

JONATHAN AND ISABEL HILL: February 2010

My weekend:

Not a very typical weekend, but none of them are.

by Jonathan Hill in Zimbabwe

Friday was Inter-House Athletics at Thekwane High School and as usual I was Chief Recorder. I had arranged the usual delivery of food and drinks for the children at the Primary School a day in advance so that it would not interrupt proceedings. (I have been organising a daily snack of bread and peanut butter, washed down by a drink of fresh milk or orange cordial for the Grade 0's to 3's as well as selected needy older children for several years now. See the website: details below.) Anyway, after standing around and trying to look important (as Chief Recorders do) for an hour or two I started to feel a bit unwell, so I went back to my house at



the other end of the school campus and had to rest for a while. I think I had stayed in the open sun for too long. By the time I felt well enough to go back I met one of the other teachers coming from the sports ground and he said it was almost finished, so I left the rest of the recording duties to my assistant recorders who coped perfectly well. (Assistant recorders don't get the chance to stand around looking important, they actually have to do the work.) We always used to have Sports Days on Saturdays, but now these events are held on Fridays and normal lessons cancelled because

teachers generally nowadays insist on having a bit of time to themselves at the weekends.

The A-level results for the November /December examinations had come out a few days previously and I did the statistical analysis as I do each year. They were quite good and an improvement on the previous year's results. My Mathematics class did



better than I expected, but the fact that the examinations had been delayed meant that we had had extra time to prepare by working through more past papers than we would normally have managed. The O-level results should be out soon, maybe later this week or next week. I wasn't teaching any O-level classes last year. This year, in addition to teaching Mathematics I am also in charge of Guidance and Counselling for the Upper Sixth Formers. I have started to organise some visiting resource persons, one of whom is a former Thekwane student, now working in the health sector in the UK who has volunteered to come and conduct some short courses mainly for the girls on health and personal well-being topics. We made contact through one of our websites (see details below). I will also be giving the students some training in good study, revision and examination techniques, watching an educational DVD on Global Warming later this term and we will watch some DVDs on Christian themes in the run-up to Easter.

On Friday afternoon, after noticing that there was water coming through the tap outside the house, I re-filled my buckets ready for Monday. Then, seeing that the electricity was back on after having gone off late on Thursday, I made myself a welcome cup of coffee before heading into Bulawayo and back home to the rest of the family. In the evening we went to the Graduation Dinner at the Theological College of Zimbabwe (TCZ), which is run by a non-denominational board representing several main-stream Protestant traditions. The campus had been a motel before the college bought it a few years ago.

Then Saturday morning was Isabel's graduation ceremony at the TCZ and it was a lovely occasion. It's only a small college and there were three other ladies as well as Isabel graduating from the Women's Ministries course. There were also ten mostly young people who graduated with a BA(Theo) and one who gained a BA(Theo,Hons). Susannah missed the occasion because she had a compulsory sports event at the same time. Their school has a system of "Compulsories" twice a term at



which you have to attend and cheer if you are not in the team. They even hold practices to choreograph the cheering. Saturday was an inter-schools swimming gala at the City Pool, an open-air Olympic-size pool in the city centre. So I drove into the city to drop Susannah off in the morning and went back to pick her up later.

Still quite hot weather, so had a nap in the afternoon before doing a bit of shopping at the wholesalers to buy orange drink and jars of peanut butter then home to do a bit of desk work later.



At Sunday School (or Junior Church, if you like) the following morning we made a bit of a change by having the teachers do a dramatic enactment of "Daniel and the Lions" instead of making the children do it. I played the part of "Official 2", one of the bad guys who plotted against Daniel. Now that I have got five other teachers helping it makes a lot of things possible that we couldn't do before. Actually, one was absent that day which meant that I had twenty 9 to 12 year-olds in my group which is quite a handful, so you have to be well prepared.

Immediately after Sunday morning service we dropped off Stephen and Susannah at home to make their own lunch and do their homework while we set out on a trip to Mzinyathi

Methodist Mission (about an hour's drive over mostly fairly good roads) to see what progress has been made with the building of the orphanage. Actually it is called the "Children's Community Resource Centre" for "day care and residential services for orphaned and vulnerable children". We met other members of the Board there including our District Bishop.

We found a remarkable change since we last went there and it will soon be finished as far as the building work goes. The roof is on, the ceilings are mostly fitted. Much of the plastering has been done. Fitting of conduits for the electrical connections has been done and piping for the water



supply. Bath tubs are waiting to be fitted and other plumbing is yet to be finished. Light fittings and switches, and so on, are not yet in place and the windows are not yet glazed, and then there will be painting to be done, but they are confident that all of that will be completed in the next three weeks. Then we will hold an opening ceremony. All in all it is a much happier situation than last year when we wondered if we would manage to finish the building at all. Now we



are turning our thoughts to the furnishing of the rooms. We are hopeful that well-wishers will come forward with donations whether cash or in kind.

We arrived at Mzinyathi while their Sunday service was still in progress, so we were ushered in and we sat near the front of the church, with a small table in front of us. We hadn't been there very long when I detected a small scuffling at my feet. It was a chicken and it had been brought as part of the offering, and it was not alone.

After being given a cooked lunch, (including chicken), we drove back home, where a pile of unmarked exercise books tried desperately to catch my eye. Friends arrived from Botswana to spend the night and after a while catching up on their news, we called it a day. I set my alarm for 4:25 am as usual, to allow me time on Monday morning to get ready, load up milk, orange drink and peanut butter (as well as personal items, and those exercise books), then set off for the drive to Thekwane to get there in time for morning assembly at 7 a.m. Another week already in full swing!

[Our website is: <http://www.isabeljonathan.org> and I also maintain a website for the Methodist Church, Hillside Circuit at: <http://www.MCZHillsideCircuit.com>]

Jonathan Hill