

March 25, 2007

Dear Friends of Zimbabwe,

John and I have returned home and are settling back into our life here in the foothills of the Cascades, after a gratefully uneventful flight. We took the trip home slow and easy and are now comfortably in our own beds, drinking our well water, and driving our own cars...what things we take for granted. It was wonderful to be woken up at midnight to talk to Jivan, our son, who is stationed in Afghanistan...a phone call at that hour never sounded so good. John went to his Saturday night square dance last night, picking up his friend and dance partner Betty, and so is getting right back into his groove...not bad for 86 years young and pretty amazing!

Mary returned a couple of days before us to her home in Seattle, who also had an uneventful flight. Between us all, we brought back much in the way of new serpentine sculpture, beautiful fabric purses, many hosho (many for children's hand size – write if you have a children's band) and toy mbiras. Carrying these things in suitcases is so important now with the new regulations there – we really managed to make a dent in the exports to be brought. If you are traveling to Zimbabwe and can spare a little room, do let me know!

It is great to be back to visiting with old friends and loving up my dog and husband, but it also takes a while to re-find my footprints here. Where did they go? Didn't I leave a life here to just pick up again? The best way to describe this is that my feet have changed over the last thirty days and my shoes don't fit. It feels as if the structure of my mind-body has been altered in the last month. I am used to this sort of transition, after a dozen or so trips to this home-away-from-home, and yet each time I struggle to re-root.

We stripped away the insulation of U.S. living, became one with life there – the chaos, confusion and continued strife, met the hearts of the people filled with great love and commitment, and so all of that doesn't casually fall away. It's like a framework has to be rebuilt inside of us, upon re-entry to our soil here. There is usually some amount of culture shock to finding one's bearings. And watching the process with as much awareness as possible is the only way I know to not get ill. I often have struggled with some minor health issue upon returning, after being fine the whole time there, and so am trying hard to observe all the subtle levels this time as the "structures" of my life get re-worked:

* My mental structures readjust to comprehend an apparent abundance (some of which is true and some is not, as we know our dollar is not backed by gold – traveling through the UK and receiving less exchange than last year reminded me that our dollar does not have the value we imagine – we have much here, but are also a nation of debt and so it is a fantasy). There is also some relief that every minute of every day isn't geared to planning how to get the most out of every moment – I go into a hyper-efficiency mode in Zimbabwe with only a month to work there. John has told me I need to take 6 weeks there to do it in a reasonable manner. I tend to agree with him. My trips have extended from 3 weeks to 9 weeks since 2000 and 6 weeks has been the best for a more relaxed schedule. It's great to let go of my super-planner mode, but then finding some new balance really takes time. How do I find that balance with so much to accomplish here yesterday on all fronts as well?

* There are emotional changes – I don't have to lock every thing, or continue to see bars on every window keeping property safe for the moment, nor worry that I am not keeping a low enough profile to fly under the radar or attract a mugger, but we have different kinds of fear here that are also rotting our sense of peace – the terrorism and war and politics pervades as an undercurrent, our children are killing children and our children are raising children,...so how do I work with all that? Either place has its issues. Worry about the future because of the present fears is kind of a human response to an animal reaction and I need to remind myself to pray and find my Center – nowhere in the world are we free of these problems. There is personal openness there in individuals that invite one to open their being to new doorways of exchange. There is simplicity of human nature that touches one deeply. And it is an exchange - I'm sure we also provide some new doorways for them to go through, in terms of new thought, freedoms and resourcefulness. How do I source relationships here with that kind of openness to create genuine simple and open friendship?

* There is a spiritual structural shift that evades description. In general I notice a spiritual willingness that one doesn't find here as easily. I think it's actually genetic or part of their "morphic field" in that historically people receive information from the world of spirit, they dream about new music, and the herbs to use, for instance. People here tend to try and cover up their simplicity, their receptivity and sensitivity, maybe in fear of being too vulnerable, too transparent and too open. There, life as it is has stripped away facades and preconceived notions about how things should be and a person is just living with "how it is" and most often with dignity in tact. There is only so much hiding behind things a person can do when there are no things. There is something too about reverence for the ancestors, elders, and authority that permeates everything. On the one hand it is a remarkable and wonderful thing to see children obedient to their parents and teachers, watching the young men talking with great interest with John about life, and other events that demonstrate a societal patriarchal difference. There is a natural beauty about the order that these beliefs create. But, then there are also great problems inherent in that – women have little and sometimes no power, people have great difficulty suggesting any changes to a system even when it doesn't work, communication is rampant with confusion because the current system and cultural fabric is breaking down and so then nothing makes sense. Shifting between these two worlds has an unsettling effect because there really isn't an answer here on this side or there that solves it all. I just remain with a multitude of questions in my psyche about what God really wants in my life, what do I teach to our children everywhere, how do I offer my Self to my world?

* There is a physical structure that nurtures me here in the rainforest of the Pacific Northwest – it fills me up – almost too much stimulation right now. I love my home. The birds are so full of sound, the flowers in our trees are bursting, and my dog is absolutely amazing as she licks my face and dances with abandon. Even though it is truly brimming with all goodness that Nature can provide, it also is still surreal, and I am slow to soak it up. It's almost like I walked across a desert and can't quite quench my thirst – I need to relax and let it sink in.

CHILDREN

Children everywhere deserve our concerted efforts to lift them up, provide them with the basics in health and education, and help them in their lives so that they have a different, broader and expanded opportunity compared to their parents. This is at the roots of the Ancient Ways motto – A Child's Life is The Path. We spent this last month focused on many things but everything we have done holds a thread of continuity that brings us back to the children. I am so very grateful for all of the effort on the soil there and the donations and time here to create these opportunities.

I had mentioned previously that we began the Girl Guides program. We now officially have an association with this international organization. We have registered almost 100 girls and purchased the basics for their attire so that they can get started. We bought badges so that each girl has the country badge of the Zimbabwe bird, as well as a patrol badge which was a bird or flower. A badge for instance cost .03 us cents a piece. We couldn't afford uniforms for each child but bought sashes for the badge placement for the youngest groups (girl guides and brownies) and hats instead for the rangers which are the teens.

Please, if you are involved with Girls Scouts and/or brownies, please write with ideas, as our girls in Mhondoro need your assistance. We have just begun and I feel that this has potential to be a forum for empowerment and a new future for these young ones. Partly instinctively I see the horizon but also the leader Voice Muchada we have is quite capable of expanding this opportunity. Our boy child program Machapro, led by Tatenda Muchiriri, is continuing on its own without Boy Scout affiliation but we are interested in any ideas you might have. We purchased fabric for hats for the boys so that they too have an image; there are over 50 of these boys. Do you work with children? Do you have suggestions for our leaders there? We dream of teaching every child to think outside of the box. Please write me!

We finalized most tuition for schools by the end. Mary returned with the photos and me with most all of the letters from the children to you. In the Jangano project there was almost no movement (transfers) of students. I don't know exactly why the area is more stable but it appears so by the enrollment. In Mhondoro we had about 34 children who had moved or dropped out before I came in February and then several more by the time I left in March. These enrollment changes make a great deal of work for all involved. And then those of you who sponsor children wonder why your child changes...what a challenge to keep things connected. It seems to be all part of the process for this area. I will be writing many of you to tell you about this change if it affects your child. If you haven't sent your donation to continue the sponsorship of the children please do so now, if you are at all able to help.

We also have had an increase in the number of older children wanting to continue their education after completion of Secondary school. This is really great! These are the categories we ask \$100 or \$200 to send to a year of school. I am so glad they are coming forward and am hoping there are many of you interested in their assistance. We have a unique young woman too, Abigail Muchiriri, who is interested in being a masseuse and her requirements are financially higher than this. We are looking to find sponsors for her so that she will not only have an occupation but we can hire her at our Health Centre – if you are interested in helping this woman please write...thanks!

DONHODZO HEALTH CENTRE

The Health Centre was able to get a start on this trip, but without Helen's presence, we were sorely lacking the planned time to cover very much. Once the Ministry of Health approves our application, the New Start program can begin which I think will be of huge importance as HIV testing is critical.

Fredreck and I spent as much time as possible studying NMT and doing treatments for various conditions. I need to come and spend an entire trip just doing the healing work – it's a must and just impossible to create enough time with all the project administration bearing down at the first of the year. I would also like to invite NMT practitioners! Write me! Now since Fred's visa was refused, he will be doing his studies from the books and DVDs – he really needs some personal guidance from other practitioners and just think – you could make a difference to hundreds of people there.

The most interesting NMT session to me was the group treatment. We worked with a group of 3 women out of absolute desperation since there was a long line of people needing help and so little time. They all had a decrease of symptoms after about an hour and returned the next day with no symptom remaining. My brain is talking at me saying "that couldn't be" since appearances were of difficult physical conditions. I am my worst critic. So group work is a definite plan for the future. Fred and Benita were to be purchasing a couple of cabinets for the Health Centre after I left and I am hoping that all went along smoothly. We need to keep things in order and create a professional atmosphere which is impossible without the physical structures for supplies.

SUMMARY

Thank you all for your help to create alternatives in Zimbabwe. If we weren't there doing this work, there would not be these opportunities. So many organizations have left the country; so many options are dead ends due to the economic problems and the health crisis. We treasure the path you have helped to create to reach out, being blessed by all the energy

on both sides of the globe towards these efforts. Thank you again for your part of this, your commitment to help things move forward, and see this through.

I know that our challenges to respond to your emails during this last couple of months have been trying. With our Office Assistant having a heart attack, we will need to find a replacement and move forward. Thank you for your patience.

As usual the letters and pictures of your children are forthcoming – know that we aren't World Vision, Unicef, or some other large organization, as most everything is done by many volunteers. The amount you donate per child for the year is clearly not paying any staff here. We appreciate being able to provide you with a communication channel with your child and again ask for your understanding. We have always managed to get you the information by June/July and continue to try to improve that but when we can't get the information from Zimbabwe until March or sometimes later, you can see the process is very slow and involved. Thanks again for all you do to support this work!

If you haven't received your tax receipts for this year they are forth coming! We tried to get them out at the first of the year, but somehow some weren't received – email, as good as it is, is not the best solution for something so important. I am sending out the receipts for any of you who have told me (for only over \$250 is a receipt required) – anyone else missing a receipt should write me now. Do feel free to email or write with any questions or concerns.

From our family to yours, and from everyone in Zimbabwe passing their whole hearted appreciation on to you - blessings to you and those dear to you,

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