

Southall Group Mission to Lichinga 12th to 24th August 2010



Team Report by Jeff Payne

Why did we go?

'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' One thing we learn from John's abbreviated version of the Great Commission is that God doesn't relate to us from a distance but in Jesus gets up close and personal and relates to us face to face. Therefore we didn't want our relationship in Southall with the Lichinga churches to be a distant one so we went. The visit was an expression of our desire to follow Jesus.



Saturday 14th – Freedom



The first thing that struck us when we arrived in Lichinga on the way to Kuchijinja, the diocesan rural development centre, was the vast amount of open space especially after the cramped conditions of the flights there. As Hannah Bookless put it 'the air feels like its got more oxygen.' The physical openness and freedom reflects a spiritual openness and freedom. We were aware of the tremendous church growth in Mozambique and we saw a freedom to plant churches without being hampered by beaurocracy

and all the rules and regulations that we have to adhere to in the UK. It made me think how the gospel in Britain is bound by red tape.

Sunday 15th - Stripped!

By Sunday morning I was feeling overwhelmed. We had lunch as soon as we arrived. Then followed a high speed tour of Kuchijinja which included meeting the youth for the first time, a brief 30 minute pause to unpack, then a high speed tour of Lichinga, dash back for an evening with the local clergy and spouses, bed and up for church the next day where I would be preaching in Portuguese. Added to that some plumbing issues in the morning and I was feeling totally



overwhelmed by new experiences and felt that I do not have the resources to lead this team. Which is of course a great stimulus to your prayer life when you arrive at that place where your only prayer is 'help'. I thought of biblical characters like Joseph in an Egyptian prison, Moses tending Jethro's sheep where God strips away our comfort and security until we put our complete trust in him. God of course is faithful and his hand guided our entire trip.

Monday 16th - Music



The highlight of Monday was a visit to the Machamba or farm. Bishop Mark and Helen Van Koevering's background is in agricultural development. Helen spoke very passionately about their vision to develop sustainable farming methods as well as training young people in community development. Anyone thinking about a gap year? Why not give this a try? Whilst here we experienced a flavour of African singing which is a feature of not just Sunday worship but is part of everything they do – no meeting is complete without

some chant style singing. And it's infectious – you can't help but join in. For a small fee footage of the most eminent Alison Christian doing African dancing can be supplied!

Tuesday 17th – Community Organising

Our first meeting with 'adeptos' from the life teams.

They explained how the life teams started and operate. Originally they were a response to the problem of HIV and AIDS but now they operate at a broader level engaged in community development. There are many parallels with our own work with West London Citizens. The 'adeptos' are lead organisers who gather community leaders. They embark on a listening process, analyse the roots and fruit of the issue and work together to produce an outcome having considered what resources are available to them. We did some training with them about care for the environment. One significant advantage they have over London Citizens is the presence of chiefs of tribes. If you get the chief on side the rest of the community does what he says – if only we could do that in West London Citizens!



Wednesday 18th – Welcome



I hear a significant amount of talk in British churches about welcome and its significance – it has been a recent topic of Deanery Synod. This is an area we can learn from our Mozambiquan brothers and sisters. During a church visit we were presented with kapulana's, a national skirt – even the fellas are given them. The vicar spoke at length of their pride in receiving us as guests and how the plane wouldn't be big enough to take all their greetings back to Southall. Perhaps the biggest compliment was likening our visit

to Abraham receiving the three visitors in Genesis 18. We joined with them in local singing and dancing and we have video evidence of Wilson Masih dancing like a dad! And alas I fear myself too! But at least Wilson is a dad, I don't have the same excuse!.

Thursday 19th – Poverty

No visit to Mozambique would be complete without sharing with the vibrant Mother's Union. A long but fulfilling day of preaching, Bible study, drama, worship and fellowship. The mothers come from the nearby poor, rural villages. What struck me about these villages is that they could be anywhere. I've visited poor communities in Brazil, India and Africa and there is a uniformity, the houses and buildings look the same. I continue to reflect on why that should be. Maybe there is some kind of lowest common denominator that poverty brings?



Friday 20 – Mosquito nets

In the usual African way our plans changed today which meant a quieter day, our only appointment was with the toddler and children's group at Kuchijinji. Not to forget an appointment at the local pizza restaurant in the evening. One thing I won't miss about Mozambique is doing battle with a mosquito net when you go to bed. This combined with the side effects of anti malarials caused me to dream rather vividly I was trapped in a spider's web!

Saturday 21st – Ministry of Sound

A down side of the open space is that sound travels along way especially without urban noise to drown it out. We were woken at 4am every day by a Muslim community on the other side of the valley presumably calling to prayer. I thought of them as the Metalhead Muslims as the call to prayer involved what sounded like electric guitar being played (using the definition very broadly!)

I noticed Mozambiquans speak very softly but still hear each other across a group. I think our hearing must be impaired by urban noise pollution. Otherwise the day was spent playing football and sharing experiences with the adeptos.



Sunday 22nd – Worship



The style of worship in the Lichinga Anglican churches is a 'high' Anglo Catholic sung Eucharist. The churches are packed with people standing outside. As an evangelical this was contrary to my expectations! So why is a traditional expression of worship that is on the sidelines of many churches in the UK so vibrant in Mozambique? The answer I'm sure is complex but some simple thoughts of my own are: First, singing is such an integral part of Mozambiquan heritage, tradition and modern

life that its an expression of worship that thoroughly connects culturally. The music and chants are local so its a form of worship that even though is uniformly Anglican in its framework is clothed with a local form. Secondly, its inkeeping with the local church's history. The church we went to on this day was called Johanna Abdullah. Johanna was the first Anglican priest in the area in the 1890s and converted members of a Muslim tribe who were involved in the slave trade. Therefore, social action, which Anglo Catholics traditionally do well is at the heart of the church here. The Catholic church which may have competed is tainted with colonialism so there is a space which the Anglo Catholic model fits into smoothly. As a poor country community the spread of the gospel can only come through community development and social action through the life teams remains today the core of the church's mission. Therefore, my conclusion of why the gospel is spreading in this part of the World is because its comunication is thoroughly rooted and connected with the culture and history. So the question I need to ask in ministry post curacy is how to connect the gospel culturally and historically and what does that look like?

Monday 23rd – Waiting

On our last day we had a day off relaxing at the lake beach town of Meponda which was wonderful. The journey is 60 kms on dirt road. On the way we passed many little villages where people would be just sitting and staring at us as we went by. It struck me how much time in their relatively short lives they spend just sitting and waiting. How contrary to our lives in the UK is that?! We try and make every second useful and productive and how we abhor waiting. Mozambiquans can teach us the practice of the advent office 'May the Lord, when he comes, find us watching and waiting.'



Conclusion

I would like to thank the team for being so good to lead. I would like to thank Mark and Helen Van Koevering for all their help in organising the visit. I would like to thank the church leaders in Lichinga especially Archdeacon Damiao and Padre Isaias for sharing their lives with us. I would like to thank the staff at Kuchijinji for making our stay a comfortable one. I would like to thank the churches and people we met for all that they have taught us reflected in this report. Above all I would like to thank God for giving me the resources I needed and for guiding us and protecting us all the way.

