Zambia "Vision Trip" After-action Report

September 2015

A lot can happen in two weeks, and in Zambia our group of 18 saw, learned, sang, and experienced a lot.

Let me divide my report on the trip into four parts: 1) our plan, 2) where we went, 3) what we did, and 4) what we accomplished.

THE PLAN

"On July 15th the largest LGPC team to Zambia will be leaving to build on our thirteen year relationship with the people of Sinazongwe. Given our choir's close involvement in the ministry - including three benefit concerts - this year's mission extends that involvement in what will be a Musical Exchange: We'll be singing in worship with choirs from Lusaka (Zambian capital) and Sinazongwe...." – Jeff Kempe, Vision Trip Blogger and Photographer.

In addition to singing, we will be bringing money and gifts to each church, school, and clinic we visit. We'll be gathering requests for additional classroom and medical clinic materials and classrooms needed to accommodate growing schools we helped build, to be brought back for consideration for future contributions by our church, Lake Grove Presbyterian Church (LGPC), and their members.

Twelve "sponsored children" in the region will receive a visit from church members who've been supporting them and their family, bringing gifts and food for their entire family.

We will be visiting churches, schools, and villages where the basics of WAter, Sanitation, and Hygiene ("WASH") have been established though World Vision with support from LGPC and other donor organizations, to see where our donations have improved the lives of these communities.

And then we'll have one day at the end where we'll just be tourists.

WHERE WE WENT

We visited three areas in Zambia:

- 1. Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. We stayed in the tourist zone and visited schools and clinics being assisted by the local Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) chapter and by our church, Lake Grove Presbyterian Church (LGPC).
- 2. Sinazongwe, a district in the Southern Province of Zambia, on the north shore of Lake Kariba. It is a district of many poor villages and several towns, with a population of 80,000. We stayed in the actual village of Sinazongwe, at Lakeview Lodge on Lake Kariba. World Vision has been leading "area development" there for about 17 years, with the support of individual sponsors and sponsoring churches like LGPC.
- 3. Livingstone, a tourist town that features Victoria Falls (the Zambezi River cascades over the falls and eventually becomes Lake Kariba), and Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, a wildlife safari park.

WHAT WE DID

Lusaka

Friday we arrived at Lusaka's airport, and were transported to our hotel via "The Jesus Bus" belonging to the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, driven by their impeccably-dressed ministers.



The bus wasn't as impeccable, but got us around Lusaka for the days we were under their care.





We stayed at perhaps the nicest hotel in Lusaka, the Southern Sun Ridgeway, and our rooms were prepared with welcome gifts from the local World Vision staff!



One of the cool features of the hotel was the atrium with weaver bird nests and miniature crocodiles in the pool.





We exchanged our dollars for Kwacha, the Zambian currency. I had to test the money to see if it worked: one Coca-cola coming right up!



Saturday we spent the whole day rehearsing with the Matero Presbyterian Church and their several choirs.

They have an interesting building, well-built for the area, with concrete walls, no-glass windows, corrugated steel roofs nailed to wooden timbers, and mostly-working electricity and therefore also a backup generator. This is an above-average quality of construction for non-touristic Lusaka generally.



Though Matero Pres Church is close to the tourist zone we were staying at, their neighborhood shows that there are at least two Zambias: one is comfortably well off and has Western levels of sanitation and hygiene.

The church is in a rather poor area, typical of the non-tourist zone of Lusaka. At least they have brick walls!



Matero is aspiring to that level, having built "modern" restrooms, which they proudly showed off when giving us the tour of the church and the church-run school building.



This is how the "shower" works: you run the sink's faucet to fill the water barrel. Then you ladle it over your head in the "shower stall" and the water drains out the hole at the bottom of the wall:





LGPC bought food that the locals cooked over an open fire as lunch for us and the entire church congregation, about 120 people. The result was excellent. They made rice for the Westerners, but nshima is what the locals prefer. Nshima looks like mashed potatoes, but it is essentially congealed corn starch, and has zero nutritional value except what it gains by being paired with actual food.



After rehearsal we visited the church's school classrooms; four rooms that span grades K-7:



Sunday our choir and their three choirs sang at Sunday church service, lasting several hours.



Afterwards we shook the hands of everyone in congregation, using the special way that Zambians shake hands.



On the way back from Matero church, we got a short driving tour of Lusaka and came face-to-face with the Two Zambias issue. These two photos were taken only a few blocks away from each other:

Zambia One, a world-class soccer stadium:



Zambia Two, a typical shanty home. Note the high-tech method of securing the tin roof using stones:



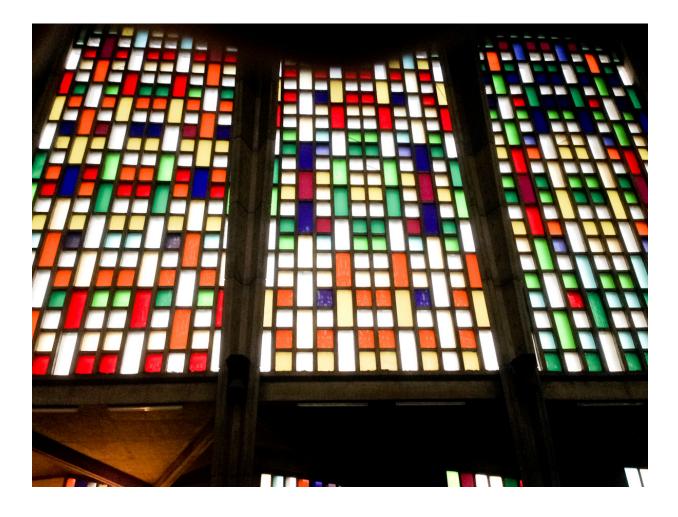
Driving a little farther we passed by a lush area of gardens near open water, and were nearly overcome by a powerful stench; the water was the open-air sewer processing plant, and the thriving gardens were taking advantage of the fertile runoff!

Dinner was at a local restaurant near a shopping mall where many souvenir merchants were set up with stalls full of tourist tchotchkes. Before being let loose, our guide, Chimuka Hamudulu, instructed us on the fine art of haggling: try to pay only half of what they're asking, but settle for 25% off.



Returning to the hotel, some of us took advantage of its proximity to the Cathedral of The Holy Cross a few blocks away, so that our organist (Jeff Wood) could play the only pipe organ in Zambia. The organ was in terrible shape, sounding more like a calliope. But the building is beautiful in its own way:





In the words of Jeff Kempe, photographer and blogger:

"[**Monday**] was to be somewhat less emotionally intense. We'd visit a school run by the Central African Presbytery, have lunch then meet the World Vision staff to debrief for our trip tomorrow to Sinazongwe.

"We walked along small booths, tightly nestled on either side, each with the day's goods, mostly vegetables, fruits or fish. There were abundant flies attracted by the trash swept - neatly - into piles in the middle of the narrow alley. We'd be tempted to call it squalor.







"They'd call it feeding their family.

"At the end of the alley a slight left into a compound where: A line of uniformed children, each with a rose, each with a welcome smile. As we walked by a boy or girl would hand us a rose, take us by the hand, and lead us through a door to an under construction - and roofless - community center. There we were greeted and cheered by hundreds of others, students and members of the church.





"Mutendere School is a strongly faith based school of 327 students, grades one through seven. Those 327 students are served by five - FIVE - teachers, one of whom - Rebecca - will be leaving Wednesday to go back to her home in North Carolina after a year of volunteering. The students are learning, but the struggle is to get funding not just for supplies, but to fund grades 8 through 12.

"But the paradox, one recognized by anyone who's been to a third world country: Unmatched joy. All were kind, gentle, humble and exceedingly grateful for everything they have.

"Two hours of music sharing and laughter later, they closed with a response hymn in their own native tongue. The translation:

Let's be happy that God has allowed this.

We received the call to go to Zambia

And we said Yes.

Amen." – Jeff Kempe

Our later meeting was the transition between being guided by Central Church of Africa and by World Vision. Instead of pictures, just visualize any conference room in an American business office, but with Zambian people in it, surrounded by concrete walls topped with concertina barbed wire for security, and outside a fleet of Toyota Land Cruisers that would henceforth be our transportation to Sinazongwe.

Discussion centered on "WASH 2.0", World Vision's program to teach people how to keep water and human waste far apart, and how and when to wash their hands. This basic level of hygiene is foreign to many in the outlying provinces. Without this approach, wells drilled in a village are soon too polluted to use.

Tuesday (on the way to Sinazongwe) World Vision drove us to the AIDS/Tuberculosis clinic in Lusaka.

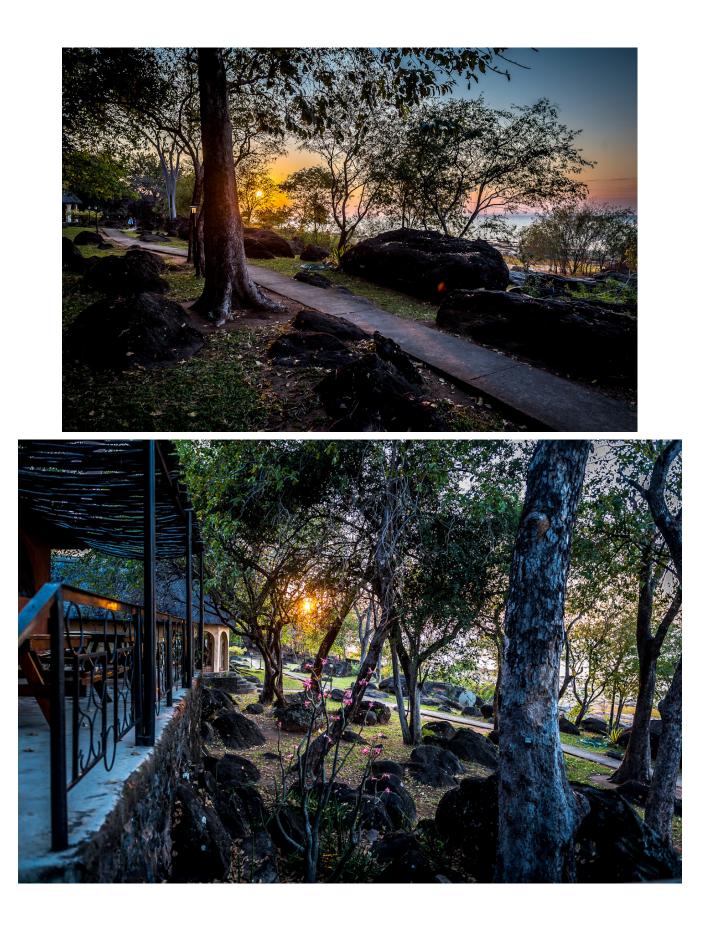
"We visited a Hospice clinic on the way down, where people come for their HIV meds, and surviving because of it. SOOO much has improved. We saw pictures of infected mothers, once shamed, and their children, beaming because they were able to give birth without passing the virus to the next generation. At the director's request, this being a music mission, we sang to the gathered patients: "The Lord Bless You and Keep You". Heart, tug..." – Jeff Kempe



The hospice part of the clinic has been closed due to a lack of funds. The emphasis now is on out-patient care providing antiretroviral drugs that has kept the HIV-positive patients from developing AIDS, and on drug treatment to prevent tuberculosis.

After a five hour trek over a mix of paved and very un-paved roads, we arrived at Lakeview Lodge on the shore of Lake Kariba (our home base for Sinazongwe) just in time for sunset:





Wednesday I am up early for a nice breakfast at the lodge so we can have a short devotional with the World Vision ADP staff. Outside the ADP staff complex we find a flock of motorcycles that their village liasons use to visit the surrounding villages; a full Toyota Land Cruiser is the wrong choice when only one person is needed to visit their charges:



As we're driven to Makonkoto School in Sinazongwe, Our awesome driver, Kenneth, is very patient with me in answering questions about the local fauna and flora, including the monstrous Boabab trees:







After very bumpy ride over pothole-strewn dirt roads, we return to pavement just before we arrive at this special school for Technological Excellence. The entire school population turned out to greet us. We were treated to excellent Zambian music, including an out-of-season rendition of "Jingle Bells".



"Perhaps the highlight was the visit yesterday to Makonkoto School, where, again, the kids were gathered for another musical exchange. Beautiful music, one of the best 1-9 schools in the region; have we mentioned beautiful people? Outside the building housing the computer lab was this plaque:

MANKONKOTO SCHOOL DEDICATED TO THE PEOPLE OF SINAZONGWE FROM LAKE GROVE CHURCH, OREGON, USA 19th JULY, 2011.

"from the money raised by the concerts put on by Sanctuary Choir." – Jeff Kempe



These are the computers (provided by Intel) in the LGPC computer lab, connected to the Internet (the kids were downloading music from Youtube):



The school was proud to show off its hand-cranked water pump and hand-washing station:





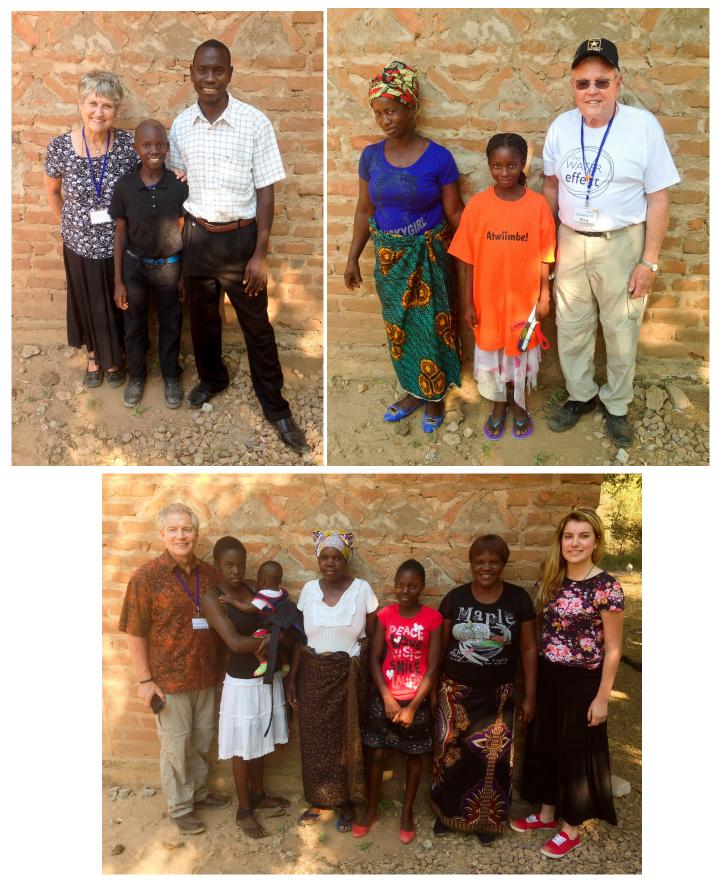
The school has its own fenced-in gardens:



They also have on-site housing for students (not pictured) and for teachers:



The afternoon is dedicated to visits of "sponsored children", kids and their families who are supported by members of Lake Grove Pres who are on this "Vision Trip". I'm the photographer to document the visits by Melinda, Doug, and Pastor Graig with their sponsored children.



We brought gifts and food (sacks of corn meal) to the families. Pastor Graig made a game of personally delivering the corn meal to the family's home:





Thursday we were transported to the Maamba Safe House, where we were welcomed by the charming youngsters with song and a gift of a wooden nshima spoon:



The safe house is a solution to a pervasive Zambian problem: in order to attend school far from home, students often rent a room near to the school. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for young girls to be sexually assaulted by their landlords. The safe house is where the girls can live safe from this kind of abuse.

They prepared a wonderful grill-prepared meal for us. LGPC donated a sewing machine to the girls in the home.



We then visited the village of Kachindu, where they've been unable to agree on who is the chief of the community (this is a big deal), so they are managing with several local village "head men" sharing the chief's responsibilities, who are doing a good job of unifying the community and getting multiple church denominations to work together. The young man in the orange shirt is Harry, the head man of Siabarwi Village. He gave full credit to the World Vision ADP staff for bringing improved sanitation and water to their area:



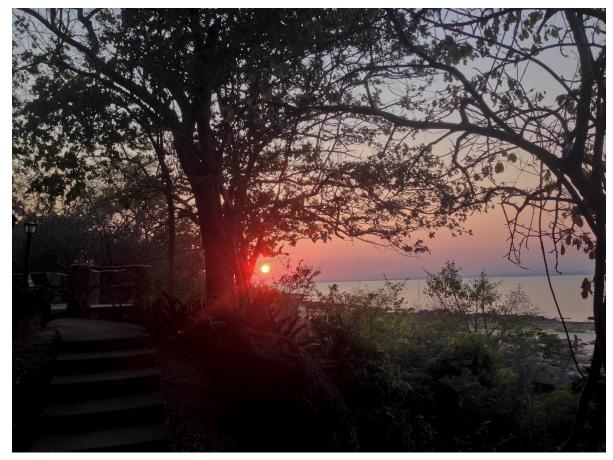
A goat pen in Kachindu:



On the way back to Lakeview lodge we encounter a common sight by the road: a woman transporting water using a 5 gallon bucket on her head. She's likely filled the bucket from a ditch full of dirty water alongside the road, and she'll walk several miles back to her home several times per day.



Friday I am awake (and this will shock people who know me well) at 6 AM, ready to take photos of the sunrise over Lake Kariba:



Then another fine breakfast in the Lakeview Lodge dining room:



Then another Toyota Land Cruiser trip over very bumpy unimproved roads to visit the Nkandabbwe Primary School:

"This morning our visit at one of the local schools – an "Education Centre of Excellence" – was dominated by music. We also observed the mechanized water system, a borehole with an electrified pump that keeps a water tower filled, servicing several faucets strategically placed around the school grounds."

"This Nkandabbwe school is the only school in the district with a music and arts program, and we loved hearing their instruments and fabulous choir." – Pastor Graig Flach, LGPC.



Their band played "Jingle Bells" for us again, which was deeply weird. Their singing was awesome, however.

The Nkandabbwe school's principal made a point of making known to us some of their needs:

- Still more sleeping accommodations for boys and for girls that attend school far from home.
- Smaller classrooms (currently 60 students per classroom).
- Needed are one or two more "2-block" classrooms.
- Interactive Computerized Teaching computer studies teaching programs (?).
- More computers: they have only 7 laptops for several hundred students who need to complete computer science proficiency exams.
- More teacher dormitories. The three they have are substandard.

I was impressed by Nkandabbwe school, but the next place I visited was actually the highlight of my trip to Zambia.

Five Siabbeula villages are united by the vision of common cause to create a farming community based on cooperation instead of competition. The leaders of these villages met with us under the "meeting tree". The visionary citizen that inspired this conglomeration is named "Friday"; the project chairman is his uncle, "Monday".



The Siabbeula fields border the Zambezi river, taking advantage of the alluvial soil from the receding lake waters.

Lake Grove supported World Vision's Siabbeula Food Security Project for 4 years. The success of the project has caused other areas to replicate their practices and achieve similar success. Take a look:







Here's "Luke"; one of three solar-powered water towers that gravity-feeds the irrigation of the fields:



(The other two water towers are named "Matthew" and "Mark".)

We returned to Lake Kariba after a full day. Katie and Zoe aren't too tired; they're fabricating "awards" for the Zambia "Go Team" members.



Later I am "gifted" with my award, which apparently is related to my ability to locate the Southern Cross in the night sky:



Lake Kariba Sunset with Troy Schmidt, our long-suffering purser:



Saturday, July 25, is the day of a huge music festival with six Sinazongwe choirs and our own LGPC choir held at the local Salvation Army church for our final day in Sinzongwe. They made a concrete bandstand just for the occasion.



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	MUSIC FESTIVALS – 25 JULY 2015			
		SALVATION ARMY		
	08:30HRS -	OPENING SONG		
		OPENING PRAYER INTRODUCTIONS WELCOMING REMARKS – PROGRAM MANAGER SONG – ADP STAFF SONG – SINAZONGWE PRAISE TEAM SONG – LGPC TEAM WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT – PST GRAIG SONG – NKANDABBWE SCHOOL SONG – KANCHINDU PRAISE TEAM SONG - MAKONKOTO – SCHOOL SONG - KENNEDY		
		LUNCH BREAK		
	14:00HRS -	SONG – LGPC TEAM		
	NTAT SIMA ANTATER.	 SONG - KANCHINDU PRAISE SONG - SINAZONGWE PRAISE SONG - KENNEDY SONG - LGPC TEAM SPEECH - KANCHINDU INTER-DENOMINATION REPRESENTATIVE SPEECH - SINAZONGWE INTER- DENOMINATION REPRESENTATIVE CLOSING REMARKS - PROGRAM MANAGER 		
-				









Spectators occasionally show approval of a performer by rushing the stage and either waving a scarf or blanket at them *during the performance*. Or perhaps they towel off their head. Seriously:



Dancing is huge in Zambia. So we taught the kids "The Hokey-Pokey":



We brought gifts for the very youngest children; some scary-looking dolls:



We also brought gifts of musical instruments from LGPC to two of the choirs (we'd previously made donations to the other choirs):



After a long day, we repaired to Lakeview Lodge. The women returning to Cabin #3 fled immediately when they discovered it occupied by monkeys, who had broken through the screen door to get at the food in the kitchen, making a big mess and leaving behind monkey poo everywhere. Men were recruited to drive the monkeys out until the staff could help clean up. In the meantime Jeff kept a close watch on them.



I don't remember which day it was, the game warden was going around reminding people to observe the "Beware of Crocodiles" sign (which is barely visible in the photo where Jeff is stalking the monkeys).

They were telling us that only a few blocks away from our lodge a young man was dragged into the lake by a crocodile.

The monkeys hung around trying to get back in, so we needed to shoo them away until nighttime, when monkeys retire to their nests. In the meantime, we hung out at the pool, enjoying the other wildlife on display:

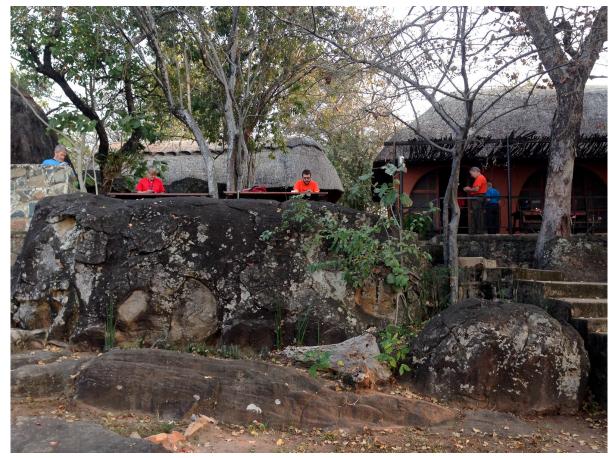


The haze from trash fires sure makes for beautiful sunrises and sunsets:





Sunday July 26th we arose early to prepare for worship with the Salvation Army Church (our host for the previous day's music festival). But first we gotta check our email (thanks to a barely-functioning Wi-Fi hotspot):



We arrived before the church members and worship team, who filtered in haphazardly so that the service started at an indeterminate time. But once they got going, we were treated to some terrific tambourine performances:



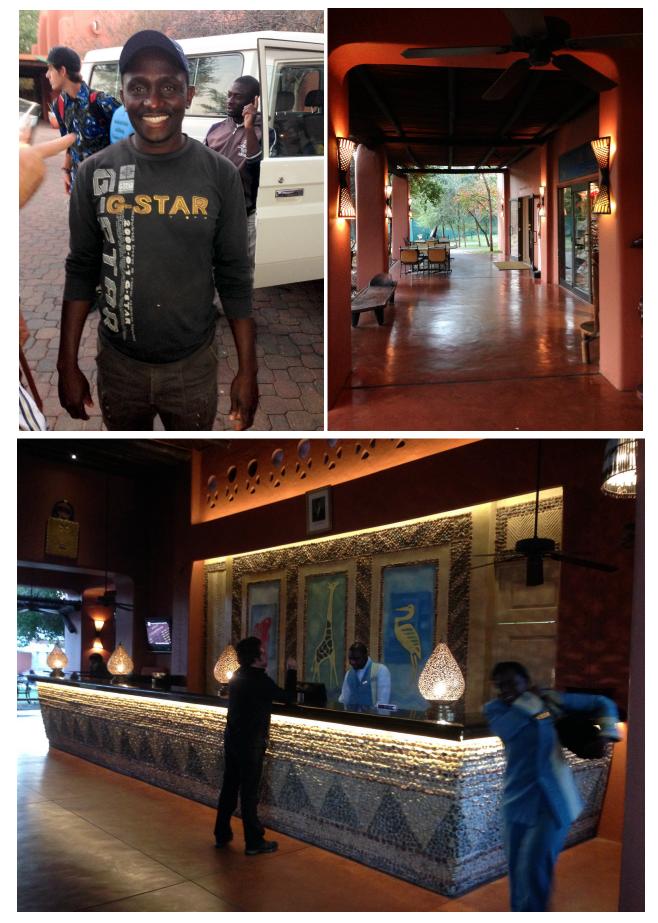
You can see the church's financial statements posted on the wall. Kwacha is roughly 10 to the dollar, so you can see their income for the month of April 2014 was only about \$180. But the May 2014 statement is particularly interesting. I didn't feel too bad about leaving only 50 Kwacha in the offering plate (all the Kwacha I had left). Our church made a much larger official contribution, of course.

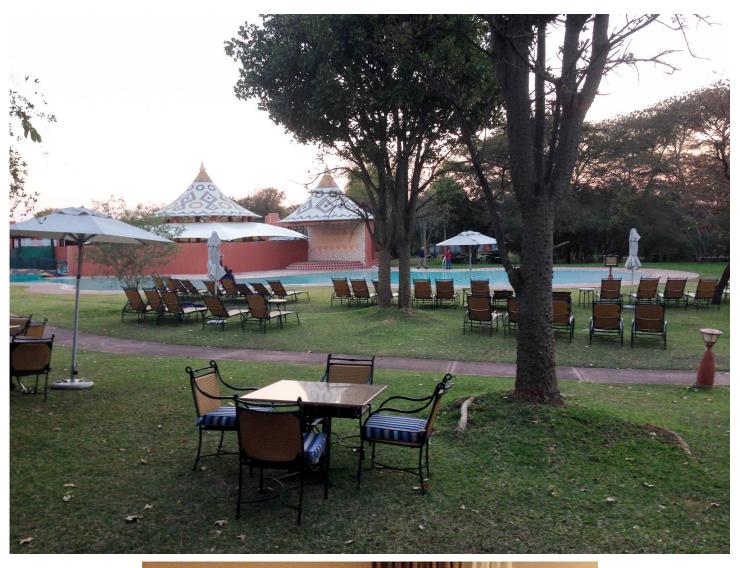
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Afterwards we drove about 5 hours from Sinazongwe to Livingstone, Zambia. Here are some more photos from Sinazongwe, taken from the Toyota Land Cruiser as we drove along the roads.



Our intrepid driver, Kenneth, safely delivered us to Livingstone, Zambia. Our lodgings there were a privation ©







We arrived in time to unpack and then it was time to go to dinner, where the buffet included crocodile stew. Katie and Zoe gave us their "paper plate" awards at this time, including my Boy Scout plate for being able to identify the Southern Cross.

Monday July 27 we left extremely early for the Mosi-o-Tunya National Wildlife Park, bundled up against the very frigid air.

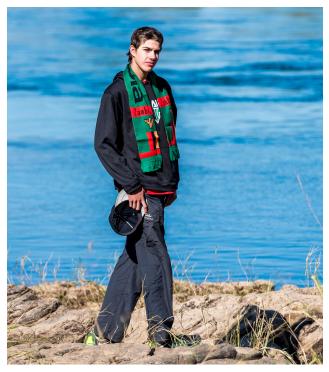


I was glad of the Zambia scarf given to us by the Sinazaongwe staff the last night we spent at Lakeview lodge! Jeff took some great photos of the animals in the Park:





Here's David showing off his Zambia scarf:

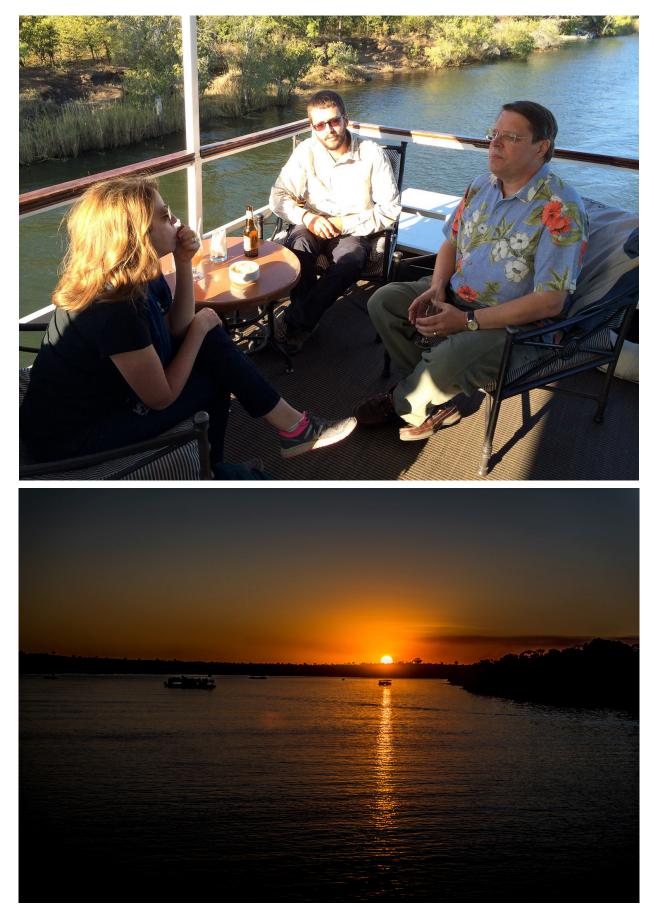


We later went to another souvenir shopping area in Livingstone, a quick dinner, and then we drove a short distance to a sunset cruise on the Zambezi river above Victoria Falls.



We were given the top deck of the boat all to ourselves.



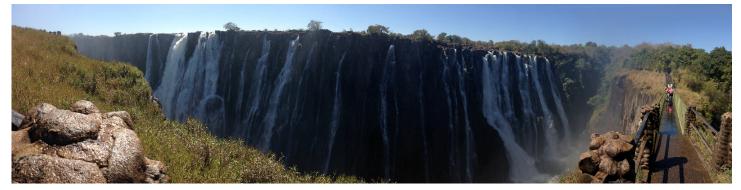


As the sun set, our little group broke out in song to close the evening. I would later learn that another church group on the deck below (who we met on the plane going home) was quite appreciative of our singing!

When the sunset cruise boat docked back at the host hotel, this scene made me think that next time we should stay here:



Tuesday July 28th I organized a dawn raid on Victoria Fall (which was a short walk from our hotel) because the previous day we'd visited it and I figured that the sun angle in the morning would produce better rainbows than the afternoon sun. I was right. This was Monday afternoon:



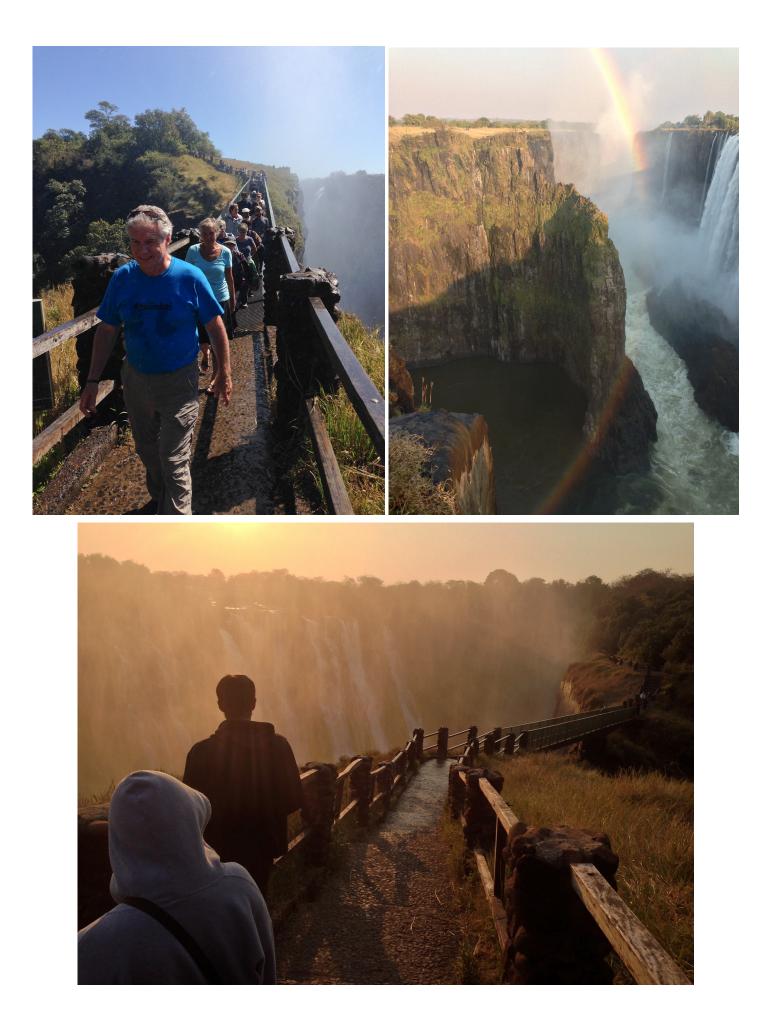
And this was Tuesday morning:



More pictures of our group at Victoria Falls:







WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

Our Lake Grove Presbyterian "Vision Tour" group went to Zambia to verify that the money people contributed over the 13 years to Zambian causes are bearing fruit in Sinazongwe, from new classroom buildings and school supplies, to HIV anti-retroviral drugs to keep patients from developing full-blown AIDS, to new water projects (wells/bore holes) and sanitation (outhouses, latrines, and full modern bathrooms).

We didn't go to Zambia to drill wells, we were there to see the wells that our money caused to be drilled, by people who will be there long after we leave and who will maintain them in good working order, keeping them clean from unsanitary conditions and from mechanical or operational failures.

Everywhere we visited we were thanked by those helped for our (and your) contributions to make those improvements to their lives. We also brought to each place we visited additional funds and supplies to continue these good works.

And we all did a lot of singing, which was an encouragement to them and to us. LGPC will continue the tradition of singing Zambian songs in our benefit concerts to increase awareness of the needs of the Zambian people, and to raise money to build classrooms and provide supplies for Zambian schools and HIV/AIDS clinics.

Lake Grove Pres and World Vision have been working in the Sinazongwe region for long enough, having brought sanitation, improved water and education to many, that we're finishing up the work there (over the next three to five years) and moving on to more needy regions in Zambia and other countries.

During this transition, LGPC and World Vision will continue to help the needy communities we visited, especially the sponsored children and the Makonkoto school.

Thanks to all of you who prayed for and/or contributed to the 2015 LGPC Zambia trip.

Sincerely, Jim "Apparently The Boy Scout" Prouty