

Zambia Newsletter

Zambia Missions

1910 Sycamore View Rd
Memphis, TN 38134
(901) 372-1874

Web: www.zambiamissions.org

David & Lorie French

P.O. Box 36893
Lusaka, Zambia
dfrench@zambiamissions.org

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Lorie, Natasha, and I have now returned back to the USA to make reports to some of our supporting churches and to raise additional support. Our goal this year is to visit those churches who we were not able to visit last year. If we do not end up visiting your church, then it is due to our having made a visit last year. Lord willing we will be able to see the rest of you next year when we return to visit the other half of those supporting the work.

Because we are pretty much out on the road traveling, I thought this would be a good opportunity to share with you an article that was written by Lorie's Dad, Richard Waggoner, who has just returned from his third trip to Zambia to assist us in the work. The following is a description of a recent visit that he, Melvin, & Thomas Sakala made to some prisons in Lusaka and Kabwe just a few weeks ago.

PRISON MINISTRY

As we approached the high wall and heavy iron gates through the dusty road and yard, (no grass or pavement) we were greeted by a man who rose from his sitting position on a log bench made from a 6 inch diameter log held up by two forked logs of 6 inch diameter set in the ground near each end. After a few minutes of visiting with this coordinator of prisons, Mvula Kwacha, with whom we had previously made an appointment, we approached the drab heavy metal door which was opened when proper identification was presented. The opening in the metal wall was about 36 inches wide and 48 inches tall which forces every one to bend over to almost to a crawling position before passing through it. After registering, which requires leaving passport, cell phone, or any other article considered by the

guards to be inappropriate, you approach another door with another set of guards to examine you and eventually unlock the huge padlock on this door. When we have passed through this door, where we did not have to be in as humble position as at the first door, we are in a large enclosure where there are about a hundred bags containing 50 pounds of ground corn and six bags of cabbage which will feed the 3,000 prisoners for two days. About one pound of "nshima" (corn) and relish (chopped cabbage) will be issued to each prisoner by a "trustee" for his daily rations. These will be cooked by some of the prisoners over open fires burning in the large yard where the short term prisoners stay. When we walk through the third door with guards, we are greeted with a sea of African faces. They have been previously ordered to sit on the dirt floor. Stacked against the wall about twelve feet high are several hundred pieces of dirty foam material about 3 by 6 feet for mattresses. This open area with the sun and stars above is their sleeping and living area but it is so much better that the cells others are in with three prisoners in a 7 by 7 foot cell. Unable to move about in this cramped cell their joints swell which brings intense pain to the individual. If ever your conduct permits you to be released to the big yard, you behave so that you will not have to go back to the cell where many die from their condition. When those in the big yard prepare the nshima and relish, one of those appointed by the guards will bring those in the cell a cup full twice a day.

Now as we approach we are guided to an area that has one of those log benches for the guest speakers to sit on and a log in the ground with a board nailed on top to serve as a pulpit. One of the prisoners comes up front and begins to lead them in African spiritual songs in the Tonga language. One by one about 20 prisoners rose and

surrounded the song leader clapping their hands as they sing out loudly and prance around in African style. This continues for about 10 minutes. Then the song leader after several "amen's" introduces the Coordinator/Chaplain who had met us out front. After several "amen's" from the coordinator repeated by the prisoners, I am introduced as coming from USA to bring words of instruction. I spoke about 10 minutes about the two types of sin in John 8:1-12, the sins of the body as illustrated by the woman taken in adultery, and the sins of mind as illustrated by the religious people, the Pharisees. Using the WBS materials and the Bible we would give them, if they were interested, in being prepared for that great judgment day.

After I was seated on the log again, we had remarks from Melvin and Thomas and several songs conducted in similar fashion to the original ones. I was surprised when I was being introduced again to bring words of encouragement. As I walked to the "stick in the ground pulpit", my mind was racing through the scriptures to fill the order I had been given. By the time my interpreter, Melvin, came up beside me, I began telling the story of Joseph. I concluded with the admonition that throughout his imprisonment, he maintained his faith in God and God led him to better days. For the second time that hour I urged them to get right with God through studying the Bible and obey what the Lord tells them to do. As I sit down again Melvin is announcing to them if any had completed a WBS study to bring it to him now. Thomas had been busy behind us breaking the three dozen bars of soap into two pieces, we had brought with us. On the way to the prison, Melvin had groaned and when I looked at him he said he had forgotten to get money for soap. I had

about \$12 worth of Kwacha, their counterpart of our dollar, in my pocket so we stopped at a grocery and purchased all the soap it would buy. Church St. in Lewisburg provides a fund for this. Can you imagine what it would be like to not have soap to wash yourself or your clothes for months at a time? As they turned in their WBS lessons, Melvin slipped them a bar of soap and the individual promptly hid it in his clothing to keep the other prisoners from knowing he had it.

Just now the guards, upon the Chaplain's approval, permit a prisoner to come close enough to me to plead through an interpreter for some medicine. His legs are wrapped in some dirty old rags. He has scabies so bad that the skin and tissue has been etched down to the muscle tissue. We don't have the medicine needed to kill the little bugs but we have some antibiotic cream to reduce the inflammation where the bacteria has infected the raw meat. When we get back to Mapepe, Thomas is given money to purchase the needed medicine, from the fund that Church Street has sent for that purpose, to carry the next week. It is impossible to carry all the requests we get for medicine each visit so we take the needed medicine the next week. Now another prisoner is permitted to approach me. He is a humble kind of person and was the fellow leading the singing when we came in. He wants me to get a lawyer for him to find out why he is being held. He has been incarcerated for seven years without being told why he was arrested and held. The supposition is that he was a political prisoner from a president that was voted out five years ago and since there is no arrest warrant the prison officials are afraid to do anything about releasing him. Melvin and Thomas were asked by me to investigate the cost of a lawyer and let me know. After him, another is permitted to approach me. His concern is for his family. He is afraid they are starving to death. We tell him Thomas will try to find his family next week, and provide food and he will report to him next week. In each of these situations where we are able to carry out the righteousness of God, meeting their needs, many see Jesus for the first time and obey His word.

Now this fellow being permitted to talk with me is better dressed than the others and walks confidently to me and sits down beside me on the log. He tells me that he wants to come to America

and study the Bible when he is released and wants me to help him. He says that he was a police officer who accidentally shot a man while pursuing a criminal. I tell him to complete all the World Bible School lessons available and when he gets out, to attend Mapepe Bible College.

After he has gone, the Chaplain, who has been listening to each one and for the first time eases up, sits beside me. He quietly tells me the previous person was a police officer and he was put in charge of transporting a prisoner to another prison. The person he is transporting was involved in a robbery and ten million Kwacha was still missing. While transporting the man, whose hands and feet are shackled, the officer told him if he would give him the money he would let him escape. The shackled man guided him out in the country to a deserted spot and when he looked in the place where he thought he put the money it was gone. The angry officer shot the shackled man in the head and disposed of the body where it would not be found but it was and the officer was arrested. When the case came to court, the officer's grandfather was the judge and at the conclusion of the trial he gave his grandson six years in prison. The angry grandson appealed the verdict and the judge in the higher court stated that the policeman was guilty of a crime worthy of the death penalty and sentenced the man to be hanged. Before the sentence could be carried out, the newly elected President of Zambia commuted the death sentence of 800 prisoners to life imprisonment and this man was one of them. As the Chaplain left his seat beside me, he quietly said, "I thought a good man like you needed to know the true story."

When Thomas and Melvin finished taking the names of the new enrollees of WBS and collecting the finished WBS lessons, the Chaplain led us from the adult prison to the juvenile prison where about three dozen boys, 8 years old to 17 years old, were seated on the ground. Some of the older boy's stares reminded of the story I had heard earlier that day. A young man near one of the new churches started by Mapepe last year had crossed the four-lane highway to an ATM. After the man had checked his balance without getting any money out, he had crossed the highway again and

headed home when out of the darkness of the night four teenagers pounced upon him demanding his money. He explained to them that he did not have any money. Two of them were holding his arms straight out from his body and another said to him, "Do you want short sleeves or long sleeves?" Frantically, the man pleaded that he did not have any money and the two, now holding his arms outstretched, chopped his arms off at the elbows with the machetes they held and maliciously used. Several of the boys looking at me looked like they could be one of those boys hooked on drugs that had no concern for the man and his effort to feed his family. All they wanted was a selfish fix.

But there among these prisoners were two little fellows about nine years old. One held back (looking like a frightened animal) but the other young boy approached Thomas and me. Thomas has been kind to him at earlier times and as the boy came close to us, Thomas said, "This is Papa Waggoner, who has come from USA." The scared little fellow began to pitifully plead with me, "Papa, take me with you." "Why are you here?" I asked. "I was hungry and some older boys said if you help us, we will get you some food. When we reached a nice house, they said, 'you wait out here and if anyone comes you call out to us.' I did and they went out the back of the house and ran away. The people took me to the police, who said, 'If you tell us who those others were, we will let you go,' but I didn't know what their names were and so they put me here for these other boys to treat me bad. Please, take me with you, Papa." Sadly, I told him I would be leaving in a few days and I had no place to leave him. As I walked away, his pleading voice was saying, "Please come back and get me." I never looked back because of the heart break he was bringing to me. Soon I am bending over to get through the front door into the fresh air and as I hear the heavy metal door slam shut and the heavy lock go in place, the boy's pleading voice is pounding away in my hurting heart. Oh, for a place to rescue and house the little fellows like that and show them the love of God, and to teach them about Jesus, and give them skills that will provide them a way to earn a living and the self-respect every human being deserves.

During my five weeks in Zambia, we helped 219 orphans and vulnerable children with food, medicine, and educational materials. In addition, we were able to lead 43 to Christ, including 24 in prison. (Richard Waggoner)