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A Bumpy Road

October 10, 2022

A Letter from Melissa Johnson, serving in Zambia

Fall 2022

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Dear friends,

The sky was hazy from the dust and smoke that signals the dry season in Zambia. I had forgotten how brown and dusty the countryside was during this time of year. The road was full of potholes –

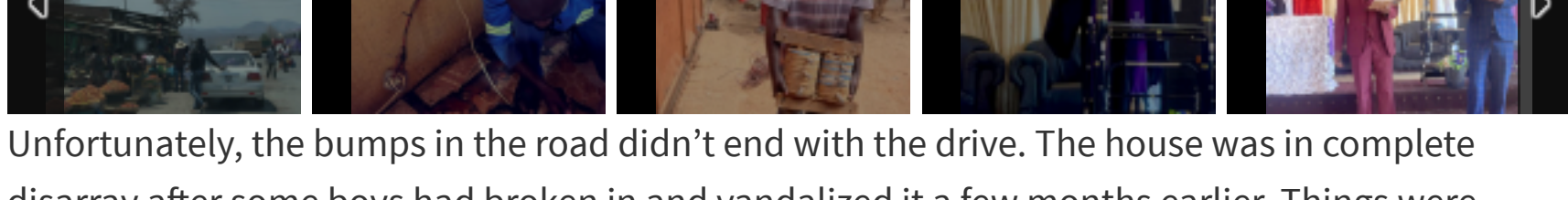
some the size that could swallow your vehicle. But the sky was blue and bright and my passenger, Rev. Lloyd Mithi, the deputy general secretary for the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Synod of Zambia (CCAP) provided me with company and interesting conversation to help distract from the bumps in the road.

This was the first time I drove from Lusaka to Lundazi. If you look at Google Maps it will tell you that it is a ten-and-a-half-hour drive, but in reality, it took us eight hours to just reach Chipata. The next day Rev. Mithi and I set off from Chipata to Lundazi. I expected the road to be bad because when we left in 2020 there was major damage to half of the road from Chipata to Lundazi and two bridges had collapsed. Charles and I joked that the first half was the “bad road,” and the second half was the “good road.” Our friend, Rev. David Chiboboka once told Charles that it was good to know that he had his Ph.D. We laughed and asked what he meant. Rev. Chiboboka told Charles that his Ph.D. stood for “Pothole Dodger.” The last third of the “bad road” has been grated and all the tarmac removed and is now a bumpy dirt road, which I much prefer over the road that requires a Ph.D. When we first arrived in 2016, the drive took us less than two hours. Now, the drive took me almost five hours.

When I finally arrived in Lundazi, I was greeted by my co-workers, Richard Willima, Cecilia Shawa and Fanny Banda, and the pastor at the David McConaghgy Congregation, Boma Prayerhouse, Rev. Albert Kanyinji. It was a joy to see them all again after such a long time and they gifted me with a beautiful welcome home cake.



Richard Willima and Rev. Albert Kanyinji singing “This is My Story, This is My Song”



Unfortunately, the bumps in the road didn't end with the drive. The house was in complete disarray after some boys had broken in and vandalized it a few months earlier. Things were scattered everywhere. It has taken me a few weeks to get everything sorted, cleaned and repaired. But I am thankful for so many friends and a good landlord who have helped me get things back in order.

Mr. Willima was very excited to take me to Phalaza to see the current status of the construction of the Phalaza Rural Health Center. The clinic building itself is complete, as well as the latrines and incinerator. The final phase, the construction of the three staff houses, is well underway. The CCAP Health Department had applied for the Birthday Offering grant with the assistance and support of Lexington Presbyterian Church in Lexington, Virginia with the hope that the department would be able to complete the staff houses and a maternity shelter. Unfortunately, we just learned this week that the project was not selected for the grant. Just another bump in the road. The department has now applied for the Thank Offering with the hope and prayer that it will be approved so they will have the funds necessary to complete the project and begin providing much needed health care to the Phalaza community.

When I arrived in Lundazi the women in the Days for Girls Enterprise (Cecilia, Eunice and Fanny) were busy packing up a new order for Days for Girls smart starter kits (two shields, two liners, a pair of underpants, a care card – all packaged in a transport bag) for an orphanage in Kitwe, Zambia. They had run out of flannel (which has been a challenge to obtain in Zambia), but thankfully I came with a trunk full of brightly colored flannel that they received and quickly began sewing. I was so excited to see Eunice using the serger. Eunice has struggled with her sewing skills, but she has found her niche with the serger. I just learned that Eunice recently successfully passed her secondary school exams. Stella also passed her secondary school exams last year and is now on education leave in Lusaka and attending nursing school. Cecilia's children are all doing well with no fear of not being able to attend school due to a lack of funds for school fees. The salaries that the women have been earning through the enterprise have truly been life-changing for them.

Yes – this transition back to life in Lundazi has been full of bumps and potholes, but it has also been full of blessings. I am grateful to all my friends and co-workers who love and assist me and have helped to make the road smoother. I am grateful to each and every one of you for your prayers and financial support that allow me to continue to answer God's call to serve with my partner here in Zambia. I covet your prayers not only for me and my ministry here in Zambia but also for Charles who is at home in Atlanta. He is also facing a bumpy road learning to manage life without me there with him. Your prayers and the blessings of friends will help make smooth the “bad road” and help turn it into the “good road.”

Melissa

Please read the following letter from Rev. Mienda Uriarte, acting director of World Mission:

Dear Partners in God's Mission,

What an amazing journey we're on together! Our call to be a Matthew 25 denomination has challenged us in so many ways to lean into new ways of reaching out. As we take on the responsibilities of dismantling systemic racism, eradicating the root causes of poverty and engaging in congregational vitality, we find that the Spirit of God is indeed moving throughout World Mission. Of course, the past two years have also been hard for so many as we've ventured through another year of the pandemic, been confronted with racism, wars and the heart wrenching toll of natural disasters. And yet, rather than succumb to the darkness, we are called to shine the light of Christ by doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with God.

We are so grateful that you are on this journey as well. Your commitment enables mission co-workers around the world to accompany partners and share in so many expressions of the transformative work being done in Christ's name. Thank you for your partnership, prayers and contributions to their ministries.

We hope you will continue to support World Mission in all the ways you are able:

Give – Consider making a year-end financial contribution for the sending and support of our mission personnel (E132192). This unified fund supports the work of all our mission co-workers as they accompany global partners in their life-giving work. Gifts can also be made “in honor of” a specific mission co-worker – just include their name on the memo line.

Pray – Include PC(USA) mission personnel and global partners in your daily prayers. If you would like to order prayer cards as a visual reminder of those for whom you are praying, please contact Cindy Rubin (cynthia.rubin@pcusa.org; 800-728-7228, ext. 5065).

Act – Invite a mission co-worker to visit your congregation either virtually or in person. Contact mission.live@pcusa.org to make a request or email the mission co-worker directly. Email addresses are listed on Mission Connections profile pages. Visit pcusa.org/missionconnections to search by last name.

Thank you for your consideration! We appreciate your faithfulness to God's mission through the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Prayerfully,

Rev. Mienda Uriarte, Acting Director
World Mission

Presbyterian Mission Agency
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

To give, please visit <https://bit.ly/22MC-YE>.

For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 4:6



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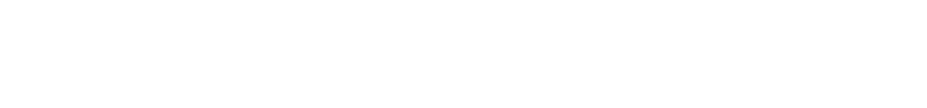
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