

May 2022

I remember sitting at the eye clinic writing one of these a couple years ago. Today I'm sitting at the mechanic waiting while they check out the 'clunk' in the back of the car. Thus far they think it's in the bushes... They seem to think it won't take long, but the Zambian definition of long and mine often don't match. 'The Bwana (boss) has just run into town, he won't be long' is code for, I don't know where he went, why he went there, or when he will return. It could be 5 minutes, or it could be tomorrow afternoon. I sat in an office waiting for someone last week, only to be told 45 minutes later by another member of the staff, that the person was out of the office doing inspections that day... Yep, first person was quite happy to leave me there all day! Doh.

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Well, it was quick, I'm now down the road at an awesome little coffee shop that has opened up fairly recently. Yes!! A coffee shop. I have a comfy cushioned chair and a mocha coming, and there's a delectable looking cake staring at me that may require



devouring shortly too. . Oh the wonderful luxuries that are now available compared to when I first came to Zambia nearly 9 years ago.

Right, so the first question on everyone's mind... When am I coming home for a visit? Well, most likely by the end of the year. But don't hold your breath, the last few times I've tried this there have been explosions and world wide pandemics! I feel like someone is telling



me not to travel. I got an email from my travel agent saying my tickets will expire early next year, so I'd better try again soon. So, if you want to see me, you'd better all start praying that something else doesn't come up and stop me!

Next question, how am I doing? Well, I'm sitting in a coffee shop and I have a mocha in hand, so great really! No, truly I am doing well. As in anything anyone does, there are up and down days, but more often than not they are up days.

We've managed some really significant changes in the last few months, which means that I have a lot of help now managing my work load. Linet is a young Zambian lady, who is super quick at learning new skills and admin, and systems minded. She now does all my work at the farm - managing nurseries, checking the pick, filling orders, etc. as well as doing 1-2 days a week in the office helping me with the accounts, and the market sales every second Saturday, freeing me up to do the supply shopping that day. Oh, and when she's not doing that she still manages her own patch of crops at the farm! The other staff have nicknamed her 'Erica 2', which I find utterly hilarious. All of Linet's help means that more often than not I really feel like I'm keeping up with my workload rather than horrendously behind. There are still jobs that desperately need doing that I haven't managed to get too, but that list is shrinking. Finally. And not growing.

We're looking at starting to make some significant changes in our management structure at the farm as we have really outgrown our current management structure. Exciting really, but also super challenging as any change is difficult and we want the change to strengthen

our team and not divide them. We received some really exciting news over the last few weeks - 3 large mission projects that we have provided farming training to in the last 2 years have all now become profitable. Each of them was a dismal farming failure before we were asked to assist with training, and each is now sustainable for the mission's need and turning profit. We are so excited, because not only have we helped each of these missions in their sustainability but also their staff are taking the knowledge home and using it too. It is just a brilliant success. Now for ours to work just as effectively.

We have been utterly blessed in the past few months with major needs being met. Last year we received a major donation that allowed us to buy a 3 ton truck, which is a significant upgrade on our very tired old 2T that likes being at our mechanic more than on the road now. Then Juliaan, who did his Bible College practical from Faith with us has returned to Zambia too and settled down and gotten married, and he has purchased a laaaaarge refrigerated truck for us which we now use for all the farm produce, as well as a smaller refrigerated van which means we can get produce to and from market cold. What an incredible difference that has made. We are so thankful.

Then add to that, a visitor from the UK, who came to see another mission project that we partner with. He came and had a look at ours too. So, we showed him around the Baby Unit, our Distribution Shed, and my office, then took him out to the farm in the truck. Now, mind, the road out to the farm now takes 40 minutes to travel only a few km... It'd make a stunning off-road track for a 4wd... But we're in the 3 ton truck. I have 2 ladies, one of them Mary, sitting next to me in the front, both praying loudly next to me that we don't get stuck or roll the truck (no it isn't quite that bad, but they were that freaked out), and 2 men in the back, riding backwards, sitting on an old car back seat that we placed in the back, and they're having the time of their lives, especially the guy from the UK who's now getting a REAL taste of village Zambia, but who both at the end think I'm absolutely awesome because I managed to navigate the road without getting the truck stuck (don't tell them all, but it was very close a couple of times, and a whole lot closer to severely stuck than I



really want to admit). . Well after all of that, the other project will get some support for their project and we will be getting the solar system for the Baby Unit sponsored! Which is huge!! And what a blessing. Of course, that's just in time for our local power company to finally start completing putting in the power lines that they started putting in about 3 years ago and then didn't touch again after they put up poles and 1 set of power lines. So, in a few months we'll have solar with the back-up of supplied power, which is brilliant. One more hurdle holding up the Unit opening dealt with.

Other missionary friends recently had some visitors for a few weeks, it was their first taste of the mission field as they make decisions for their future and I got to spend a bit of time with them. The question they asked that has most stuck with me was 'how can we help deal with the street child problem?' Chingola has quite a group of street children, children that live on the street and spend their days begging and getting into mischief. And once upon a time I thought it was a simple thing of doing things like taking them into children's homes and getting them back into school. But no. The complexities of each situation has to be looked at. Why is each there? Do they have a family? Do they go home at night or are they sleeping rough? Why have they left that family? Have they been chased? Have they been sent to make some money because there's no food at home? Or have they made a choice? If this is their choice, why? Is the home abusive or do they simply not like rules and being required to help at home? If they're taken into a children's home and put

back into school will they stay there? Or do they like the lifestyle and prefer it to structure? I remember one man telling his story. He was educated, but found that he could earn more in a single day of begging than in a week of full-time work. Begging was providing his family with a better life than him working did. Every person has a story and each story has its own complexities. We certainly can't change things for every one of them, but we can breathe hope into the story for a few.

Currently a large recruitment of teachers is taking place across Zambia. Nearly 30,000 teaching positions are up for grabs, mostly in rural areas that are significantly understaffed. We have nearly 15 applying for those jobs who have completed their studies with sponsorship support through Living Hope. We can't impact every life, but that's hope breathed into 15 individuals and their families. 15 educated that otherwise wouldn't have this opportunity. We certainly can and do change things for a few.

Last week there was a newborn babe abandoned. I'm due to visit and meet him today. We were called to help provide clothing, diapers, blankets, bottles and formula for him. His story reminds me of Moses being left in a basket in the reeds on the edge of the river, to try and save his life. His sister stood sentry watching from a distance to make sure no harm came of him. How desperate must this small babe's mother have been to leave him? What is her situation that abandoning him would be necessary? Did she stand at a distance and watch to ensure he was found? Or did she flee in fear and confusion and cry over her lost child? We may never know, but he now has a chance. There is hope for this small one.

Now let me end on a light note... What happens when you end up with vehicles made in different countries and with right and left-handed steering and have to swap between those sometimes several times a day? No blaming blonde hair here! You get in the wrong door, you can't find your seatbelt, you try to change gears with the wrong hand, you put on the wipers instead of the indicators, you have to relearn where you are on the road, and can't always find the hazards! Utterly hilarious and a maybe just a bit embarrassing.

Love to everyone.
Blessings
Erica

P.S – sorry about the lack of photos this time... this update has been so long in the writing that if I take the time to add photos it'll be so out of date that I'll have to start again. Next time, I promise.