

Katie Fox (Veterinary Medicine) - Zambia, Summer 2016

This summer I spent almost three weeks in Zambia with a group of people from Holy Trinity Cambridge, to work with a Christian charity out there called 'The Jubilee Centre'. Most of our time in Zambia was spent in the Northern town of Ndola and on our first full day there, we travelled to a district called 'Mapalo' which is one of the poorest areas of the town. Here, we discussed Zambian and UK community and family values. This was really interesting as a lot of the same values were expressed in different ways, for example a huge part of expressing the common value of love for the people there, was through confrontation and accountability in community. As a church family we all found this really challenging for our lives back home and definitely something to be valued in the Zambian community.

A couple of days in, we travelled to another village to meet with the locals and some volunteers who work with people living with HIV/AIDS. As I was the only one on the team with specialist medical knowledge, I was able to answer the Zambians questions on the disease and help them to understand how and why to take the necessary precautions, in a conference held in the village church. The level of understanding and lack of education was quite alarming at times, given 20% of the people in that area are HIV positive, but it was fantastic to be able to actively change that from both a scientific and a Christian perspective. It was interesting to learn about the healthcare system out there as from the descriptions given, it was clear that all Zambian people in theory, had access to very effective drugs and testing for HIV. However it was interesting to see how just giving people access to medicine is often not the whole answer, as for instance in this particular culture the shame and embarrassment associated with being known to have HIV often prevented people from even going to be tested. Leading on from this we were all keen to emphasise the role of the church in such a situation. Zambia is a predominantly Christian country, with the church being the heart and hope of almost every community we saw, therefore it was key to emphasise the importance of fully accepting people known to be suffering with HIV into the church family, which we learnt wasn't always the case. This was followed by an afternoon of visiting and praying for sick people in the village, often also suffering from HIV/AIDS.

Another way my course at Cambridge impacted my time in Zambia, was on our village experience day, meeting and living with a family in the remote wilderness outside the town. It was interesting to see what a crucial role animals played in the lives of the people there, from goats being kept for milk, to chickens and cows. They also had a couple of puppies running around, one of which had a clearly broken leg. After speaking to the family about this, it was evident that they were unwilling to do anything about the situation (even just to strap it up), this was quite a shock but made me see how different people's views on animals can be and how impacted by culture they are.

Going to church was also slightly different to the UK as we got there after the start but still stayed for three hours before leaving well before the end! As a team we led the service and on the second Sunday I was given the opportunity to give a short talk. The music they sang was also so fun to be a part of and the tangible sense of joy and excitement for God was infectious along with their encouraging sounds and 'Hallelujah's' every time one of us got up to speak! I found on numerous occasions in different settings in Zambia, how amazingly music can bypass any language differences and so many memories I have taken home are in the form of songs.

I am very grateful to the College for contributing towards this fantastic trip, during which I have learnt so much about the wide-ranging themes of culture, practical applications of medicine and God!

