

# PARTNER PLAN

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Dear Family and Friends

**Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**



We are writing this from Mwandi. We have been here twice in the past quarter. The first time was in the New Year as we were planning the activities for the year. We planned for a visit with the Moderator in early March and a return this week for Board Meetings but our meetings have been cancelled and we find ourselves here in self-isolation with Mubita and Ellie.

We were fortunate to receive a 50% bursary for Ellie at Chengelo School, so

we dropped her off in early January. We are grateful to friends who help with her fees. She has coped well with boarding school life, made friends and enjoys sport and the outdoor activities. With the early closing of school she is now keeping up with her school work electronically. Mubita's is more of a paper-pack set-up.



We pray for and remember our friends all over the world, as we hear of the death toll rising and people in lock-down. Here there has been one reported death and 39 confirmed cases. Njase Clinic is being used as the Choma area Corvid19 Unit. A lorry driver back from South Africa and a local taxi-driver were admitted with symptoms but released today as negative.

We spent all day last Tuesday in conclave at Synod Headquarters working on pastoral guidelines to protect the Church and keep ahead of the virus. These emphasised prevention, avoidance of overcrowding and maintaining social distancing. The UCZ were the first Zambian Church to cancel Sunday Worship. The Health Service here is very fragile and would soon be overwhelmed if things deteriorate. Most people in Lusaka and the Copperbelt live in overcrowded compounds, many are immuno-compromised and malnourishment is another problem, so the consequences of a serious outbreak here is unimaginable. There are no ventilators; testing is rudimentary and tracing does not always work. As the Italian PM said, we do our best here on earth then pray that heaven help us. That is all we can do here.

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We had a successful visit from the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Right Rev Colin Sinclair and Ruth, his wife. They were accompanied by Jennie Chinembiri and Valerie MacNiven from the former World Mission Council now Faith Impact and Cameron Brooks from Communications. It was a tight and wide-ranging schedule designed to let the party see the Church at work internally and externally and at a variety of levels. It was also great to be able to

interact with the Guild Journeying Together group who were in Lusaka to visit the Young Mothers' Empowerment Scheme that they support. Good to meet up with old friends, Carol and Karen and also find connections as we talked and fellowshiped.



Keith was able to get the School Board Meetings in Northern, Muchinga and Luapula over before the banning of public gatherings was instituted. Two excellent school retreats were held at Lubwa and Mwenzo, accompanied by the Synod Bishop, General Secretary, Presbytery Bishop, Chaplain and local UCZ clergy a spiritually beneficial time discussing servant-leadership and the need and rationale for policies and guidelines.

Meetings with the Education Secretaries Forum and Ministry of Education have revolved around a proposed new Statutory Instrument regarding Aided Educational Institutions, a review of national Education Policy with an updated Education Act to follow. Another area being updated is national examinations. Printing papers and certificates in Zambia together with decentralised marking are matters presently being addressed.



For Ida, much of her office work has been to do with ensuring Hospitals and Clinics are properly registered with the Health Professionals' Council and CHAZ. A major preoccupation has been trying to have a Doctor sent to Mwandu Mission Hospital. There has not been a Doctor here for over a year. Seven have been sent but have been diverted elsewhere.. Rev Chepela completed his term as Hospital Administrator and has been replaced by Pastor Harold Haamumba who served at Mwandu before with his wife Rev Susan Ngonda who was the Minister here in the early 2000s. Little Josias from Kafue is now 5.7kg and a thriving bonny baby.

While we are in self-isolation at Mwandu. Ruairidh, Fiona & girls are doing the same, outside Lusaka. They are just back from house hunting in Laos, we kept Lucy and Cora while they were away. It took them 4 days to get back using a circuitous route as things closed down. They were expecting to move to Vientiane in July.

Catrina and Will are in Lusaka. Catrina's business has closed but will use an appointment system if necessary. Will has taken 5 days leave to see what other measures the Government will take. His work is still insisting that he come to the office, but they both felt this was too much of a risk for them all. A full-lockdown now seems increasingly likely, so it is really only a matter of time. They are making arrangements for their baby to be born in Lusaka in August.

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Gregor is moving into his curacy in North Wales very shortly without public ordination. He and Sarah were blessed by another daughter, Elsi Florence, a sister to Maia. She was born on my mother's birthday.

Kirsten, Stuart and their two are in lock-down in Lenzie. Kirsten has closed her tea-room and is much relieved about the Government Scheme that will help pay 80% of her employees' wages. Stuart is also working from home and with the children not at school they are making the most of the time they have together as a family.

We have just heard my brother Kenneth, who lives in France, has been diagnosed with cancer and his prognosis is not good, 2-3 months at most. We cannot visit him but only keep in touch indirectly by phone. His Dutch partner was on a visit to Holland and she cannot now get back to him either. But we have heard he is in hospital and his pain is being managed. We are relying on his friends and neighbours to take the place of family.

At this time of uncertainty my daily reading from Our Daily Bread on Tuesday spoke to me. I suspect, we are all wanting to know, like the David in Psalm 131, 'How long Lord?' - for ourselves in our present situation and for the people infected and dying. The pandemic with all its pain and suffering seem as though it will go on for the foreseeable future.

But, after we have done all we can, let us go to God knowing he will never leave or forsake us, and in all our struggles, trust in his unfailing love to carry us and we can rejoice in his salvation. The Lord bless and keep you all.

With our love

Keith, Ida, Mubita & Ellie



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