



Youthworx East Africa Zimbabwe Special

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What a difference 2 years makes. Empty supermarkets and restaurants now stocked. New buses on the roads. The general functions of the country seem to be back on their feet. Is it surface or does it run deep? I guess only time will tell.

The training took place in the Baptist Conference Center which is pretty much in the middle of the country and about 4 hours from Harare. The youth workers were drawn from churches around the regions and although a smallish group, they were very key. I was also struck with how well informed and passionate they were about youth. A very worthwhile group to train.

I started with some background work about understanding discipleship and my philosophy on youth ministry, emphasizing the need to walk alongside young people, to be non judgmental and to never give up on them.

Then through the main workshop sessions we looked at issues that are a challenge in 21st century youth ministry: Traditional Church Youth Culture, bridging the generation gap, Sexual Purity, Relationships, HIV Aids, Addictions, Family breakdown and finally internet/social networking.

As you can see we covered all the fun topics, using discussion, case scenarios etc.

All in all it went well. I felt the teaching was well received and understood. Hopefully I was culturally relevant in a country I have spent little time in, and where I may have been adrift God was able to speak through me.

I was also able to spend time with Brett and Odette, Rebecca and Daniel down in Masvingo. They are much more settled in than last time I was there and Odette has now started to run a small school



Some of the youth workers at the Gweru retreat

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Ian at Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site

at the church. It was great to see them again and we managed to get out to Lake Kyle park for a picnic. And saw 3 Rhinos'.

In Harare I met youth workers from a variety of city churches at a BBQ that Paz arranged and got to catch up with friends at Central Baptist Church. Paz and family hosted me wonderfully.

Before heading back to Uganda we managed to get out to Lake Chivero (40km from Harare) for a quick retreat for a night. Very relaxing but it poured with rain almost all the time. The place we stayed had an excellent bird sanctuary, 2 pet zebras and friendly, eccentric owners.



Paz making friends at Lake Chivero

So what about the future? Zimbabwe is far from Uganda but certainly has a great need and hunger for our work. I feel it is fertile ground for YEA. The way forward should ideally be to identify local trainers who we can resource with the methodology of

youth ministry and pass on the training manual when it is completed. Then we can make occasional visits and keep in touch and offer support by email. It is also a potential place for a YEA volunteer to be placed for a period, so if you read this report and feel challenged then let us know.

A great trip. I came back a little exhausted thanks to the weird timing of the flights. Midnight check in for a 2am flight of 3 hours to Nairobi. Sit around in the early hours of the morning for 2.5 hours before the 45 minute shuttle home to Entebbe!!

Ian