My Eyes Have Seen

A PERSONAL HISTORY OF GOD'S WORK IN AFRICA

BY ELEANOR SIMS

I was born at Kalene Hospital in Zambia on February 17, 1928, and grew up in Chavuma, Zambia. Although missionary responsibilities kept my parents, Wallace and Ruth Logan, busy, we gathered for a time of Bible reading every morning and evening. Each of us seven children trusted the Lord as Savior at a young age.

One night, when I was six years old, I witnessed a fierce forest fire in the bush. When I saw how ravaging and uncontrolled it was, the thought of hell and the punishment for my sins convicted me. In the middle of the night, I woke my parents, and we prayed at their bedside. I asked God to forgive my sins and trusted and received the Lord as my Savior (John 1:12; 1 John 1:9). Words cannot express the peace and joy that filled my heart. As we grew older, my siblings and I were introduced to Emmaus correspondence courses, which strengthened our walk with the Lord.

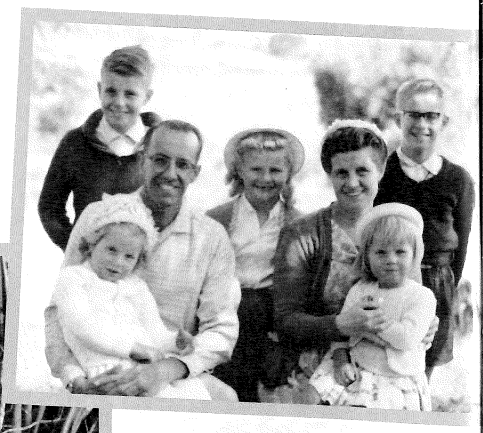
THE LORD PROVIDES

In 1951, my family returned to the USA for a two-year furlough, during which we traveled to different assemblies telling of the Lord's work in Africa. At the meetings, my family stood up and sang: "Away far beyond Jordan, we'll meet in that land; oh, won't that be grand."

At that time, a few of us older girls were in our 20s. Before returning to Zambia, someone called my father aside and questioned him as to the wisdom of taking his daughters back to Africa—would they ever find husbands there? He replied that they each want the joy of helping those in Africa find the Savior.

In 1953, we returned to the mission station at Chavuma, Zambia. Meanwhile, the Lord had led a young man named John Sims to join his widowed missionary father, Edwin Sims, in the work in northwest Zambia. The elders of John's home assembly had commended him to this work, and he was serving the Lord at Lukolwe mission station, which was located near Chavuma.

Over time, John and I developed a deep friendship, and we married at Chavuma. During the next few years, our loving heavenly Father provided spouses for the five girls and two boys in the Logan family, as they continued in mission work in Zambia. With the Lord as our guide, John and I had the joy of serving the Lord for the next 52 years—in Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Far left: Wallace and Ruth Logan raised Eleanor (far right) and her siblings at Chavuma Mission Station in Zambia.

Left: Eleanor carries two of her children, Andrew (left) and Stephen (right).
Above: While the Sims children were young, the family served at Lukolwe and Chavuma mission stations.

THE LORD GUIDES

Chavuma was our family home and base, and during my childhood, I learned to speak Luvale, the local language. John and I enjoyed the missionary work at Chavuma and at Lukolwe, the sister missionary station. Yet, after our older children finished their elementary education at Sakeji Mission School, we sought the Lord's guidance for their high school education. At the time, the postal system in Zambia was not well-developed, so education by correspondence was not the answer. John made a visit to Zimbabwe (then known as Southern Rhodesia) and found good government schools. The missionaries warmly invited us to join them in their work.

While John was away, I stayed home with the children and also sought God's guidance. Three times, from different sources, Acts 8:26–40 was given to me. Each time, the words in verse 26 struck me: "Arise and go toward the south." When John returned, he said he believed God was calling us to go south to Zimbabwe.

So, in 1971, we said goodbye to our parents and other family members and, with our six children, followed the Lord's call to a new field of service.

THE LORD OPENS DOORS

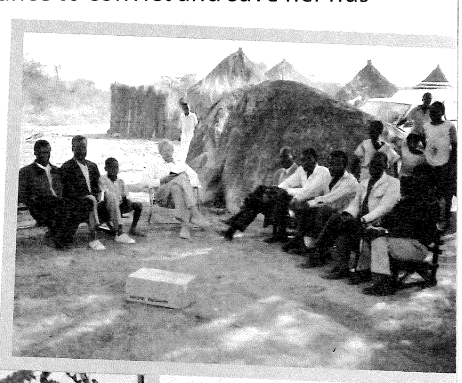
When we arrived in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital, the Lord provided a house for us and places for our children in the local government schools as day scholars. Becoming proficient in Shona, the local language, was important for us, and our colleagues encouraged us in this endeavor. Within three months, John could preach in Shona, and I, too, could teach the women from the Scriptures in their language. Speaking Shona enabled us to build friendships, and we were delighted to see the people responding to God's Word as they heard it in their language. Our missionary work was twofold: spreading God's Word and raising our six children to know and grow in the Lord. We are thankful that our children surrendered their hearts to the Lord at young ages. Daily Bible readings were an important part of our family life, and we were grateful to see our children grow in faith and in their involvement in the local assembly. Today, the Lord lovingly uses our children in His service around the world.

Community ministries

The Lord blessed our ministry among the Shona people. We witnessed many people turn from ancestral worship and place their faith in Christ, anchoring themselves in God's Word and letting it filter into their home life, assembly life, and work life. Through His grace, the Lord enabled us to meet not only people's spiritual needs but also some of their many practical needs. Zimbabwe would become a war-torn country, yet the Lord gave us opportunities to reach unreached ones with His Word and protected us while traveling on lonely, dangerous roads.

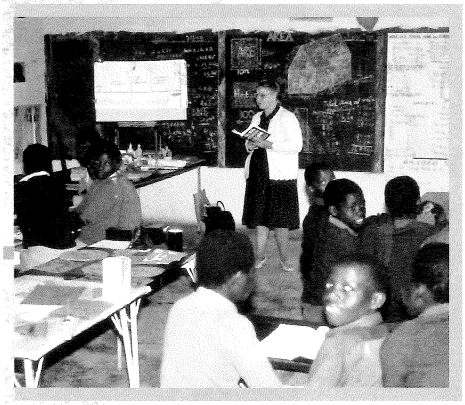
John spent many hours building up local believers in their faith, often as they faced trials and suffering. The Lord enabled me to share openly with the women about how His divine power gives us all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him. One believing Shona woman suffered opposition from her husband. Yet the Lord used the testimony of her strong faith, her deep love for the Lord, and her faithful endurance to convict and save her husband and three children. They are still living for the Lord (1 Peter 1:7–8).

What a joy it was to see God saving individuals who became servants of the Lord—evangelists in rural areas and faithful workers in the assemblies.



Left column (from top): John Sims and Lorne Ferguson, a fellow missionary at Lukolwe, travel to nearby villages to preach the Gospel; Eleanor teaches her children a Bible lesson using flannelgraph.

Above: John studies the Bible with a group of men while a few children listen in. **Left:** Eleanor rides a motorbike, which helps with movement around the mission station or to nearby villages.



School ministry

We had the privilege of teaching religious education in government schools in the townships of Harare. As more and more schools requested our help, we built a team of about 10 teachers from the Shona assemblies and went on to teach hundreds of children the good news.

Emmaus correspondence course ministry

The Lord opened the door for us to preach the Gospel in one of Zimbabwe's largest prisons and to introduce Emmaus correspondence courses into all of the country's prisons. Since many prisoners did not speak English, they needed courses in Shona. We translated many of the English Bible courses into Shona, providing Bible study resources to hundreds of Shona believers within and outside the prison system.

Over the years, the local believers' hard work has blessed this ministry. One young man who worked in our garden joined the Emmaus work and, eventually, began overseeing all the correspondence course work in the prisons. Hundreds of prisoners trusted the Lord as Savior. After the man's tragic home call due to a stroke, the Lord raised up another godly young man who continues to lead this ministry.

Even to this day, the Lord is using these courses: We receive many testimonies from prisoners who trusted Christ and experienced transformed lives. Some are missionaries to their fellow inmates. Please pray that the Lord will help the people who grade the completed tests and answer the students' questions.

Assembly ministries

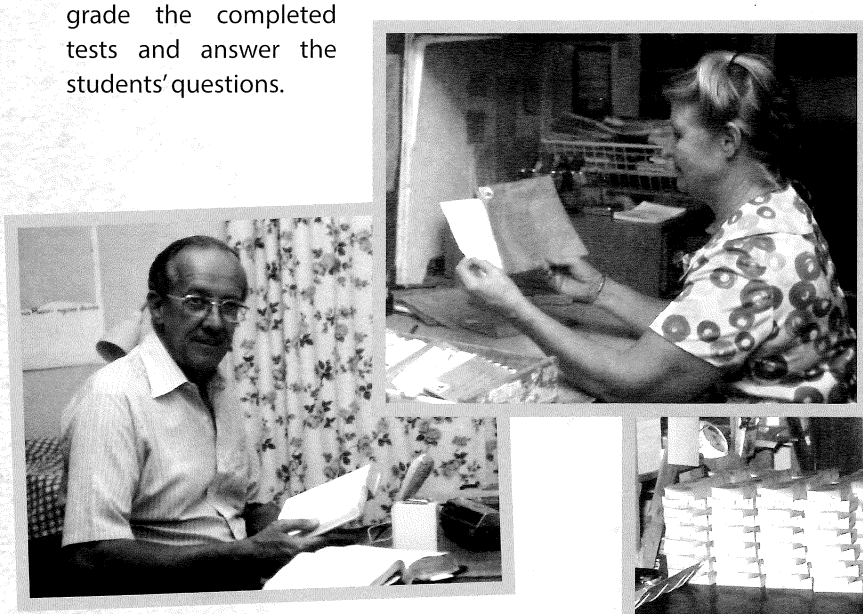
I thank the Lord for the testimony of the assemblies scattered across Zimbabwe. They faithfully gather to remember the Lord Jesus Christ and His death for sinners, they share from God's precious Word, and they spread the good news of God's loving salvation. Through these assemblies, small or large, the Lord is shepherding, encouraging, and strengthening Christians—especially in their present trials and hardships. I greatly appreciate your prayers for them.

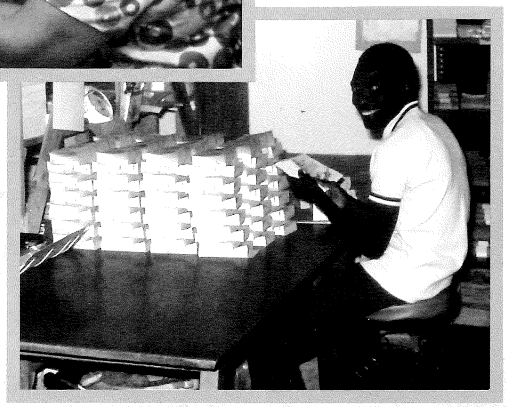
Top left: In a government school in Harare, Eleanor teaches the Bible to eager students.
Above: Eleanor and a group of believers pose for a picture after a Gospel meeting.
Left: Eleanor plays the accordion while believers in a local church sing hymns.

ALL FOR HIS GLORY

The Lord gave John and me a deep love for the people of Africa, but in 2003, failing health brought us back to the USA. We served the Lord together as He gave us strength, and on December 26, 2005, the Lord called John home to see Him face to face in all His glory and to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. . . . Enter into the joy of your Lord." (Matthew 25:21)

I anticipate that day when, in the presence of our Lord, I will join with my loved ones gone on before to praise Him for all eternity. May the Lord use us, His servants, for His glory as we serve Him faithfully, inspired by the godly example of those who served Him tirelessly and selflessly over many years.





Left (clockwise from top): Eleanor opens mail containing Emmaus correspondence courses from prisoners; In Zimbabwe, a team member prepares Emmaus correspondence courses for prisoners; John records Bible teaching in Shona.

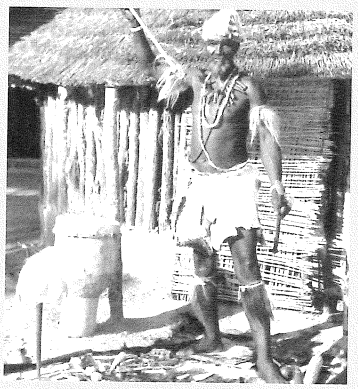
A Memory from the Field

While serving the Lord in Zambia, my father, Wallace Logan, came across a crowd of people seated on the ground in a village where a death had recently occurred. He sat down among the people to observe the proceedings. In those days, when a person died, the death was attributed to bewitchment, not natural illness or age. So the villagers called a witch doctor, or diviner, to identify the person responsible for the death.

Courage in the Gospel

The diviner used a large, waxed seedpod, which he threaded and tied to an overhead tree branch. He told the crowd that, when the pod slid down the string, the answer was no; when it remained high up, the answer was yes. As the diviner named different individuals in the crowd, he asked if they killed the deceased. Each time, the pod slid down, indicating no. Eventually, at the mention of an elderly man's name, the pod remained in place. The villagers turned on the old man, intending to kill him immediately.

With courage from the Lord, my father jumped up and shouted for the people to stop. He saw the diviner's trickery in controlling the seedpod. He took the string from the reluctant diviner, who sat with the crowd, waiting to see what would happen. The string was coiled around a stick that was attached inside the pod, which allowed the diviner to control the seedpod's rise and fall.



My father then operated the pod's movement in answer to his own questions: "Is this diviner a good man?" The pod slid down—no. "Is he deceiving the people?" The pod stuck—yes. "Did this old man kill the person?" The pod slid down—no. At this answer, the diviner fled. Everyone was astonished, for this method killed many people in the past. Once my father revealed the trick, the villagers spared the old man's life. This situation presented an opportunity for my father to share the Gospel. He told the people that Satan is the father of lies, deceiving humankind, while Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). That day, many people in the village received the Lord as their Savior.

Triumph through the Gospel

The story does not end there. One night, soon after this incident, the diviner surreptitiously poisoned our drinking water (boiled river water that we hung outside in canvas bags to cool). During the night, my mother and one of my siblings drank the water and suffered vomiting and diarrhea. But the Lord graciously spared their lives. A few days later, word spread around the local villages that it was no use trying to poison the missionaries, for their God was too strong for poison.

> What a wonderful, powerful, loving Savior we have.

Years later, my parents and sister were in a distant village, meeting with Christians on a Sunday. After the meeting, a man sitting next to my father asked him if he remembered him. When my father answered that he did not know him, the man confessed that he was the diviner whose trick my father exposed. Now, he was a Christian, thanking the Lord for His salvation with other believers. In time, five other diviners trusted the Lord and blessed others. What a wonderful, powerful, loving Savior we have. ■

Left: Traditionally, witch doctors, also known as diviners, were important figures in village life. **Right:** Wallace and Ruth Logan and their seven children, including Eleanor, served the Lord in Zambia.

Eleanor Sims is commended from Grace Gospel Chapel in Jersey City, New Jersey, and Brighton Avenue Gospel Chapel in East Orange, New Jersey.