

## PARTNER PLAN

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Dear Family and Friends

**The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song. Psalm 28:7**

This quarter again has not always been easy and has had its challenges to address with a number of difficult circumstances and set-backs. We are very appreciative of your prayers as we apply ourselves daily, bit by bit, persevering and moving forward and dealing with them. There have been moments of discouragement. That is why you who faithfully support us are such a source of encouragement to us. Your intercession helps us to put our prayers into action and share the message of Jesus in our life and work. Hence our choice of the Scripture above.

And we also have had our joys and delights, shared with our brothers and sisters here.

We lost two faithful friends and servants of the Mission. Charles Newsome from North Carolina and Ronnie Sinclair from Fife. Charles was instrumental in bringing ZESCO to the Mission in the 90s, in building the new Sanctuary and helping to procure the oxygen plant. Ronnie in procuring medical equipment, crating it and sending it to us and also with staff development. We give thanks for their faithfulness. Ida's cousin Birgitte passed away mid-month just a few month's after the death of Per, her husband.

We are so grateful to Christine, Susan, Wilma and Anne who have taken up the mantle from Ronnie and are working to ensure the medical supplies he had accumulated and stored in his garage are crated and sent to us.



We have to lay off two of our full-time brickyard workers and offer part-time work instead. It is only economic to open the brickyard when we have an order. Orders are very few and far between at the moment. We produce a quality block, with quarry dust; cheaper and inferior quality blocks made with sand and cement are readily available in the village. Our main client is the Mission Hospital, and a few NGOs who are constructing public buildings. Our major cost is transport. The quarry dust costs K660 per ton but it costs us K9000 on top to transport 22 tons of quarry dust the 90km from the quarry to Mwandi. Cement in Mwandi rose from K165 to K180 last month. Our own transport would help cheapen the cost of this, along with the feed for the fish and layers and other bulky building supplies.

The new Diagnostic Centre for X-Ray and other ECG, Ultrasound and CT Scan is now complete. The difficulty with the brick yard is compounded by the daily electrical load-shedding schedule. More about this later.

We have put in another 1000 fingerlings in the pond a month ago and have now 2 cohorts of 120 'layers'. They are not sexed before pick-up so we have a number of cockerels amongst them which we will sell as broilers. Their selling should recoup some of the cost of feeding them!

In late January we did a week's on-line Personal Safety and Security Awareness Training, dealing with threats, hostile environments, situational awareness, life support and stress. It was useful as it brought out matters we had previously taken for granted.

Another good time was the Art Therapy Workshop run by Liz Hall and Lesley Hill who used a therapeutic art session for staff and vulnerable groups at the hospital. The therapeutic art approach can enhance mental well-being and was an opportunity to address this knowledge and skills gap in this area in Mwandia. With further training of staff it should become an ongoing project and function sustainably and independently in the future.



In mid-January too, the 10 bedheads and suction machine we were donated by the Czech Embassy arrived. Again, the hospital staff came together and using discussion and consensus along with steel pipes as ramps and rollers were able to unload the crated machine and put it into storage until the copper piping needed for its installation is procured.

With support from friends of Kandiana we have been able to renovate the home. As well as general maintenance and repairs, the rooms have been painted, the toilets refloored, the showers tiled, the stove repaired, as well as a washing machine purchased. Catherine and Sepiso's wages too are secure for another year. We have a new resident Belita who has come from Lukulu and we expect another lady, Namonda from Mongu, to arrive shortly.

The schools did not open till mid-February after the Christmas and New Year holidays because of a cholera epidemic mainly in the higher density areas. Mwandia is fortunate with the sand and the smaller population, and we were spared although prepared. The government and public health authorities need to carry out more public health education programs and improve the poor living conditions that have facilitated the outbreak in the first place. Water and sanitation infrastructure in the compounds need to be addressed seriously or this will just become another annual event with 700 people losing their lives this year. Despite the shortage of vaccines and the trauma faced by medical staff caring for patients, the Ministry of Health coped well with the epidemic.

The impact of EL Nino this year has been devastating here in Mwandi with poor rainfall, only



343mm instead of the average of around 600mm and unseasonably high temperatures most days in the high 30sC instead of around 20C at this time of year. This time the whole country is affected. It is the worst drought in 40 years with 2-3 million people suffering from hunger and malnutrition already. The situation in Mwandi District is dire with 85% of households facing food insecurity from crop failure and 90% of the crops destroyed. We have supported World Renew here in their proposed food relief programme and we have also through a supportive church in the USA been awarded a grant to go towards a nutrition programme for malnourished patients in the hospital and also to provide a standard food package for selected vulnerable patients on their discharge.

To help improve our communications and poor internet connection we bought a Starlink kit, this was hit by lightning very soon after we received it and needed to be replaced which Starlink did. We have noticed a great improvement in speed and quality of signal. At the same time the motherboard in our inverter was damaged too, so this is being repaired in Lusaka. It also took out our washing machine and television. We now have 8 hour daily rolling powercuts as the water level in the Kariba Dam does not allow the turbines to work at full capacity. The water has to be rationed and most of Zambia's electricity is produced by hydro. We have reverted to running our old trusty petrol generator we bought in Lusaka during the 2019 loadshedding. This means we can run the fridge and freezers, lights and computer and internet for a few hours during each outage.

April will be a busy month with visitors, we have two medical students from Edinburgh, Hannah and Erin, staying with us. They are doing their tropical medicine placement. Then Maggie and Jane are coming from Hands Around the World to look at support for developing our one-stop centre for GBV Survivors. The American Surgical team headed as usual by Peggy Schrieber arrives mid-month for their 10 day stint and a Board Meeting.

We fly out from Lusaka on furlough for two months on 28 April to Edinburgh. We have a Church of Scotland flat in Marchmont, near where we stayed as students 50 years ago! We are looking forward to catching up with our supporting Churches in Fife, Stirling & Perth, Houston and Lochaber. It will be a busy time as we will attend the General Assembly too. We will also be able to catch up with the family in Lenzie and North Wales and hopefully with our old friends as well.

As an aside, the UCZ will hold a Full Synod Meeting this year. This happens every two years. The four-year terms of office of both Synod Bishop and General Secretary come to an end. The Synod Bishop, Rev Sydney Sichilima has completed two terms and will stand down but the General Secretary has done one term and is eligible to stand again. This means there will be elections for both offices, so we pray for discernment wisdom and understanding for all concerned and that God's will may be done.

Ruairidh and Fiona's girls both competed in the Asian Junior Masters in Golf held in Thailand and both did very well in their age-group.



Ellie reached the Nationals in Swimming, gaining 2 golds, a silver and a bronze medal for backstroke and front crawl. We are proud of this achievement. She sits her GCE O Levels this year in October. She is doing well both socially and academically.

Mubita is enjoying working with Charles in the garden. He begins his PE lessons this week. We see Madeleine and Hugo whenever we are in Lusaka. Madeleine is enjoying nursery school and trying to read and Hugo is now walking. It will be good to catch up with the other four in May and June.

On Sunday the mainstream Churches in Mwandi will gather for our traditional Palm Sunday procession through the village, in remembrance of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem. This is the start of Holy Week. We celebrate together his humility amidst the triumph and acclamation of the crowd, his insistence on being the servant king, as he was from the beginning. From the temptations in the wilderness, throughout his modest, gentle and loving ministry, bringing salvation and healing to many to the fulfilment of this earthly mission in his crucifixion and resurrection. Wishing you all a happy Easter.

With our love  
Keith Ida & Mubita