

This year is disappearing FAST!

Thank you SO MUCH to everyone who responded to the request I made for donations towards gifts in my last letter. WOW!! I was overcome! Some of you even took the liberty of sending it on to a few more people and within a few days we had more than we needed. We even had additional contributions from George, the UK, Singapore and Canada! Again. WOW!!

People are hearing about what the Lord has called us to do and are so excited about it and recognize it as the same call God has put in their hearts and they want to do something, get involved, contribute. Make a difference. For the Gospel.

Really, thank you soooooooooooooo much. I really am encouraged. Thank you also those of you who said that if there was anything left of your contribution that I could keep it as part of my personal support, its making a real difference at this time of the year. We still have some extra money left over but what we would like to do is put it towards our next little money collection drive for school stationery for next year. Any objections? Someone has already started collections of half used / disused stationery in the offices of the corporate world! This is good stuff!! The difference this makes for kids who just don't have is something you and I would struggle to even imagine!

Anyway, back to the outing and gifts. In the end there were 76 of on a bus, Party Packs in hand, headed for Seaview Lion and Game Park. Talk about excitement and noise! The time at the park was great. Almost all of the kids with us had never seen a Giraffe, or a Zebra, or a Wildebeest, or a Bush Pig, or a Monkey, or a Crocodile, or a Tiger, or a Lion before! Granted some of you reading this in a far off land have never seen some of these either but they're not exactly found 20km from where you live either.



Everyone enjoyed the information given by our guide and having their questions answered. It was a bit unnerving though when the Lions began charging the smaller kids on the other side of the fence! One was even taking a good look at my little Ethan. Noooo. Made me feel a bit sick. That's when I decided to move on! It was a great time for everyone though. The time of their lives for most.



Back at the Centre things were very excitable – the pressies were coming! We shared a few words about the past year, the work of the Lord in our lives and how commitment and positive participation brings reward in life. We gave out presents – everyone got a present, sunglasses for the teenagers, radio pens for the juniors and toys for the little ones. But then it was time for the “awards”. And they really were awards. We called all nine up to the front and explained to everyone how these nine had excelled and shown themselves deserving of





something more. I then addressed each one of the nine individually, in view of all their peers, telling them why they were deserving (polite, hard working, always willing to contribute or assist, diligent, respectful, personal development, enthusiasm, teachability, etc) of what they were about to get.



We then presented them with their gift/award and what struck me most was to see that for some of them, this was the first time any of their efforts in their lives was acknowledged in this way! Of course they were happy with what they got and maybe shocked that we were actually interested enough in their lives that we were watching them and could see and acknowledge what their caregivers did not. But not the fact that they just got the first bicycle they have ever had

(a new one too!) or the coolest toy they've ever had or the most amazing school bag and stationery they've ever dreamt of, but that for the first time their contribution and their presence was considered important to other people. That was special!



Things have pretty much been winding down. Our programmes have come to an end for the year but the food ministry carries on right through the holidays. Praise the Lord for Hamilton, the man driving the bakkie for us. He really is taking a load off me. We're looking for someone (or two) who can take over him, for 6 – 12 months, from the end of January 2006. Do you know anyone?

November study month seems to have been a success generally. Most of the kids have their reports and they seem to think that they did better than they have in the past. I haven't been around long enough to tell if this is true, but if they are starting to get the message that they need to apply themselves better to their work, I'm happy. Two have failed so far though. The one doesn't seem to care and the other is really worried. We definitely have a lot more work to do next year!

Don and Judy's approaching return to the States (20 Dec) has required some time for sorting out the handing over of the administrative side of things but I have been able to do some planning for next year and recruiting of new members for our Management Team to fill the spaces left by Don and Judy. Some good news is that our NPO certification has been approved and we should be getting our certificate mid January 2006!

On the 4th of December we had our final Sunday School for the year but it was actually a farewell from the community for Don and Judy. Lots of singing and some adults from the area shared what the ministry has meant to their lives and their children's lives, and then some of the kids shared some too and thanked Don and Judy for all they had given them. Yes, it was an emotional time!



We then presented Don and Judy with a poem written by one of the teenagers (I'll attach a copy for you to read) and an oil painting of the Centre. The idea came to me months ago and I am so glad that it was just the right thing to give them. It's the kind of thing they like and they have told me again and again how special it has already

become to them. We're sure they'll hang it on a good wall back home as a constant reminder of what God has been able to do with their lives and of all the people He has reached through them.



Anyway, if you looking for a good oil painting, Vinnie's the guy. He paints really nice oils of the Sacramento Trail area and other scenes. Vincent Olivier – 041 581 2234.

Well, the end of the year is here and most of us are taking some time out. I want to plant a seed here though. As I mentioned in my last letter, I need to start raising my personal support for next year. I believe with all my heart that God has called me to do what I am doing and that He will sustain me in it through His children who are able to give. The ministry is able to pay me a portion of what I need to live and support my family etc, but it really is not enough and things are really starting to get tight for us.

I have been in some turmoil as to how to go about raising money for myself and how much to raise. Should I just keep quiet and see what happens or should I go gung ho kamakazi on everyone I know for all they've got? I really have spent time with the Lord on this issue and I believe that He has given me this strategy. I need to find the support of 50 people who can contribute R100 each a month for a year. This, I feel, is reasonable, is real, and is needed. Good news is I already have 12 so I only have to trust the Lord for 38 more!

I would like to ask everyone who receives this letter to prayerfully consider being part of that for me for next year. And perhaps also help me find the rest of those 38 people out there too. Share the ministry with the people you know, get the word around. This is not some free ride wish or selfish want that I have, but a genuine need. I work hard, what I do with my time costs me and it makes a real difference in the lives of many for whom God's heart is heavy. But I just can't sell what I do in this world because it belongs to another one.

Maybe this is a good time to ask me to take you off my mailing list!! But don't stress and fret. If you just can't or the answer is just, "No." that's OK. I am in no position to be offended, get upset or bitter. Just being able to share this all with you is great. And I really do understand. Sincerely.

Thank you though to those of you who have blessed me with money this past year. It really does make a lot possible. More than you and I will ever see in this world. And also thank you to those of you who have contributed in other ways to what we are doing. This is Combined Christian Ministries to the Poor, an opportunity to work together as Christians (without the many divisions between us) for the sake of the Gospel and in answer to God's call to us.

As some of you know, I have had a business in the past making and selling hammocks. I still have 15 left that I want to sell off to recover my cost on them. I'm looking for R300 each. They're big enough for two people, are super strong and durable and make great Christmas presents. I'm putting an add in the paper but would like to give you the chance to get one first if you want. There are only 15 and at that price I'm sure they will disappear fast.



OK, enough of that. I hope your time of "rest" ahead (if you're fortunate enough to be having it now) is a blessing to you, and that you won't forget what this Christmas thing is all about (that's actually quite easy to do) and that the new year is full of hope and reward for the effort you put into your life each day.

I want to leave you with what Jesus left us with. Matthew 28vs18–20:

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The Lord bless you and keep you.

I'll write again in January.

M a r k

