

An
introduction
to

Covenant College

Training pastors, teachers and farmers in
Eastern Province, Zambia

Over the past week I have received a mailing from a Christian organisation and seen an internet article by a prominent UK evangelical both telling me how wonderfully strong the church is in Africa. These particularly interested me as I had just returned from my 11th visit to Zambia.



As is usual on such visits, I was impressed by a society so different from ours. God is acknowledged in the public sphere; Christian songs are played on public transport; people flock to Christian events; it is natural and easy to speak about God to strangers; it is normal for people to believe the Bible is God's word. As is also usual on such visits, I was depressed when digging below the surface of that society. Much of the church growth has left minds and hearts unaltered. Many in the villages I visit continue the immoral practices that have been passed from one generation to the next, while also attending church. Many live in fear; not the

fear of God, but fear of evil spirits and the power of the witchdoctor. The mindset of African Traditional Religion is reinforced by the prosperity gospel which is dominant across many denominations and simply gives the old thoughts a new Christian veneer.

Deep in the bush, in the middle of this society, is an institution trying to shine the light of the gospel of Christ.



Typical local village scene

Covenant College is situated in rural Eastern Zambia, where it has been operating since 2000. It is working to bring the transformation of the gospel to the surrounding region in three ways:

1. Pastors' training: The central work of Covenant College is a 3-year residential course for local pastors and evangelists. The students, from many different church backgrounds and with very varied understanding of the Bible, are taught, mentored and spiritually nurtured by a course that is Evangelical, Reformed and

practical. The staff running this are a mixture of Malawian, Zambian and Western.



Student pastors

2. Christian Education Ministry: This work seeks to improve local primary education and promote a Christian approach to education. The main method used is the training of teachers in over 20 local schools. Across church history Christians have been involved in education. It is not hard to see why, when one sees the effect on the church of many people being illiterate and an education system that discourages thinking. The potential from raising up a new generation who can read, know the Bible and have been taught to think about it, is enormous.



One of our community schools

3. Farm-training: Everyone in the area is involved in farming. What do biblical stewardship and the Protestant work-ethic look like in an African farming context? Our farm exists to investigate this, research more effective farming methods and promote them among the farmers of Eastern Province.



The Principal, George Kalengo, and his wife, Bridget

All these works are on a relatively small scale, giving a lot of time to intensive personal work with local people. That may not make for the impressive statistics of big organisations. Many visits to Zambia have taught me to be highly sceptical of such statistics and of those who fly in to Africa, report great things, and fly out again quickly. There is no substitute for the intensive, long-term personal work which Covenant College is doing.

Covenant College is governed by a board of trustees selected from churches and Christian organisations from Zambia, South Africa, Scotland and England. It has an Evangelical and Reformed doctrinal basis.

To find out more about this work and to support Covenant College, visit

www.zambianmissionsupport.org.uk

You may be interested in the following post on Covenant College by well-known Zambian pastor Conrad Mbewe:

http://www.conradmbewe.com/2012/02/bible-colleges-worth-attending-in_09.html

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