

You will be changed. After three days all of us in the group I traveled with said “when” we return, not “if.” You will find magic there-warm welcome from new friends you have just met, amazement of kids who have never blown bubbles, awesome gratitude for everyday items, singing without sheet music, wondering where the extra verses to the song are coming from, singing from the heart. Their songs, sung in Shona, accompanied by drums, hoshos and yes, whistles, are special and beautiful, and especially touched my heart.

You will meet little ones who can say “how are you?” and won’t understand a word you say back, but will leave you grinning like a Cheshire cat. You will see other little ones who won’t come close because you are so different from anyone they have ever seen. You will learn that mispronouncing a word can be hysterically funny when you find out later what you really said. You might hold a little girl who can’t walk, who is older than you think, and dying. You will find that you don’t mind being behind schedule by two hours because you are still amazed by the experience you are currently in. Your heart will tear when widows ask you to pray for them, and you realize only later why. You will be amazed at the truth of the phrase “the little we have we share.” And you will have experiences you can’t image, that will touch your soul.

I looked in the eyes of a chicken, sat up front and center during many worship services, spoke as my words were translated, was honored to attend a wedding, listened to the kids sing their church songs. I became part of a conversation about organ donation-something that is so odd to them, and so difficult to explain. “My people” took me into their home for my first few days there. I hope to return to Zimbabwe, to have another chance to experience again the wonder of their lives.

Beth McFarlane

Pilgrim United Church of Christ Brentwood-Kingston - paired with Gwenzi UCCZ,
Gwenzi, Zimbabwe

Traveled to Zimbabwe in 2007