

The Murray Family

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"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."
2 Timothy 2:2

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You may have heard it said that if you are not a missionary then you are a mission field. If that is the case, then Zambia is definitely a mission field. David Livingstone first explored southern Africa more than 150 years ago. Since that time, the outside world has seen Africa as a dark continent, without the light of the gospel. Through the years, thousands of missionaries have responded to the call to come to Africa. Beginning at the coasts and then moving inland, they preached the gospel, planted churches and pastored local congregations. Every major denomination (and most of the cults) has established missions here. Christians from other lands have provided the vision, the people and the resources. The Zambia church has, for the most part, simply received the Christianizing efforts of the missionaries. Too many times, the missionaries were slow to relinquish control of the African field. Today, much of the Zambian church is still dependent on others for direction, training, pastors and finances.

How does a church move from mission field to maturity? My limited experience suggests that missionaries have fumbled badly when it comes to equipping and empowering an independent national church. All of their philosophy and statements promote an autonomous church, but the reality is that most still do not know how to work out the practical details involved in handing the church over to local men. Too often, they are hesitant to let nationals have significant control of either pulpits or property. The example of Zambians has not been encouraging either. Too often, they have adopted the model of the national independence movements, throwing out anything that is foreign on their way to establishing their own identity. This has led to lawsuits, broken fellowship and shrinking churches. While it is time for the church in Zambia to be growing and maturing, it remains stuck in a mission field mindset.

To begin addressing the issues, our Zambian Mission Board sponsored a Missions Conference – the first of what we hope will be an annual event. We chose as a theme, "Around the Corner, Around the World" in order to emphasize



both local and global missions. In order to introduce missions, we presented short stories on the lives of several missionaries, including David Livingstone, pioneer missionary to this part of Africa. One of our keynote speakers was Rev. Victor Chibangula, a Zambian pastor. He spoke on the subject of local churches taking the responsibility to evangelize their neighbors and plant new churches within Zambia. The ministry of Edwin Gbor, IPM missionary in Liberia, was given as an example of this type of ministry in an African context.

We also had Dr. Bill Bowen, Vice President of International Partnership Ministries, speak on the world wide scope of missions. He challenged those present to consider the Great Commission as being a call, not just to the western world, but to the African church as well. He noted that our passion for God should translate into compassion for a lost world. Zambia can move freely into neighboring countries like Congo or Zimbabwe, countries where western missionaries cannot go. And even now, we know of Zambians who have participated in short-term mission trips to Asia. The opportunity for Zambians to be missionaries is becoming a reality.



In addition to his participation in the conference, Dr. Bowen presented an opportunity for more in-depth study by offering a Bible School course introducing world missions. Mark has continued teaching the course. One student, who has an undergraduate degree from a Zambian Bible College, commented that it was the first time he had heard of a course on missions.

Our hope is that, even while the Zambian church works through the issues of becoming a maturing mission field, they can hear the call to missions - both here in Zambia and around the world. Please join us in praying that those who heard the challenge to missions may respond!

We invite you to continue to pray for our family
for Mark

- as he continues to teach the course on missions
- as he disciples a core group of men
- as he helps to “replant” a church in a nearby village - a church that has been closed for more than a year
- as he makes plans for a brief trip to the U.S. this fall

for Tracy

- as she balances the needs of our home with the needs of others
- as she gets involved in a program helping poor women and widows to be more self-supporting
by crocheting purses out of plastic grocery bags for sale in the U.S. (they really are attractive)

for Abram

- as he works with the youth at church, that they might take their faith seriously

for the children

- as they minister in the compound (ghetto) and in orphanages
- as they seek to be friends and witnesses to their peers in both the church and community

for Noah

- as we work our details for him to return to the States and live with my mother
- her health has not been good and it would be good for someone to stay with her, especially at night

for Micah and Sarah

- who announced their engagement this month

for Kirstin and Sam

- who have moved to Orlando, in preparation for Sam entering school in the fall

Finally thank you to all of those who responded to our invitation to become involved. We were encouraged by your responses. One man, coming to Zambia on a short-term mission trip, packed several playground balls - even though he didn't have any use for them. After his arrival here, his wife received our email and forwarded the need to him. Yes, he left the balls for us to pick up. In His own amazing way, God had prepared an answer to our request, before we had even made the request - that's our God!

In His service,
Mark, for the Murrays