

Dear Friends,

Greetings!

This week marks the beginning of term two for students and teachers in Zambia. During the four-week break, many pupils will have helped with their family's annual harvest of maize, sunflower, and sorghum. This year's harvest was good in most areas of Southern Province – thank you Lord.

Teachers must work for two of the four weeks during term break. Some offered remedial lessons to their pupils, some did lesson planning for the next term, and others were busy with school maintenance such as painting. Now, it is back to teaching and learning for all!

In February during our stay in Zambia we discussed the merits of a bicycle loan program for pupils who live a long distance from school. There is a program at Good Hope School of a similar nature, and it has been working well. Before getting underway, the staff at each school had to plan for supervision and maintenance and soon each school had a "Bicycle Committee". Next, Ruhtt purchased twenty "Buffalo Bikes" which are specifically made for rough terrain. These bikes will be loaned to pupils from Monday after school, until Friday morning when the student cycles to school. If, after a few months, the program is working well, more bicycles will be purchased for each school.

Another purchase in 2023 has been hygiene kits for young women. Ruhtt ordered 400 of these to give to the young women in upper grades at Basic schools, and the young women within the sponsorship program. Many of them miss two or three days of school each month during their menstrual cycle due to a lack of funds to purchase commercial products. The components of the kits are washable and reusable, and our hope is that this will reduce absenteeism.

The lunch program is ongoing and is an encouragement for families to send their children to school. As we reduce barriers and offer encouragement the number of youngsters in school increases. You might think that getting an education is important to all parents, yet we still find families who do not put much merit on academic education. Or, some families will ensure their sons are in school, and keep their daughters home to help with domestic chores such as caring for younger siblings, or an ailing grandparent, or the garden. Bit by bit the attendance is rising, and test results are climbing!

The sponsored students attend either Kalomo High School in town, or Namwianga Christian Secondary School (NCSS) at Namwianga Mission. University and college pupils attend at various cities in Zambia according to their place of learning. Kalomo High School offers more electives than NCSS, yet NCSS is smaller, and students have more weekly interaction with Ruhtt. They have all come from humble beginnings and are grateful for wherever they are sponsored to attend. Several of the students attending George Benson Christian College (GBCC) are now part of a local 'football' (soccer) team. The star player is a

sponsored pupil named "Biglend" (his first name!). More and more we cross paths with former sponsored students who are now graduated from high school and/or college. In February while in town our vehicle was suddenly, deliberately, blocked by a young man driving his car. He was grinning from ear to ear, jumped out and ran to our car window - "remember me?"!! Well, we didn't remember him, but he remembered us! "I'm Gift - you sponsored me and now I am a nurse". These are moments that can lift one's spirit from dreary to delighted in a heartbeat.

Thank you for your continued support for young people in Zambia. Bit by bit, pupil by pupil, futures are changing for many.

Blessings!

Joan

On behalf of ZMFC