



# Lubuto Library Partners

*Bringing knowledge and enlightenment to Africa's most vulnerable children and youth*

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April 11, 2019

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
4900 Connecticut Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20008

Dear St. Paul's community,

I'm sorry this is coming too late to be addressed to your wonderful former pastor Tom Omholt, whom we will greatly miss as well as I know you all do. From the moment he opened the doors to the church to us in 2004—informing us that your Social Concerns Committee (who responded with love and generosity when they invited me to meet with them) had just decided St. Paul's wanted to reach out to your African brothers and sisters—to these past weeks when we shipped off our last collection to be cataloged in the church basement and carted off the shelving from your walls, we have enjoyed and greatly appreciated the hospitality and goodwill of Pastor Omholt and so many others at St. Paul's who understood and so kindly supported our work.

As the founder of Lubuto Library Partners I have always been particularly grateful that in our early years we were invited to use the basement space free of charge – essentially important as we had no money when we got started. We simply would not have been able to move forward otherwise. As we were later able, when we had grants to support it, to make an offering to the church in exchange for housing the collection and occasional volunteer work there, we were very happy to be able to give back in that way.

During our nearly 15-year relationship with St. Paul's, over 250 Lubuto volunteers, including students from over 20 area schools, worked at least (from when we started counting!) 4,381 hours in St. Paul's basement, assembling, cataloging, labelling, packing up and shipping 5 complete, balanced and excellent library collections for the shelves of the libraries we were simultaneously building in Zambia. All of this work and activity was squeezed into a 3-hour Sunday afternoon time period on Sunday afternoons when volunteers could gather and no other group was using the space. We always did our best to use our St. Paul's space contribution as efficiently as possible – so that St. Paul's helped to create a great gift for children who, in the tens of thousands, use Lubuto libraries in Zambia. (Lubuto's most popular library gets an average of 2000 visits per week!)

I wanted to particularly thank our old friend Jay Guerber, who always had his eye (and heart) out for us, for example, safeguarding our valuable books when flooding imperiled them. If not a lifesaver, he was, at least, a precious book-saver! Over the years we enjoyed getting to know others in the St. Paul's community who were interested to know more about this important work that their church was playing such an important role in supporting.

When Vicar Meredith was organizing a group to travel to Zambia in July 2008, I was delighted to speak with the group in advance of their adventure, and we were very happy to be able to facilitate their connecting with our first library, in Lusaka, which was clearly a moving and enlightening experience for them. One of the group, Michael Repas, recounted their experience in his blog from Lusaka on July 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008:

*We arrived at a walled compound, which is the situation of the Fountain of Hope children's shelter as well as the Lubuto (which means "Light") Library Project. It is interesting to note that all of the books*



*within the library were donated by folks in the USA, and every single donation gets sent to St. Paul's for organization and subsequent shipping to Zambia: seeing the fruits of the labors of church members halfway across the globe was an enlightening experience as to how important a person's contribution can be, no matter how seemingly small or large....*

*We explained where we were coming from, and upon learning that our church is the source of their library books: this really got a response from the kids, both cheering and applause.*

We would like the St. Paul's community to understand the broader significance and impact of giving our unique organization a venue for creating excellent and balanced library collections for African youth in your basement space. Lubuto is engaged in true development, empowering Zambians with the ability to build library collections and offer life-changing services and programs. During the years when we did the collection building and cataloging at St. Paul's we were also training Zambians to take over that task directly, in Zambia. So, the sending off of this last collection meant that our volunteers no longer needed to do this work for them – from now on, Zambian staff and volunteers will be building and cataloging new collections themselves, in Zambia, in space donated by the University of Zambia Library! And library studies student interns will learn about collection development, children/youth literature, cataloging, classification and creating an automated catalog, and other essential library skills, which will benefit children throughout Zambia and even, ultimately, throughout the Southern Africa region.

For the role St. Paul's played in making this happen, we (at Lubuto) join with the kids in Vicar Meredith's group and respond to your generosity and help with cheers and applause! And, of course, gratitude. May you all have a blessed Holy Week and a joyful Easter!

With deep thanks,

Jane Kinney Meyers  
Founder and President  
Lubuto Library Partners

cc: Thomas Omholt  
Jay Guerber