

REPORT ON MY TIME IN ZAMBIA JANUARY 2025

It was a privilege to be in Zambia, representing the Southampton District of the Methodist Church and the Wessex Synod of the United Reformed Church, who largely financed the whole visit. I was there to further our link with the Lusaka Presbytery of the United Church of Zambia. The Methodist District gave me £100 which was spent on Prayer Manuals, which were given out throughout the visit - 5 lectern sized ones for the 4 churches I visited on Sundays and one to the United Church of Zambia University, and the A5 ones to ministers and lay people, who were very glad to have them. I am very grateful to all the moneys given by the URC to enable this visit to take place. I gave appropriate greetings at many churches and places and in many meetings. Obviously for the many projects I visited, the gifts were personal ones. Salisbury Methodist Church gave me 6 commemorative plates (given to the 4 churches, one to the UCZ University and one to the Synod Bishop) and 3 mugs (one for Bishop Lordwell and one for the Minister and one for the Deaconess at St John's Mtendere). James and I bought many calendars of Wiltshire for distribution, and gifts for the various projects I visited. There were also gifts for the GB and BB at St Andrew's and greetings were given everywhere!



I arrived in Lusaka and had a couple of nights to recover from the flight and to get ready for the month ahead (finding a bank etc) and also getting rid of a debilitating chest infection I had had since Christmas. On Thursday 9th January I visited the Cathedral of the Holy Cross Lusaka (a first – it is based on Coventry Cathedral) and I spent the afternoon with the Revd Dr Charley Thomas (the Dean) and Dr. Rachel Thomas (Dr at the Lusaka teaching hospital), who I had first met in 1999 at Mindolo. A lovely afternoon.



Jenny Featherstone (former Mission Partner – of whom more anon) collected me from here and we stayed with her friends at the Gossner Mission and I paid for this stay and for a meal out, as Jenny had really only come to Lusaka to welcome me and to lend me her spare phone for me to use for calls and texts in Zambia. This was invaluable. On Friday 10th January morning Jenny took me to Whiteson and Justina Chenga, my hosts for my time in Lusaka. Whiteson is the Lusaka Presbytery World Partnership Convenor. That day we visited Bishop Lordwell (Lusaka Presbytery Bishop) and then we went to Chilenje House 394, located in Chilenje, Lusaka, which is a museum about the struggle for independence, and the house in which Dr Kenneth Kaunda lived from January 1960 to December 1962. He later became the first president of Zambia. From this house, he directed the struggle for Independence of Zambia, which was finally achieved on 24 October 1964. It was moving to see the Land Rover, which the Reverend Merfyn Temple had given KK, on display. I was very glad to have spent time in this museum.



Bishop Lordwell, Whiteson Chenga, Rosemary Friday 10th January 2025



With the Land Rover of the late the Reverend Merfyn Temple

I headed up to Kitwe on Saturday 11th January. I was offered a lift by Whiteson's daughter Bupe, who was returning to her job with the Inland Revenue in Solwezi, but it was a very long drive (we left at 4.00am and got there 1pm).



Glad to be back at Mindolo!

I spent nearly a week in Mindolo and preached at Mindolo UCZ on Sunday 12th January 2025. This is the new church. The old one is too small!



A group after church – the new minister is on the right – the Reverend Mazusyo Ngambi. He had just started work there in January 2025.

Mindolo is the church where the UCZ began on 16th January 1965. And it is the church with which Caversham Heights Methodist Church was twinned for many years, from 1998 onwards, and they supported the work of this church and the Theological College (now UCZ University) and also the Racecourse Community School. This latter support has only just come to an end. Although Zambian ministers move around every 5 years, somehow Mindolo still see me as Caversham's minister, which I was on my first 3 visits: 1999, 2000 and 2003. My husband James Rowley and I returned in January 2015, as we had been invited to attend the Golden Jubilee of the UCZ, and I thought that was our Goodbye to Zambia. Then in December 2022 the Southampton District Chair Andrew de Ville asked me to take on this Link role, so I found myself back there again. Very happily. My own great aunt (Muriel Stamp who was a member of Winchester United Church when she died in October 1995 aged 99) and her husband, the Reverend Ernest Stamp, worked at Mindolo 1949-952 and I have a photo of them outside their Manse at Mindolo. As well as of the Mindolo Methodist Church as it was in their time. They spent about 35 years as Missionaries in Africa, mostly in then Northern Rhodesia.



The Link with the United Reformed Church involves a link with the UCZ University (formerly the Theological College), where Ministers and the diaconate are trained and also lay ministers are trained, so I was asked to make contact again here. This was a pleasure to do – I had taught there for a brief while in 2000 (covering a furlough of Mission Partner the Reverend Dr Caroline Wickens) and some of the admin staff I had met on each of my previous visits were still there. I had a meeting with the University staff as to how best we could further this link. There was sadness that the URC Council for World Mission *Face to Face* programme no longer operated, as it

once had (I knew of this programme from my days teaching in Sri Lanka as 3 of my students went to Zambia on this programme in 2008 and 2009). The University also wanted to concentrate on student ministers coming to the UK, rather than senior ones. I worshipped with the University community each morning Monday to Wednesday of my time living at Mindolo.



With Ba Mwamba and Belliness in the University offices. I had met them first in 1999 and on each subsequent visit. It was so lovely to see them both again. I am wearing the T- Shirt the College gave me in 2000.

Thursday January 16th saw the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the United Church of Zambia. Mindolo have been building a new church for some time (Caversham Heights made some significant contributions in the past) – their old building is too small and will be used for smaller functions and some services in future but the new church, in which I preached on 12th January 2025 and in which the 60th celebration was held, seats 2000. There were also lots of people sitting outside with live screens. Having been present at the 50th Service, I thought I knew what to expect, but this year's service was longer than ever, and included many speeches and prayers, and the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The celebrations had begun with a procession from a local shopping mall - its start was delayed as the MP Guest of Honour was very late. The actual sermon was preached by the President Designate of the Methodist Church, the Reverend Dr Richard Andrew. My visit (postponed from October when I caught Covid) overlapped with the official visit of the Connexional reps – Richard and his wife Debbie and the Reverend Dr Andrew Ashdown (Connexional Global Relationships Partnership Coordinator for Africa). The Service lasted over 6 hours and ended with the cutting of the cake and the sharing of the cake - it had been a long while since breakfast, so I was glad of some food!



Above: the Procession leaving the local Shopping Mall

Below: Prof. Jonathan Kangwa Vice Chancellor of the United Church of Zambia University sharing the history of the UCZ in the Service



Above – Richard preaching in the Service and then after the Service in the former church, with the Reverends Moses and Chipula – two of the students I had taught in November 2000

For me, Mindolo is the part of Zambia where I am at home and whilst there I visited 3 projects – two of whom we had visited in 2015 and the other was the **Racecourse Community School**, which I first visited in November 2000. It was very moving to meet Prisca, a volunteer there, who remembered me from our visits in 2003 and 2015, and she was very grateful for the moneys she had received from Caversham. She was a volunteer at the school when it began and Caversham paid her some

The chalkboard contains the following handwritten notes:

Types of accounts

Normal A/C ✓
 - People do regularly
 - Examples:
 - Assets A/C
 - Income A/C
 - Expense A/C
 - Contra A/C
 - Real A/C

Contra A/C ✓
 - Opposite of normal A/C
 - Examples:
 - Accumulated Depreciation A/C
 - Sales Discounts A/C
 - Allowance for Doubtful Accounts A/C
 - Insurance Expense A/C
 - Interest Expense A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Assets A/C
 - Loss on Disposal of Assets A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Investments A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Real Estate A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Equipment A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Inventory A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Fixed Assets A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Intangible Assets A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Goodwill A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Patents A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Trademarks A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Copyrights A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Licenses A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Franchises A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Royalties A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Residuals A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Other Intangible Assets A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Other Fixed Assets A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Other Real Estate A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Other Equipment A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Other Inventory A/C
 - Loss on Sale of Other Assets A/C

Real A/C ✓
 - Permanent A/C
 - Examples:
 - Cash A/C
 - Accounts Receivable A/C
 - Inventory A/C
 - Property, Plant, and Equipment A/C
 - Land A/C
 - Buildings A/C
 - Furniture A/C
 - Vehicles A/C
 - Intangible Assets A/C
 - Patents A/C
 - Trademarks A/C
 - Copyrights A/C
 - Licenses A/C
 - Franchises A/C
 - Royalties A/C
 - Residuals A/C
 - Other Intangible Assets A/C
 - Other Fixed Assets A/C
 - Other Real Estate A/C
 - Other Equipment A/C
 - Other Inventory A/C
 - Other Assets A/C

ing Hearts and Play4All

ited two other projects - both led by amazing women and both were illustra

her husband Crispin have 4 children of their own in their Home, which they call “Caring Hearts”, which is now a registered Children’s Home/ NGO. Her work is supported by former Mission Partner Jenny Featherstone and friends of Jenny, as is the work of another amazing woman – Jane and her project Play4All. This is a project for 50-100 children who are not able to go to school and the Project have a plot in Kamatipa where the children come and play, in order to learn life skills, and are given one meal each day (often their only one of the day). Jane was a Methodist National in Missions Appointment and Jenny, and her team enable her work to continue. Jane also tries to ensure that the children who are HIV+ take their drugs. In 2015 James had played football with them and this year a football was one of my gifts to them so, not wanting to be outdone, I played with them this year!

The first two photographs below are from the home, called Caring Hearts, of Caroline and Crispin



Then the others are all from Play4All - the last one shows me with Jane Mwenda. She has volunteers who come each day to help her. Here they are making the maize porridge for lunch.



In Mindolo I met many folks from my 4 previous visits there, some of whom had come to Caversham. One man called **Ringtone** who lived in a very poor township has had a major stroke and when I visited him his face beamed. But he had no spoken language. He was a key person who set up the Racecourse Community School because he had a heart for the children in his township who were not getting educated..... Ringtone visited Caversham in 2007.



At the Diamond Jubilee celebrations I met ministers I had taught in 2000 and on the campus in the week I had met up with people whose children I had baptised which was lovely. Along with a widow of one of the students I had taught in 2000. I was invited for meals by a member of the church who had visited Caversham in 2000 and his family and by the new Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Northern Zambia, John Kafwanka and his wife Martha –I had first met them in 2000.



With the mother of a child I had baptised in November 2000

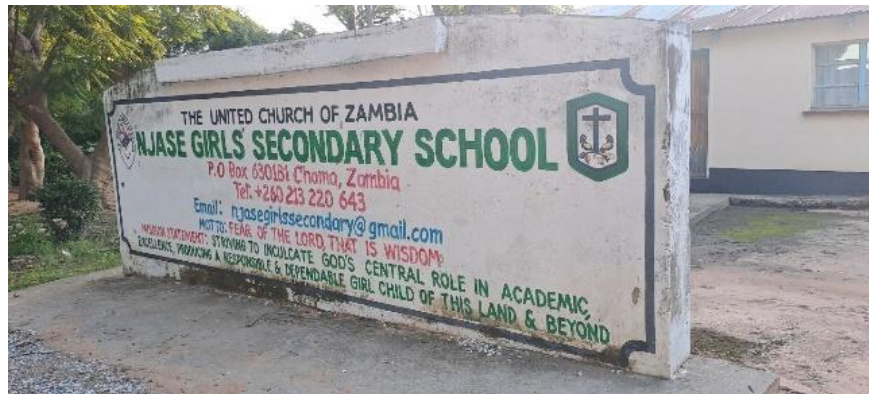
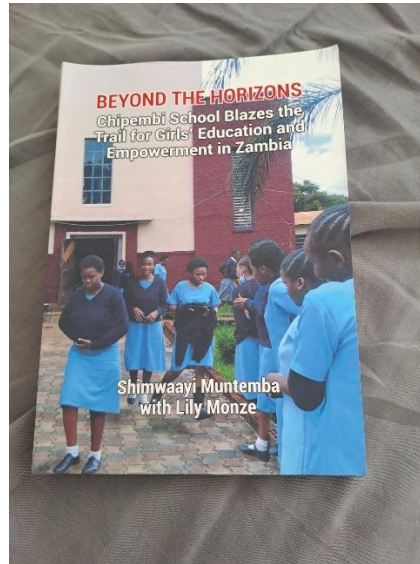
*Below **Wilson Tegha** who came to Caversham in May 2004, with his wife Juliet and children Davies, Ruth and Natalia.*





Above with twins Naomi and Ruth born June 1st, 1999, and whose Grandmother Regina had asked me to name. A lovely reunion as I had not seen them since November 2000. And then on Monday 13th January 2025 with the Reverend Musonda Matutu whose wedding to Beauty I had conducted at Ndola UCZ in November 2000.

I was kindly offered a lift to Lusaka by Andrew Ashdown (thank you to Global Relationships who contributed to my stay in their same hotel 16th/17th in Kitwe) and so I joined the official Methodist party to Lusaka on **Friday 17th** and on our way we visited the famous **Chipembi Girls School** (where a St Albans Church member had volunteered in the 1970s) and this was one of three UCZ Boarding Schools which I visited. The other two being **Njase and Nambala**. All 3 of these had links with a former Supernumerary minister in the Reading Circuit (the above mentioned the late Reverend Merfyn Temple) and indeed his ashes are buried in the grounds of the Nambala school. His niece, the Reverend Liz Wills née Temple is a close friend of mine, so it was nice to share in her family history, as she grew up in Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia) and also had taught at Njase School. This school is famous for its murals of Biblical stories in its chapel which date from the 1960s and are all of indigenous peoples. No Anglo Saxon Jesuses in the pictures – all people have Zambian features.



The next 3 Sundays were spent in the **Lusaka Presbytery**

The weekend of 18th and 19th January I was with **St Andrew's UCZ** – the only church where my sermon did not need to be translated into the local language.

My super hosts in Lusaka (Whiteson and Justina Chenge – Whiteson is the presbytery Partnership Convenor) attend this church and on the Saturday I attended the Women's Christian Fellowship New Year Party and met their lovely Minister the Reverend Theresa Nanyangwe.



On the Sunday after worship, there were presentations and parades by the Girls' Brigade and the Boys' Brigade (about 150 young people in each) and I felt rather as I imagine Princess Anne must feel inspecting the troops, except she knows what she is doing! Although I had had Brigades in Reading and St Albans and Amesbury, I had never been required to undertake such duties!

There is a link between the Woking URC BB and the Amesbury Methodist Church GB with St Andrew's, and one of my tasks was to further these links. So I had a meeting with the GB and BB Officers.





Here I am making presentations to the GB Captain Fridah and the BB Captain Owen

I also travelled to **Choma** by bus to stay with **Jenny Featherstone**, a former Mission Partner, who has built her own house in Choma. She has retired there and is working with those who have an alcohol problem (using AA principles) and also on a project called **Happy Planet**, making cooking brickettes out of bio-mass rather than charcoal, as so many trees have been cut down for charcoal, and the impact on the environment is devastating. Jenny is now 73 and is inspirational, funding her own work and supporting projects through her British pensions and friends who help. We had first met Jenny in 2015 (3 of my Sri Lanka students had met her in Mindolo in 2008 and 2009 when they were on the aforementioned *Face to Face* Programme). Jenny had stayed with us in St Albans when on a furlough visit. It was really good to catch up with her again.

Below Jenny in her garden and pictures of the Happy Planet project near Choma





Happy Planet bricks in the local supermarket in Choma

My time was interspersed with many **meetings** - two with the Lusaka Presbytery Bishop Lordwell Siame (I had met him in Salisbury in October 2022), and one with their Link Committee. Lordwell gathered together 8 of the students I had taught in November 2000, who were in Lusaka Presbytery, for a reunion one evening, which was lovely (photo below). I met the Synod Bishop (like our Methodist President) and their General Secretary at UCZ HQ one morning, as well as informal meetings with many people. At Mindolo I stayed in university accommodation and in Lusaka, after the initial couple of days, I stayed with Whiteson and Justina and then in Choma I stayed with Jenny Featherstone. There were also a lot of meals out with various hosts and many typical Zambian meals with enshima.



Above with a group of Ministers I had taught in 2000 and below with the Synod Bishop (Festus Bwembya Chulu) and the General Secretary (Chipasha Musaba) of the UCZ



Mtendere area

On Sunday 26th January I was with St John's Mtendere which is linked with Salisbury URC, Salisbury Methodist Church and Bemerton Methodist Church. Here I once again preached and having spent time with Jenny Featherstone, I preached on the environment, which linked in with the UCZ lectionary theme for that day of New Year, New Hope.



It was rather nice that when I presented the Lectern sized Prayer Manual I could point out that today was Day 26 when the Southampton District is remembered.

I met the Minister Revd Mwaka Phiri, who had visited Salisbury and stayed with Anna Bishop and family in 2017 and the consistory Deaconess, Majorie Mvula, who showed me around the premises and introduced me to the many groups who were meeting after Church. I met up with Majorie later in the week. She had not been aware of the Link, so it was a very helpful meeting.



With Deaconess Majorie

The Church is in a poorer area of Lusaka (compared with St Andrews) but the church was full on 26th January (they had combined the two services) and there were 5 choirs taking part in the worship. All sang extra anthems for the visitor!

The 5 Choirs being Men's Christian Fellowship

Women's Christian Fellowship

Praise Team

The Anointed Shepherds Choir

And the largest one - over 100 members in the St John's Choir

A few comments about the church, which has over 1000 members:

The Consistory (Circuit in Methodist terms) called Chelston has 19 churches

Majorie is the Deaconess for the whole consistory, but she lives on the St John's site with her children – two daughters Gracious aged 16 and Marvellous aged 14. Her husband died in an RTA 3 years ago – on a motorbike.

There are 6 large churches including St John's and the others are smaller. She chairs / convenes their CDSJC meeting -Community Development Social Justice Committee - not the Minister, as it is diaconal work.. I told her about our Salisbury Justice and Peace Group, and she was very interested in this.

She has a youth project which has been grateful for TWAM (a Baptist group) -Tools with a Mission – who send tools to Zambia.

Caversham Heights MC, which was linked with Mindolo UCZ, used to collect for TWAM for that same reason, and later in my Ministry, St Albans Baptist Church collected for TWAM because a key lay person had worked as a lay missionary in Zambia. And I suggested we make this an ecumenical venture in St Albans.

So, one idea for us in Salisbury would be an annual collection for TWAM.

Majorie's project is in a poor area and she is trying to teach skills to unemployed youths. Unemployment is very high here esp. amongst the young - I was told by a school principal that 60% of the population is under 25.

At St John's there are usually services on a Sunday at 6.30am and 9.00am and there are the 5 aforementioned choirs.

There is a daily prayer meeting called Morning Glory - Monday to Saturday – for an hour from 5.30am. Prayers before work. I join with Harnham Parish for morning prayers at 9.00am and we had a visitor from Nigeria with us for a couple of months, over visiting family in Harnham, and she thought our prayers very late and very short as she too was used to something like Morning Glory at St John's.

St John's also has an Intercessory prayer group on Thursdays from 16.00 until 18.00

On Tuesdays the Women's Christian Fellowship visit the sick – home and hospital, lonely, bereaved and housebound. It is called Visitation Day, and it is other WCF members they visit.

The Congregation is divided into 13 sections with a section elder responsible for caring for those in their section, like the old Methodist class system.

Bible study groups meet on Thursdays and on Sundays after church.

GB and BB meet after church each week - like at St Andrew's

Sunday School is at 7. 00am each Sunday during first service

There are 3 classes of Catechumens with about 35 in each, a 6 month course preparing for church membership.

Infant Baptisms – many in a year – usually January and December- and even on Christmas Day, with a course of preparation for parents

Adult baptisms when there is a need, following a 6-month course.

Weddings -2 to 4 on average per year

St Johns is a young congregation. So only about 1 -2 funerals a month.

Holy Communion is on the first Sunday of each month there. In the smaller churches it might be on the second or 3rd Sunday. The Deaconess has dispensation for HC across the consistory. After HC service, elders take HC to the sick and housebound etc.

Preaching plan done by a team – lay and ordained – the chairperson of the consistory who is the senior ordained person heads it up – like our Superintendent.

Women's Christian Fellowship (WCF) do a 6-month teaching programme before admittance – called Blousing – in August. There are about 50 in training at the moment.

Men's Christian Fellowship (MCF)-they follow the same process and their initiation ceremony is called Badging, which also takes place in August

MCF meet after church on Sundays for those who have jobs in the week and same with WCF, but they also have midweek meetings for others.

My final Sunday was spent in the **Matero consistory, Lilanda Congregation**, and it was February 2nd and in thanksgiving for the work of Anna Chaplains, I asked if I could preach on the Presentation of Christ in the Temple - Luke 2 v 22-40 rather than their lectionary, as this date only comes on a Sunday once every 6 years! The minister, the Reverend Bertha agreed.



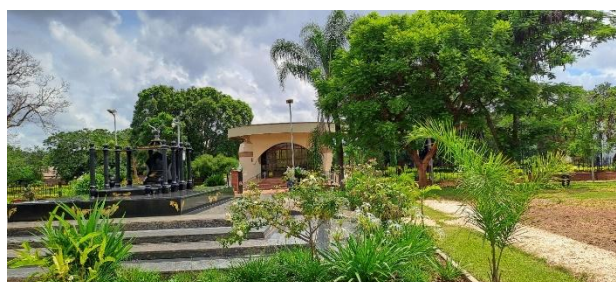
I took Whiteson and Justina out for a meal on Sunday evening Feb 2nd and then it was time to depart on Monday, with many feelings of thankfulness. and sadnesses too. I did fall in love with Zambia in 1999 and our first visit was responsible for our lives being changed in many ways. In 2015 we thought it was goodbye to Zambia but now I have had a new hello!



Meal out in Lusaka with Mpala, sister of Chinyanta who was a member of my late parents' church in Watford. Her partner is a refugee from Rwanda.

So many reflections:

It is such an obviously new participatory democracy in that so many are keen to talk politics with you and they all have an opinion. I was glad to have been taken to **Embassy Park** where the 5 deceased Presidents are buried and each Mauselum is built to represent aspects of their presidency. And from this visit and so many conversations, I have a better feel for what each President is remembered for. KK has been restored from how he was talked about on our first visit in 1999, partly because of all he achieved after he left office, and also remembered fondly as the Father of the new Nation but general criticism for how he went on for too long in power



Looking back

1. 1999 James and I first visited Zambia – thanks to a wonderful member Martyn Allies of Caversham Heights Methodist Church who, in 1998 (he was very keen on twinning) asked me if I could set up a link with one of my friends who was a Mission Partner. “We are a rich church” he said, “and we need to learn from others in poorer places”. Martyn and Lily had such a wide vision and never lost that commitment.

Martyn had been part of setting up the link with Dusseldorf after the 2WW. He was an amazing man and he and his wife are two of our special people – both now deceased.

So, I pondered and chose friends in Zambia –Caroline and Andrew Wickens - partly because they were good friends and also, they had offered for Ordination from the Reading Circuit, so they knew our context. Also living in the Circuit there was as a Supernumerary Methodist Presbyterian, the infamous Merfyn Temple, who preached at the inauguration of the link at Caversham Heights in 1998. And also, for me personally, it was nice because of my late relatives who had been missionaries in Northern Rhodesia Revd Ernest and Mrs Muriel Stamp, both of whom Merfyn knew. Caroline and I – all blue air letters in those days..... were determined the Link should outlive our times in both places. It was ratified by their Copperbelt Presbytery in 1998, and in 1999 I also had a meeting with the then Africa Secretary’ Roy Crowder (who later was a church member of mine in St Albans!!) and he made lots of useful comments, e.g. the link should not just be about money, but also about issues.

At this time my churches were very involved in Jubilee 2000 and ecumenically with that too, and James and I organised a group to go to Birmingham in 1998 and Cologne in 1999 and Italy 2000, and then went onto Make Poverty History, all of connected with the Zambia link...

Indeed, in June 1999 James and I went on a Jubilee 2000 march in Kitwe with Caroline and Andrew.. This was most moving – this was for real – not a middle-class hobby in Reading..

But at this time (1999) in Zambia life expectancy was about 40 and so so many were dying of a *mysterious illness*. The local graveyard was full of graves of babies and children; it was awful and everyone we knew was affected in some way, e.g. looking after orphans.. I wept bitterly when the Reverend Teddy Kalongo took me to the Chingolo Road Cemetery. So many young lives cut so very short. This first visit to Zambia changed our lives and led to us offering to be mission partners – our friends

and our church members in all the churches with whom I worked in the Reading Circuit – 2 Methodist and 2 LEPs all noticed how something had changed in us

So, thank you Caroline and Andrew, and also to the Reverend Dr Teddy Kalongo, who we met for the first time in May 1999

2. In November 2000 Caroline was due a furlough visit to the UK but needed someone to cover her New Testament teaching for November 2000 and their set text was the subject of my MPhil (the Epistle of James), so she (again blue air letters) asked if I could come out and cover....

And all my lovely folks in Reading said “Yes” – even those in churches not linked with Mindolo They said if having a link meant they wanted to borrow our minister then go with our blessing and so I did...

And now the mysterious illness had been named – HIV/AIDs posters were everywhere and even the GB were doing role plays about how to say NO to unwanted sex....

What a difference in 18 months, and the UCZ and other churches were at last confronting the issue..... all churches of all denominations, and were doing things to combat HIV/Aids. Often led by the RC Church.

At this time so many children (still a lot today) were not in school and community schools were being set up and one of the students took me to Racecourse Community School – of which you have already heard, and Caversham Heights supported this school from 2001- until 2023...Amazing, and they are remembered fondly.

In 1999 and 2000 the Theological College also asked for books and computers - all of which CHMC responded with ... And because they went to Zambia, the Church also started a regular collection for TWAM -Tools with a Mission.

They did so much – Martyn in his 80s had so much energy and so did the whole church at this time. The GB linked with Mindolo GB, and the GB officer went out to Zambia, along with a Junior Church teacher. Three young people went out – 2 post A-level and pre-University and worked on a street children project, and one medical student did a placement with the aforementioned Dr Rachel Thomas.

CHMC paid for folks from Mindolo to come to Caversham. The Link continued well after Caroline and I left both places.

3. Our next visit was in Feb 2003 – Caroline and Andrew were now in Kenya, so we had one week in Mindolo and then 2 weeks in Kenya with them

Our main focus was the Racecourse Community School, as well as the church and the college

And now what was different?

Jubilee 2000 success meant that all under 5s in Zambia could have measles injections , so infant mortality was improving, plus President Levy Mwanawasa changed a very awful law, which the Wickens had brought to our attention – when a man died his family could seize the property and leave the widow and children homeless...

Caroline and Andrew helped out folks like this and in 2001 when two men we knew had died they asked us if we could buy their widows and children a house each, which we did, of course. And one widow (Evelyn) we met in 2003 and 2015 and 2025 and fortunately she has remained well..... and in that house.. And her son is now a Minister.



On Sunday 12th January 2025 at Mindolo with Mrs Evelyn Bwalya whose husband Oswald died in 2001 and whose son Jedidiah is now a Minister. We had met Evelyn and Jedidiah in January 2015 also.

4. Our next visit all came about a lot later. I received an official invitation as the Minister of Caversham heights MC to the Golden Jubilee of the UCZ.... I checked with the then Minister of CHMC, but she did not want to go... I really did want her to go, but instead and encouraged by Teddy Kalongo, James and I booked leave and headed for Zambia – we thought we were closing that chapter of our lives....

What were the main changes this time? When we arrived at Ndola Airport, for the first time ever, we had our temperatures taken, why? Because of the Ebola outbreak in the DRC, and then we also saw lots of Chinese people at the airport - that was new. In Kitwe, shopping malls had started to appear..

5. So now in 2025 what are the main changes that I have observed– **PLASTIC** bottles - in 2015 they were still using glass ones with moneys back on return.. and now it is plastic and hardly anyone is talking about recycling It is so upsetting - below *bottles in my flat from my time at Mindolo*



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Friday a member at St Andrew's Lusaka who is passionate about recycling plastic bottles. He is also the member who is helping with the GB and BB links



A rubbish dump outside a Lusaka township where people pick up things for which they can get money – like plastic bottles

6. But what is my main hope? - that the wretched **school uniform policy** will change - I have come across so many children excluded from school because of the uniform policy - like 20 of Caroline's children at *Caring Hearts* (January 12th visit)

Schools don't have uniform banks and each school has a different uniform and within that school there are different uniforms .. so, the current President (HH) might have made schools free for all ages BUT they still need to provide school uniforms, shoes, pens, books and bags, so, a lot of the children I saw in the townships of Kitwe will never get educated but thanks be to God for Caroline and Jane and others who work to keep them off the streets.

Sri Lanka has lessons to teach here - it might look boring, but in Sri Lanka every Government School has virtually the same uniform – a bit of variation of colour of ties and socks and accessories but the basics are the same everywhere, so if you move, no more expenses, you can pass down clothes easily and there is no stigma as to which school you go to.... (when I was in Sri Lanka, I did think this was an excellent idea - the only thing is that they have chosen white as the colour and it used to amaze me was how clean the uniforms were, when my white clothes never seemed as clean!!) but here in Zambia the uniform issue drives me mad.

And so that would be one hope that I would have for the future here... I doubt I will be returning, but if I did, the change I would hope to see is an improvement in the school situation – having made it all now free, they need more teachers and schools but there is no hope for the future of these poor children unless they can get an education And no uniform bar to going to school.

Education education education..... where did we hear that??

One friend from the UK sent me a message saying I should be glad I was away from President Trump as he was not good for mental health. But I was NOT far from away from him at all in that he was often talked about – like what happened on Capitol Hill- if it had happened in an African country how condemning of it USA would have been....

And then I was there when the **USAID** was being withdrawn – I met Zambians who had been told to pack up their desks and go home. I heard of projects which were to end, and the main worry – USAID fund Anti-Retroviral drugs (anyone born HIV positive is put on these drugs for life) but funded by USAID. Of course, the middle classes and the rich will be able to buy them, but many of the children I met on the Kitwe projects were on these drugs and they would not have the means to buy them...

And **Rwanda** - Zambians were appalled that the UK were going to send refugees here – how much did your government pay for that? Their regime is likened to East Germany prior to 1989, and Zambia receives many refugees from Rwanda – I met one (a physiotherapist) who could not even return to Rwanda for his mother's funeral, as he would not have been safe.

There are 3 large refugee camps in Zambia – one on the Angolan border, two on the DRC border (Zambia have been receiving refugees from the DRC for many decades) but there are now economic migrants from Zimbabwe, refugees from Rwanda, and more recently refugees coming on lorries from South Sudan via Tanzania. I heard no one criticise the presence of refugees. Zambians admire Botswana as a well-run country (but of course a lot smaller country to govern – like comparing UK with a Scandinavian country!). I also did not know about the deal with Arsenal FC and the Rwandan Government which is much condemned in Zambia – paying Arsenal £30 million for them to wear “Visit Rwanda” on their shirts when that money could have gone to the poor in Rwanda.

I was amazed at how politically aware people were -not just about their country but the world - and also at how much interest they took in UK football – they even knew about my lowly team – I said you won't know it - Watford FC (they replied middle of the championship and Elton John!), which is why they knew all about Arsenal's deal with the Rwandan government and I did not!!

Church

I obviously spent most of my time with churches and church members and it is so hard to explain our UK context. In Zambia they are building bigger churches (Mindolo being one of many examples) and churches in areas where there are none. Youth work is thriving and so it was very hard for the Zambians to imagine our British situation. I met with lay and ordained leaders in each place.

The UCZ churches are largely lay led and often the only part of worship taken by a minister was HC and, as I was there, the sermon. But they do have many lay preachers also. So each service was shared out by members of the church. Sometimes I did wish the Minister had taken the intercessions which were often very long and loud. And there is always lots of singing and many choirs. The singing was often beautiful and there were a lot of extra anthems for my benefit!



Sunday 2nd February in the garden with Whiteson and Justina. Holy Communion Sunday means they wear their MCF and WCF uniforms.

Towards the end of my visit, I did have a 2-day holiday (paid for by myself!) in the **South Luangwa National Park** which was wonderful, and I saw this beautiful leopard, only about 12 feet away from me. I had never been to this National Park before and it was a super time. It was not the tourist season, and I was the only guest where I was staying and the park was empty of tourists, so it was quiet and peaceful.





My final reflection – I am so pleased I got Covid when I did – how would I have coped with the temperatures of October 2024 (37- 40 Celsius) and the workload and plus a country very brown and dry? But the rains had come in mid-December, and everything was so green and there was rejoicing every time it rained, and delight in healthy maize crops.

There were however many power cuts during my time in Zambia, because of the lack of water in Lake Kariba. after many years of low rainfall. This is so hard for the majority of the population who do not have solar power. The country relies on HEP but the smoke is thundering again on the Zambezi. Last year, up until the rains came in December, people were walking on the empty riverbed. I visited here with Jenny Featherstone, whilst with her in Choma. A beautiful sight. Mosi-oa-Tunya (Victoria Falls)



I might have missed the celebrations on 24th October 2024 for 60 years of Zambian Independence but I had very wonderful time in January 2025.

Thank you to everyone who made the visit possible.

And how can you help Zambia in any way?

There are many of you who are supporting charities and NGOs who work in Zambia. For information, the Baptist organisation *Tools with a Mission* supports Zambia, and I met a Deaconess whose project benefitted from goods received from them. So, this is one idea for churches wanting to support Zambia. <https://www.twam.uk/>

And, if you were not able to attend the service at Salisbury Methodist Church on Sunday, 26th January 2025, celebrating Zambia's 60 years of Independence and 60 years of the UCZ and if you want to learn more about Zambia, then please go to the Salisbury Methodist Church website to share in the Service

<https://youtu.be/flFjt9KT7p0>

What else could we do?

If your church is interested in twinning, then please do get in touch with me.

rosemary.fletcher@methodist.org.uk The agreed criteria for links are people, prayer, perceptions, so please don't think they are all about money.

If anyone is interested in having a talk or a World Church Service on my time in Zambia then please do get in touch.

The United Church of Zambia University has set up the Peggy Hiscock fund which supports those who have a discerned vocation for ministry but cannot afford to train. Maybe the Southampton District could send a grant in memory of Peggy?

Thank you to all who supported this visit and to all those who made it possible.

The Reverend Rosemary Fletcher, Southampton District Global Relationships Officer,
March 2025