

Grace Samkange – transcription of audio clips

1. Church Meetings

We used to have, as kids, Wednesday house meetings so, you know, every Wednesday either we would be taken to other people's houses or there would be people coming to our house for these house meetings. So you would also participate in your own way as kids.

And what happened in the house meeting?

Well, I suppose there would be half [the time] for the whole class meetings – there would be classes or house meetings so they would have whatever plans they had [made]. Then there would be singing and praying and we'd just be listening and behaving. Then also, every night I remember my mother teaching us a prayer that was called [*recites name of prayer in Shona*] and we would all say that together as children, which means, 'Jesus, O good Jesus, will you look after us tonight as we go to bed'.

But then you went to a Catholic School. How did that interact?

Catholic schools were popular mainly because of their education. Their education was preferred to, was much better than all other denominations and they had better schools. You sort of merged in. You followed the Catholic way of worship, the rosary.... you'd know everything such that if I were to go to a Catholic church now, I'd know the routine, I can say some of the things. So, you sort of merged in.

Did you still think of yourself as a Methodist?

I don't think it really made any difference. At the boarding schools where we were, most of the time there was no alternative. But when we went to Mary Mount College, there was a bus that the nuns would arrange on Sundays. Those who wanted to go to the other churches could go into the city centre. So, we used to go to the Methodist Church in the City Centre.

2. Work and Faith

I think my faith had a great influence on my work ethics because I was now in a position where I could, sort of, influence the way we look after people. I found that I was more empathetic, I was more... I would, sort of, tend to want to find out more about the person – not being intrusive, but in a way where you'd help their situation. As time moved on, initially health care services were not expensive; people would pay one dollar and that would cover a week's medicine and radiotherapy or some treatments were free, but as time went on, then the people had to start paying for the services and you then have to decide, should you deny them treatment? Should you refer them to Social Services? Or what is the best way that you can help? Or are there other ways that you can help that person? So, yeah, so it is interesting how... you don't realise that your faith helps you in your daily work, but it does.

3. Wesley Mem

I found a church... or the church found me... I don't know which way! Because the first weekend I go to Oxford, I was sending some money home on the first Saturday that I got here, so as I went past, I was asking somebody, 'Where can I get Western Union?'. And they said, 'Oh go to George Street and then you go up past New Inn Hall Street. I went past and said, 'Ahh. Wesley Memorial Methodist Church. Oh

OK. So I made a mental note, I know where to go on Sunday, so that's why I ended up at Wesley Mem! I think I met Mary and Nigel [Gilson] then on the first day.

What was the reception from Mary and Nigel?

Mary and Nigel were missionaries in Southern Rhodesia. They knew my family. When I met Mary and Nigel then they invited to their house. I think there were three of us who went there, and then we started talking about Rhodesia, and yeah, getting to know each other and very welcoming, and felt very much at home.

How did the Wesley Memorial in Oxford, how did that differ from the church back home?

You could say the music was different. Well, I would know the songs because we would have the English hymns, but obviously then you miss out the usual Shona songs, the dancing and whatever. I think [it was] more formal. I think as a new person, it was quite difficult to get in until you get to know people and, if you don't have someone who is like... not forceful as such but who is more open to talking to new people, like Mary and may be Paul and other people like that, it does may be feel that may be I'm not welcome here. Because at times you really have to accost them, and go and say [something]. What I now do is that if I see somebody that I want to talk to in church, I make sure that I go and get them before they get out of the door. Because if you don't do that, they will go quickly.

4. Glimpses of God

There are instances when... somebody in a sermon, or [somebody] says something, or you hear what has happened to somebody, and you say, 'Yes, God works miracles in our lives'. Everyday there is a miracle taking place that we are taking for granted. You think it is normal, but it is not normal, it is something unusual.

What sort of thing are you thinking of?

We have had two people who have had kidney transplants. That is a miracle in itself. A time to think I have been part of that journey as well.

When I went to Israel in October, there were 57 of us in our group, which was quite a large group. And we were at Bethany, at the house of Lazarus and his sisters. We were there for less than five minutes but as we were walking out, we went past the garden. I sat down there for less than two minutes but I just felt overwhelmed, content. I just got this sense of smell... I don't know what type of bushes were there, but it was just the place to be.