

## David & Sonia Brown

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Dear Friends

March 2019

Greetings from a very hot and sunny Lusaka (of which more later).

Our biggest project on the go at the moment is helping the leadership of both the Bible College (Hope College Zambia) and the NGO (Africa Enterprise Trust Zambia) to work out how to reconfigure the land they currently occupy in a way that can generate some sustainable income for each organisation. D is working hard with meetings with each group of board members and joint board meetings to help them come up with a workable proposal/plan that is owned by the local leadership. We need prayer for this – there is now some degree of time pressure to get this moving – but D is keen not to be seen to be coming up with all the answers as that doesn't gain long term buy-in and acceptance. We have an American missionary friend here who said that his organisation's land issues took 7 years to resolve – we are praying for much faster than that!

We haven't travelled much since we got here in January – planned trips to Zimbabwe have been delayed while the situation there calms down, and the work we were hoping to check up on has been on hold (you can pray that D will soon be able to return). The economy is in a terrible state, but the violence has calmed down and people are getting back to their normal business. The floods caused by the recent cyclone are in the Eastern part of Zimbabwe on the Mozambique border, and although we believe all our contacts are unaffected, there is terrible damage and loss of life in the worst affected areas.

Here we have been planning a new outlet for our practical finance teaching. Rather than running the courses in churches and church groups as we have been doing up until now, we are planning to run a course as an expansion of Africa Enterprise Trust's Vocational Training suite of courses. Targetted at individuals and those thinking of running a small business, it will teach principles of budgetting and planning for individuals and businesses. We have a number of interested people and are hoping to run a trial course in May. People will pay to come on the course (4 sessions in one day initially), with profits going to help AETZ's Chimwemwe orphanage.

Sonia has spent some time over the last year setting up one of the bedrooms on the campus here as a room to let on AirBnB, as another way of generating local income for HCZ/AETZ. The advert on AirBnB went live in January and we had our first paying guest this month – we are waiting for his review to encourage others to book as well – but he seemed to enjoy himself, extended his stay with us once he was here, and is talking about coming back.

We are hoping to visit Malawi in May, having had to delay from an original plan of going in March. We haven't been there before (well D had a stopover in the airport once) and we will also get to see the Eastern part of Zambia on the way there and back which we haven't seen either. We had a senior leader from a network of churches there attend Hope College over the last two years and he has invited us to come and do some teaching. We are planning some Christian Foundation teaching in conjunction with Hope College for his leaders – HCZ have a 4-day training course suitable for any Christian, but which is a prerequisite to studying a leadership diploma at Hope College. The senior leader is hoping that the rest of the Hope College modules will be able to be taught there in the future. The economy in Malawi is in a poor state, so pray that all the key leaders will be able to get together when we go.

The cell group system in our local church had stopped functioning over the last 4-5 years, with only 2 remaining cells functioning out of an original 8 or 9. However there is now a plan to revive these groups and

see if they can be made to work better than before. We won't attend a local group as it stops the other members from using their own language, but it seems as if we will be asked to oversee 2 or 3 groups by meeting 1-1 with the leaders and visiting occasionally. We think getting these groups functioning is a vital first step in developing better pastoral care/discipling and outreach in the church, so we'll be glad to be involved.



Our mothers are both struggling in their different ways, although both are still living at home on their own. D's Mum (Rachel, 91 in May) has had a few falls recently at home and has been in and out of A&E/hospital. Mentally she is fine, and very clear on some aspects of her life that she doesn't want to change (I want a boiled egg boiled this way at this time for my tea), but is slowly realising that if she wants to be able to stay at home (she does) without someone else living with her (which she doesn't really want either), she may have to accept some things being done slightly differently by carers/my sisters. She's had three times a day carers since January, and struggles with the vast number of different people that the agency sends. The agency is trying to limit the numbers during the week, but it is difficult for them.

Sonia's Mum (Phyllis, 92 in May) is much better physically than D's Mum, but mentally is getting very forgetful and sometimes confused to the extent we think she is no longer always eating when she should nor taking tablets when she should. Sonia will be back in UK for two weeks leading up to Easter, primarily to help sort out whether any extra care is needed beyond what her sister can offer. Her Mum is awaiting the results of some tests to see if there is a medical reason for her problems which can be treated. If not, we think she will probably need carers three times a day as well.



It's hard being 7000 miles away and trying to work out exactly what is going on!

The new house is working out well – the landlord lives next door (rather than three hours drive away as the last one did) so it is easy to have a conversation with him when needed. It's very quiet and well back from the nearby main road. The water systems work much better than before and we have good water pressure most of the time. Two of our three close neighbours are in the army, and one of them is a colonel, so we feel quite safe! To get more exercise, we've started walking to work one day a week – it's about 50-55 minutes' walk, and we feel like we are getting fitter again. We have two spare bedrooms now, so if you want to come and stay just let us know.

The weather has been unusually hot and dry for this time of year - more like a Zambian October. We've had the odd shower but very little rain really which we suspect will cause electricity supply problems later in the year. Meanwhile we have been enjoying swimming in warmer water than we expected on our twice-weekly fitness outings.

Thanks again for praying for us, we are conscious we need it, and there are a few suggestions in the paragraphs above to focus your prayers.

With love from us both

David & Sonia

