

## Shelley's African Adventures! May 2012

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Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all, I hope you are all well.

Well, this is a difficult newsletter to write as the news is very mixed!

As many of you will know I left Zimbabwe at the end of February for the UK, as my visa had expired. I was invited back to Zimbabwe by the Presiding Bishop of Zimbabwe and went back in March. Sadly I was only able to spend a week in Zimbabwe saying 'Goodbye' to my children, my project and Baboon as well as packing up my home. God was very good, he helped me to keep my promise to the children that I would return, even if it was for such a brief time. I was then temporarily placed with the Methodist Church of South Africa whilst awaiting appropriate documentation. Sadly, this has not yet materialised and so I will return to the UK this week to take up a post in Doncaster Local Authority in the near future. I trust that this is a 'pause' in my time of service to the people of Zimbabwe, not an ending as the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe are very keen to continue with the partnership with Methodist Church of Great Britain.

So while I have been in South Africa I have been based with the MCSA Childcare desk, this position has responsibility for co-ordinating and raising the profile of Children and Young People across Southern Africa which includes South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho and Mozambique. I worked alongside Victoria Sikhakhane, the Childcare desk co-coordinator to support the team with preparation and delivery of an International Conference for leaders called 'Celebrating Children'. It was attended by 30 delegates and 6 international trainers and inspired the delegates to begin the journey of raising the profile of children and young people in their communities via church projects.





I have been staying with Bronwen Dawson, from MCSA, and her family during my stay here, which was supposed to be for just two weeks! The family have been such a blessing to me and have supported me through this very difficult time, even taking me on a much needed holiday to Kruger National Park for my final week in South Africa! It has been amazing to see nature how God intended it to be seen. (And yes these really are my photos!!)



The first lamb of our ECD animal project was welcomed this month along with chicks and soon a litter of rabbits. These will improve the children's diet and reduce the burden of the cost of food for MRCH. Children are also learning animal husbandry skills.

I have continued to support Matthew Rusike Children's Home from afar through emails and phone calls for example co-ordinating how to use money that has been donated to develop the ECD, we are currently building a goat and sheep paddock for our increasing herd.

The ECD kitchen has been kitted out with a stove, a fridge, a microwave and baking equipment for days when we have electricity.

The African hut in the ECD outdoor area is well under way.



My freight arrived in Zimbabwe after almost a year on the road...only to be re-packed and now to be sent back to the UK!!



Visiting historic places in Johannesburg, South Africa has been a real highlight, especially places associated with one of my heroes, Nelson Mandela.

As you can imagine this has been a whirlwind of emotion, uncertainty and loss during which time God has sent me many 'angels' along the way in many forms...some of whom will be reading this! People to talk to me; people to pray with; a 5 year old to do regular makeovers for me; people to challenge my thinking; people to teach me; people to laugh with; people to cry with and even a cat to sit with me during my nights of searching my soul for solutions! All the while I hang onto my two favourite verses that both inspire and comfort me:-

*Jeremiah 29 v11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you"*

*Matthew 18 v5 "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me."*

Thank you to all of you who have been a part of this journey, your emails, prayers, letters, Facebook contacts and your outpouring of generosity to my project have been overwhelming.

*Please pray for the children at MRCH; for the staff in the ECD and MRCH; for the many friends I have made both in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Please pray that God will guide me in my next steps back in the UK and make clear a way for my continued involvement with MRCH in Zimbabwe.*

*Love from Shelley*

Shelley x