



Lusaka, Zambia

From the classifieds...

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Corner of Vubu Road and Lumumba Road

From *The Post*, November 16, 2007 (CD4 count is a laboratory indicator of the stage of HIV infection.)

Sewards' Follies

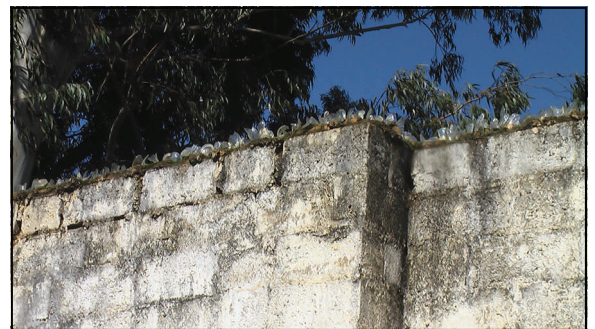
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Walls

We have been looking for housing in Lusaka. Houses vary greatly in this city of 1.2 million, from one-room shacks with shared outhouses to mansions with manicured gardens, swimming pools, tennis courts and guest cottages, but they all have one thing in common: walls. No matter the size or luxury of the home, everyone is hidden behind high cement block walls. The security level varies somewhat, from simple broken bits of glass embedded in the top of the wall to the addition of barbed wire, to a crown of electric fencing. And the aesthetics vary, from grey, unpainted cement blocks to ornate brick and artistic relief work (still with electric wires on top). Security is big business, and when the shifts change, morning and evening, uniformed guards from various companies fan out across the city to take up their posts. The city does not feel unsafe. In the 80's and early 90's Lusaka was notorious for armed robberies and car-jackings, but we have not heard recent stories of these. We might not need walls and guards, but who will be the first person to tear them down? Who wants to be known on their street as the one person without a guard?

So what did we find? We found a house with room for guests, a wall around the yard, and an enormous dog that looks like he could eat a small child. Since Boris only looks that way, and is in reality entirely too lazy to bark or growl or even look up when someone comes, we'll also continue the employment of the three non-uniformed guards that took turns providing 24-hour security for the previous tenants. We moved in on December 18th, just a few hours after the previous tenants left.



Is Zambia a poor country?

In terms of GDP per capita and HDI (human development index) score, Zambia ranks 165th out of 177 countries. Fifty percent of people do not live past 40 years of age. Forty percent do not have access to clean water. Thirty percent of adults cannot read. It sounds like a poor country.

And yet, here in the capital, we might be fooled. Most of the roads are paved, and traffic jams of Toyotas of every kind attest to considerable wealth. Gasoline costs \$7 per gallon. Trendy professionals glide through western-style supermarkets tossing into their carts vegetables shrink-wrapped in little Styrofoam trays, gourmet cheese, wine, decorator cushions on sale from Aisle 14, and a plastic Christmas tree from the seasonal display between the electronics department and the impulse-buy bins. At the Arcades shopping mall, we see people with money: Expatriates buy groceries and pretend they are part of middle class life in the US or Europe. Tourists sip java and go online in a chic Italian coffee shop. Families go to the movies. On Sundays, vendors spread out in the parking lot their fare of wood carv-



The hospital road

ings, batiks, baskets and jewelry. On Saturday nights, teenage girls huddle in the bathrooms, make up and hair products and giggles and drama crowding the sinks and mirrors. Security guards blanket the parking lot. There are no beggars at the Arcades, no street children, and no people without shoes. It is quite possible to live in Lusaka and never see any of these.

One of the few bits of convincing evidence that Zambia is a poor country is that I (Michael) see a steady stream of patients who are well past the point of legal blindness (many cannot even see motion) due to cataracts. Their sight could have been restored months or even years ago by a 20-minute surgery costing less than \$100. Since this is more than 10% of the average yearly income in Zambia, money is understandably a barrier, but there are other limiting factors. These include transportation costs, fear, and lack of knowledge. For this reason, CBM has a special budget that pays for a vehicle to visit a rural area each week

to pick up people who would otherwise not be able to come to Lusaka. Their surgeries are performed free of charge, and then the vehicle returns the patients to their village. In some cases, there are enough patients who are far enough away that it makes more sense to transport the doctor (and operating equipment and staff) to the people, and that is exactly what we do. This month I traveled to the Western Province to do surgeries on patients living in Senanga, about 400 miles from Lusaka. Most of these patients had never seen Lusaka, and to ask them to go there would be something akin to telling you to go to the moon. I think these trips are going to be the funnest part of my job.

I wish I could tell you some stories from the patients on that trip. The truth is that I was so busy doing surgeries that I failed to spend much time with the patients otherwise, and I also don't know that it would have resulted in any understandable stories, since I do not speak Lozi. So far, I have acquired a few phrases in Nyanja, the lingua franca in the capital ("hello", "look up", "look straight"), but for some reason this has not resulted in any deep personal conversations. One of the senior hospital staff informed me that the language I should learn is Bemba, but when I made mention of this realization to some others at lunch, everyone laughed. It seems that there are about 78 different opinions about which language is worth learning, which leaves me a little overwhelmed.

Please pray with us.

- Again, we are grateful to God for arranging everything. We have found a house to rent, and because of limited choices we didn't have to agonize over our selection. We also found a used car to buy. It is decidedly the ugliest make of a car known to man (a Toyota Venture). It looks a lot like Postman Pat's vehicle, and it is appropriately beat up and unattractive in color and condition. We have great peace that it will never be stolen.
- Jannike is thankful for a profitable time in Johannesburg, South Africa. It was a good time of connecting with people who are doing disability work in Zambia and other African countries. In fact, one outcome was an email network of people doing community-based rehabilitation in Zambia.
- Michael's first month at Lusaka Eye Hospital has been good. Pray for deep, real relationships and wisdom in knowing when to learn and when to challenge.
- One of our prayer supporters is still recovering from cancer surgery. Pray for encouragement and continued healing.

Please keep in touch.

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