

September 2018 Central Africa Medical Mission (CAMM)

“Lord, Why did you pick me? What can I do to help people all the way over in Zambia and Malawi? How can I help give tens of thousands of people healthcare?” All of these are thoughts that have passed through my mind in the last 5 years but especially as I was chosen to be the chairman of the CAMM in late 2017. I am confident that thoughts just like these also passed through the minds of my fellow committee members – Cindy Fietzer (Nurse Coordinator) and Cheryl Valus (Contact Woman Coordinator) and advisory member, Mike Valus – as we were all about to board the airplane to Malawi. Every few years, the Central Africa Medical Mission sends a few committee members to the field in order to make sure that our ex-pat volunteers in Malawi and our national workers in Zambia have the support that they need. In July 2018, that is exactly what we were asked to do!

Malawi – The Warm Heart of Africa – is exactly that. The people are kind, smiling, have a great sense of humor and live every day in poverty. Poverty is hard. As we drove out to our clinic in Suzi, the first thing we all noticed was the litter. There is litter everywhere because of the lack of basic infrastructure like sanitation services. BUT there are also mountains and green farmer fields and children who see the ambulance pass that are waving and smiling and running after us. When we pulled up to the clinic grounds, we see that the Malawians are resourceful – there is a market at the clinic site because the villagers know that there will be people attending our clinic. We see expecting mothers, parents with their children and sick people waiting for the clinic services to start. We see our clinic staff member, Mrs. Howa, educating the patients on diabetes signs and treatment. We hear them singing along to the song that she uses to end the education. And we see smiles – smiles at the visitors who stand out, who don't know exactly where to go or what to do. For Malawi to be called The Warm Heart of Africa is a perfect description.

After our week in Malawi, we went to Zambia. Zambia and Malawi are very different and so are our clinic services in each country. In Malawi, we have 4 clinic sites that our staff travels out to each week. In Zambia, we have one stand-alone clinic in Mwembezhi. This clinic is run by Nationals with Mr. Jackson Kalekwa at the helm. Here we offer care 24/7 – including delivering babies. We encourage expecting mothers to come to the clinic to deliver instead of staying in their homes, so we can help if something goes wrong. We also encourage them to bring their newborn babies to the clinic within their first days so that we can assess them for their overall health. In Zambia, the culture says that the baby should not leave the home for 40 days, so we do have trouble getting the moms to bring their babies in. Watch for a request from Cheryl in the upcoming months on how you can help us with a project that we will be doing to help provide incentives for the moms to bring their babies in to be checked.

Finally, one letter is NOT enough for us to share the news from the clinics and what we saw when we went to Malawi and Zambia. In November, we are going to be doing a campaign where each of us will be sharing a more personal experience with you both in this letter and on Facebook. We know that each of us can give a different perspective on how the little that we do impacts tens of thousands of people every year.

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:40

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