

DERRICK AND BARBARA'S VISIT TO ZIMBABWE AND ALBANIA: 2012

For the first two weeks of our visit I was teaching at **Ameva Bible School**. I left John and Celia's house at 7.30 a.m. picking up students on the way in John's large pick-up truck. Teaching began at 8.00 a.m. and I had two hours in the morning and one or two hours in the afternoon getting home about 4.00 p.m. **Church History** is not an easy subject to teach especially as most of it concerns the Western church although the North Africa Churches were very influential before they were destroyed by the Islamic armies. It is the one subject that is not Bible based and so requires more work. I had however prepared a booklet about early Christian missionary work in Africa which also included information about the coming of the gospel to the Shona people in Zimbabwe (see the attachment).

I am sure those of you that have "Fellowship" connections will be know how the farm has been run down and John's house burned down. It is a sorry sight alongside houses now empty that were in full occupation when I was here about 20 years ago. It was strange to look around Martin and Marian William's house, remembering each room and where I had stayed. Devoid of human life and activity they are strangely empty. I remember Marian treating a young boy from the school who had machete wounds on his legs and I also remember seeing a child from the Infants school drinking water from a plastic container which was not fit for drinking. Some of the children walked many miles getting up as early as 4.00 a.m. Both Infant and Junior Schools continue to function well at Ameva.

There is a beef herd and there are also a few dairy cattle but nothing like the former herds. All that is left of the chicken sheds is a broken timber frame. The fields have reverted to bush and the only fields I saw cultivated was one of sunflowers (the seeds are used for cooking oil) and one of brightly coloured flowers (the seeds will be sold to gardeners). John is positive that there will be a future in the will of God for Ameva Farm. The Lord has kept the farm up to the present time but there are continuing challenges regarding its ownership. Please continue to pray for the farm and for John and Celia for continued strength and protection.

The Graduation Ceremony was the conclusion of two years of study, meeting periodically for two weeks at a time. Students come from different church affiliations. Some are from Fellowship churches and some from the Christian Marching Church which is a break away from the Salvation Army. The Bishop of the CMC denomination was present. It was moving to see the joy shared by the students and their friends with lots of hugs and dancing. To graduate from Bible School is an unbelievable achievement. I preached during the Conference, at the Graduation and each Sunday I was there. Driving up to the "Scout Hut" in Chegutu reminded me of when I was here twenty years ago; then it was a Student gathering now it is a church meeting. The Lord led me to preach on the Ten Virgins and the Second Coming with a strong sense of urgency.

I have spent time helping the staff with issues related to the Bible School and spent over four hours trying to make sense of the Library. Some of my subject headings are still there from my last visit! Of course unpacking and sorting books is a delight to me. It has been a joy to enjoy John and Celia's friendship and home. They have been so kind to us. Barbara has been able to relax and spend lots of time reading, although today she had a meeting with some of the local Christian ladies sharing with them about the Lord and her experience of walking with the Lord.

The last week of our stay we left very early for a few days stay at Victoria Falls which is a long journey from here. It was David Livingstone who was the first white man to see the most spectacular waterfall in the world. His monument stands overlooking "the Falls". We returned home to Uk with a couple of days to repack our cases for Albania.

ALBANIA REPORT: MAY 2012

This is our third visit to the church founded by Najua Diba, a Brazilian missionary with Antioch Mission. On our first visit five years ago I wrote,

“Our first meeting was in her church; they have a small building in a yard. It looks dilapidated and seems as if it might fall down, but inside it is full of people. What is most striking is the difference of the inside from the outside. After Barbara shared I stood at the front of the meeting and I saw lots of youngsters from about the age of 10 upwards. I changed what I was going to say and spoke to them instead. I observed this age group all the time I was there (half the population of Albania is under 20 years old). When I spoke on Sunday in a hotel room that the church hire, I noticed when I gave the appeal a young lad in his teens on his knees weeping and pouring out his heart to the Lord. The next thing that impressed me was that the whole church is awakened by the Holy Spirit - there is an eagerness for the Lord that is infectious. The church is in its honeymoon period, and these dear lovely people were so full of love towards Barbara and me. We felt we fitted in here like a glove.”

I am glad to write to you five years later that those young men and an equal number of young women are now leading in vital areas of the churches ministry and that which I described as the “honeymoon period,” or what John describes as “first love” still characterizes the church. First love must deepen into mature love. The divine love that is reproduced in the fellowship of the Lord’s children accounts for the rich presence of God in the church. When the love of God is poured out among the saints in joy and exuberance the love of God becomes irresistible and this creates hunger and longing in those who visit the church from the outside. Those who are not yet Christians soon find themselves at the altar seeking for prayer. Saints who are living in the overflow of the divine life also take every opportunity to seek Him and to hear the Lord’s prophetic words for their lives. These Christians know how to wait before the Lord following the ministry of his word.



Najua’s plan was for us to teach each evening to their Bible School students, but what actually happened was that the church took the opportunity to attend. The young lady who translated for me three years ago was there to translate again. Eagerness for truth and love of Scripture is not confined to the young. The mother’s who had prayed their children into the kingdom who were now leading worship, prayer and evangelism were as eager to grapple with the doctrine of God and the divine attributes as their grown children. I always spent the day getting ready for the evening studies. We began our studies with the doctrine of God, the trinity and the attributes of God. Since Albania gained her freedom from a totalitarian dictatorship she has been free to revive the old religions resulting in the upsurge of Islam and it’s mocking of the truth of the triune God and the Sonship of Christ.



Our final Sunday was memorable, as it had been three years ago when the Lord had moved significantly, breaking in and making it impossible to continue preaching. On this occasion we finished the meeting and began praying and speaking the Lord’s words into each life, praying for each individual sparks prophecy. Ministry is a two way thing: we minister and so we also are ministered to. Prayer releases the prophetic word just as responsiveness to the Lord’s words ensures the continuing flow of the prophetic word. Hunger and eagerness calls forth the word of God. I recall praying with one sister whose heart was overflowing to the Lord and I saw her life as a fragrant ointment, her brokenness as the flask or vessel that Mary broke before her Lord that filled the room with its rich odour. The ointment was her hearts devotion to Jesus. Barbara also spoke the same word to her later when she prayed for her. The meeting which began at 10:15 am finished at 1:45 pm.

Our plan is to return next year and to continue our programme of Bible teaching. Our final evening of teaching was on the inspiration and writing of Scripture.



Since returning home we have had Beth, Gareth and children staying with us in our home for a week's holiday and disregarding the rain and wind we went out most days with the children. Due to our being away so long Hope had almost forgotten us!

We now have Steve, Manjit and family with us through to the first week in August. It has been a great opportunity for us all to meet up together as a family with our four children and their children and the wider family of cousins and aunts and uncles!

We met up together at Raglan Road but Barbara was ill in bed – she had put so much into planning this occasion! However, on the 8th July which is Barbara's birthday we celebrate 45 years of marriage so that will compensate a little for her disappointment.



Thank you so much for your support in prayer and fellowship.

With much love in the Lord Jesus, Derrick and Barbara.