

## Palmer Trip Report March 2023

### Summary

We had a safe and healthy trip, making all our expected appointments and enjoying some fellowship/co-working time with other WBS staff (John Reese, Brian and Sondra, and Machona). The only negative incident was when a truck scraped the back fender of our rental car while we were stopped at an intersection. The police were efficient and helpful. Unfortunately, the rental car company wasn't very forthright and we only got back \$70 of our \$190 deposit on the car.

### Recruiting Campaigns

Because I had limited knowledge of the people and places where we should prioritize our efforts, I had asked Maidei (the Service Center director) and Terrence (the Inventory Clerk-- and in effect, Recruiter liason) to make our itinerary. I had some learning to do as the campaigns unfolded about these leaders' thinking and approach. We knew it is an election year, creating tensions that could limit what a campaign could do and where one could be done. Police permissions were acquired in advance for our venues. Different from what I normally do in Kenya, Terrence planned for a small team of experienced recruiters to go to each campaign location since he did know whether to expect the local church (a) to know what to do and (b) to show up to do it. Additionally, one criterion he used to choose locations was to target places they are trying to plant a congregation rather than where a congregation already exists. This meant there were no local members to work with at those 2 places, but just the preacher who will be the lead worker in the church plant. In each case that preacher volunteered to be the contact person and follow up worker for those enrolled in the campaign.



**Chelsea, former WBS student we met going house to house. She still needs the last 2 lessons**

A late development just before our trip was the announcement by the government of the dates of the school holidays which left us only one day when schools were open. We took advantage of that to address the student body at Ruveneko Secondary School in **Damo Falls**, about 30 minutes outside of Harare. They were preparing to start for home for the holidays shortly after our meeting. Some 300 students there had already turned in their Intro lessons and were still waiting for *God Has Spoken*. We gave them the "buffer course" *Are You A Seeker?* to go home with.



**200 + students at Ruveneko 2dy School are given a buffer course to read as they head home for the holidays**

The rest of the day in Damo Falls we did door-to-door and marketplace recruiting of new WBS students. The church has yet to start meeting there, but with the good relations with the school, brethren expect to start using one of their

classrooms soon for Sunday worship. A nearby preacher, Jairos Chidenhe, will preach there and is doing the follow up for the WBS campaign.

Our next campaign was at the **Highfields Church of Christ** in Harare. About 4 members and the preacher, Nyasha Mukondwa, turned out (out of a congregation of 120 members). I was later told Bro. Mukondwa was formerly not interested in WBS, but is now promoting it for his township and congregation. It is said to be hard to get people away from their desperate search for income in the current economic state of Zimbabwe.



Enrolling outside the mall at Westgate, Harare

Although we did not do a campaign at **Hatcliffe Church of Christ**, I preached there on Sunday and gave an overview of what is in books 1 to 5 of the WBS Master Series. The preacher there, Tomson Mlawuzi, had enrolled some 400 students of the nearby high school, but when it was time to collect their *God Has Spoken* answer sheets, the Scripture Union teacher at the school would not collect them because she hadn't been given a Bible like the headmaster had. We made sure Tomson had a Bible to give her! Tomson has translated some books by J.C.Choate and may be capable of translating WBS courses into chiShona.

**Greencroft and Westgate** are suburbs of Harare where the church is in its early stages or still to be planted.

Elaine and I recruited outside a mall there alongside preacher Saul Botoman. Zimbabweans rarely refuse to let you stop them and talk. I would estimate that fully half let you enroll them or promise to enroll themselves online. Some few, especially in Harare, are skeptical of your motives, and don't want to divulge personal information, especially in an election year. Only a very few are explicitly resistant.

**Southlands** is a developing residential area south of Harare where a very active WBS recruiter, the late Bro. Nyamshamba, worked for some years. Many were enrolled, but the failure of postal mail left most unable to finish the Master Series. Of those many do not want to re-enroll and start over. At the same time, the congregation there is quite weak. The current preacher, Gamuchirai Makunike



Partially 'expanded' (and unfinished) building of Southlands Church of Christ. Ownership of the land is still tentative

("Julio") is a gifted, hard-working evangelist who is devoted to building up the congregation there and in neighboring Hopelea township. Julio came and worked at all our Nairobi area campaigns. Our campaign in Southlands was going well until a long, cold thunderstorm interrupted it.

We held neighborhood recruiting in the towns of **Chivhu** and **Mashava**, accompanied by Terrence and by John Reese. Though participation by the church members was minimal, two WBS recruiters came the long distance from Buhero to



Campaign group in Chivhu

assist in Chivhu and 5 area preachers from as far as 2 hours away joined us in Mashava.

By some standards, the actual number of WBS enrollments through these campaigns was modest: a total of around 500. However, the organizers were quite happy for bringing the leaders of the host churches into greater involvement and commitment to using WBS. I had assumed readiness to use WBS was a “given” among the churches in Zimbabwe and was surprised to learn many are not that open to it or they see the courses as something for children. (That undoubtedly comes from years of recruiting primarily at schools). Some at our recruiters workshop in Harare were eager for a “delegation” of WBS recruiters to begin an organized campaign to “sell” WBS to non-participating congregations and preachers by making formal visits to their leaders. Currently one key person willing to plan that is Bro. Auswich Mashaba of the Gospel Chariot in Zimbabwe.

### Avondale Workshop and Service Center

I believe there is a strong consensus at WBS about the importance of our **Service Centers** being well staffed, well equipped, and kept functioning at peak performance. They are the hub of all our overseas activities and, now more than ever, essential to the flow of courses to and from students. We are also adding to that hub **Inventory Offices** which must be maintained. The Avondale (Harare) Service Center has historically been a model center, and was the first to employ scanning. Even there, however, they have the challenge of intermittent electricity and poor internet service. A donor has helped us to move ahead with plans to install solar electricity as a back up to the Inventory Office, the office most affected by blackouts. Hopefully within a short time that will be up and running, eliminating long and frustrating interruptions in the work.



Lunch at the Avondale WBS Recruiters' workshop

Avondale hosted a small Key Recruiters' workshop for us to try and encourage those whom John and I would not be able to reach on this trip. It was attended by 15 men from among the most committed recruiters in Zimbabwe. I emphasized

each worker refining and laying out a plan for recruiting, student follow up, collecting and checking answer sheets and delivering next lessons. The men shared some of their own approaches and good advice.



WBS “gazebo” in prime location at SAIL

### SAIL

The **Southern Africa International Lectureship (SAIL)** in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, a long-time annual event, was held this month for the first time since Covid. The turn-out reflected the eagerness of the brotherhood after such a long wait: the attendance was 1,800 people! Even the last day, Easter Sunday, the worship crowd was over 1,000 people, maybe because the speaker was “Brian Davies” (African spelling of WBS’s president).

Our booth was hopping with visitors throughout the program. I was also able to connect with 69 WBS recruiters from 8 countries, giving them some sample recruiting tools and (to many) a WBS ESV study edition Bible. An additional 70 people signed up as “interested” in knowing more or participating in WBS ministry. Several enrolled to start as WBS students. It was convenient that a WBS recruiter is serving the major university in Bulawayo (N.U.S.T.) where the lectureship was held.



Elaine at the WBS booth at SAIL