

CV

Born in Belfast, N Ireland, into a Christian family with a strong tradition of active Church membership.

Primary and Secondary Schooling in Belfast.

1957 – 1961 BA Degree in Classics at Trinity College, Dublin.

1961 – 1964 BD Degree at New College, Edinburgh University.

1963 Accepted by the Overseas Council of the Church of Scotland as candidates to work with the Church overseas.

1964 Married to Joan, in Belfast

1964 – 1965 Th M Degree at San Francisco Theological Seminary, California.

1965 – 66 Assistant Pastor, Lewistown United Presbyterian Church

Autumn 1966 St Colm's College, Edinburgh – training, prior to going to work in United Church of Zambia.

January 1967 – June 1980 Minister of United church of Zambia

October 1980 – June 2000 Minister, Murrayfield Parish Church, Edinburgh

July 2000 – June 2006 Minister of St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church, Jerusalem

July 2006 Retirement.

1. One of the reasons for outlining a CV above is that it illustrates a significant aspect of our lives. Quite deliberately I say “our” lives, meaning Joan and myself. All of the major decisions in our lives from 1961 were joint decisions, and it was this shared commitment which made it possible for us to do the work that we did. We were both brought up in homes which gave us a great sense of security, and encouragement to develop our own personalities and potentialities. This solid start to our lives gave us the foundation which allowed us to travel, to live in different countries, to observe and share in different cultures, and to provided us with sufficient self-confidence to be able to acknowledge and learn from the values and traditions of people quite different from ourselves.

2. In mid-1966 we were told by the Overseas Council that the United Church of Zambia had agreed to accept us to work in Zambia, where we would be on the staff of the relatively newly-formed United Church of Zambia. This was our first exposure to a process which continued over the next 13 years – the power of acceptance or rejection of our service lay firmly with the local Zambian Church. This role was one that I greatly appreciated. On each occasion, as we approached the end of a Tour of service and considered our future, we did have a personal decision to make as to whether or not we felt it appropriate to request a new appointment. Nevertheless, the response to any request from us for a further period of service within the UCZ lay with the Courts of that Church. We felt that this procedure was entirely appropriate, and it was one which we were glad to accept. Our understanding of it was that it recognised both the independence of the UCZ, and its acceptance of responsibility and care for us as workers on its staff.

3. To jump ahead in the story, not only did the Synod of the UCZ or its Committees have the responsibility to invite us to continue serving in Zambia, but it also had the authority to station us wherever it felt we might make the most appropriate contribution to the overall work of the church. We did not necessarily accept these without some reservations, but it was either accept the authority of the UCZ, or leave its service. Over the years, we did feel that the Holy Spirit had not been absent from these decision making processes. One very positive and practical effect of the UCZ having the authority to station us according to its perceptions, was that we were spared the temptation to talk of particular postings as “our” church. It was a shock to the system when we returned to

work within the Church of Scotland to hear ministers speak of “my” church, and “my” congregation. We were glad that the discipline of working within the UCZ had got this understanding out of our system.

4. Looking back at 1966 from the vantage point of 2008, I was terribly naïve. While the term at St Colm’s College in Edinburgh had offered some opportunity for reflection and learning, and while the experience of the staff of the Overseas Council office in the Church of Scotland offices was helpful, I had no real idea of the work that I would be asked to do. However, there was the very positive feeling of wanting to do whatever I could to contribute to the work of the UCZ in particular, and the Church in general, in Zambia. It was a question of being prepared to “be”, rather than to “do”, and in the “being” to find out what required to be done – or perhaps more pertinently, what I might be able to do, given my total lack of experience of work in any part of Africa.

5. My recollection of the conversations with the Secretaries of the Overseas Council reinforces this rather non-specific approach. I was encouraged to look, listen, and keep quiet, until I had got some experience under my belt which might equip me to make a contribution to discussions within the Church. When I compare the approach that I was encouraged to take with that taken by some of my other expatriate colleagues from different Churches which were in partnership with the UCZ, I realise how fortunate I was to have had such wise and perceptive teachers and advisers.

6. On arrival in Zambia, it was not always easy to “keep quiet”. Having been sent to Livingstone in the Western Presbytery, a part of the UCZ where no Church of Scotland minister had previously worked, there was no structure of past experience into which I could fit, so that I could gain experience and undertake language training. There having been no minister in that particular post for some 18 months prior to my arrival, there were expectations from the local church that I would be able start work as soon as I got off the train. My expatriate colleagues were all personnel from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, none of whom had ever worked with someone from the Church of Scotland. So, it was an interesting situation. There were at least two saving graces. The first was the understanding shown by the minister in charge of the area – the Rev D S Sumbwanyambe. Having had some experience outside Zambia, he was aware of my need for support and advice, and he gave both in a very gracious manner. The second was the fact that Livingstone, where we were working, was 300 miles from the Presbytery headquarters, and in reality cut off from the rest of the Presbytery by the fact that at that time there was no road from Livingstone up into Western Province. I was therefore largely left to get on with my work in the Livingstone area.

7. One attribute which I had that others in the area did not was that English was my first language. At that time, there was a great expansion of education, with English being the language of instruction. I was therefore allocated to work in schools and the local Teacher Training College, principally taking RE instruction classes. This was providential, as it gave me an opportunity to listen to the questions of younger people, who were having to relate their traditional culture and traditions to the challenges of a wider world of scholarship. They could ask me questions without feeling they were in conflict with their culture, and I could help them to tease out possible answers to their enquiries.

8. This apprenticeship stood me in good stead when, in 1971, I was appointed by the UCZ to be the interim Headmaster of Sefula Secondary School near Mongu, one of the 4 Secondary Schools run by it. The “interim” nature of the appointment was a bit of a misnomer, stretching as it did for almost three years. This, too, reinforced the understanding

that we were members of the UCZ Team, and were invited to work where the UCZ felt was the most appropriate place.

9. A Transfer away from Sefula in 1974, while not the easiest decision to accept, put us in a position where we were able to be transferred in early 1975 to work in Lusaka. There our ministry had multiple facets; within the congregations of Trinity and St Andrew's Churches, which were English speaking; within the Presbytery; within the Synod; providing hospitality for church folk from within Zambia and overseas visitors to the UCZ. I greatly appreciated the fact that we had had an "apprenticeship" of almost 8 years working within Zambia before being given this sort of pastoral responsibility. It meant that we had a better understanding of the culture, traditions, - and faith - of the people with whom we were working, and hopefully enabled us to be of more assistance to them.

10. One of the more challenging aspects of working within the UCZ system was to accept that our Zambian colleagues did not always see things from the same perspective as ourselves. On pastoral matters, there were times when the UCZ seemed to us to be overly bound by regulations. However, we usually managed to reach a modus vivendi through discussions with the Church Elders. On administrative matters, within the Courts of the Church, it was possible to make a contribution to debates, but at times it was frustrating to see that our "advice" was not accepted!

11. One of the most positive aspects of working within the UCZ for me was the way in which leadership was a "collegiate" matter, shared by Elders and Minister. Watching Zambian Moderators of Presbyteries manage the business of their Presbyteries was a valuable experience reinforced the value of the contributions from all participants at meetings. Schooled in this way of working, I rarely found it necessary to come to decisions on my own, and was glad to have the experience and expertise of Elders to assist and to guide. It was quite a shock, on our return to Scotland, to hear ministers speak of their reluctance to involve Elders in discussions and decisions about the work of congregations. I have also to say that Elders took some prodding to realise that they had to join in discussions, and then work at putting decisions into effect.

12. Working within the United Church of Zambia, which had its roots in the work of the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church, the London Missionary Society and the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, provided us with a great wealth of riches. Different church theological backgrounds, different church government systems, different church worship traditions - all combined to make the experience of being within the UCZ an enormously enriching time. It also made a significant contribution to my approach to Ecumenical Relations in the general sense on my return to Scotland, and in particular in the Parish where I was working, which became a Local Ecumenical Project.

13. Coming from a background of infrequent celebrations of Holy Communion, it was at first disconcerting to be in a position where I was expected to be celebrating Communion every Sunday, as I travelled round the different congregations in the area where I was working. The feeling of Holy Communion as a Sacrament which was "special" was difficult for me to maintain, as it became part of a weekly routine. So, Communion became much more mundane, but in the process it became a much more significant part of my "spiritual diet". Again, on return to Scotland, the experience of worship in Zambia played its part in leading to more frequent celebrations of Communion within the Parish where I was working.