



Zimbabwe

FIRST FRUITS MISSION

February 10 through February 17

Troy J. Onsager, Jeff Jarchow, Greg Foulke

Two years ago, when we prayed for Josh and Virginia on their last Sunday with us – many of you came up to me after the service and said, “if it were ever possible for our church to partner with them on a mission trip to Africa, we would heartily support it!”

Well, half a year later, Josh and Virginia, moved by the poverty and the starvation in particular villages surrounding the capital, were moved to begin using their tithe money to feed hungry people. A connection was established with a village and conversations began with their small group bible study here at the church concerning support. This blossomed into a church-wide effort to send money monthly to the Giddens’, who would, in turn, purchase food-packs and deliver them to the church. We called this mission: First Fruits Zimbabwe.

A year later, one of the mission elders, Dick Nelson, approached Jeff Jarchow (who has facilitated the First Fruit ministry from the beginning) and myself and encouraged us to take a trip to Zimbabwe, to see how the mission was working on the ground, to encourage and support the Giddens (who have had difficulty connecting with a local church), to explore new opportunities to serve and to see if a future mission trip there would be feasible and helpful.

Jeff had been desiring to go to Africa for some time now (you can read this in his article inside) and I had been deeply desiring such an opportunity after the years of exposure to the need in Africa that I learned about through the Global Church Conference we partner with at First Presbyterian Church of Berkeley. In fact, the former senior pastor

of FPCB, Mark Labberton had encouraged me early on during my time in Escalon to do what he has done - to make a yearly habit of getting overseas to visit the poorest and the most troubled regions of the world and to enter into their struggle. He said I would not be an effective Christian pastor otherwise.

At this year’s Global Church Conference, entitled “Overflowing Joy and Generosity in a World of Pain and Scarcity,” Greg Foulke was able to join our mission team in attendance. At the closing Question and Answer session, we both listened to the powerful appeal of Mr. David Zac Nringiye *Assistant Bishop, Diocese of Kampala, Uganda*, who, when asked the question about what idols he sees in the American Church, responded:

Zimbabwe

The Call To Go, Listen, and Partner

By Troy Onsager

Stop praying about it.

Go. Just stop praying.

Why do you need to pray

about it? Your brothers are experiencing it. Go

and see them. Make the

choice to go to the risky

places – you will meet

Jesus in a way you have

never known him. . . .

Get out of here. Save

money. If you have it,

just take the next flight.

Bishop Zac Nringiye



Safety and security. This is the antithesis of the Gospel. . . following Jesus is not safe!

I sometimes find prayer as a cop out when you actually could get on with it. I know that this church [FPC Berkeley] organizes trips to the Congo. Stop praying about it. Go. Just stop praying. Why do you need to pray about it? Your brothers are experiencing it. Go and see them. Make the choice to go to the risky places – you will meet Jesus in a way you have never known him.

God is speaking, how else do you want God to speak? I have a struggle with prayer, prayer, prayer, when God is speaking. Get out of here. Save money. If you have it, just take the next flight.

His words floored us and Greg leaned over to me and said: “I know you and Jeff are going to Zimbabwe in the spring. If you’re willing to have one more, please let me go.” Realizing that God was speaking to Greg, (*how else do you want God to speak?*), and knowing that Greg’s organizational skills facilitating many mission trips through Habitat for Humanity (see his article inside) would be of essential value for us in considering a future mission trip to a country with very few mission organizations presently on the ground – well, the decision, quite frankly, was easy. Now, a year and a half after the Giddens left, we’re sending three to Zimbabwe.

One of the caveats the good bishop gave us was that the church in America needs to move beyond its inability to listen. Putting it all together, this is what we learned at this conference: the church in Africa doesn’t just want resources (though they desperately need them), they want partnerships, and they want churches who are willing to listen to them, to enter into their struggle, rather than simply prescribe for them what we think is best. In many ways, on this trip, we will be going to enter into their struggle and listen to them.

To be clear to our church—the funds used for this reconnaissance trip are not from the monies you have donated to the First Fruits Ministry to Zimbabwe. We also have not requested permission from Session to engage in extensive fund-raising from the trip – the majority of it will be raised personally from key mission partners here and elsewhere. If God opens the door for a future mission trip to Zimbabwe, then at that point we will ask for your partnership – for it will be an extension of First Fruits, our partnership in ministry with the people of Zimbabwe.

What we do ask of you is that you pray for us now as we prepare for this trip and as we go on this trip. Pray for the Giddens. Pray for the people of Zimbabwe. Continue your support of First Fruits. As for the three of us – well, we’re just taking the next flight.

Zimbabwe

E P C F I R S T F R U I T S D O N A T I O N S :

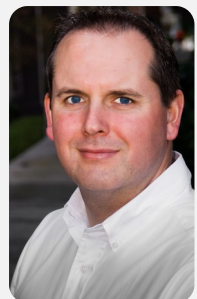
- From April 2009 through December 2009: \$12,236.00
- Foodpacks Delivered: 585 (65 per month—2,000 lbs per month)

Zimbabwe

The Purpose of This Trip

By Jeff Jarchow

*Our goals for this trip are to determine how we can help with **SUSTENANCE** (food & safe drinking water availability), **AIDS** (many children have lost parents to AIDS and need God's love shown to them), and **EMPOWERMENT** (microloans - typically \$50 to \$100 - to help women start small businesses to sustain their families.).*



We leave for Zimbabwe in a couple of weeks. Zimbabwe, Africa? Am I nuts? Possibly. However, I am excited!

Ever since I became a Christian 14 years ago, I have sensed God's call in my life to bridge the "work world" and the church. This is how I was created to serve God and the church in my skills, gifts, and passions.

In today's world, there are a lot of exciting developments in the areas of technology, entertainment, and making life easier for us. But, while we are sipping our \$4 lattes and surfing the Web at Starbucks, there is a different reality in Zimbabwe and Sub-Saharan Africa. There and around the globe, the wealth gap between the rich and the poor grows at an alarming rate. The wealthy are getting richer and the impoverished are getting poorer. This is true in Zimbabwe, where more than 83% of people live on less than \$2 per day. Life expectancy is only 37 years. Everybody in the country has been affected by the AIDS epidemic in a personal way, with over one million children orphaned. Unemployment is over 80%. 1.5 million Zimbabweans will not eat today. To say the least, Zimbabwe is different from our comfortable Starbucks culture.

Flashback to 1996 - In college, I worked as a summer camp counselor in the second poorest county in the U.S. Campers built outhouses, painted houses, fixed roofs, and helped the poorest of Grundy County, Tennessee. The verse our team chose as our charge was 1 Timothy 6:17-19:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command

them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Zimbabwe is an extension of that desire to "take hold of the life that is truly life". Escalon Presbyterian is taking hold of that life in making a difference in Zimbabwe, and, God willing, we will continue.

Thanks to Josh and Virginia, we have "feet on the ground" in Zimbabwe, delivering food to a village in East Zimbabwe and teaching people how to grow crops themselves through the partnership with Farming God's Way. In our upcoming trip, we hope to expand our ministry.

Our goals for this trip are to determine how we can help with sustenance (food & safe drinking water availability), AIDS (many children have lost parents to AIDS and need God's love shown to them), and empowerment (microloans - typically \$50 to \$100 - to help women start small businesses to sustain their families.) Our "take home final exam" for this trip is to have a plan developed for a mission trip to Zimbabwe for our church in 2011. You are invited to join us on this mission through prayer, financial support, and seeking God. Will he call you to take a huge step of faith? Will you be one to step out of your comfortable life in our wealthy nation to serve the people of Zimbabwe, one of the poorest countries in the world?

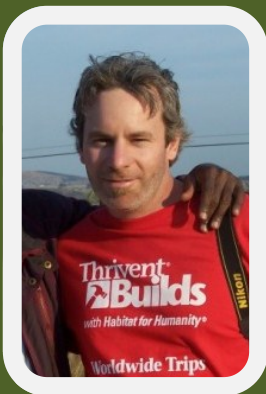
I am excited for this trip and to help lead EPC to continue learning to take hold of the life that is truly LIFE!

Zimbabwe

Planning for the Future

By Greg Foulke

People coming, however, would build life-long friendships, and carry the plight of these fellow children of God back to the states, to pass the passion and the mission on to more people, who would come, build even more houses, and share their lives in the process.



It's not hard to find concurrence that there is significant poverty and significant need in this world. It's also not controversial to say that this great need lies largely and primarily outside the United States. Sure, we certainly have pain and misery right here at home, but not on the scale of Haiti...India...Africa. Most of us in the states have seen the videos and heard the stories of people in the farthest corners of the earth living in abject poverty, famine and disease. These images evoke in me feelings of guilt. I feel guilt for being as blessed as I am, guilt for not doing more (or anything) to help, and guilt for not appreciating just how blessed I am.

A ticket to for one person to fly round trip to Zimbabwe is \$1,800. The first question that comes to mind is: *Surely this money is better spent if we sent the money, rather than a person...the money must be able to do more good in Zimbabwe than a visit?* I struggled with this while I was on a Habitat for Humanity trip to South Africa to build homes with the Zulu people to help put AIDS orphans in homes. While I was working one afternoon on a cinder block home, I calculated in my head how many more homes could be built if my team of 18 Americans would have simply sent the money they spent on hotels and airfare and hired local workers to build the houses instead.

I asked this very question to Pastor David Majola, a local Zulu (Lutheran pastor) who lived in the village where we were building. Pastor Majola (who has since died, in the service of these orphans) told me that money sent from America would build houses, but would only build houses. People coming, however, would build life-long friendships, and carry the plight of these fellow children of God back to the states, to pass the

passion and the mission on to more people, who would come, build even more houses, and share their lives in the process.

I later learned that my team was the 12th team to come build in this South African Zulu village because one man in Arizona felt the calling, and decided to recruit a team to go build, rather than simply send money. Since my trip, over 31 teams have been to this Tshongwheni Valley (land of a thousand hills) in rural South Africa, and they are still coming! We have built an eternal spiritual connection with these Zulu people as we built homes with them, ate with them, sang with them, cried with them, and worshipped the one true God with them.

My role on this 'advance team' to Zimbabwe is to coordinate the logistical side of sending a team of our congregation 10,210 miles away to Sub-Saharan Africa and one of the poorest countries in the world. Where do we stay? What are the safety/security risks? What work will we do? How does the team get transported around in country? How long should the trip last? What time of year is best? What skills are needed? How much will all the airfare, transportation, lodging and food cost? What immunizations are needed? What are passport/visa/immigration issues? These are some of the questions I am tasked with discerning while in Zimbabwe.

Sometimes sending money is appropriate (relief for Haiti is a good example of this). Sometimes putting on the sandals of the gospel of peace and loving our neighbor face to face is what God is calling us to do. I am convinced the latter is the case in regards to the gifts of our congregation and the need in Zimbabwe. I am going because God calls me to.