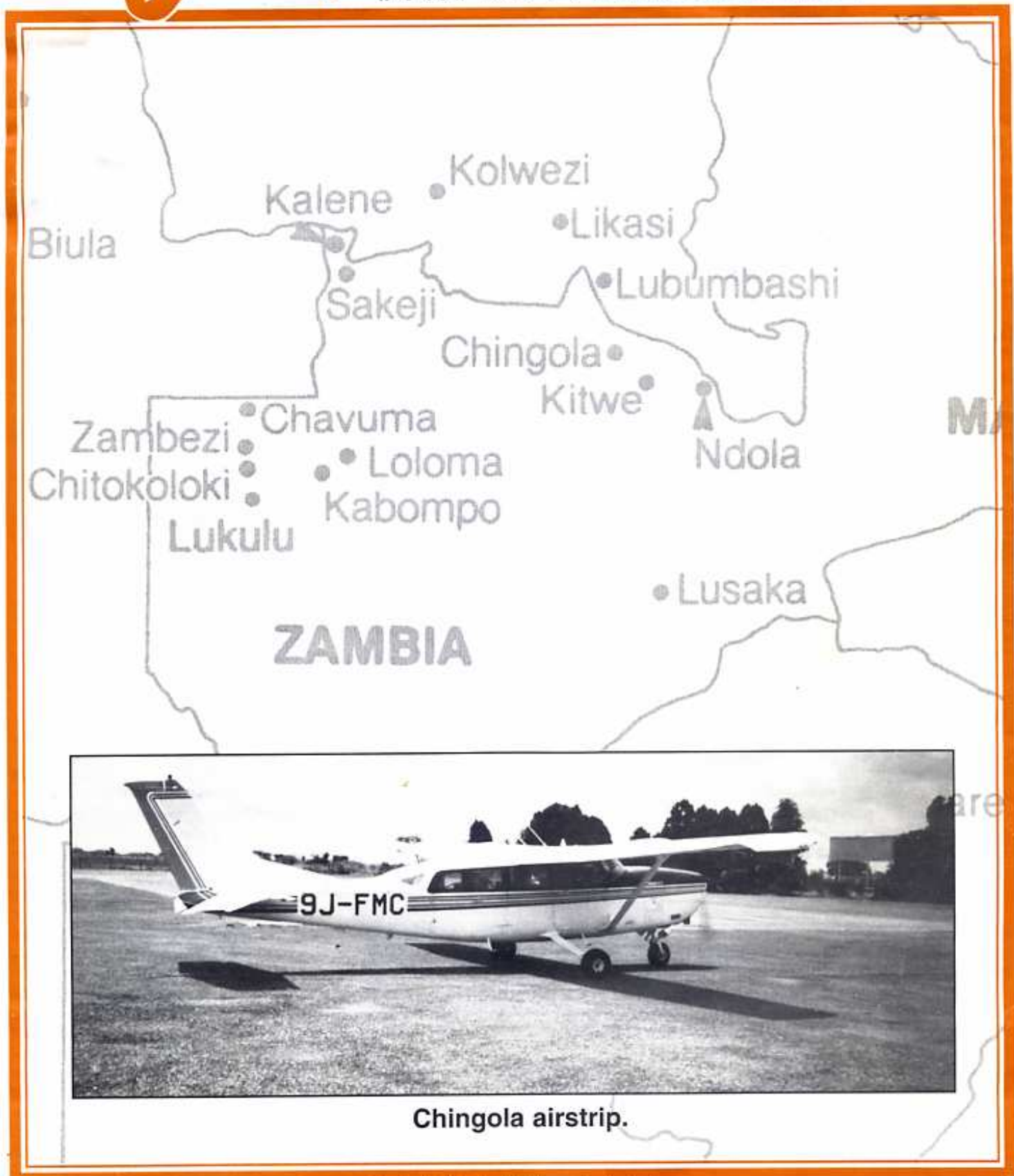


CHRISTIAN
Missions
IN MANY LANDS INC.



Chingola airstrip.

The CMML Flight Service of Zambia

— Bruce Poidevin

Bruce and Marilyn Poidevin were commended in 1980 for the work of the Lord in Zambia. Initially they served at Chitokoloki and then in 1990 they moved to Kalene where Bruce has been involved in building maintenance and hospital administration. In 1993 he was responsible for the start-up of the flight service described in this article.

Bruce and Marilyn have three boys – Stephen (14), John (12), and Andrew (11).

Even for the most enthusiastic traveler there are limits. The joys of traveling can become a scarce commodity after the eighth or ninth hour in a sun-baked vehicle vibrating over 300 miles of dirt roads! Perhaps, for variety, try a 400-mile trip with frequent use of second and third gear to negotiate the many potholes. It does wonders for your gear-changing ability but is not so good for your patience and temper, nor the end-state of your vehicle! Many times a necessary trip is postponed, sometimes indefinitely, as the energy and will to go on these roads yet again is just not there, to say nothing of running the gauntlet of road banditry!

As a mission group serving in Zambia, we have 15 centers of rural activity – nine for medical/school work, the rest for Bible teaching activities – as well as working in the two main industrial and commerce centers of the Copperbelt and Lusaka. Transport of personnel, children to and from school, supplies and equipment is a major problem and results in some missionaries spending the equivalent of over one full month of each year inside a vehicle on the roads of Zambia. Time is money, so the saying goes, and in terms of people committed to doing work of eternal value traveling time saved can mean more effective input into evangelism and Bible teaching. Hence it has been the concern of some for a number of years to try and reduce travel times and increase travel safety.

GETTING OFF THE GROUND!

One very efficient mode of transport in



Picking up passengers at Lusaka airport – Gordon Roberts with Bruce Poidevin.

terms of time management is by air, and it has been successfully used in many countries where work is being carried out in scattered rural or town communities. It is a more expensive option, but when personal time, road vehicle wear and tear (and outright loss in some cases) are costed in, the use of air transport is very viable. Some of our missionaries in northwest Zambia have actually been utilizing the air service provided by the AEF (Africa Evangelical Fellowship) mission group for a number of years and those in the northeast have been using the services of a

Zambian-based charitable association, Mission Medicare. In the late 1980's the question of establishing a flight service to specifically serve the Christian brethren mission work in Zambia and neighboring countries was postulated but the costs and effort to set it up seemed formidable. Then in 1992 Bruce Poidevin, a Canadian missionary based at Kalene Mission, expressed a personal concern and vision to see the concept put into action. Having spent 13 years working in the northwest province, he and his wife were acutely aware of the transport



Home from school – taken at Sakeji airstrip.



Going home for half

problems of serving rural mission communities. Substantially because of their exercise of faith, what was initially known as "Kalene CMML Flight Service" came into being with the purchase of a secondhand Cessna 207 turbo single-engined aircraft. The purpose is to provide high-quality flight and related support services for the Christian brethren (CMML) missionary work in Zambia.

As we write (1994), we are in our second year of operation. The first 12 months saw 350 hours of flying recorded against what we thought would have been an optimistic maximum of 250 hours. At current rates of usage, it looks likely that this second 12 months we will clock up over 500 hours. Some flights have even been turned down due to the plane being serviced or the pilot being unable to fit them into his schedule. All in all, we praise God that the Flight Service has already been able to greatly assist the Lord's servants in their travels throughout Zambia.

We are operating on the same basis as other Christian brethren missionaries, that of relying on the Lord's provision to fulfill the objectives of the work.

The present management of the Flight Service, on a daily basis, is in the hands of Bruce Poidevin who is also the only pilot. We have a Zambian air mechanic employed out of the income the plane generates. There is a committee of advisors who meet regularly with Bruce to give accountability in finances, make decisions regarding policies, be stewards of all assets, and together prayerfully seek the Lord's guidance for future development. The members consist of Dennis Brubacher (Canada), Barry Haigh, Clive Cornelius, and Mark Davies (UK), and Robert Young (USA).

GROUND SUPPORT!

The snowball effect is not a common sight in central African landscapes, but in work scenarios here it is! Likewise, merely having an aircraft does not constitute a



Patients being taken from Ka

Bruce with Miss Hilda Wadsworth at Kalene.



Transp



from Sakeji School.



Passengers must weigh in before the flight!



to Mukiingi Hospital for surgery.

Flight Service. Subsequently, out of necessity and quickly we have had to develop a number of support facilities. The first was that of a suitable airstrip at Kalene itself, which is virtually completed and in action. Secondly, a maintenance and care facility for the aircraft there. Then there was the question of what to do with passengers waiting in Lusaka for flights either way ... a place to stay overnight ... and a vehicle to get from the airport to the house and into the city to do business!

We are looking to the Lord to be able to construct a hangar, tool room, and fuel storage facility at Kalene, although a temporary store and fuel room is in place. We have been able to rent a house in Lusaka only 10 minutes' drive away from the International Airport. This not only assists the Flight Service but is a guest house facility available to all our missionaries to use in Lusaka, something we have been much in need of for years. We have a vehicle permanently

parked in the airport courtyard for our pilot and passengers to use as well as an office in the main terminal building to act as a waiting room. It hasn't been easy to see so much done so quickly and we are grateful to all who have assisted and seek your prayers for continued provision to complete these plans.

AND WHAT EXACTLY HAS THE AIRCRAFT BEEN DOING WITH ITS 750 HOURS FLOWN SO FAR?

The bulk of the hours flown have been in the transfer of missionaries and visitors from Lusaka International Airport to their respective destinations throughout Zambia. Schooling of missionaries' children is a major concern on the mission field and the single biggest reason for missionaries returning to home countries. Many of our flights have been to transport children to and from Sakeji and Chengelo schools within Zambia and meeting the external flights for Rift Valley Academy in Kenya. This means



supplies.

Prayer for journeying mercies before take-off.





Stephen, Andrew, Bruce, Marilyn, and John Poidevin outside their home at the Kalene Mission Station.



CMML Flight Service plane at Kabompo airstrip.



Bruce taking an AIDS worker to a seminar.

safer, swifter travel for them and more time spent together as families. Running nine medical mission facilities requires much coordination with the Ministry of Health as well as other official business such as work permits for missionaries, etc. All this has to be done in the capital, Lusaka, and frequently Bruce combines Lusaka flights with sorting out some of these things or others travel with him to deal with official matters. Some visitors who, with a very tight time schedule, have to see people in a number of scattered locations have been enabled to do

so by flying. Some patients have been transferred from one mission hospital to another for major surgery. There have been two medical emergency flights from rural areas to meet the Medical Jet Service at Lusaka enroute to South Africa. And so the list could go on.

SAFETY ... IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD

Things are operating very smoothly, although it is a heavy load of work on Bruce who pilots as well as administrates the whole service. However, we strongly request your prayer support, as there is

much that could go very wrong in flying. African storms are an attractive sight from the ground, with spectacular lightning displays and high winds, but not recommended at close quarters in the air! Thus, flying in the rainy season, from October to April, needs special care. The aircraft is equipped with a storm scope so as to enable the pilot to follow a clear air path, but your prayers for safety assist too. Then there are the mechanical safety factors. Despite thorough checks, things can happen, like a factory-sealed drum of fuel having water in it. One tank was fueled from it but in the pre-flight inspection some liters of water were found in one of the aircraft tanks and had to be drained out. Navigation is aided by a satellite positioning system and there is good communications instrumentation in the aircraft. However, we rely too upon the protecting hand of the Lord in and through all these things. Please pray much for the pilot, considering the long hours he puts in on some of the flights.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

If the origin of this ministry was by faith (and it certainly was!), then as we look forward it is in the same frame of mind. The maintenance facility is a long way from completion and we are still feeling our way as we try to set policies on charge rates for use of the aircraft, airport office/waiting room, guest house, and vehicle. One of the most pressing needs at present is for more personnel to be involved; primarily for a missionary to come and take on the maintenance/administration work at Kalene Hospital so that Bruce could be able to concentrate on the Flight Service. Then maybe another pilot (ideally one with air mechanic qualifications) and a coordinator to help in our own administrative work.

Looking ahead to 1995, we will be faced with a large expense of replacing the engine and propeller of the aircraft so as to keep in line with mandatory safety regulations. There is also the question of progressing by adding a twin-engine aircraft to the service, with greater range and weight carrying capacity, in order to more efficiently cover the regular trips. These include the school children within Zambia, to fly directly to Rift Valley Academy in Kenya, and to Johannesburg. Pray with us in all this that we may be able to hear clearly from the Lord as to His plans for this ministry. It would also be good to have a network of people in our home countries who have similar vision and are willing to have fellowship with us in all this; to advise, to pray, and to assist in whatever ways they are able. If you are such a one, then please contact us directly.

Above all else, pray that the Flight Service may be just that, a true service for the assembly workers in Zambia so that when all is said and done the Lord's work may prosper yet more.