within our own church. His description generated a lot of questions and discussion, as they don’t do it here much at all. It takes a mindset shift away from the “pastor **over** the elders **over** the deacons **over** the congregation” model that is the norm here.

Apart from Gavin imparting his heavy cold to me this week, we are basically ok health-wise, and enjoying our time here, despite the water going off at night, and the constant heat. I asked Gavin to sus out the man we have considered working with to establish a Ministry Resource Centre here (Deb originally suggested him after he and his wife took care of her and Elizabeth last year in dreadful circumstances). His wrap was a good one after four days of engaging in the life of their church and at the seminar.

Sadly, we also learned from him and his wife how their one-week old daughter (third child) died so tragically only two months ago. She swallowed breast milk down her windpipe and asphyxiated to death.

Things are not as bad here as they were in 2008 and 2009. They have stopped eating baboons and donkeys here as they did in the food and cash crisis two years ago! There is now abundant food in the shops, and we will not run out of food as Peter Brown and I did in 2008.

**Typically African story #1;** - Zimbabwean “English” - The ministers’ fellowship secretary asked us to provide “breakfast” for the pastors! I replied we never do that. But when talking to him, we realised he meant “morning tea”!..... He had no English word for this.

**Typically African story #2;** after we drove into town late yesterday afternoon, and after we had come up behind a horrendous smash out of Hwange, we walked from our hosts’ home out to the runway of the airstrip nearby as the air cooled down. It could still take a 737 but nothing much happens here anymore. The aerodrome building has been stripped bare and de-roofed... As we walked past some old airport houses, a group of children came out waving (we are an unusual sight here as few varungu – white people – are left in Hwange). I turned around and called out “Jesu akanaka!” (Jesus is good). This morning as we walked there again at 6.30am, they were there again and began calling out “Jesu akanaka!” (Jesus is good!). Then I started singing and dancing it and they burst into joyous laughter as I waved my bum (like Taubelle Leiman did 10 years ago at our church)... People are so friendly here if you show respect and friendship.. At home I could be arrested for communicating with such young children....

We drove to Sinamatela Sunday arvo for 2 days in the National Park. The lodge was disgraceful especially considering they are now charging First-World fees. We couldn’t get out of the building the first morning, as the zhing-zhong lock jammed tight. I had to climb out of a narrow window high up a wall, as all other windows have burglar bars. We “showered” using a 5-litre plastic bucket... no water to the shower at all. The fridge was schizophrenic and all our cold stuff was melted by morning, before it decided to come on again. After a written complaint to the Camp Director, we were “upgraded” to another lodge where everything, although old and worn, worked ok. The senior manager came over and we talked for an hour at what they are facing getting funds from their centralised bureaucratic system for repairs and maintenance. He and my good friend Sam trained together 25 years ago.

But what a variety of game we saw! A herd of **500** buffalo came in both nights below us as we sat on the escarpment overlooking the plain below – followed by **nine** lions trying to set up a kill (and failing). It was an awesome sight. On our way out of Main Camp around noon today, outside the Park boundary, there were **THREE PAINTED WILD DOGS** sitting under a tree right next to the Main Camp Road!!!! These are the rarest animals in the Zimbabwe..... Two had collars on (from the nearby conservation unit we visited last year, which explained their lack of fear as we pulled up close by), but what on earth they were doing there in such an exposed area, I have no idea.

Gavin leaves for home tomorrow, and has off-loaded Kathy’s spare food to me just now... There’s enough dried fruit and muesli bars to get me and the entire Plumtree ministers’ fellowship through the 3-day seminar coming up in two days time! He has taken off all his clothes - not literally - there’s enough clothing to supply Addmore’s church in socks and undies for the entire length of the Tribulation....

### **3/10/10 AFTER THE PLUMTREE SEMINAR**

The next day, I picked up Cosmos, his wife (Chelesani) and their gorgeous 5-month-old son, Theodore – for the short 100k trip to the Botswana border where Plumtree township is located. It is, shall we say... “basic”; but the people there for the past six years have shown great hospitality, and hunger for God’s Word. We all stayed for the four days of ministry at the same house we have used for the past six years. So hospitable. Just wish they would put ceilings in so that every – ahem - sound doesn’t travel through the house!

The 3-day seminar went very, very well. Then today, Sunday, I attended Nzima Ncube’s church for the first time – only problem was I had had a senior’s moment back at Mick’s and left half my clothes behind there! So I had only a pair of cargo shorts to wear all four days.... They thought that was very funny – weird murungu.... Nzima loaned me a pair of his and I called them “the holy, anointed trousers”... and gave them back to him after church.... Cosmos and I prayed for many people in their church. But, yet again, I ended up having communion on my own. In the six Sundays here so far, **not one church** has celebrated communion, and Gavin and I have truly missed our church’s weekly celebration of communion together.

This was the last seminar and at last count, we had **227** pastors and leaders attend the various activities our church and Lifeline have presented since arriving 5 weeks ago. The feedback from the Plumtree ministers (including one of a powerful and permanent healing of a pastor’s approaching blindness a year on our last visit) has been very encouraging. The dust in the townships gets into everything, but returning this afternoon to my friend Mick’s farm house meant a bath! Oh how one’s idea of “luxury” changes after 12 bed-moves!

I taught for three days on the restoration of the “teachers” of Isa 30:19-24, and the reduction of a pastor’s work-rate when preventative maintenance is applied.... Several cult leaders attended (which I didn’t know about for the three days), and were apparently deeply and positively affected.

Gavin got off ok on the plane from the – ahem – temporary airport located in an old tin hangar... we spent over an hour haggling with souvenir traders before we settled on 8 good-quality carvings (mostly ironwood) between the two of us. They were happy; we were happy. I will send this now-now before the power goes off again! Home soon.

P.S. the attached photo is of Valentine - a minister from George Moyo's Breakthrough church in Bulawayo - who left the city three years ago to assist the AoG develop a string of new churches 80km south of Plumtree. He is on his own there, and has been using a small print Bible with no references, concordance, etc. He was rapt when I passed on one of Koorong's Study Bibles that Samantha got for us! And God bless Koorong!

### **14/10/10 FINAL WRAP FROM JOBURG**

After Gavin left, I drove back to Gweru / Mkoba and stayed with the Ncubes for another 2 nights, spending time between carting water (they have had to bring it in by wheelbarrow for **five months!**) and doing a leadership night for Lifespring church.

The good news for Lifeline was the plans falling into place for Addmore and Betty Ncube going with (Baptist) Pastor Ish Tasara to the Binga district (some 600km south) for a series of ministry opportunities. The "God-is-in-this" bit was that Ish didn't know Betty is from Binga and speaks fluent Tongan, as does Addmore from his days as a policeman down there. Ish was rapt! Coz he doesn't speak that language at all.

This was an excellent example of where Lifeline fits the scene in Southern Africa – connecting people / resources while not attempting to control how things work out. We were able to assist in covering transport costs and some ministry expenses from our own church's missions' offerings too.

The road from Gweru to Harare was marred by two horrendous semi-crashes. The number of wrecks we encountered during our 3000km of travelling was horrible – the slack disregard for basic road safety measures scares us as trained drivers. As Peter Zulu said years ago, "in this country, we not only live by faith, **we drive by faith!**" But the Popemobile (as we lovingly call the Lifeline 4WD) ran like a dream – Loxley really looks after that aspect of ministry so well.

In Harare, I stayed for three days with Alan and Dorothy Graham – and got spoiled thoroughly as they hosted six young adults from their home church in Derry (Nthn Ireland). It was such a blessing to be there, and then with the family of Derick and Collette Dove in Joburg for a further two days of being spoilt before flying home. For the first time in memory, I came home in better health than I left in!

A very, very sincere tinotenda (thank you) to everyone who kept us (three) in prayer while we were in Zimbabwe. It was a relatively glitch-free trip this time. The Indaba in Mkoba went well (a total of 16 Lifeline leaders and 14 Friends of Lifeline attended)– all we have to do now is **DO THE STUFF WE SAID WE WOULD DO!** And the seminars in Banket, Mkoba, Hwange, and Plumtree (a total of 199 pastors and leaders attended) were well received - and better run than previously too – we are all still learning even after six years of doing these seminars around the Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Lifeline is well- positioned to go to the rural and township areas that are generally under-resourced, rather than the cities and tourist areas more commonly accessed by ministers coming from the First World. And if that's where God wants us, He **WILL** provide, undertake, **and** protect us all as we continue to obediently go....

The Lifeline journey continues.....