

Showabona (G'day),

It's just after 6:00am here on Monday morning (2:00 in the afternoon for you Aussies), I've been awake since around 4:30am, still a bit time shifted. I was nearly dozing off at around 7:30 last night during a youth service they had here at the mission base. So the beginnings and ends off days we are still getting used to.

After getting up at 3:30am on Saturday in Melbourne to get across to the airport, to when we arrived at the mission base at sometime after 10:00pm local time (6:00am Aussie EST), it makes for a long day. I think all of our flights were shorter than scheduled.... all good tail winds. The flight that seemed to drag out the most was Melbourne to Perth, we often forget how big our country is. And we had a great check-in lady at Perth, who noticed our bags had been tagged only to Johannesburg, and not all the way through to Harare, so she chased up our bags, which had already been transferred onto our Johannesburg flight, and then went out and re-tagged them. So at Harare all our bags turned up.

On the flight to Perth the plane was not full, so we could recline seats and also not worry about the kids disturbing any people in front of us. But that was nothing compared to the long flight between Perth and Joh'burg. I believe there were 108 passengers on this flight, on a plane that takes around 300-350 passengers. So in addition to the 2 sets of 2 seats we had, we also had a straight row of 4 seats where we could stretch out and get a little bit of sleep. So we took it in turns to stretch out (mainly the kids). Not surprisingly the flight between Joh'burg and Harare was packed, and some people had to give up their larger hand luggage to go under the plane, but by now we were all too tired to be particularly concerned. On this flight that is scheduled to take 1:40, it took just over 1 hour, the attendants were really moving to get drinks and a meal served in this time.

I got to talking to an older gentleman (well older than me) that was seated opposite us on the Perth-Joh'burg flight and he was heading to Harare also, but had some overnight stops to break up the long flight. He was the principal of a Christian school in Sydney and was going to visit a Christian school in Harare and also speak with the Zimbabwean education minister. He had done a lot of teaching of Christian school teachers around the world. When it got to talking about where we lived he asked what I thought was a strange question.. "Do you have a dog?" Then he started to mention the vet in Bayswater. This brought the degrees of separation closer... It turns out that this gentleman is the brother of Flo Sinclair. Ian Sinclair is the vet from Mountain Hwy Bayswater. Ian and Flo are people that we know from Canterbury Gardens Community Church.

Also staying at mission base until Wednesday are a group of boys on a mission trip from a boarding school in South Africa. There are around a dozen of them in their young to mid teens, they have been visiting and working in some of the orphanages. Last week they were working in St. Joseph's Boys home, they have been quite complementary on the "Green Room" that we created last year. We are going out there today with the boys as they continue work there (Scraping and painting), so it will great to catch up with how the place is going.

Steve, who was our cook and guide at the start of last years' trip is guide and cook for the boys group so it is good to catch up with him, at least for the next few days.. and it is hard to get Emma to stop pestering him.

And to the weather... fine and sunny... having to resort to shorts and T-shirt, maybe a jumper and long pants in the mornings and evenings. I'm guessing high 20's. Sitting outside to eat breakfast... some of this is so hard. But looking forward to getting into some helpful work today.

At this point we must thank all those who have given items and finances to support the orphans and orphanages here. We are greatly enthused and appreciative of what people have and do contribute. We look forward over the next four weeks to what can be started and achieved for these people that seem to be ever grateful for any assistance that they receive. We look forward to also visiting many more aid and assistance programs than we had opportunity to last year, and to see many groups working together to improve the living standards of these people, and in some cases just to help them survive.

Our first visit is to St. Josephs boys home, and the South African school boys are back into scraping, washing and painting walls. There are too many bodies on this doing this so we need off to see the "green room". It is a bit grubby, but I guess that means it is being used, so we clean down some of the walls. Anne heads off to get a bit of a cooking lesson. The young lady that is in the kitchen has been without her helper for some time (apart from the help from the boys). So Anne pitches in, including cooking sadza and greens with tomatoes over the open fire (no electricity on) where she managed to melt her runners while trying to cook( she now has a new appreciations for the women that cook like this all of the time, it is hot , tiring hard work). It was a case of no hygiene queen here (Anne). Anne notes that we need to buy them some knives, as there is not a sharp one in the kitchen. I caught up with a boy called Happymore that often sort help with his school work when we were last here, so for the next two hours I help him with maths and science work (even though they were on school holidays). All this work meant for a late lunch.

In the afternoon we went with the school boys out to Dombashava, a rocky outcrop about 20 km out of town, to see over the country side, and watch the sunset. It is very beautiful, but very different from any view you'd get from Mt.Dandenong back home.

Tuesday saw us visit Mt. Zion orphanage, one which we hadn't visited last year. The school boys had started working on scrapping back and painting some playground equipment. So today they (and we) finished this off. We also spent time playing and singing with the orphans. At this facility there are 22 kids, and they are well looked after. They have a large block of land where they grow cabbages and onions. The kids clothes were pretty tatty, but they all seemed in pretty good health. We were outside all morning and there wasn't much shade, so we are all pretty tied. Tyler done a great job scraping and painting, and is currently covered in bright blue and orange paint. And Emma had a great time playing with all the kids (orphans and school boys).

Tonight the school boys are having a ministry time at St. Josephs for their last night in Harare, so we will join them. With the boys leaving Harare tomorrow we will be then working as a family on projects.

And for the guys back at work... be warned, quality follows you everywhere. The mission base is used for many things. Over the next four days there is a training course running here.. on ISO17025 and ISO17020. Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

Well that's us for now, safe and well... looking forward to the next couple of days of catching up with people we met last year.

Love Glenn, Anne, Tyler and Emma

