

We have left Harare and now find ourselves in Bulawayo, the second biggest city in Zimbabwe (so they tell us).

Let me just fill you in on a few things from last week in Harare that I had left out:

The boys at St Josephs earlier in the week invited us along to their cell group on Wednesday night. We had no idea what this would be like. We were told that some people from the Celebration Church (which is a “mega” church in Harare, looks very out of place) lead the group. When we got there on Wednesday Night there was a church service going on in the dining hall, with a loud African preacher, but none of the boys were there. It was a group that hires the hall, and the cell group didn’t start until after this. We eventually caught up with the gentlemen from Celebration Church, and they figured we as visitors were giving the message. News to us? It turned out that the boys generally run the group, and we were more they happy to share something with them. The boys, around 20 to 25 of them, sang praise and worship songs, many which we knew and could join in (except the Shona parts). The gentlemen from Celebration Church indicated they love coming because their small groups aren’t this enthusiastic. Several boys shared how God had been working in their lives. We shared with them what had brought us to Zim (and back again), the verses around 1 John 3:16-, how special they were to God being poor physically but rich spiritually, and Anne shared the verses in Matthew 5 that Bell had given her to share during the Church African lunch. Then the boys prayed for us in their “circle of love”, which they do for visitors. We spent much time chatting and praying with the boys. One boy was eager to learn and he asked Glenn to help with his homework for a while.

On Friday morning we went back out to Fathers House orphanage and finished putting up curtains in all the rooms. Not a hard job, but a tiring one continually holding your arms above your head, but it was good to get them all finished. Mary said thank God you have come back, she wondered who would finish the job once we had left. Carmen seconded that thought.

Friday afternoon we went out to St Josephs to finish the Study room, replace a broken glass panel in their front door and refit a door to the dining hall. We managed to finish all the benches around the study room, fit pin boards, fit a black board and have all the other stored items cleared out. We hope this gives the boys, especially the form 4 to 6 boys, a quiet place to study away from their dorms. When we finished up at around 6pm, there were more doors they were hoping we could fix, but we had just run out of time to do any more. (Besides, simple fixes on doors never were simple) We have been able to spend more time with the boys this time learning their stories and being encouraged by them. A young boy named Kuda who just turned 13 this week nearly broke my heart with his story and the untruths that people had told, such as it was his fault he did not have a mum or dad. Sometimes you just want to scream at the things these kids have been told. Yanni asked if he could call me Aunty Anne and said that he refused to say good bye because he believed that we would be back, so he was not going to get upset now. (That is up to God).

Since we hadn’t gotten out to the orphan farm in Beatrice due to land invasions, Carmen asked the Montgomery Heights children’s home whether we could visit. This was in a place called Concession around 1 hour drive north of Harare. Carmen had lived with her family out in this area for some years and had attended Church there, and is still involved on a management committee. This place was what I’d imagined a rural mission base to be, fenced, with the buildings around in a sort of a U shape. A mission house, a school room and small library, a Church, dining area/mess room, a pool

(that needed cleaning) and some dogs. We were invited in for tea and biscuits while the kids waited eagerly outside to meet and play with us.

The children were eager to show us around their home and after introductions, the boys proudly showed us their rooms. Brian took hold of my hand and would not let go until we had seen his house. Lots of chatter and question asking. They all wanted to know why Tyler and Emma were being so shy??? It was then the girls turn to shows us their rooms, just as much enthusiasm from them as the boys. Then the toddlers happily toddled through their house showing us their special beds and their cupboards, while the older kids stood at the windows laughing and teasing us. Last but not least we headed to the babies rooms. There are currently eight babies here but they are all a little older. They can take another 4-6 babies but are waiting for Child welfare to send them some.

We have lunch and then took the toddlers and the girls for a hike up a rocky mountain, the boys stayed back to watch a movie. Even the youngest toddler climbs the mountain and then walks back. Patrick has cerebral palsy and he climbs very well with some help on the harder rocks. The motto is "I am strong" and stand tall.

It is a lovely afternoon with the children, I read with the toddlers, Tyler & Glenn play soccer with some boys and girls. Emma plays with the older girls. It is a surprise when we realise how late it is and that we have to go. I truly lovely example of caring for those that need a loving environment. Elizabeth and Elaine have been there for over 20 years each. Elaine is the teacher and looks after the girls while Elisabeth is the preacher and helps manage the house. They still have contact with the children that have left the house over the years, some of whom are nearly forty years old and have families of their own.

It couldn't have been a nicer place and a nicer bunch of caring adults and kids just like a home only on a bigger scale. The children keep asking us when we will come back, and indicate a room for us if we were to stay for a while.

OK now back to Bulawayo, we are staying in the Traveller's Guest Lodge. There are ten or eleven small ensuited rooms, a nice new kitchen and dining area (that from the outside looks like an old overgrown shed), and a pool with seating and some deck chairs around. It is so hard to take... The kids used the pool several times. And several times we had breakfast or dinner by the pool.

On Monday we visited Isaiah's house. They often refer to it as a "half way house" as they care for babies/children up to around 5 years old. Again some of the children's stories are heart-breaking.... parents dying of AIDS, relatives dumping them, sexual abuse...etc. Some of them found in an awful state, but now thriving. Today it is hard to just sit and play with the children, as we are used to also fixing, replacing or doing other practical things. But since the day is quite warm it is good to just pick-up, hug, and play with the young kids. Some of them crave human attention, and did not want to be put down. Emma and I (Anne) have both fallen in love with Darlen a three month old baby girl. Emma wants us to adopt her and bring her home. Ok and we want Keith, Mathew, Hope, Faith and the little one that loves Glenn just to name a few.

The idea of this house other than to care for the children is to be a place that people can come and adopt the babies or where possible have the babies reunited with extended family members. There are 26 children here mostly under 2 so you can image how hectic the place can get. Any help is appreciated, when the children are asleep there is always washing and cleaning to be done. 20 children in cloth nappies (that's a lot of washing)

On Tuesday we visit another aspect of this project...Forever Homes. They try to get the children from the children's home placed/adopted within a family, or they seek to develop "Forever Homes" for them. Where they take a house parent or parents and place 8 to 10 kids with them in a home. Here they will become a permanent "forever" family, with the additional support of the Isaiah's House group. (It is noted that much of the support for this group comes from Australia.) They also seek to place a disabled child within each house group. We visit two homes, one run by a mother, the other by a married couple. In the case of the married couple they have officially adopted the ten children... nine boys and one girl.

Mark and Dorcus spent a couple of hours telling us their stories and those of their children. They whole heartily believe in family and are a great example of putting biblical values into practice. They knew even before they married that they would be taking the ten children as their own. Can you image starting married life with not one but ten children, all with sad backgrounds of abuse, neglect or abandonment?

I know we have water restriction at home but this family has a 355 litre per day set by council and they have 14 people living on the property, they don't have enough to grow their food. They are praying for a borehole.

The Isaiah's House group also has other projects running: Including working with street kids, providing support and enabling ministries in some of the "slum" areas. On Tuesday we meet Murray, a pastor from a Church in Leonard Heads, NSW, who would be working with them on these projects over the next six weeks. He is from Ballina on the NSW coast, where Anne did some of her growing up.

Tuesday evening we caught up on the news of Elise, our Pastors' daughter's state of being unable to walk again, it saddened us greatly. We pray for a full and speedy recovery for her and strength within her family.

On Wednesday morning we visited Hillside Dams in Bulawayo, for a walk around. Not an awful lots of water, but we seen a few different lizards wandering (and swimming) around the place. The kids thought one was a water snake to being with; it had them retreat quite swiftly. We have been through many police road blocks while in Zim, but only stopped at a couple, with usually just a licence check. But while travelling to Antelope Park from Bulawayo today we were stopped and the vehicle and our luggage search. The police were in this case pleasant, and were checking most vehicles. So after 5 to 10 minutes of unloading the vehicle of our luggage and the food and camping supplies for the next week and half, and opening up the eskies and suitcases, we repacked and were back on the road. We also come across several land fires on the way to Antelope Park. But we are coming across burnt areas all the time.

We have spent the afternoon at Antelope Park, and it is now around 10:30 at night and I can hear some Lions growling... it is now time to sleep.

Lots of love

Glenn Anne Tyler and Emma

Hi all ,

One of the places we were working at was St Joseph boys home. I met a girl called Nocir and because she knows how to do the waka waka dance properly she taught me and then we were doing it in front of lots of the boys. It was scary

EMMA