

Howzit goin'?



“Howzit goin’?” I used to hear in the States.

Now: “*Muli bwanji?*”
 (“How are you”?)

My wife Debbie, my son Drew, and I moved from Minnesota to Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, in early December 2019.

My future role: Theological Educator for the One Africa Team of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, concentrating especially on formal continuing education for African pastors in our fellowship.

My current role: Newbie. Learner. OAT called me to spend at least the first 6 months here learning as much language and culture as possible.

How is that going? There is too much to tell.

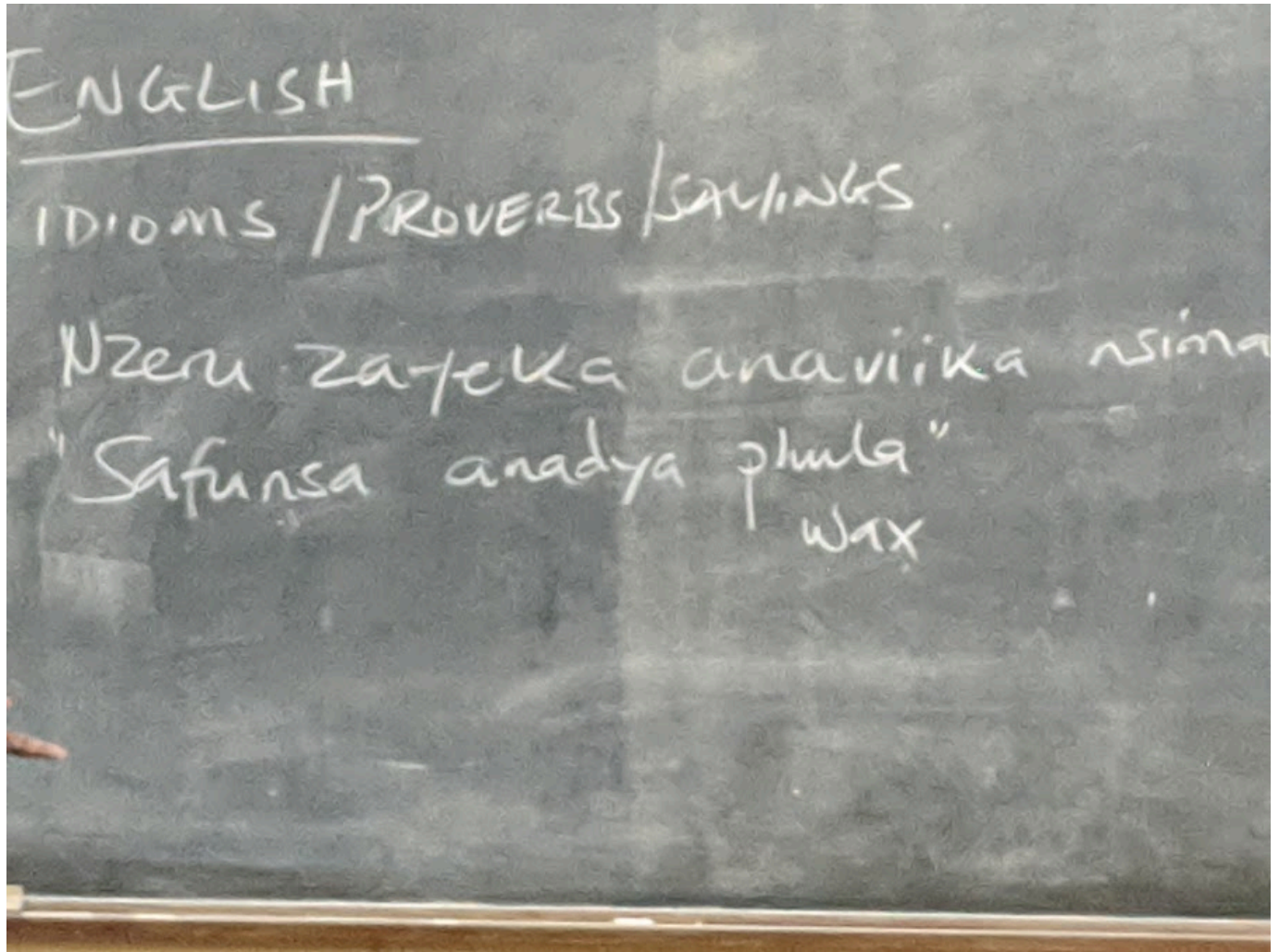
Pithy proverbs may help. That is, let’s zero in on 28

January 2020, one of the best days I have spent in Africa.



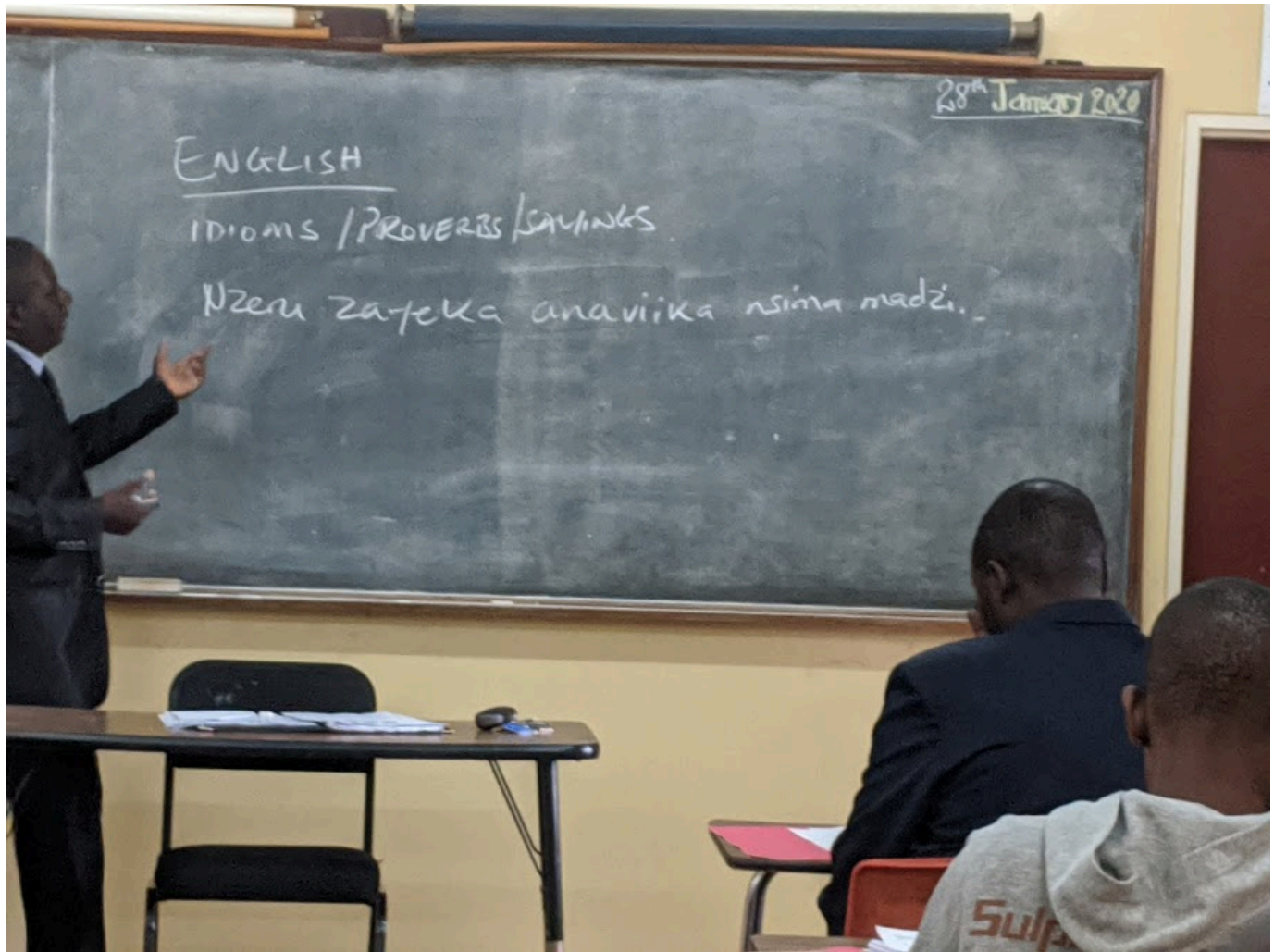
Malawian pastors Stanley Daile and Alfred Kumchulesi at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Lilongwe, Malawi took many hours out of their day to get to know me and help me get to know them, their lives, their city, their heart language, and the future pastors they teach.

After a particularly comforting morning devotion by Pastor Kumchulesi on God's forgiveness as seen in Psalm 32, I went with Professor Darlington Mwakatika to an LBI class which focused on English and Chewa proverbs.



The easiest Chewa proverb for me to learn was the shortest: *Safunsa anadya phula*. "The-one-who-didn't-ask ate wax." He could have had honey, the dummy, if he had only asked for help.

That proverb sums up much of my last months. I keep asking *abale anga*, my brothers and sisters, both Western and African, about their lives, their language, their customs, their faith, their suggestions for what to do next, and more.



Otherwise, *Nzeru za yekha, anaviika nsima madzi*. “Wisdom-of-himself — he soaked *nsima* in water.”

Only a fool would take a handful of his maize flour porridge, *nsima*—an important staple in central African diets—and dunk it in water. That would ruin it. But Mr. Know-it-all did that.

New missionaries, thinking they are wise, can become such fools. (“I am familiar with biblical Hebrew. I have been a pastor since 1992. I know how things work in the States.”) But pride poisons everything. Pride offends our holy God. It also ruins relationships with *abale athu*, our brothers and sisters.

Bought by blood, though, forgiven through faith in the true *Nzeru za yekha*, Jesus, who really is all wisdom-in-himself—oh!



My family and I are so glad for the gospel preaching of our pastor Chibikubantu Simweeleba; the seminary senior assigned to our congregation, Justin Namakhwa; and the elders who also do some of the preaching at Bethel, the congregation we attend.

We wish you could hear the youth and ladies choirs here, too. Click this link to watch <https://youtu.be/Fqjj1A6O8DE>
For most Sundays, both choirs have learned four *a capella* songs. The youth choir sings a recessional as well. I'm catching more Chewa words all the time, but from the first service we attended in December—words fail. Such conviction. Such joy in the Lord in the choir members, young and old.



One of our favorite new customs comes at the end of each service. Out the door of the church building walks the pastor, then any special guests, then all of us, one by one. Unlike your church, probably, here everyone takes their place in a line outside stretching into a large circle. Everyone shakes everyone else's hand, taking a new place in the circle, while the youth choir continues to sing and shake hands at the same time, at the end.

Such highlights are more important to share than

- what it has been like to wait for our shipment to arrive, or
- which American conveniences we miss, or
- what it has been like for Debbie and me to learn to shift with our left hands and drive a manual transmission Ford Ranger 4×4 on the left side of the road, or
- what the international school has been like so far for Drew.

How is it going? In short, we are part of great team. We learn and adjust daily. We are especially learning to lean more on God.



One last Chewa proverb: *Kuona maso ankhono kudeka*. "To see the eyes of the snail [requires] to slow down."

That big snail inched up a mango tree in our yard the other day. Can you see its eyes, up at the top of the Y? Did you have to slow down and look closely to see them, against the tree?

That is how it is going. *Pang'ono*, *pang'ono*, "my friend," *munzanga*, Mr. Zulu, tells me all the time. I tell it to others, when they ask especially

about language learning: “bit by bit.”

“Slow but sure,” *munzanga*

Mr. Kalima put the proverb to me.

You too: Thanks for all your little-by-little, slow-but-sure prayers and support for us and all WELS missionaries and their families. Keep it up, slow-but-sure, for Jesus’ sake.

Missionary Dan Witte lives in Zambia

Please pray for those working in fields that are ripe for harvest. Share their story, engage with future news and receive updates. Learn more about our mission fields in Africa and how the Holy Spirit is working faith in people’s hearts at <https://wels.net/serving-others/missions/africa>