

December 20, 2003

Greetings from a warm Harare!

Thank you for this opportunity. I continue to be amazed at how we are working together, and how we are having such success. The fine thread that began to weave a tapestry 4 years ago has become a strong cord. Many people are being positively affected by your desire to help, by your actions supporting our work here and your encouraging words.

We arrived 10 days ago with a pleasant 1 ½ day trek. Of course, the unusual sleeping conditions (2 a.m. last minute packing, sleeping in airports, and sitting up in the plane), as well as the altitude (6-7,000 feet) and the time change (9 hours ahead), had us horizontal for day or so...nothing out of the ordinary for a trip to the other side of the planet. We, includes my son Jivan, my husband Lodi, and myself. They will be able to be here for 5 weeks while I try to take on a lighter than normal schedule. I will stay for another month to finish up. Lodi's suitcase was missing from South African Airlines and still hasn't turned up. He is replacing a few clothes, but is still patient and hopeful that his personal things will arrive. Cosmas just arrived from the US, also missing 2 bags, but on British Airlines. In his case, there was a delayed flight and 8 other people were also affected similarly. One bag of his has been recovered. He feels optimistic at this point, under the circumstances. We hear that a baggage theft ring in Johannesburg has been cracked but don't know anything for sure.

Lodi's missing bag was the final deciding factor on whether to take a short trip to Victoria Falls before heading to the rural area. We found that the trains no longer run normally, and petrol to take a car is quite expensive. Airfare was out of the question, so the added disadvantage of having to buy clothes definitely swayed us away from considering this holiday idea. It felt to me that Spirit was directing the show, as usual, and we were being nudged towards home right away rather than with delay.

#### CURRENCY

The currency exchange was the first priority. The bank exchange remains constant. When we arrived I heard that the street rate was 5,600 and now, 10 days later, I heard it was at 6,000. The exchanges on the street are discouraged in many ways forcing vendors to go underground. Just imagine all the ways you might see a drug scene exchange on television...these same pictures should come to mind in thinking about the dollar...the difference is that it's the common man with no disrespect or disregard for authority, only a person needing to survive hyper-inflation.

The banks have printed new money since last February. At that time they had come up with a 500-dollar bill, which helped considerably. Now there is a 1,000-dollar bill. Additionally, they have some bank notes for 5,10, and 20 thousand. This is a real relief. No longer do you need a suitcase. These notes state clearly that they are good until June 2004. I'm not sure what that will mean, but its clear they hope things will be different by then.

The money situation is quite a brain screw. Trying to count change, and catch on to regular conversions needed to estimate the bill, as well as feeling a sense of business savvy, are all up for grabs. I'm counting on it sinking in - it's still like a strange game of monopoly, but its full real life stuff. I can't imagine how the rural person is grappling with it all. Here they were dealing regular numbers from 1 to 100 and 500, now it jumps into the thousands. Many of these people didn't finish school. How can they relate to this? And then too, how can they generate that kind of cash for transactions?

Before heading out to Mhondoro we looked for groceries for the family there and ourselves. The rural residents ability to grow vegetables has been severely stressed by a lack of rains, so we loaded up on potatoes, carrots, onions, tomatoes, cabbage to name a few. We also bought fish from a strolling vendor. We bought fish for about the same in town and then later in Mhondoro. The odd thing to me was that, compared to last year in USD, it was also similar. It cost about \$1 to \$1.50 (7-8,000 this year and 1200-1800 last). There are many examples of this where the items haven't actually changed their cost if I tie it back to the USD last year. And the price for an item if bought in the US would still be inexpensive for us. What is not changing is the cash flow here for the average person. Remembering that 1 lb. = 2.2 kg, for example:

1 loaf bread \$2,100  
2 liters cooking oil \$20,900  
500 grams pasta \$6,900  
2 liters fresh orange juice \$8,200  
1 English cucumber \$2,046  
10 grams oregano \$1,120  
1 red pepper \$1,000

500 grams carrots \$900  
1 kg salt 1,900  
peaches \$3,000/kg

This year, so far, it appears that anything you want is available, if you have the money for it. It costs \$250,000 to fill up Cosmas truck with petrol. At the street exchange that would be about \$43. Where we live in Oregon that is high, but for other locations that may be normal. It does make our operating expenses out of balance with everything else, but at least we can get around. Thank God for the sculpture and textile sales that help cover these cost! The horrific thing is that the average wage earner cannot use a car, even if they might have one. A bank teller for example makes \$250,000 a month in wages. These petrol prices mean that the driving frenzy that was more common downtown, has lessened. It also means I can cross the street without such stress in the circus of a downtown scene ... we have to keep remembering to look a different direction, as they drive as the English, on the other side of the road. Us American foreigners are the only strangers to that approach.

#### MHONDORO

We arrived in Mhondoro and found it peaceful and the air fresh. Being from the country in the states, we yearn for that simplicity here as well. The family was generally well and Nhimbe was operating as usual in Cosmas' absence. Many things were underway, and others moving slower. I held meetings each day at 10 and 2 with each of the associated groups. Cosmas youngest daughter had just finished her exams for her "A" levels and was on holiday waiting for the results and so she became my assistant right away, translating and keeping track of many details. In the 4 days we were there we met with everyone, preparing lists for supplies from town as discussing plans for this year. I have also been able to provide NMT (See [neuromodulationtechnique.com](http://neuromodulationtechnique.com) for more information) to a few people, only taking on the worse cases presented.

#### MEDICAL

The first case was a daughter-in-law who was diagnosed with tuberculosis and had been taking the standard course of medicine for a couple of months, but not getting well. She would relapse into the same symptoms with difficulty breathing, no appetite, and sweats. We have done only one treatment and are seeing remarkable results. After the first day, she was able to sit upright for many hours. She is sleeping better and her appetite is returning. I have supplemented the NMT with essential oils and supplements that I have here for myself. I keep looking for time to be able to get together with her again.

Another case is a body rash on a young woman that has persisted, remaining on her face after a year. It began after being admitted to the hospital for another ailment, and being treated for that. We have been able to do one treatment and the itching has discontinued. Her story is so very common – someone goes to the hospital and comes out worse. I heard that more than once, in working with people.

#### HEALTH

Locating some assistance for health education was a priority in our discussions with the Health Aid and the Village Representatives. Our hope is to find someone with a program for going into rural areas to set up workshops monthly that our people could continue with on a weekly basis. This would be about sanitation and nutrition primarily. Our Health Station Aide will be setting up bilharzia screening for the villages so we can provide the medication for this parasite. Its easily dedectable in urine and the Health Aide treated many people last year, primarily adults.

#### COMMUNITY CENTER

We went to see how the Community Center was doing. The landscaping is coming wonderfully. Chiedza (meaning bright light) has added her horticultural background to her artistic touch and is doing a great job. She moves plants from her home as well as tends what we had purchased in the past. Our fruit trees are beginning bearing. The strawberries, which we took a chance with being unfamiliar to the area, are doing remarkably well, spreading and feeding the preschool children. We made a list of the plants to locate for the development this year, trying some unusual things as well as the standard. I need some advice about a natural method to repel ants, which are eating one of the citrus trees. If anyone has an organic suggestion please write!

The guesthouse is still under construction and we hope to be able to finish for our visitors this year. It is a wonderful structure that we are trying to provide some amenities whilst holding to a softer design than the standard 4 corner building. We need to purchase 12 bags of cement to finish the floors. They are waiting on a thatching grass delivery also to finish off the roof.

We arrived during library day. I was brought to tears, seeing the librarian in his Nhimbe shirt, checking out a book to a little girl as her family was there for the Saturday opening. He has hours twice a week. There weren't many books left on the shelves and the index cards revealed many books checked out. Obviously, we will be purchasing many books this year.

#### EDUCATION and PRESCHOOL

The Nhimbe Tutor also requested a set of the textbooks for the grades and subjects for which he is tutoring. Seems quite an obvious request. He just appeared on the scene last year and has taken on the tutoring with gusto. He gets the parents and the children both working together on the child's progress. The progress reports I have received from the schools show improvements in some ages. His work needs more remuneration as well as material support. Many of you that donated towards teaching supplies will be helping with these textbooks.

The progress reports showed that the youngest grades are doing the best. Those who have been to the Nhimbe Preschool are showing the most obvious development. The preschool teachers were very happy to see us come. Everything has been operating quite well, snacks continuing on a daily basis, with fresh water available and great learning activity. They have a woman coming daily baking bread. They have made a primitive outside oven area, but we need to make something permanent. I don't have the information with me, so if anyone could email the details on building an earth oven, I would be very grateful!

We have graduated 31 students into 1<sup>st</sup> grade. There have been 85 pupils registered with the average of 65 showing daily. It's best to not have more than 50 due to the toilet regulations. We expect to implement the double program this year with the youngest children coming in the morning and the older children in the afternoon. The teachers will be happy to work a full day. Our shopping list for them includes simple cleaning and food serving supplies, student apron fabric, and basic record keeping materials. Play area equipment is another hope for this year. Just one or two simple things would be great.

A small marimba was donated to the preschool, so the teachers and I will spend some time getting familiar with it and they will be able to add it to their music program. They love its sound! I've had more than one of the Nhimbe preschoolers come up to me and begin singing their songs they are learning. It's quite touching and exciting to see the enthusiasm. The Sundborn Children's House sent me with blackboards, building blocks and sewing shapes and puzzles – the teachers are very happy for this special kind of support!

My heart was moved by our lead teacher's story of loss since I saw her last. Her father, brother and 2 younger sisters have passed over the last months. She now has the responsibility of raising 3 children, 10, 12, and 17 from her siblings. The day she went to her father's funeral, her home was broken into and she lost everything. They actually took everything inside her hut. We are replacing her Nhimbe uniform fabric, as that was part of it. Our Assistant Teacher was late for our meeting as her brother's 7-month-old son died unexpectedly the day before and she was attending the funeral. The peaceful acceptance of these circumstances is necessary to be able to go on, and yet the normalcy is ripping at my insides.

#### TEXTILES and UNIFORMS

The biggest thing I noticed at the Community Center was that most windows had newspaper covering them to keep the *tsotsis* (thieves) from looking inside. Obviously, we need curtains. We were planning to purchase fabrics for 2 new dress designs and the medical uniform tops (scrubs) that I brought for the Textile coop, so the curtain fabric can be added to that list. The Textile coop is operating very well with new procedures in place. The finger puppet group is ready for work as well. Besides further puppet making, focusing on the African and domestic animals, I also brought a crocheted scrunchie design that will be easy and fun. They may even tie-dye some threads to have some unique colors.

Back in town, we went to purchase some of these supplies and thought we should just check on the uniform fabric costs. We found that some of the primary fabrics for the uniforms are not being printed so far this year. There was a little available but at exorbitant prices. There were also some fabrics in cheaper substitutes being sold. I realized that if we didn't jump on it, we would end up like last year in January with more problems to get new fabrics approved by the PTC and everything could get more complicated. So we took a couple of days and have purchased most of the fabric we could estimate for the children's uniforms. We don't know how many grade 1 children will be sponsored so couldn't include that. Less than 1/3 of the secondary fabric could be found anywhere. The uniform fabric costs will be double last year in USD but more than 5 times ZIM.

We also bought the scrubs fabric, curtain material and yarns. We spent over 5 million in all, covering almost all 190 children. At least we have taken care of that huge task, and quickly. We will want to return to purchase more for the non-

Nhimbe uniforms that the women want to be able to make. This would be on a loan basis. There are maybe 20 or so orders they expect based on last year. We found a nice sale in looking for curtain fabric. It was \$14,900 instead of \$16,600 per meter. When it turns out to be .25 cents a meter, my great sense of frugality is overshadowed by the ridiculous. I'm such a bargain hunter that everything shifts in this light. My sister and I were laughing so hard over the "great" savings, but almost crying too as she is a seamstress and feels the impact of these rising prices. No one can afford to purchase clothes and so her business has drastically reduced. Of course this time of year, for the next couple of weeks, things will be better.

#### IN SUMMARY

Jivan went with a friend to check out the college campus and then looking for a book store downtown. He saw a teddy bear in the store for \$400,000. In the US it would have been \$10. Beer is about .40 a bottle and soda is .15. He enjoys being able to buy a soda for his friends and family.

Today will be our last time in town for another couple of days. We need to return to Mhondoro. We will be placing our first sculpture order, visiting with the chief with expectations of getting a letter signed with him requesting our video producer's presence, and giving Cosmas a chance to see mom, after his extended stay in the states. There is always more to say, but its time to begin rolling.

Thank you again, the many of you, who carry Nhimbe in your heart. Your prayers, your intentful acts of generosity, and the resulting miracle of the Nhimbe toddler continue to bless our lives, and the lives of those many involved here. Bless you during your holidays!

Always Gratefully...Jaiien