

Birmingham District trip to Kadoma District, Zimbabwe



Report and reflections on the visit of a team from Birmingham District to Kadoma District, to set up a link between the two districts.

Arrivals

The team from Birmingham set off on April 20th and arrived the following evening at Harare airport. At that stage there were six of us, Rev Rachel Hextall and Deacon Marilyn Slowe, ministers in the district, Sincere Makunde, secretary to the Zimbabwean Fellowship, Rev Cleopas Sibanda, chaplain to the Zimbabwean fellowship and minister in the Birmingham Circuit, as well as my wife Barbara and myself. Rev Malcolm Oliver was to join us a few days later.



This was my first visit to Africa, let alone Zimbabwe, and I have to confess that mixed with the excitement there was a fair degree of anxiety. What was it going to be like? We had heard much of the political upheaval and economic crisis within Zimbabwe and it came as something of a surprise as we drove out of Harare airport for everything to feel so normal, at least on the surface.

As we drove into Harare from the airport, the fact that Zimbabwe had been a British colony was obvious in so many ways, from the fact that we drove on the left, to the names of streets and Harare suburbs. The effect of that colonialism for good and ill, and how it affects the relationship between our two countries and the churches in our countries was a factor in much of our conversation and thinking over our time there.

What was evident from the beginning is that the culture of Zimbabwe is a welcoming one. Welcoming and greeting people well is important, and when a new person enters a room everything stops while hands are shaken and all are asked how they are. We were welcomed so warmly by so many people, friends and strangers, that I have never so quickly felt at home in a foreign country.

As we arrived in the evening, and to give us a chance to adjust, we did stay the first night in a rather nice hotel in Harare. It also gave us a chance to have our first experience of Zimbabwean cuisine, basically a variety of delicious chicken and beef stews, served with kale and sadza, made out of maize mealie meal and a bit like semolina. Sadza is the Zimbabwean staple, eaten in the poorest villages and the most exclusive hotels.



“From family to family”

Just before we went to Zimbabwe I received a card from one of my predecessors as Chair, the Rev Donald Eadie which simply said “You go from family to family”. That phrase became a mantra to me as we met people from the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe throughout our trip. (For Sincere, one of our party this was literally true. In Harare, two of her sisters were there to greet us, and help us get settled into the hotel.) For the rest of us this was to be borne out when we set off to preach on the Sunday morning, about twelve hours after having arrived in the country.



I had been given some material by the Zimbabwean fellowship in Birmingham that had been made into a clerical shirt, so at least I felt appropriately dressed, but was rather surprised to find that our Zimbabwean colleagues dressed more formally than we did.

The church where I was to preach was about an hour and half’s drive from Harare, in Kadoma itself. The others went on nearly another hour to Kwekwe one of the most southerly parts of the huge Kadoma district.

Before preaching I was to meet the Bishop of the Kadoma District, Acub Simba. In the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe, (MCZ), what we call Chairs of District are called Bishops. Interestingly, they only serve for five years, and within the Kadoma District there are three ministers who have previously been Bishops of other Districts. They now serve as Superintendents, although they did process with the Bishop in the Synod communion service.

Acub is in his first year as Bishop and the Synod we attended was the first one he had chaired. Like everyone else he gave us a wonderfully warm welcome and with his wife accompanied Barbara and me to St Aidan’s in Kadoma where I was to preach.



St Aidan’s was the most traditional of the churches we visited while we were in Kadoma. It looked like a British country chapel, still with pews and organ and had originally been a



predominantly white congregation. It still had one white member, who was the organist. Amongst the Shona hymns, we also sang, (or tried to sing), 'Hark my soul it is the Lord' and 'Will your anchor hold' while Margaret played the little organ, which was in remarkably good condition.

The service also began with 'Morning Prayer' which was, I think, an extract from the 1932 'Book of Offices' morning prayer, based on the Anglican Book of Common Prayer. The language was 16th century English and felt very strange in that environment.

The congregation was All-Age, including twenty or so teenagers and a similar number of younger children who stayed in throughout. The service came alive during what they called 'Praise and Worship.' when each group, choir, men, women, youth and children, came to the front and started a Shona praise song in wonderful harmony. I found the nine year old girl who led the children's song as a cantor particularly impressive and moving. Shakers and drums appeared and moving to the music from the youngest to the oldest was natural and obligatory.



The service finished, as all worship we attended while we were in Zimbabwe did, with 'Fellowship'. This consists of everyone shaking everyone else's hand in a line, (like an extended passing of the peace).



This is accompanied by singing, drumming and dancing, in which young and old participate. It is wonderful way of building a sense of belonging and community for one and all.



This was followed by tea and cakes in the hall. This was another example of the Britishness of much of what we found in the churches, although when we spoke to the other members of the group, in the churches they had preached in, which were more African in style, they had also been given more traditional Zimbabwean food after the service.

It was good to share the service both with a local preacher and the local minister. Both were women, and it was good to see women's leadership within the church. However, the cultural patriarchy of Zimbabwean society means that care needs to be taken that women's involvement in leadership is not token, and that women ministers, especially, single women ministers, like the minister at St Aidan's are supported and made to feel fully part of the strong fellowship that exists within the ministry of the MCZ.



On Safari

Over the next couple of days we were privileged to see some of the beauty of Zimbabwe as a country as we made the long journey through Bulawayo up to Victoria Falls. Stopping for lunch, (and car repairs), in Bulawayo we saw some of the contrasts that permeate the country.



In the wealthy suburbs there was the beautiful supermarket with cafe, with a better stock of fruit, vegetables and meat, than you would find in Sainsbury's.



In the centre of town there were more traditional markets, still well stocked, but we were conscious that there were not that many buyers.



We were beginning to get some understanding of the way the economic crisis was eating away at things under the surface, and becoming increasingly amazed that the country functions as well as it does. Money is simply in very short supply. Even if you have money in your bank account, people find that ATMs are empty, and even banks have no money to hand out. The Zimbabwean dollar is now tied to the American dollar and prices are not that much different from here, which given the wages for those who are in work in Zimbabwe means they are horrendously expensive, and with the massive rate of unemployment, despite the fully stocked shops, much of it is beyond the reach of most people.

For those with money in their accounts, and who live in towns, there is now increasing use of plastic to pay for goods, but in the villages, the shops do not have those facilities and people are really suffering. The dollar notes that we went with were like gold dust, as they hold their value and in practice are deemed to be worth more than Zimbabwean dollars, even though the exchange is 1:1. For those without jobs and money, there is reliance on



extended family, (particularly if they are in the diaspora), and barter. We were

amazed at the resilience of people, who have learnt to survive in this situation.



We travelled on to Victoria Falls. There was much to explore, but it was late, and we needed fast food. Every town of any size has a Chicken Inn, and Victoria Falls was no exception and there are times when international comfort food has its uses!

In many ways Victoria Falls is an upmarket tourist town, like many such places around the world, and is part of a tourist economy that is a potential valuable earner of precious foreign income for Zimbabwe, particularly as the political situation stabilises and opens up.

One thing that was missing on our long journey by road up to Victoria Falls were police checks. The abolition of such checks which used to happen every few miles, and where you often had to pay a few dollars to prevent the police from finding a fault with your car, is one of the most visible and welcome changes that happened with the fall of Robert Mugabe as president last November. Sincere, returning to Zimbabwe for the first time since then was thrilled not just by that, but by the change of mood everywhere. Everyone wanted to talk to us about politics in a way that simply would not have felt comfortable while Mugabe was still in power. The openness, the willingness for there to be political debate, is leading to a great feeling of hope in the country. I found myself in the conversations warning that the changes that are needed, particularly the economic changes, simply cannot happen overnight, whoever wins the forthcoming election, and I trust that the hopes are not unrealistic.

There is also the fear, that while elections are pending there is a willingness among all parties to be all things to all people, which may not endure when there is an elected president, as well as questions about the role of the army if their favoured candidate is not elected. But it was heartening to see the faith in the democratic process, and the determination amongst the people we met that it would be free and fair, and to hear discussions about what role the church could play to ensure that. (which included the

Presiding Bishop insisting on making a pastoral visit to the president on the grounds that his wife is a Methodist member!)

The falls themselves deserve their reputation as one of the natural wonders of the world, and it was wonderful to see them in full spate after the good rains in February.

Near the top of the falls there is still a statue of David Livingstone, put up in 1955 to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of his 'discovery' of the falls. I found it rather strange that the plaque still says that he discovered the falls, rather than that he was the first European to see them. It says much for the graciousness of the Zimbabweans that



those we talked to did not see this as an issue particularly. Even suggesting that its Tonka name, 'Mosi-oa-Tunya' which means "The Smoke that Thunders" spoke of the mystical nature of the place, which might have meant that locals did not go close, just saw the 'smoke', and it might actually have been Livingstone who discovered the falls themselves!

Likewise, while the main statues of Cecil Rhodes, the colonialist founder of Rhodesia, have been taken down, some have simply been moved to less prominent places, and his grave 20 miles south of Bulwayo is still a beautiful monument, that our hosts wanted us to see, but time did not allow. It all speaks of a complicated response to the colonialist legacy. There is a keen awareness of the injustice at its heart, but there is also a recognition that it is part of what Zimbabwe is today, for good and ill.

Certainly, all the Methodists we spoke to were profoundly grateful for the witness and the ministry of the missionaries who had served in Rhodesia and who had had a profound

influence on many, spiritually and educationally, that they will never forget. The MCZ is proud of its heritage of schools, colleges and clinics, founded by missionaries which still make a tremendous contribution to the life of the nation in the name of Methodism. The MCZ today is still building new schools on that model, as resources allow in the current economic climate, and dreams of being able to extend its educational involvement by sponsoring a new Methodist university. Given the economy of the country the church believes it is in a better position to run such institutions than the state.

Synod



The main focus of our visit to launch our partnership with the Kadoma district was our attendance at their Synod. In Zimbabwe, District Synod is more like Conference. It is an annual event and lasts three days. Over the first day there are separate lay and ministerial sessions, held simultaneously, and the last day and half is in representative session. All ministers, and minister's wives, attend ex-

officio, (although not necessarily the husbands of the women ministers!). In Kadoma District there are 35 ministers, and there were about 150 lay representatives.

The Synod was held at the Moleli Methodist High School, which is a boarding school on a beautiful campus in quite a remote location, 20 miles along a dirt road.



As the notice outside the school demonstrates it is the policy of MCZ that in the signage for all Methodist sponsored institutions the name and logo for the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe should

always have priority. This was an example of a deep sense of pride in being part of the Methodist church, that we also saw in their enthusiasm to wear clothing with Methodist logos, and the fact that all their circuit cars proudly proclaimed that they belonged to the Methodist Church of Zimbabwe. It made we wonder if there is an appropriate way of us being more proud to be part of the Methodist Church here in Britain, in a way that speaks of a confidence in who we are as Methodist Christian people. I realise now it was something of a relief to be with people, who though not uncritical of things in their church, were unapologetic about what it stood for and their commitment to it and the life of discipleship.



In the hall where the Synod met, each circuit had its allocated table, and we had our place near the front. On arrival we were given a folder with a Synod handbook that bore an uncanny resemblance to our own, with the agenda reports from different committees, appointments etc. Unlike ours, it included a report from each circuit in the district, where each circuit had to list their achievements, their failures and their future plans. One of several ideas that I thought we might learn from!



Just before we went, I put on Facebook that we were going to the Kadoma Synod at Moleli High School and one of my oldest school friends commented on the post that his father, Rev Ted Hawton, had been the last missionary from the UK to be principal there, and sure enough on the board by the stage was a list of principals, and I was able to send the picture with Ted's name on back to his family.



One feature of Synod that we do not have in the UK was the resident group of traditional dancers, who assisted us in the acts of worship. They were of varying ages and had enormous energy that was contagious, and which really helped to lift the spirits after some of the longer and more difficult Synod sessions.

After the opening business, in the course of which we received a very warm welcome, we went into the separate ministerial and lay sessions.

Even in the opening business we realised that keeping to the timetable on the agenda we had been given was going to be a struggle, and we did have to get used to that through the sessions.

The main item for discussion in the ministerial session was the payment of stipends and we were brought up short to be made aware of the difficult circumstances in which our Zimbabwean colleagues are having to exercise their ministry. Some of the ministers were being paid stipends over five months in arrears, and there was a lack of clarity as to why some were having to wait longer than others, leading to some anger. We were amazed at the way they coped on a day to day basis, often thanks to the generosity of members of the congregation, who sometimes shared food when they couldn't put money in the offering.

Targets were set, both to increase giving locally, and to devise better systems, but many of the members are unemployed, and even though tithing is expected, I do wonder where the money will come from. Also, the MCZ has no reserves either at District or Connexional level to meet such shortfalls, thanks to the economic crisis of 2008, and while both District and Connexion are trying to develop projects that might engender some income, in the current economic climate this is a long term solution which depends on the current political hopes translating into a sounder economy.

The financial problems facing churches were a recurring theme throughout the Synod, and certainly put our church finances in Britain into a different perspective, especially as few of our churches would expect members to tithe, as is the expectation in Zimbabwe, when some people have so little.

In some aspects the Kadoma Synod was a reminder of the ways we used to do things in former years in the UK. This was true in terms of candidates for the ministry, where the candidates were questioned from the floor of the Ministerial Synod. Something we stopped doing many years ago here, because of the danger of inappropriate questions, and I certainly felt something of that in some of the questions that were asked in this session, which also had a lack of rigour with the use of closed questions to which, on the whole, short, one sentence answers were expected.

However, there was one huge difference in terms of the candidating situation. The District had been told it could only send one candidate to the final Conference selection, as the church cannot afford to train and pay any more. Originally, there had been eight candidates from the District and the District candidates committee had chosen two of the eight to appear before Synod. It was the job of the Ministerial Session to choose which of the two went forward. As we struggle to find enough candidates in our Connexion, it was fascinating to be in such a different situation. However, while there is a surplus of candidates, the cap is for financial, not missional reasons.

In rural areas many ministers are in single station circuits looking after over 20 churches. As far as we could work out, ministers on average have over 400 members each, while some have as many as 2000.

Thus, Kadoma district has over twice the membership of Birmingham District, (c15,000 - 7,000) with twenty fewer circuit ministers. In addition, there are over 6,000 registered 6 - 18 year olds, although there is a concern that this number is declining quite fast, particularly in rural areas.

Another interesting statistic from the figures in the Synod handbook, was the number of local preachers, which was nearly 1,000, 1 in every 16 members! (and that is not counting the 250 preachers 'On Trial.')

As you will gather, the language and terminology meant we felt at home, even if the situations were very different. In fact, some of the language spoke of the Methodism of my youth, particularly the references to Quarterly Meetings, the previous title of what we now call Circuit Meetings, a change which we made in the 1970s.

During Synod, I came to think of the MCZ as the Methodist Church of my youth, in the 1960s, transplanted into an African context. It is an organization that still has confidence in its role in society and the nation, that expects its voice to be heard. It is still an all-age church with all generations being represented in Sunday worship. People are proud to be Methodists and not shy in saying so. That was what we felt particularly when we visited churches.

But at Synod we also felt an underlying anxiety. The financial crisis is undoubtedly a key part of that. But the difficulty in keeping the young people, particularly the boys is beginning to be recognised. Zimbabwe is still a society where children do what they parents tell them

to to a much older age than in the UK. But the prevalence of the mobile phone, with its access to social media and a more secular world is raising questions.

It was quite embarrassing when people looked to us to ask us what to do about 'the youth', and we had to say that we had not reacted soon enough to a situation when young people started becoming alienated from church, 50 years ago in Britain. Something that the success of MAYC served to camouflage for several years. This may be an area where we can share our reflections and concerns, as we develop our relationship.

Within the ministerial session I was given a short slot to introduce ourselves and say a bit about the state of British Methodism. I spoke of the challenges we face of being a declining, ageing church in a secular society. I also spoke of the change in balance within the world church. Conscious that I was standing in a school built by British missionaries, I said that whereas we had sent people from the British Methodist church to share with them, now we were in a situation where the MCZ were sharing with us, and I talked of the four Zimbabwean ministers in the District and the two branches of the fellowship at Selly Oak and Coventry. I spoke of how we appreciated their perspectives, their ministry and how we needed to learn from their commitment, through the hard times, in our much more comfortable culture, (at least financially.)

The Bishop was grateful for that perspective, and the affirmation it gave to the MCZ in their more practical struggles around stipends and resources.

Back in the full session of Synod the following day, we heard addresses from the Presiding Bishop and the Lay President, (the equivalent of our President and Vice-President, although the Presiding Bishop serves for five years,) and the General Secretary. Prior to their addresses, the Birmingham team met the Connexional officers over tea and cake, and received their strong support for the idea of a district link.

We also heard an address from their new Connexional Mission Director, whose language and style were reminiscent of the way Trey Hall addresses the same issues in our district. The overlap in the way they talk about the need to do things differently to share the gospel in the present age was striking. The MCZ does not face the crisis of numbers and age profile that we do, but this Director could see the trends and argued strongly that the issues, particularly relating to young people, need to be addressed now. I got a sense that the church in Britain did not listen to such talk when we had the strength and resource to respond to it more than we do today, and I hope that from the position of relative strength in terms of numbers and spirituality, if not finance, the MCZ has the courage and imagination to respond so that the vibrancy of faith that we saw could be passed on in appropriate ways to future generations and also to those outside the Methodist family.

We were prepared for this by an excellent devotions in which the story of the risen Jesus meeting the fishermen and encouraging them to fish on the other side of the boat to get their harvest, was taken as a challenge to be prepared to do things differently, because the spirit of the risen Jesus is with us.

After lunch, (two and a half hours after we were scheduled), the Birmingham team made our presentation to Synod. I gave an overview, Malcolm spoke of the experience of the Together in Mission week event in Sutton Park Circuit, Marilyn spoke of the role of deacons and Rachel of the place of women's ministry in the life of the church. We distributed the cards that had been signed at Synod and they were well received. It was good to have the opportunity to present to Synod, but although the response was warm, at that stage we had little feedback.

The evening was a time for a traditional Zimbabwean meal, with tables appropriately decorated.



The food included goat and wild turkey, (delicious), unbleached tripe, (which I didn't try), okra, (not my favourite), interesting knobby cucumber and lovely nuts, as well as various varieties of sadzha made with different grains.

At the end of a long day we had the opportunity to have a more interactive session with two of the 'zones', which comprised half the synod. I asked the question what they would like us to take back to share with the Birmingham District about Kadoma synod.

Inevitably, particularly those in rural circuits, wanted to share with us their difficulties that arise from lack of resources and money. We heard how circuits had tried to have projects that might generate some funds, like building a windmill, or a bore hole, but had found them difficult to

maintain, as well as many churches and manses that were partly built and unable to be finished due to lack of funds.

On a more positive note, some asked for good communication so that we could share ideas and spiritual help as mutual friends, and we were thanked for our friendship.

We said that we also wanted to take back their confidence to talk about Jesus, the vibrancy of the worship we had taken part in and their commitment to the church in tough times.

The following morning we met with the other two zones and I asked a slightly different question, namely: "What do you want us to thank God for in Britain about the Kadoma District?"

Thankfully, the answers were many and various, from freedom of worship and lively youth work, to the good harvest they had had this year, to the fact that when someone grieves they are all there with them, alongside the peaceful transition of political power last year. One interesting thing they valued enormously were the separate women's and men's groups, with their distinctive uniforms that gave a sense of identity and fellowship.

These two interactive sessions were really valuable as a chance to interact and engage, and they raise real questions as to how we develop a constructive link between our two districts.

On the final morning, I had the privilege to preach at the memorial and communion service. I felt a bit underdressed alongside the Bishop, the former presiding Bishop and two ex-Bishops in their Men's Christian Union blazers!

It was a wonderful service, full of great singing and dancing, but also a deep sense of spirituality that made it very easy to preach into, and during the 'fellowship' outside, as everyone shook everyone else's hand, the singing and dancing continued in the sunshine.



After a concluding session we made our farewells, and it did seem that people had appreciated our presence. The Bishop was very gracious in his thanks, and said it had made a big difference to the atmosphere of the Synod.

Sunday worship



It is still very much in its early stages, and with a lot of uncertainty about how it will be financed, but is an example of MCZ trying to think about projects that will both offer something to society and provide long term capital resources for the District.

The church where I preached was being rebuilt, but all building was on hold because of the financial pressures, and from the

We drove off to Harare, to recuperate and prepare for our preaching appointments in the Chinoiyu circuits the following day.

After meeting up at the Chicken Inn, we visited a piece of land that the District had bought with a view to building a school, for a new housing development, in a rural area on the edge of the town.



outside it looked like a building site, but inside worship was alive and vibrant, with a great choir conducted by a man in his early twenties, and good groups of youth and children. We had a session of praise and worship, and then a session of dancing, when water had to be sprinkled on the floor to stop the air getting too dusty.

The service was nearly two hours old when I was invited to start preaching! Young and old had stayed in throughout and still seemed a responsive congregation to what I had to say.

It was a wonderful way to finish our visit to the Kadoma District. Some of the stewards we met there had been at the Synod and greeted us like old friends, and there was a wonderful sense of belonging to each other in fellowship across the world.

Back in Harare I was privileged to accompany Cleopas on a bereavement visit to a member of his extended family, whose niece had died that day in childbirth in South Africa, and example of the way at times of grief people, including strangers, gather round to support and pray with those who bereaved.



Harare

Monday was our last day, with our flight leaving at tea time. All we had planned to do was visit the Matthew Rusike Children's Home, an MCZ project in Harare, that is supported by several churches in the Birmingham District, and do a bit of souvenir shopping. However,



there were other things we were expected to see! Matthew Rusike is in an area called Epworth, which is a large tract of land on the edge of Harare, owned by the MCZ. However, during the troubles nearly forty years ago, refugees from other parts of the country set up a shanty town of squatters on that land, and Epworth is now an established town. In it the MCZ has set up a clinic and on our way to Matthew Rusike we

had to pop in and say hello to the staff, while they were busy with a mother and baby clinic!

Another part of the land that has not been squatted on has been developed by the MCZ as a beautiful conference facility for its women's work, and they see this as a project that is actually beginning to provide a return for them.





Mathew Rusike Home is set on a beautiful piece of land and caters for 100 children from babies to 18, who need residential care for a variety of reasons. It works closely with the Harare Social Services, but is funded solely by the MCZ, and as always the running costs, particularly salaries for the staff are a challenge for them. The children live in houses with a house mother living in and there is farm land around for the growing of crops, and the keeping of pigs and chickens to both help them be self-sufficient and train some of the young people in agricultural skills.

The have a school on site, and as it was school holidays many of the children when we visited were away with foster parents, whose role is to look after them during the school holidays, although in Zimbabwean culture that rarely develops into adoption.



They appreciated the toys we took from churches in Birmingham, although we had to explain how Duplo worked!

We were impressed by how well run and organised it was. As in a similar situation in Britain, pictures of the children were not allowed for safeguarding reasons.

On our way to the shops, we had to pop in to Trinity Methodist Church in Harare, the central city church where Cleopas had been minister before he came to Britain. This involved a drive round central Harare that took us past Wesley House, the Zimbabwean equivalent of Methodist Church House.



The inside of Trinity, even to the light fittings, looked like many of the Methodist churches in Britain, yet few of our churches could maintain its worshipping life of an early 8.00 traditional service, an international service at 9.00, in English, catering for people from all over the world, and then a Shona service at 11.00 for which people queue to get in and which is infused with the singing and dancing as an expression of committed faith, that we had so appreciated during our stay.



After we finally got to do our souvenir shopping, we had a final lunch at a lovely pop up restaurant, run by Methodists in a rather nice suburb of Harare.

This allowed me and the Bishop to have a final chat about how we might develop the link between our two districts.

We agreed first of all that we were both committed to developing the link in a way that was a real partnership, not as an aid project on the part of Birmingham, and I invited the Kadoma District to send 6 - 8 people to visit our District to coincide with our District Spring Synod next year around 11th May.

We agreed that communication would be through our District offices in the first instance, and that we needed to keep up a way of sharing news for prayer and concern, and find ways of communicating it throughout our own districts.

We discussed whether there might be ways of circuits twinning with each other, or a church here twinning with a circuit in Kadoma. The slight difficulty here is that we have eleven circuits whereas Kadoma has over twenty.

We also talked about the conversations we have had here with Christian Aid, who are providing resources for church partnerships, which enable things like shared Bible study through Skype.

The key thing is to find ways in our own districts of raising awareness of the link, and fostering the flow of information in ways that allow us to be mutually supportive.

I think this will take some working out, but the commitment and the relationships are being developed and I pray that we will find the right way of doing it.



There are challenges, particularly the economic disparity between our two districts. How do we handle that? Can we support spiritually without supporting economically? Can we support economically without perpetuating a colonialist mindset that encourages the MCZ to look to Britain for answers, when in many ways we need to be looking for what we can learn from them?

With the help of our Zimbabwean colleagues here I pray that we will be able to grapple creatively with these questions over the coming months.

We set off for the airport full of memories, with many new friends, full of the opportunities and challenges that our relationship with Kadoma offers, and with a deep sense of thankfulness to God for the

fellowship we shared, and the sense in which our understanding of being part God's Methodist family had been enlarged and enriched.

I pray that together we can build on these foundations in ways that truly allow God's spirit to move and bless us all.