



EBENEZER MATOBO

March brought our third training block of the year to a close. This meant that we came to the end of our current Family Night series on Walking with Jesus Every Day. It has been amazing to have friends of Ebenezer come and share from their own experiences of the storms, challenges and temptations they have faced and how they have known Jesus walk with them in those situations. Lots of apprentices have been commenting on how they have come to a new understanding that being a Christian does not mean storms will not arise and temptations will not come. As one first year said, "I have learnt that I can depend on God no matter what."

The end of the block also brought our current series of weekly clubs to an end. Just before Easter we spent an evening together as each club presented something they had learned, created or experienced in their club. With over ten clubs presenting, it was a jam-packed evening! We loved seeing the dance club in action, eating cookies made by the cooking club and seeing the impressive furniture made by the carpentry club.

Two of our team members visited Ebenezer Kazungula in Zambia towards the end of March, to join in the celebrations of their third annual graduation. It was a joyful occasion with 8 second years graduating from the Advanced Course and 10 first years graduating from the Intermediate Course. We are looking forward to sending another staff team in April to help our colleagues select their new intake!

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CROPPING

We faced some serious water challenges in early March with broken pumps and engines. This was compounded by a continuing shortage of rainfall in what has been an incredibly dry rainy season. The one upside of this has been that we have avoided common fungal diseases in our crops which often occur at this time of year.

In March we harvested 2,090 kg of butternut, 57 crates of pepper and 12 crates of cucumbers. Our apprentices had been working in the early hours of the mornings to transplant onions; sadly our water challenges have hindered the plants' growth and we only have a quarter of a hectare remaining from one hectare planted.

Our demo plot has lots of interesting vegetables in it at the moment, including some funny looking lettuce (pictured above). We are trialling a variety of vegetables including lettuce, cucumber, green pepper, paprika, tomato, watermelon and butternut - all being grown for seed, in the hope of winning seed growing contracts with JW seeds.

We have been battling with red spider mites infesting our young tomato crops. On this crop we are seeking to implement biological methods of pest control and so we are busy researching solutions to manage this pest.





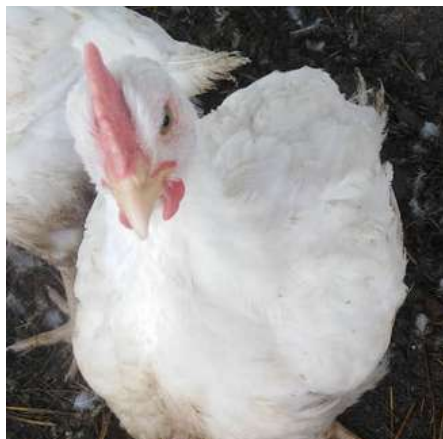
LIVESTOCK

We have been facing a challenge in our dairy with our bull suffering from a leg injury which he does not seem to be recovering from. While he is well in himself, unfortunately he is not strong enough in his legs to be able to service our cows! As a result, we are looking to buy or rent a new bull, or alternatively seek ways to artificially inseminate our cows.

Also in our dairy, this month we started an experiment with a feed enhancer for our weaners. So far, we have seen good growth as a result. We are going to run the experiment until the end of April for more comprehensive results.

Our current broiler batch has gone from strength to strength, with our team maintaining a low mortality of 1.6%. At the end of the month our average bird weight was 1.8 kg at 5 weeks. We are looking forward to good results when this batch is closed in April.

We are continuing to see varied performance between our two layer flocks. One flock is hitting and sometimes exceeding its target lay rate of 85%. The second flock should be hitting a lay rate of 95% but is only managing 67%. We are working hard to understand the cause of this low lay rate, including making environmental improvements and requesting an analysis of our feed from our supplier.





INTRODUCING

Second year, Sikhwebezi has been impressing us in her new role managing our stores! Facing some health challenges, Sikhwebezi was struggling with her field work and so her coaches asked her to help in the stores for a season. Within a day or two, our stores were looking noticeably smarter, cleaner and more organised, and it seems like Sikhwebezi has found her perfect job! She has proved to be an excellent record keeper and is enjoying her new role, doing stock takes, issuing equipment and inputs, and receiving goods. She says, *"I am enjoying admin big time. I love doing it and serving people."*

When asked more generally about her time at Ebenezer, Sikhwebezi says, *"I came here because I wanted to learn, not be like some of my friends who wait at home for parents or a boyfriend to provide for them."* Sikhwebezi is one of 9 siblings. She found herself without employment prospects or a place to stay once she finished school. Hearing about Ebenezer, she chose to apply because she was told that Ebenezer was a place where she would learn about agriculture and about God.

She has indeed learnt a lot about agriculture and about God, but she has also learnt a lot about herself and grown spiritually and emotionally. *"At Ebenezer, I have learnt how to become a confident woman. I know who I am now. And I have learnt how to forgive - I was someone who found it hard to forgive, but now I can! I want to share what I have learnt with other young adults in my church."*

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