

The spirit of ukama (which means “we are family”) embraces the joys, successes, achievements, as well as pain, sufferings, failures, and problems of one another. We are indeed “family” in the body of Christ-despite are distance or diversity. I was embraced by the spirit of ukama during my entire journey as a delegate from the United Church of Christ in North Hampton to the Emerald Church UCCZ, which is located approximately 5 miles from Mt Selinda Mission Station in southeastern Zimbabwe.

I felt the nurtured by the spirit of ukama through the hospitality of our hosts. “The Little We Have We Share” was printed on a sign in one of the churches we visited in Gweru. Whether we arrived 4 hours late, or had a 5:30am departure, or lacked electricity (which was often the case 6pm -6am), we were always fed a warm meal three times a day despite being told many Zimbabweans did not eat more than once a day. One morning at 4:45am I awoke to the crowing of a rooster (a rather pleasant daily sound I had never heard in North Hampton), and to the sound of someone chopping wood. I peeked through a well worn circular hole in the drape and saw my host, the Minister of Emerald Church and High School Principal, in his dress shirt chopping wood for the open fire- so that I could have a hot breakfast (boiled eggs and tea) as well as hot water for a sponge bath. I’m sure I displaced many of his family as well. He and his wife, three children, his mother and an orphan all lived in a small 3 bedroom home- one of which I was given.

My penpal Chipo and her husband Crispin hosted me for 3 nights in their 2 bedroom farm home. Again, I displaced their three children, her sister Eva, and her son Dekarai who helped on the farm. Two days later at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Ruwadzano-a Women’s Fellowship of the UCCZ Chipo gifted me the bedspread off her bed to keep me warm during the cold winter nights in Central Zimbabwe, and gave me a hosho (shaker). We danced, sang and shook our hoshos late into the night. I was moved to tears.

The spirit of ukama is alive “that they may all be one.”

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Traveled to Zimbabwe in 2010