The Same Yesterday Today and Forever

Had we not had Ida’s appendix operation, we would have been returning to Zambia at the end of this week. Thankfully, Ida has recovered well and we have our debriefing at 121 later this week. We are now undertaking the deputation visits that were cancelled while Ida convalesced. It has been good once again to make contact with the presbyteries and individual congregations who support the work at Mwandi materially and by prayer. Many of these are strong Churches with busy and successful outreach programmes but they remain interested in what God is doing in our particular part of the vineyard and elsewhere. It is good also to see the possibility emerging greater collaboration, cooperation and inter-church fellowship in all of this. While this is now happening at local and presbytery level, our appointment as an ecumenical one, with both the Church of Scotland and Methodists here and the United Church in Zambia, helping us and others in undertaking the Great Commission.

Our Power-Point presentation this time, we have entitled ‘Our World Belongs to God’. We chose Micah 6:4-8 and Matthew 25:34-40 as the two portions of Scripture to provide the framework for our pictures and discussion. The well-known verses from Micah deal with what God is looking for in his people; namely, to be fair and just, compassionate, loyal and serious. And Matthew talks about taking care of the needs of the hungry, thirsty, sick, poor, homeless and imprisoned, those often overlooked and ignored, and in doing this, you do it to and for Jesus.

In our talk we tell about the building of the new UCZ Secondary School where 500 pupils who might not otherwise have been at school, have completed Grade 12 since 2010, the challenges we face with a lack of teaching and learning resources for large classes but also the enthusiasm and eagerness to learn of the pupils. The importance and necessity of girl education is also stressed and the bursaries that we provide, using the UCZ & Social Welfare criteria to help needy but able pupils complete their secondary education by the generosity of ordinary but special people. We also share stories of students that are supported in tertiary education.

The ministry of the Church at Kandiana is also an area of need that we are involved with. We report too on the churches roofed, the support for rural pre-schools and the digging of the new well at Sikuzu. Other areas shared are an overview of the Mission Hospital HIV programme, integrated within this are the Church of Scotland’s HIV Nutrition programme and the Formula programme. Housing and sustainability are other areas being tackled. We end with the story of our Congolese foster children and the plight of their parents.

I have been reading David Smith’s ***Mission After Christendom*** and as we are carrying out our deputation work we can see that much of what he is highly relevant to the Church in Scotland today. It has been brought home to us how much successful Church work is home mission at the new frontiers and we have seen how the Church is learning to live cross-culturally in a postmodern world obsessed by consumerism and entertainment where traditional Christianity and its values are irrelevant to most secular people. This is, however, nothing new, similar problems were faced by the early Church in the Roman Empire where people were addicted correspondingly to wealth and pleasure with the Church offering counter-cultural qualities to the Graeco-Roman values of the time. More recently during the Communist-era in Eastern and Central Europe another militant form of materialist philosophy shaped and controlled society while the Church under difficult circumstances offered meaning in Christ under another man-made and meaningless, dishonest and iniquitous economic and political system.

Under all these regimes and systems, the same human needs we see today, went largely unheeded and un-catered for by the orthodoxy of the time. The Church today with its powers of regeneration and transformation, as the world continues with its rampant economic and ecological exploitation of the world’s resources and its peoples, still brings baptised people into communities who feast at the table of Christ’s sufficiency, communities known for their contentment and compassion. This Church, having learned from the past, has and will always have something true and reliable to offer the future. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2Cor 12:10