SUNDAY IN CAPE TOWN: CONTRASTS

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Categories: Africa, Observations

This morning I had the wonderful privilege of being invited to attend a church service in Silver Town, a run down area of Kayelitcha; a township on the edge of cape Town.



The service was about as far away as you can get from a suburban Anglican service in the UK. The building was a small, very hot, corrugated iron construction - it reminded me of the village church in Gouabafla. However,unlike in Gouabafla, they had run a lead in from a nearby house to provide electricity. The music and preaching were delivered through a stack of amplifiers that would have done justice to a rock band in a much larger venue!

The singing was amazing. I'm not a good enough musician to say why it was very different to West Africa, but it was. Another reminder that Africa is huge and just because we are on the same continent, it doesn't mean that we are in the same culture.

Anyway, as I say, the music was good: I've not danced that much in years! oh, and when I was asked to say a few words to the congregation, I sang a Kouya song for them - thankfully, it went unrecorded!

However,the most inspiring thing about the day was the meeting the leader of the church. Bishop Lucas is an amazing entreprenurial leader. The church used to meet in a very different part of the township, but he has a vision to help Silver Town and so he moved the church there. It is early days yet, but I believe they will have a huge impact over time. Lucas has drawn together leaders from a number of churches to work together; they look after AIDS orphans, grow vegetables to use in a poverty relief programme and do all sorts of other good stuff as well as more traditional evangelism and church planting. He works in a difficult situation, but I was inspired to meet him.



The picture of the toilet gives you an idea of life in Kayelitcha. The government wanted to do something to clear up the environment, so they built sewers and gave every house a toilet - but they didn't build walls for the loos. Obviously, this makes them unusable. Would you want to sit on a loo in the street? It is a good example of when a development project doesn't take into account the dignity of the people involved. It was such a good initiative, but for want of a few mud-brick walls, the whole project turned into a minor disaster and caused resentment against the government.

Back at the congress, things got underway as we met with our small groups. There were only five of our six there, but they all seemed nice folk; two Brits, on American, on German and Japanese Gent. I think I'll enjoy talking to them and praying with them.

The conference opening ceremony was a huge spectacle. The best bit was a new video on church/mission history. It is the sort of thing that I would love to show to people at home or at work; a huge conference hall wasn't, perhaps,the best context for it. There was also lots of singing and dancing by an impressive group. However,I think I had been rather spoiled for it all by the wonderful singing and dancing in the small township church this morning. My problem is that I'm happier in tin huts than I am in conference halls!



One thing that is extremely impressive about this congress is the organisation. Considering they have to feed 4,500 or so people, the meal queues are very short and everything is done extremely well. There will be inevitable difficulties in having that many people in a small place, but the conference organisers seem to be doing a great job of making sure it runs as smoothly as possible.



I'm looking forward to the Congress proper starting tomorrow. Ajith Fernando is giving the Bible reading; I very much appreciate him, his writing and his speaking.