

Matt and Polly's newsletter

November 2006

The blue house

A new home – after months of moving from place to place we have now moved into a two bedroom 'cottage'! Known as the blue house (for obvious reasons), it is owned by an elder from the church we are part of – and we share the compound and garden with his family of ten. It is just what we were waiting for – bringing us closer to our church community and Zambian life – as well as being within walking distance of the office and local shops. We are eagerly awaiting the forthcoming harvest of mangoes, avocados and papaya from the trees in the garden – and also the vegetable patch that our predecessors left us!

Strategic Retreat

Work has been incredibly busy for us both over the past couple of months – yet it continues to be rewarding and a privilege to be involved in. Back in September we helped bring the staff and Board members of Jubilee Centre together for a four day retreat to develop a new five year strategic plan. We were joined by an excellent facilitator from the UK, Rev Neil Warwick from Tocester, and the whole time went amazingly well – bringing the organisation forward as a whole and providing a new focus for the coming years.

“Jubilee Centre exists to empower churches, communities, and their leaders to grow spiritually, flourish physically, and have a voice in the world”

Jubilee Centre's new Mission Statement

Willow Creek church from the USA funded the retreat, and has been so impressed with Jubilee Centre's work that they want to develop the relationship further. As a result the past month has seen us co-ordinate the development of a full five year strategic plan for Jubilee Centre, and the putting together of a significant funding proposal to Willow Creek. The proposal has been warmly received and it looks like Jubilee Centre secured some long-term funding to enable it's church community engagement work to be developed from working with 1 community to 4, and also for the development of one of it's HIV and AIDS response programmes.



Photo: Jubilee Centre team at strategic planning retreat

Settling into roles

The process of developing a new strategic plan has also helped us clarify our roles for the future. Matt will be helping to support the organisational development of Jubilee Centre and helping implement the Church Community Engagement Programme – as well as helping to establish the Micah Challenge campaign in Zambia. Polly is focusing on Jubilee Centre's HIV and AIDS response – helping to spearhead a pilot project of home-based care and support for people living with and affected by HIV and AIDS through local churches – and helping to build the development educational work of Jubilee Centre.

The past months have seen Polly putting in the groundwork for the new home-based care programme, which aims to help churches in economically poor communities to provide holistic care and support to families in their community, and will then be replicated in other communities.

The pilot project is in Mapalo – an economically poor community on the outskirts of Ndola that Jubilee Centre has a history of working with – and Polly goes into the community once a week to meet with a group of women visiting the long-term sick. It is rewarding work, but sadly often means visiting people who are so weak that you only see them once. HIV is such a massive problem in Zambia – it affects everyone, and the global



Photo: Women's group in Mapalo offering home-based care for people suffering from and with HIV and AIDS

response just isn't impacting on the local situation yet. Often people die due to hideously simple problems – like not having a balanced diet whilst taking ARVs or not getting to the hospital in time due to a lack of money to pay for transport. So whilst it is a tragic situation it is also one that often could be turned dramatically around with simple measures – and that is why this home-based care and support by these women can be so effective, making it also a situation of hope.

Zambians go to the polls

In our last newsletter we explained how Jubilee Centre was helping the community in Mapalo develop a memorandum of understanding with the candidates standing for election as MP and Councillors. In the run-up to the elections every candidate publicly signed the memorandum and committed to working towards meeting the needs stated by the community if elected. Over one thousand community members turned out to the public meeting to see their candidates sign-up – and the story was reported by national radio stations – which was a fantastic encouragement to everyone involved.

The political parties in Zambia do not have much of a strong ideological focus by which to differentiate them. Rather they are based on the personality of the 'big man' (and the majority are men) at the top of the party hierarchy, which inevitably means that the parties have very little history to build upon – and MPs seem to switch party allegiance according to what day of the

week it is and who is offering the best chance of promotion. The persona of the 'big man' plays a massive role in who people vote for as well – and much like in the UK and elsewhere when it comes to voting, few people think of the common good, but instead simply vote for their own benefit.

The elections themselves went peacefully – with a few outbreaks of violence during the count when it became clear that the main opposition presidential candidate, Michael Sata, was lagging behind the sitting president, Levy Mwanawasa. Urban areas, including the Copperbelt, were Sata's stronghold but his support in the rural areas seems to have been weak. Despite the international observers declaring the election free and fair, there has been much talk of rigging, particularly in the rural areas, and disappointment by many that the sitting government was re-elected.

Being open to change

We are finding increasingly in our work situation that it is often easier and quicker for us to just get things done by ourselves – rather than working through something with someone else or as a team. This is a real danger for us all in such a diverse office which itself is learning to adapt as the workload builds and the number of staff struggles to keep up. But if we succumb to the desire to 'just get things done quickly' we reduce the opportunity for sustainable change – and create an environment where we could just each 'export our empire', rather than empower those around us and build Jubilee Centre for the long-term. We, and Jubilee Centre, need to take things slowly and be open to change if this danger is to be avoided.

**If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together**

Yet the 'trap' of focussing on getting things done also creates a bigger danger – it potentially reduces the opportunities for change in ourselves. Our reason for being in Zambia has never been just about work – it is about developing relationships and sharing life. It is not about us 'flying the flag of empire' – but rather about being open to change ourselves – and, thereby, opening up opportunities for us all to learn from one another.



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Photo: Community meeting in Mapalo where the whole community was invited to agree on the needs of their community to present to their candidates standing for election

For transformation to take place we all have to be open to being transformed by the environment and people around us before God can use our efforts to transform others – and that, being counter-cultural, is always a struggle, but it is necessary if real transformation is to take place. Being open in this way remains the challenge of being ‘citizens of the kingdom’ rather than ‘subjects of an empire’.

UK trip

We have decided to make the most of our unexpected return flight that expires in January and so we will be returning to the UK in late December for a few weeks. We are looking forward to seeing family and friends, as well as visiting most of our supporting churches. It will be a great opportunity to update those of you who are supporting us – and share with you all what Jubilee Centre is doing.

We hope to see as many of you as possible whilst we are back – at the moment we are booked in to talk at the following churches:

- Sun 24 December – morning service at St Peters, Thurston, Suffolk
- Sun 31 December – morning service at Ipplepen Methodist, Devon
- Sun 7 January – morning services at St Johns Woodbridge, Suffolk

- Sun 7 January – afternoon group meeting & evening communion service at St Augustine of Hippo, Ipswich, Suffolk
- Weds 10 January – joint home-group meeting at St Mary’s Mildenhall, Suffolk
- Sun 20 January – morning service at St Mary’s Standon and evening service at Christ Church Ware, both in Hertfordshire

New website

As well as moving house - we have also moved our online home! Our new blog website can be found at www.mattandpolly.com – where you can now also subscribe to receive our blog posts automatically by email if you prefer rather than checking the website for updates.

Call for help

Jubilee Centre has an office that is struggling to keep up with the demands put upon it. You might be able to help Jubilee Centre by donating a laptop (or possibly desktop) computer – or peripherals like a colour printer, scanner, mouse etc – that you no longer need. Or you may be able to pay for us to buy some second-hand laptops. Either way if you feel able to help in this way or want to explore helping in other ways please get in touch with us.

Whilst we are back in the UK we are going to need the use of a car – now this is a long shot but we wondered if anyone might know of someone with a car we can borrow for a few weeks (preferably in the Hertfordshire area). If this might be a possibility please let us know.

With thanks for all your support

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