

# A Letter from Michelle

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Dear Friends,

I first arrived in Zambia on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1993; I was excited and nervous to be starting what I thought would be a year at Mukinge Hospital. I had no idea that year would be extended, I would return to the UK for a while and then return to work long term at Mukinge.

Thirty-two years later, to the day, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November, I was again at the Lusaka Airport (now a new modern building) only this time I was leaving Zambia. What was once an unfamiliar land had become home, what seemed strange had become normal, and leaving was hard.

My 6 weeks of packing up and saying goodbyes in Zambia were a bittersweet time, filed with joy and sadness, laughter and tears and much reminiscing. There were farewell parties (3 of them!) where people shared memories of our times together over the years. So many stories. Some were funny such as the hospital executive director sharing how I always had coffee at work and how when he was a student nurse, he and a friend stole a taste of my coffee when I wasn't looking. Other stories really moved me. Nurses shared memories of working together through both good and hard times, how I influenced their lives and about our friendships.



Farewell party with the Paeds team and Airport goodbyes



It has been a joy to be a part of training so many students and to work with so many nurses. Some are still at Mukinge, but most are now scattered across Zambia and beyond. Many have gone on to do further training and are now in leadership themselves, including three on Mukinge's Management Team. (pictured left)

Kafue National Park will always be a special to me. The road to Mukinge goes through it and it has been the place of many holidays and adventures over the years. I was able to have one last visit with my friend Dee. We stayed by the Kafue River and saw so many birds and animals. On our last night while driving back to

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camp, after watching the sun set, we had to stop for a lion to cross the dirt road. He then settled down in the grass, and we were able to watch him for a while by the light of the headlights. Such a perfect way to end our trip and my time in Zambia!



Moving back to England, has been and still is a major adjustment; some days I feel like a foreigner in a strange land. There is so much I miss about Zambia, but I am also enjoying new experiences here; Christmas with all the lights, special markets, seasonal treats and carol services were wonderful. This is my first winter in the UK for twenty-five years, and although the short grey days have been a shock to the system, I have loved the sunny but cold days and especially seeing my first snow in many years.

I have had lots of questions about what my next steps will be. So let me try answer some of those questions:

*Have you retired?* No, I have not retired - I will still be working with SIM.

*What next?* For the first 3 months of this year, I have been encouraged to take a sabbatical. During this time, I have enrolled in a member care course to further develop my knowledge in this area. I will also have some time for rest and spiritual refreshment.

*What is your new role?* After March, I will start working with SIM UK as part of their People Care Team. I am looking forward to this. I hope that my experience and skills will enable me to prepare missionaries to serve overseas, to support them while they are away and to be there for them when they return.

*Do you still have to raise support?* Yes, I will continue be supported by donations given through SIM.

*Where will you be based?* I am living in Cambridgeshire with my sister.

*Can we meet up?* Yes, I would love to see you! One of the wonderful things about being back is the opportunity to see people more often, so if you would like to catch up let me know.

Thank you for your continued interest in my work with SIM.

With love

Michelle