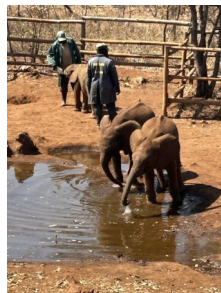


**July 13,2024**

Greetings from Lusaka! Your service team has arrived and is on the ground. Since we arrived late on Friday, we have had the opportunity, courtesy of our trusty driver, Tom, to take in some of the local sights. Today saw us visit Lusaka National Park. It is just outside the city but feels like a world away from the metropolis of 3.5 million. As you can see from the photos we were able to see rare white rhinos (only 12 of them in the entire country), orphaned elephants, and then we came upon some photogenic zebras.

As you can also see the landscape is very brown and they are currently in a massive drought. To combat this, the country is embarking on a plan of load sharing, or rolling blackouts, since much of their power is hydroelectric energy. Despite this, life is bustling and it is clear that the city is developing rapidly. Even though I am one of the few on the trip who have never been to Zambia before, I have already heard a version of "That's new!" or "They didn't have that last time I was here." countless times.

Tomorrow (Sunday) we will join with our longtime friends at Garden Presbyterian Church for worship led by Rev. Jane Nyirongo. Peace to you and come back throughout the next few weeks to follow our journey.



**July 14, 2024**

Enjoy Sunday's reflection from Hannah Hagenau.

Hello from Zambia!

Today our group had the opportunity to attend church at Garden Presbyterian Church in Lusaka, Zambia. The church service was led by the wonderful Pastor Jane Nyirongo with some remarks given by Barrett. The service was excellent, with lots of amazing singing and dancing! Many of us were even brought up to participate in the songs. Afterwards, our team met with the session of Garden Pres. to discuss our relationship and the various projects they have ongoing. We learned about the history of Garden Presbyterian School, a Faith Works primary school on the same campus, and their goals moving forward.

I've been lucky to have a unique relationship with Garden Pres. School over the years through my sponsorship program. Since 2015, I have been fundraising with the help of MVPC to help the graduates of Garden Pres. attend high school. For many of these students the cost of tuition, fees, books, and uniforms is too high, even for public schools. Over the last 9 years, we have funded 265+ scholarships with the support of the church. Today I was lucky enough to meet one of these students, Lusungu Shacholi, who attends a girls school here in Lusaka! I'm looking forward to getting to meet several more of these students later this week. If you would like to support this project you can write a check to the church labeled for "Hannah's scholarship fund."

Look forward for more stories and reflections tomorrow! Blessings, Hannah Hagenau



**July 15, 2024**

Monday's Zambia reflection courtesy of Deborah Galloway. Deb goes back home to Atlanta tomorrow so we pray for traveling mercies. She writes:

Fourteen years ago through my friendship with Barbara Hughes I was able to sponsor two ninth graders at Helen DeVos School in Zambia. It resulted in one of the most joyful relationships of my life. One of those ninth graders was Lloyd Chama. I got to meet Lloyd, by then a quiet eleventh grader on my first trip to Zambia in 2012. We spoke for about 20 minutes but formed a lifelong connection. After high school, he wanted to attend pharmacy school and I was able to support him so he could achieve his dream. Today he works for the government delivering vaccines in a remote area of Zambia.

For 12 years we've exchanged short emails and texts- about our jobs, our families. We shared the pain of losing two of his siblings and my parents. His notes gave me- his "American mama" as he calls me- great happiness. His gratitude for my little help was truly touching. Yesterday and today we got to reconnect and our mutual joy was evident. He is now a man of 31 who is the main support of his parents, siblings, and 9 nieces and nephews of his deceased brother and sister. It is humbling to think that my small contributions over the years have changed the future for this young man and his family. But he doesn't know the extent of the blessing he has been in MY life as I witnessed his faith.

Come back tomorrow for more stories as we walk alongside our friends here in Lusaka.



**July 16, 2024**

Church member Gill Hutt offers some thoughtful reflection for today's post.

It's Tuesday and there has been plenty of excitement during our Zambia trip.

Yesterday we met with [Alliance for Children Everywhere - Zambia](#) (ACE) staff members at The House of Moses and the Bill and Betty Bryant Home here in Lusaka. The dedication they have to the children they serve is truly awe inspiring. Their innovative thinking continually places them at the very forefront of childcare practices to the point that they are influencing national childcare policy here in Zambia.

We were illuminated to these practices by Chantry Mweemba who oversees the Transitional Partnerships for ACE. Through his work, ACE is advocating a move away from the institutional care provided by orphanages and the "orphan tourism," it brings. This term Chantry used describes the practice of western individuals traveling to orphanages to play with the children. This can be to multiple orphanages or to a single one with the expectation that the "tourists" will see not only the same number of children but also the same individual children- thus, developing a relationship with a particular child. The systemic problem with this type of expectation is that it necessitates continual institutional care until the child is 18 years old, instead of focusing on placing children with loving families. As Chantry explained, studies have shown that when compared with a family based care model (which is what ACE is advocating for), institutional care does not prepare children to live as functioning, productive members of society.

My fellow MVPC members and I found this particular conversation unbelievably informative and fascinating. We also firmly agree with the ACE staff that this is the way forward, and that our focus should not be on the experiences of western individuals but on the children we serve.

We hope you are enjoying our stories. See you back here tomorrow. Grace and Peace.



**July 17, 2024**

This is a joyful recap of our first week courtesy of David Barclift.

For many years it has been my hope to come to Zambia with Barbara Hughes and a Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church team. Finally that hope is fulfilled and it comes with so much joy.

On Sunday morning we worshipped with the congregation of Garden Presbyterian Church and our friend Rev. Jane Nyirongo. Throughout the service there was joyful music by several groups - the youth, the men, and the ladies who also danced. Various members of our team were summoned into the groups!

Other awe-inspiring and joyful moments have included:

meeting some of Jane's extended family and having lunch together

seeing the acknowledgement of and admiration for Barbara and all she has done through the years stepping into the House of Moses and the Bill & Betty Bryant Home and seeing the children who are so well loved and cared for by the staff

watching Debbie Galloway connect/reconnect with Lloyd Chama (see Deb's post below to learn more about this story)

hearing the updates on the work of [Alliance for Children Everywhere - Zambia](#) (ACE), meeting with leadership, Daisy and Chantry, and learning about the transitions in their mission: their love for the children, their passion, and their competency and confidence which is both incredible and inspiring

witnessing Hannah Hagenau meet a classroom full of students who recipients of support through her Zambia Fund (see Hannah's reflection below to learn more)

seeing the children of Garden Presbyterian School - the beautiful smiles, the happiness, and the singing for us; four older students reciting a poem about Education

visiting the 7 Faith Works school that partner with ACE

watching Barrett learn and embrace this incredible ministry that we share

I am overjoyed to visit with our ministry partners in Zambia. I am encouraged with the enthusiasm of our team and particularly the young adults such as Hannah, Gill, Connor and Jake.



**July 18, 2024**

Connor Hughes offers his thoughts on what was one of the most impactful days of the trip.

Today we visited the five schools in the Kanyama Compound, or neighborhood, of Lusaka that have partnerships with [Alliance for Children Everywhere - Zambia](#). Four of them are primary schools (grades 1-6): True Gospel, Tithandize, Edwin King, and Free Baptist. The final stop was a visit to the Helen DeVos Christian School which serves as the Secondary School (High School) for all of these primary schools in Kanyama.

The students and faculty at each school gave us a warm welcome and especially to my grandmother Barbara Hughes. Because of her tireless efforts over the years to maintain and build the relationship between MVPC and ACE-Zambia, the team was able to witness the work which has changed lives for the better here in Lusaka.

Kanyama is arguably the largest compound in Lusaka (we have been told it has a population of 800,000) and is the most poverty-stricken neighborhood in the city. Despite these incredible challenges, it was inspiring to see just how many students are dedicated to their education.

One of the highlights today was the opportunity to sit down with a number of current and former students of Helen DeVos to answer questions and exchange ideas. All of the former students in attendance were university students currently sponsored by MVPC under the initiative created by church member Stan Williams. Each of these students introduced themselves to us and shared that they were pursuing degrees in fields such as medicine, engineering, and the humanities.

During this conversation a former student who is now studying fashion design and textile manufacturing at a local college shared that she was close to finishing her education but that she feared finding work after graduation would be difficult. Some of us shared that the same angst exists in America, but given my time in Zambia, I would say that the struggle to find a job for educated individuals is much greater than in the States and highlights the macro development which must still be done here.

Education is the foundation for a successful and meaningful life. However, the story we heard from a recent graduate was a sobering reality of the continued struggle that is ongoing in this part of the world. That is why our call is to love neighbor. For that is a love that I have seen displayed by my grandmother as she has persevered to bring countless individuals in an effort to expose them to the joy we saw on the faces of children and the fears we heard from that young woman. By doing this, she has inspired, yet again, another team to sit around the table with her and wonder how we are called to walk alongside these people with the love of Christ.



**July 21, 2024**

Jake Hughes recaps a packed last two days through the stories of two people: Hope and Matrída.

Friday morning saw us venture out to Chongwe, a city about 30 minutes outside of Lusaka. We went there with employees from [Alliance for Children Everywhere - Zambia](#) to learn more about their Family Preservation and Empowerment Program. This program, formally called Milk and Medicine, provides families skills and resources needed to accrue financial resources so that the family can remain intact and stable and it targets malnourished and orphaned children. Currently, ACE supports 28 children in this program and in Chongwe we met Hope. Hope was 4 years old and was living with an Aunt and Grandmother because her mother died in an act of domestic violence. ACE's Family Empowerment program had given this family the needed tools to open a small neighborhood convenience store and grow healthy crops in a large garden. Walking into the garden was almost like Eden- for surrounding the landscape was a barren land suffering from drought, it has been hot and sunny everyday and we have not seen a drop of rain- but inside the garden it was green and lush, revealing the hope that this family and ACE have to support and see this little girl named Hope, and 27 others like her, to thrive.

On Saturday night, after a full day in which we held snakes, saw crocs, and said a fond goodbye to [Hannah](#), we enjoyed a wonderful meal at Matrída's house. Matrída oversees Church Relations for ACE and she hosted us for devotion and a traditional Zambian dinner. Her family was so kind and every one of us was extremely thankful for their hospitality. They sang for us, prayed for us, washed our hands and fed us delicious food that they all helped to prepare. Afterwards, Matrída and Grandma (Barbara) shared stories and memories of the strong friendship they had built over the years. As we sat and listened, we learned how they have lived this ministry together and have heard and grieved the stories of families like Hope, but they have also rejoiced when from that trauma you can open a door with their extended or new families and see a green, lush garden.

Learn more about our past few days in the pictures. More to come!



**July 21, 2024**

Good Sunday to you from Lusaka! It has been a joyful sabbath day as we worshipped with our brothers and sisters at Chelstone Presbyterian Church. It was Harvest (Stewardship) Sunday so I have a lot of notes to share with the Finance team! Jokes aside, we were warmly welcomed by Rev. Amos who just started serving the church 4 months ago along with the entire congregation.

After the full week we have had, I find myself tired and grateful we had a day to worship and relax. To conclude the day, the final 5 of us once again sat and reflected as Barbara asked (as she has asked throughout the trip) what did you find breathtaking and what did you find heartbreaking?

To answer that I want to introduce you to Kenneth Kaunda. He was the first president of Zambia and while I will let you Google him, he was a complicated figure (what leading politician isn't?). But his reputation has largely been rehabilitated here and I think it is because the country has been able to reflect on him and itself. When British colonialism ended here and Kaunda began his presidency in 1964, only 100 Zambians had graduated college and no more than 6,000 natives had more than 2 years of secondary education.

I bring this up because of the heartbreak I have seen from my American eyes as we visited these schools this past week. Children not getting lunch everyday; teachers not having enough supplies; there never being enough resources, period. Yet at the same time, that heartbreak is also breathtaking because in those same schools there are waitlists for children to get in, the neighborhoods value and support the children and their families who want to be educated, and there is a fervent spirit among the teachers we have met to serve these children, even coming back to the neighborhoods and schools they grew up in.

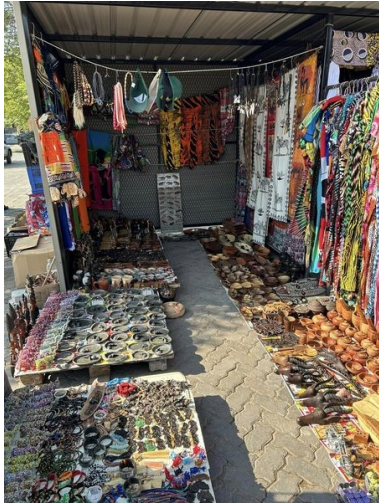
So as we draw near to the close of yet another trip learning and wondering with our Zambian friends, I celebrate who they are because of the incredible challenges they faced when they were birthed and the spirit they have to continue to take the challenges on. May we be so bold to follow such a lead. Grace and Peace, Barrett





**July 22, 2024**

Some pictures that haven't made the nightly reflections. Tonight let them tell the story and read of some of the captions.



We have visited several local markets on the trip.



Barrett is with Tom Mwale. Tom is to ACE-Zambia what Steve Ray is to MVPC. For this trip he has also been or driver and guide. He has literally driven us all over this city and we are incredibly grateful for him.



One of the pictures on the wall of Garden Presbyterian of a previous group from MVPC.



Barrett and Hannah with Rev. Jane Myirongo and elders from Garden Presbyterian. Richard Msimuko, one of our biggest fans, is to the right of Hannah.

**July 23, 2024**

Well, friends, the bags are packed and we are ready to come home, but before we do, we want to thank you for following our journey.

One of the running conversations we have had throughout the trip has been asking each other the question, "You think (fill in MVPC member name) would come?" The reason we continually asked this question is the same reason I wanted to come to Zambia in the first place- to wonder both aloud and within how we are being called to sustain this ministry at MVPC. Our partnership here with [Garden Presbyterian church](#) and [Alliance For Children Everywhere](#) is fundamental to how we see ourselves as a faith community. It is based in this missional understanding that has flourished for decades at our church.

Key to obtaining and sustaining that understanding, however, is learning and growing from our friends here in Lusaka.

We have learned by worshipping with them.

We have learned by sitting down with them in their homes or in high school libraries.

We have learned from guides who have imparted to us the story of their country.

We have learned and been led by a driver, Tom Mwale, who has tirelessly taken us to literally every corner of this city.

We have been humbled by the affection we have been shown, and impressed by the people we have met.

There are no photos to share tonight, just a tribute to the grand communion in and around this vibrant city filled with both gut wrenching brokenness and joyful wholeness. So next time we make this trek, perhaps you will be that someone who comes along to help us share the story of what we have learned, for that is what sustains this ministry and that is what grows our faith.

O God be the Glory and we look forward to sharing more with you Stateside.

Barrett