



**Link with the United Church of Zambia (UCZ)  
Bethel Congregation Chilanga, near Lusaka - History**

At the September 2009 Church Meeting, the World Church Committee was given approval to seek a link with a UCZ congregation in the Lusaka Presbytery. This is in response to a Wessex Synod initiative encouraging local churches to develop links.



Initially, we were looking to form a link with a church in Lusaka where the Revd. Agnes Mulenga was the Minister. But we discovered that Agnes had moved pastorates to Chilanga about 12 miles south of Lusaka.

Here is Chilanga.

It seemed sensible to us that a link with Agnes' current church should be followed up rather than with her previous one.

Revd. Agnes visited Chandlers Ford from 10 to 12 May 2010 and we discovered that she is an outgoing, approachable and committed Christian. It didn't take us long to decide that we did indeed want to forge a link and Agnes suggested that we link with her Bethel Congregation, one of five churches that she leads.

We stressed to Agnes that our main aims were to:

- Get to know each other
- To learn about each other's plans, hopes and church life
- To support each other in prayer and
- In time, visit each other.

We **stressed** that the Synod's view is that these links should **not** be seen as primarily fundraising projects from our end and also confirmed that this is our view too.



**Banner to Zambia**

When Revd. Agnes Mulenga visited us in May 2010 she asked us if we could make a banner for Bethel Church in Chilanga. As a member of the Bethel Congregation was visiting us we decided we would like to give them this Welcome Banner which we feel is very appropriate

We pray that the banner will be a reminder of the link between our churches and that it will be a blessing.

We received the following letter of thanks from our friends in Zambia:

'Yes indeed, our member Mrs. Liness Ng'andwe arrived safely and we thank you most sincerely for the banner (cloth) and the small cups for Holy Communion which you sent us. We have so far even placed the cloth in front, at the altar with that powerful message which is loud and clear, it has really changed the outlook of our church and the Christians and Rev. Agnes are so delighted! May the Lord continue blessing you so abundantly! THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Recently, we received the following information from the Church Secretary at Bethel:

'Let me just in brief update you on the structure of our church, The United Church of Zambia. The church is composed of four major organs, we call them "courts". The lowest court is a SECTION where there are members. These members from sections meet for mid-week prayers in their respective sections and these sections are led by elders and deacons who are elected at the Congregation council meetings.

The term of office for elders is 4 years while that of deacons is 2 years. These leaders cannot serve for more than two terms. The second court is a CONGREGATION where all sections meet for Sunday worship as well as on Wednesday for prayers. Leaders of all the committees, groups and sections meet quarterly to review the performance of the Congregation, Committees and groups. This is what we call the CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING. The third court is the CONSISTORY which is currently led by Rev. Agnes Mulenga as a chairperson; this is where matters from the Congregations and beyond the jurisdiction of the congregation are dealt with.

The CONSISTORY COUNCIL MEETINGS are held annually and may be called as the Chairperson calls them from time to time depending on the issues needing urgent attention. The composition of such meeting are:- The Chairperson, The Secretary and vice and the Treasurer, who are elected after 2 years and can serve to a maximum of 2 terms. Other leaders of the Consistory Council are all Congregation office bearers and all Consistory Committee Convenors.

The fourth court is the PRESBYTERY which is Composed of the Bishop as Chairperson, the Secretary and the vice and the treasurer, others in this committee are all Consistory leaders, who are the Congregation Chairpersons, who are normally the Reverends, the Consistory leaders, i.e. the Consistory Chairpersons, their Secretaries and Treasurers. The Presbytery meet to review the performance of Consistories and deal with other related matters from the mother body which is THE SYNOD being the administrative offices of the church. Synod is composed of the Synod Bishop, Synod General Secretary and The Finance person, these normally deal with issues pertaining church policies and alike.

I hope this somehow is going to give you some rough image of our church. Best regards to all the Christians, and to your family and friends.

"Maranatha!"



GOD BE WITH YOU AND BLESS YOU.

Bornface Abednego Silomba'

### **Our Visit 7-22 September 2011**

A group of 7 of us visited Bethel Congregation in September 2011. Bethel is in the United Church of Zambia, the largest denomination in the country. What were our expectations? What were our hopes? What were our concerns?

Well, it was nothing like we expected. The church (pictured above) is in the middle of a very large compound called Linda about 10 miles south of Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. A compound is really like a self-contained town except the buildings are small, some of them are brick-built, some aren't, and there are a lot of them!!



However, wherever we went, we met nothing but kindness, warmth and a real delight that we had taken the trouble to go and visit them. We also met Jesus Christ in every aspect of their lives.

We stayed in nice homes but the vast majority of people live in small houses in the compound. But they all worship with an enthusiasm and vigour that we lost, sadly, a long time ago. They have 2 Sunday services – one in English and one in Bemba, one of the vernacular languages. The church isn't full at the start of the services, but certainly is by the end, so about 600 people altogether worship in the church every Sunday.

On the first Sunday, we led the English service with Tim preaching the sermon. That service lasted over 2 hours, with wonderful singing by several choirs.

The vernacular service, which we also attended, lasted over 2 hours too, so we were there for over 5 hours in total! During this service, 8 people were baptised and 10 more were confirmed. The joy in the church for the people making these commitments was palpable. 5 hours sounds a long time, but it passed ever so quickly. And we truly felt in the Lord's presence in both services.

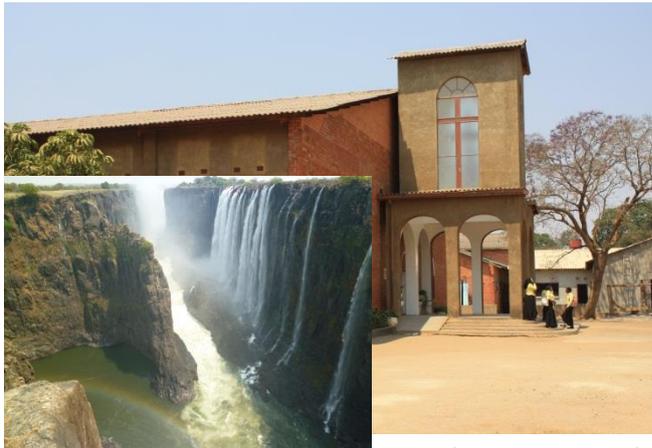
Faith is so much part of their lives. The church is split up into 'Sections', a bit like 'cells' over here. Every Sunday afternoon, most of the Sections meet for Bible Study. The others meet during the week. The pastoral visiting is organised by Section, done by Section members for those in need in their Section.

The church arranged for us to visit a number of churches in Lusaka. Bethel is part of the Lusaka South Consistory of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ). This is a bit like our old Southampton District.



We visited St Paul's Church in Kabwata Compound. This picture is one of the original church built on the site. It now acts as the church hall and when we visited it, a meeting of Boys' Brigade Officers was in progress. The church grew significantly in numbers and became far too small for the worshipping

community. So a new church was built next door and a picture of it is below.



The photo hardly does the church justice as it holds about 500 people and is full to overflowing for 2 services every Sunday! I think our eyes turned a little green at this point!

The churches are also used as venues for Bible Study and for choir practices – some choir members are on the steps of the church.

We were surprised to discover that services generally don't contain much congregational hymn singing. In the

services we attended there were only 2 hymns. But there is a major input from the many choirs at each church. At Bethel, we think there are 5 choirs and 2 at least are involved in every service. So, it's during their contributions that the church comes to life so to speak. I commented at one point that the singing of the main Bethel choir very definitely joined us to the singing of the heavenly host – if only I could bring it to life here!



Membership of the Women's Christian Fellowship and the Men's Christian Fellowship is also highly prized. On joining, a member is 'bloused' and from then on wears the uniform with pride. This is the women's uniform and the men's one is similar.

The scale of membership is vast. Zambia has a

population of 13 million and UCZ has a membership of over 2 million! My eyes are going green again! It seemed to us as well that everyone played a part in the life of the church so there were no 'dormant' members.

### **Our 'touristy' bit Victoria Falls, Livingstone**

Lusaka is on a plateau at 4235 feet above sea level and Livingstone is about 1000 feet lower. Consequently, it's much hotter there – as we discovered!

Livingstone is a 300 mile drive south west from Lusaka but, as traffic is light in the countryside, we did it in 6 hours in an 8 seater Toyota. We spent 2 nights in Livingstone staying at a small hotel which only catered for 8 guests – us! It was owned and run by a very friendly Scot who looked after us very well.

My literary skills are not good enough to do justice to the Victoria Falls so I will let my camera do the talking with a couple of photos:



In

September, the volume of water is at a low level so the outline of the Falls becomes much clearer as you can see in these photos.

We enjoyed a sunset cruise on the River Zambezi and saw elephant, baboons and hippos close up as well as lots of birds.

Near the Falls is a 1000 year old baobab tree which 3 of us climbed (on steps you understand!) to give us a fabulous panoramic view of the whole area including the Falls.



All too soon we were on our way back to Lusaka.

Following a second long weekend with our church hosts, we set off for a couple of days at Puku Pan Safari Lodge in the Kafue National Park, about 170 miles west of Lusaka. The first 150 miles was on a tar road – fine, but the last 20 was on an uncomfortable, bumpy dirt road – but then we were in Africa!

The lodge was in the middle of nowhere, but in a fabulous setting on the banks of the river Kafue – Kafue National Park is the size of Wales. Here are a couple of photos of the River Kafue, another wide African river, and some intrepid tourists on a walking safari.

We didn't see lots of animals but it whetted our appetite for a return visit. On the walking safari we had a close encounter with a herd of elephant which Tim captured on his camcorder!

Africa does get in your blood and most of us are game for another visit. Before then, though, we hope to reciprocate the hospitality we received by hosting members of Bethel Congregation, maybe in 2014 or 2015.

#### **Latest News:**

- The Minister, Revd Agnes Mulenga moved to a new church in Lusaka in April 2013 and was succeeded by Revd. Christopher Njovu from a church near the Kariba Dam. He moved on and in January 2014 Rev Bertha Lungu was inducted as Minister. We sent her our warmest wishes and blessings following her induction in January

- At the end of March 2014, rev Lungu, with a Ministerial colleague, will be visiting the UK for a 2 week stay and will be with us in Chandlers for 5 nights. We are really looking forward to this and meeting Rev Lungu face to face
- We send regular prayer requests to our friends in Zambia and are strengthened by knowing that we are linked by the power of prayer
- We send 2 copies of our church magazine to Zambia every month and
- We give thanks that Zambia is having plentiful rainfall this year (it rains from about November to the end of March).

***Martin Waldron***