

**Zambia Personal Diary – Simon Vibert**  
**18<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April

Arrived into Lusaka on the overnight from Heathrow.

Not-a-lot of sleep but all smooth.

I was met at the airport by Bishop Jim Nyirongo, father of one of my students, David.

He and his wife Gladys (a local MP) have made me very welcome.

Their house is full of children – only 1 of their six still lives at home – but as is quite common with African Pastors they have several adoptees living with them.

I spent some time relaxing and preparing to preach at the mother church of 13 churches which Jim is Bishop over in the morning.

Food so far is: lots of eggs! Cold baked beans (?) tea with lemon (milk not being readily available). Gladys asked me whether I would like chicken for dinner – which I said would be fine – we could have one of those making a racket outside my room, I joked, that would be fine she said – free range is nice!

Got woken at 3am by the sound of loud shouting – it turns out that Jim and Gladys get up at that time of day every Sunday morning to intercede for Zambia – and African's don't pray silently!

**Sunday**

We skipped the 7am prayer meeting and arrived in time for the 9am Bible Study followed by the main meeting which finished at 11.30am. I preached on "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" Philippians 1:21. They seemed very content that I preached for an hour! I discovered in the closing notices that I am also preaching at the 4pm service! Good job I keep a few sermons up my sleeve – and I wear long sleeves!

The singing was exuberant as ever. A congregation of a couple of hundred, I guess. A few firsts for me: live chickens brought up as part of the offering! And anointing a new car and praying for safety in driving for the owner after the service.

One other first for me today was eating Caterpillar! To be daring, I capitulated to Jim's caterpillar delicacy. Apparently a privilege, but it tasted disgusting!

**Monday**

A short trip to the internet café to drop a note home – very slow connection! Then on the road to the conference centre just north of Ndola.

The location was chosen to suite the group who travelled from North Zambia to our preaching conferences in Tanzania. However as of this evening they have not turned up yet. Incidentally I hadn't realised that Zambia is encircled by no less than 8 nations. Starting at the north (12 o'clock) and working clockwise – Zaire (Congo); Tanzania; Malawi; Mozambique; Zimbabwe (roughly 6 o'clock); Botswana; Namibia and Angola.

In the car Jim shared a bit more with me about the difficult time they have been going through as a family. Gladys is a politician, a reluctant but good one, who was elected on the ticket of moral uprightness. She has pledged to fight corruption and bribery. She was nominated to be Vice President of the country but a smear campaign has meant that she is in the midst of court proceedings. Regrettably, all too African.

We arrived in good time – about 2.30pm. Two hours ahead of when the group leaders are supposed to be here. Come 6pm no one else present! The two local coordinators and a few delegates turned up. So we met after dinner – by which time we were up to 12 – and decided to postpone the evening meeting and squeeze the evening's events into tomorrow's already packed programme. We still hope for a full complement tomorrow – which is probably about 2 dozen. But another familiar African trait is arriving not just minutes or hours late for meetings, but if Tanzania is anything to go by, days!

The country is not spectacularly beautiful. It is quite lush (the rains have just ended) and flat. It feels more prosperous than Tanzania. In fact, here in Ndola, in the Copperbelt, there has been good income until the copper mine closed just recently due to the world wide credit crunch.

No wildlife yet. Although if John Stott were here he might be able to name some of the spectacular and tuneful birds that are around.

## **Tuesday**

Today was my heavy teaching day. We have remained at 10 participants (+2 facilitators), which is a bit of a shame, but they are receptive and enthusiastic.

There are a dozen students here at the Glo bible school and Joseph has students at their school who are currently on holiday break. It seems to me that these students could be involved if there is a future event. There may be some more careful follow up of people required. Jim Nyirongo has 12 other Pastors in his Church plants who could be encouraged to come in the future?

We had no electricity for most of the day today. When it did come back in the evening I attempted to use the internet here but never succeeded in actually loading my web mail – it was just too slow!

Food has been rice, cabbage, chicken, mince with ugali. Most of them wash their hands and eat with their fingers – finding it slightly odd that me and one or two others still ask for a fork!

## **Wednesday**

We had a visit from the executive director of Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, Bishop Paul Mususu who drove 350km to be with us, and returned before lunch. He is shortly to become the bishop of Evangelical Church in Zambia which has 1,000 congregations. He was quite candid about the state of the evangelical church. He said we know that Church in England has lost its way but we are struggling in other areas.... There is teaching which is false and shallow, there is a lack of willingness to give and change lives as a result of the Gospel. "What has gone wrong?" he asked.

In his view, one of the main problems is the weakness of preaching and the need for pastors to nourish and feed the flocks... Hence he was very enthusiastic about the vision of Langham and pledged support.

We had a good closing exposition today from Conrad on Romans 1:16f. the same passage which the delegates had worked on this afternoon to produce homiletical outlines.

The close of the meeting was quite funny because Conrad slightly overran before lunch. Whilst he was in full flight a frog hopped down to the front of the room and one wag chirped: Look God is warning you as he warned Pharaoh, he is saying: "Let my people go!"

Electricity has been off most of the day again today.

## **Thursday**

I am sure that sleeping on a water bed has an adverse affect on my bladder control! I didn't sleep very well last night. I feel like I am at sea!  
It is quite windy, overcast and (relatively cool).  
However the rains have finished – and they don't expect any more rain until the autumn.

Food is well prepared and the staff here at Glo are eager to serve, although tonight was probably a new cross cultural food low for me – beans, cabbage and rice, hmm, yummy!

## **Friday**

We finished the morning with a talk from me on "Growing as a Preacher" (In which I sought to encourage them to grow in expository preaching but not beyond it) and another good bible exposition from Conrad.

My reflections on the week's seminar are: It has been great to work with Conrad. He is a fine and challenging preacher and I am pleased he has been invited to be a Keswick speaker this year – he will go down very well. It might be helpful for him to have a better orientation to the pattern and flow of the flow of the hermeneutical and homiletical parts of the seminar. Local

organisation has been poor. Much better use of networks would have been important with personal follow up of invites. Having said that: this was a good core group who could be persuaded to come again and be small group leaders. Links with Glo and Ticka should be furthered so that we get the students from both institutions at the seminars. Joseph's presence here is important for that and he has been a key player. It is disappointing that Felix and the 9 from the north of the country never arrived – they were expected and this was one of the justifications for being in Ndola – one assumes that something happened at the last minute to prevent them being here. The strong support of Bishop Paul Masusu should mean that he can attract more here next time. Conclusion: this was a good start – as much for building the networks as anything else – and we should consider repeating level one next April at a time that works well for both lots of students.

Our 2 hour journey southwards to the home of Pastor Jim went smoothly. We are joined by a Kenyan, Johnny, who is tagging along for the trip to Livingstone.

After a great meal (of chicken with chilli AND Beef in sauce!) we headed to bed early so that we could be on the road at 3.30am!

## **Saturday**

A very early start which got us down to the Falls at 10am, despite the fact that the last bit of the road is in an appalling state of affairs. Given this is one of the 7 wonders of the world it is quite surprising that they have not moved faster in repairing it.

The Zambezi Sun is, certainly by African standards, quite luxurious. My staying here is an advantage the others too – they can get free access to the Falls from the hotel grounds. We had a first trip down. They are as you might expect, stunning. We are just past the end of the rainy season so the amount of water flowing of the edge is enormous.

The Great Explorer David Livingstone wrote in 1855 upon his visit to the Victoria Falls

*Creeping with awe to the verge, I peered down into a large rent which had been made from bank to bank of the broad Zambezi, and saw that a stream of a thousand yards broad leaped down a hundred feet and then became suddenly compressed into a space of fifteen to twenty yards....the most wonderful sight I had witnessed in Africa." ...."No one can imagine the beauty of the view from anything witnessed in England. It had never been seen before by European eyes, but scenes so lovely must have been gazed upon by angels in their flight.*

Locals call the Falls the "Smoke that Thunders" ... you can see what looks like smoke from miles away, caused but the massive amount of spray. This means that you cannot get a view of the whole width of them from the land at this time of year. Nevertheless, this does not distract from the wonderful spectacle.

I decided to skip dinner at \$39 per head and have a hot chocolate instead (with expectation to fully refuel at breakfast!). Quite a lot of commotion and business at the hotel because the President was here for a function. But as I watched the Africans fussing over the red carpet etc. I could only think of the Mr Bean Sketch where he meets the queen! The President is

quite a good man, though, I think (The President of Zambia, that is!). From all accounts he seems to be a Christian. He wanted Gladys as his VP, but this smear campaign has probably put paid to that. John made an interesting comment which I have not been able to quite process: namely, that all the French run colonies have had huge amounts of toil and political unrest – Burundi, Zimbabwe etc. but the English colonies have fared much better. Interesting.

## **Sunday**

Breakfast was very good and quite entertaining. Baboons do their utmost to pinch residents' breakfast – and occasionally succeed running off with a piece of fruit or cake. Local security men try to keep them at bay with stones slung by a slingshot, but they are very tame. One leapt on my table and grabbed a slice of toast. A few minutes later he returned for the marmalade, but also bared his teeth at me which was a bit disconcerting!

A relaxed day preparing Bible by the Beach Seminars and exercising a bit. I walked down to the Boiling Pot today yesterday. 672 metres down (and up!) to see the collision of the rivers and falls creating an appearance of water gushing down a huge plughole!

Dr Nage Charavanapavan, a GP of 24 years here in Livingstone, originally from Sri Lanka, collected me along with Johnny and Jim to go to local small game park. Not very many animals there: impala, wild boar, a monitor lizard and lots of pretty birds.

This has been a good couple of days to relax and see a site of outstanding natural beauty, but I am ready to go home. This starts with the long reverse journey to Lusaka when we shall stay overnight ready for the flight home early Tuesday.

## **Monday**

I managed to check in online for the hotel. This has been a nice place, a bit pricey, but a perfect end to a busy week. Hard for Carrie for me to be away with June so ill – my 8 minute call to her cost \$38 dollars on the hotel phone (I made two of those on my mobile too!).

I swam a bit in the pool before packing up. We walked over the bridge that links the Zambian and Zimbabwe and just crossed over the other side!

6 hours up to Lusaka (Jim doing a very good job driving us again). Some African driving habits are still a bit perplexing to me though: as far as I can tell switching on your right indicator can mean

- please keep to your side of the road
- you may overtake me if you wish (although I can't see how you don't confuse that with a turn right signal)
- I intend to overtake at some point in the near future (within the next 10 minutes)
- or of course, the slightly more conventional, I am turning right

It has been quite expensive with my personal fuel for Lusaka – Livingstone coming in at over £100. Plus other incidentals for the team added up. However, it is a privilege to be involved in this teaching role, a joy to meet Jim and Gladys and see their good ministry, and a good start here in Zambia. The added bonus of a trip to the falls, ably hosted by Jim, was quite an effort, not least for him, but well worth it. I am ready to return home in the morning.