

Follow me on Facebook- Shelley Cooling or my email is Waif_uk@yahoo.ie

Our address is MRCH, Epworth Mission, Hatfield, PO Box H99, Zimbabwe

Going "Kumusha" for the holidays!

As many of you may know I expected to spend Christmas and New Year at Matthew Rusike Children's Home with the few remaining children, but this all changed with an invitation from our new Minister in Charge Rev Saul Tadzaushe on Christmas Eve morning- he promised me an African adventure and how right he was!

My time was spent in two rural parts of Zimbabwe, Marondera and Buhera at the rural home and plot of our Minister with his extended family. We left on Christmas eve and returned on January the 2nd. So here are a few of the many mini-adventures that I had.

When we first arrived at Marondera it was very late at night, the rain was heavy and so my car was unable to cross the river. We knocked on a neighbouring farm's door and a lady there offered to let me and the Reverend's daughter stay there for the night- she gave up her bed for us and showed great hospitality. She repeated this again the following night. This was to set the scene for the rest of my time, which was marked by many acts of generosity from people living in very challenging circumstances. I was also given two chickens and a goat for our ECD project, drinks, millie cobs to eat, meals to share and most of all peoples time and wisdom.

Rev Tadzaushe is hoping to develop his plot into paddocks to raise cattle, sheep and goats. He is very active in his work for the community and is hoping to develop a community garden for the poor in Buhera. He also regularly distributes food and clothing to the poor.

The highlight of the holiday was the slaughtering of a sheep which was dedicated to me, this took place on Christmas day. It was a very big honour and as many of you know, I have been a vegetarian for 20 years and so it became a fascinating part of our time together. The sheep was chosen for a group of 3, I was asked to do this but deferred this to the Minister due to my lack of experience. We then all had to look at the sheep and give thanks for it. I then watched as it was slaughtered in such a peaceful, respectful and humane way. I was asked to try various parts of it which I agreed to do, I can honestly say it was delicious!! This was the main focus of our Christmas Day, sitting as a large extended family in the sunshine eating our meal prepared by the women on a fire. No presents, no Christmas tree but right at the centre we

thought about what Christmas was really about and shared fellowship with one another, people from all backgrounds and ages.



At the farm we walked to the rivers and mountains, saw a Cobra, fetched water, visited friends, herded the goats and cattle and finally on Boxing day a cow was slaughtered- again this was the focus of the day and was to provide the family and friends with meat for the rest of the celebrations.

And then onto Buhera, to 'kumusha' , the Shona phrase for rural home. Here we stayed with the Rev's parents and were joined by many extended family. This area again was only accessible by crossing a river. We had no running water or electricity, no phone access, and worst of all for an internet junkie like me....no internet access!!!

This part of the holiday was marked by visitors, going into the nearby town, learning new skills, playing with the children, spending time with the Reverend and getting to know how life in Rural areas works. I also had time to relax!



Pounding ground nuts grown in the fields to make peanut butter.



Learning how to milk cows in the fields.



Playing in the rivers with the children.



Learning how to use soil as an abrasive to clean the cooking pots.

Helping to fix local roads to help vehicles to cross the river.



Visiting extended family and members of the community....I was so excited to see the Union jack on this little girls t-shirt and my football team- Sheffield Wednesday's colours on her sister's hat and jumper! This had been sent by well-wishers in the UK and had been distributed by Rev Saul Tadzaushe.

And then bringing a little bit of home to Zimbabwe....



One night we sat outside and toasted marshmallows and chocolate sent by my friend in the UK- the children loved it!



I was sent nail varnish for a Christmas gift so we all put it to use...even some of the boys had a try!

A real treat for us was going into the local growth point (a little town) for a Coke at one of the church members shops.



As this picture shows, the weather was another central focus of the holiday, it is the rainy season and so events were controlled by the much needed rain. I was lucky enough to be there when we experienced flooding, announced by a native bird, and could then see the dramatic effects of the rain.



What struck me was how technology is growing alongside this very natural way of life, from seeing a donkey eating outside an internet café, to narrowly missing a goat on the road because the shepherd was texting on his phone, to people enjoying a laptop in a hut...whether we like it or not, technology is impacting on all walks of life.

The New Year was welcomed in with dancing, eating and everyone sharing New Year Resolutions and giving thanks to God for the events of the past year. At midnight people say “Congratulations” and then a fire cracker was lit, while car hooters could be heard and music played.



**So from Gogo
(Grandmother),
Zimbabwe and
me.....Happy New Year!**

Many thanks to the Rev
Tadzaushe and his family.

From Shelley x



Rev 's mother.