

25 February 2006

OK. Newsletter time. Hello again!

Since you heard from me last, there is so much that has happened and so much that hasn't happened.

I was supposed to write again regarding school supplies shortly after my last letter but it didn't happen (obviously!). Just been way too busy. Some people came forward out of their own though and we still had some money left from the donations some of you gave at the end of last year, so we went ahead and bought what was still needed by some of the teenagers for school. Just under R2 000. They got a lecture on how



the only free gift in this world is Salvation in Jesus Christ (and even that carried the biggest cost to God), but the rest we have to work for! They may not have had to work themselves for the books and stationary they were receiving, but someone had to. So they were definitely not 'free'! And I encouraged them to earn the books etc themselves by working harder than before at their schoolwork and that a 40 something percent

pass mark would probably not be good enough to enable them to really succeed and live the lives they dream of. I've followed this up over the past few weeks with goal-setting and practical things that we can do (like planning, equipping yourself, self discipline, creating a space to work, keeping your 'eye on the ball', commitment to hard work, etc) to reach our goals. I think some of them are starting to get it!

Sunday School is going well. General attendance is a bit down - averaging between 55 and 70. We are trying hard to get kids from the shacks down near the river to come but no one is ever ready on a Sunday morning! Most of the adults are still hung over from the night before! But persist we will. Hamilton (he drives our bakkie to collect food) has been so encouraging - going down there and encouraging the people to get their kids ready on a Sunday morning so he can come and pick them up and then drop them off again afterwards. He goes down there week after week after week. Sunday School itself really needs some fresh input though. We need a team from a church who can get involved for a few months. Any offers?

We have also been having some setbacks with the kids' and teen's youth groups. The leader of the kids' club has left all together to concentrate on earning an income and, due to work commitments of the teen's club leader, that meeting has been moved to a Saturday afternoon, which has caused some confusion and a drop in attendance. We're also looking for some 'excitable' younger people who would like to get involved

in these two areas evangelism and discipleship and help spread the load and also bring in some freshness! Again, any offers? Know anyone who knows someone who ?

The rest is running smoothly. We are grateful to have regained our collection twice a week from Walker Drive Pick & Pay after some problems over the holidays. The bulk of it is again feeding three projects out in the Greenbushes area and what's extra is really going a long way to help feed the many people who are coming to us these days out at KwaZakhele. We're also busy gearing up to begin approaching some new stores for their support.

I am excited to see the commitment of the volunteers we have from the community growing all the time and new volunteers coming into the group every week. Many of them are not very well educated but they are committed to working towards a better life. We held a workshop meeting with them last week to talk about the ministry and how we as CCMP would like to see it developing over the year and also to talk around some of the ideas from the volunteers themselves. It really was a fruitful time (a planned 2 hours that stretched into four!) and it is amazing how the Lord is calling these people together to fill a certain role in what is happening there. I have been talking to various people regarding training for these volunteers in areas of child care, evangelism,



home based care, etc and just wish we could get it all done by the end of today! This is the ". . . much that hasn't happened.", that I spoke of earlier. Like I've been telling the volunteers, if we are able to, with some hard work, accomplish by the end of the year most of what we are committing to, it will be a job well done. There is much to do but we need to build some more capacity first.

And all this time the interviews have continued thanks to these volunteers. 139 (interviews that is!) so far and 29 still waiting. Nondo and I have been assessing them, re-interviewing some that need special attention and establishing 'categories' and planning how we are going to address all of this! It's coming together slowly. The interviews and assessments are tough because after just 10 your brain has had enough! With the images of 10 different stories of hardship, genuine hardship, falling over each other in your thoughts, it's very difficult to approach another one objectively!

Our focus is really on the children but we have realized that the children from these homes will never progress much unless their home environment is stable, loving and supportive! So instead of pushing some of the things we want to do with the kids first, we are moving our attention to the adults a little for now. On Tuesday we

addressed the adults in our hall to inform them what we are there to do and what we are not there to do. Apparently some are expecting the fridge they listed in their interview as a need in their home to arrive any day now!?!? I'm glad the majority of them found that funny too! We want to begin holding short workshops for the adults on our 'food' days to address things like roles within a family, respect, discipline, general parenting skills, HIV/AIDS and other health and nutritional issues, substance abuse, the importance of love and good role models for their children, the importance of education, etc. But, we'll start with the Gospel! We've begun developing better relationships with the clinic and some of the churches in the area but we need to begin connecting more with the schools too. I've been encouraged by the eagerness of some professionals who would like to be a part of and contribute to these adult life skills workshops.

I was so moved the other day. We've had a fair amount of skirmishes and even some fully-fledged fights for the food over the past two months. But the other morning we had just finished some assessments and I heard the people singing softly outside. It was a song of thanks and about putting your trust in the Lord. I went out to clear my head and just be with them while they sang and while I was out there Hamilton arrived and reversed up the ally with a full load of food. It was a special moment, a simple lesson in faith and I had one of those 'revelation' moments when you realize something you already know, in a new or deeper way - God hears the prayers of these people. Every day now they sing while they wait and share with each other from the Word. Hardly anyone comes drunk anymore.



If you remember at the end of last year I shared with you my turmoil regarding raising personal support for myself (should I keep quiet or go crazy and squeeze everyone I know for all I can get) and how I felt the Lord has led me to a strategy to find 50 people who would be prepared to support me with R100 a month. I already had 12 of these supporters and I am blessed to say the Lord has added another 8 to that number this year! The Lord is faithful and I am trusting Him for the other 30 just as I did for the 20 He has already blessed me with. I have been really encouraged by a friend of mine in Canada who has been supporting me for more than a year now and has really been challenged himself by the ministry of CCMP. He was even considering moving back here to get involved and work. But in the end he set up a web based fundraising drive to raise support for missions around the world beginning with CCMP! Check it out if you can - apostlesfeet.org. "Acts 4:34-35. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the

apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." I have been so encouraged. I feel and see that the Lord is moving in the hearts of His people urging them to simply get on with the job he has given us to do.

This is Port Elizabeth, our town - for most of us anyway. We don't have to go to the ends of the earth to respond to what God calls us to do. This is a lesson that took me more than 10 years to learn. I have been so humbled and filled with amazement (awe) at what God is doing, but I could only experience that and be a part of it when I chose to act. John Michael Talbot is one of my favorite musicians and he has a song with these words that challenge me every time I hear them. I hope they challenge you too: - "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world, yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes. You are His body"



The Lord bless you and keep you all.

M a r k

PS: I finished this letter last Saturday but only got to add the pictures today and I am so excited by what I have seen over the last week that I need to tell you some more! It's Thursday 2nd March now, by the way.

Our gathering of people every morning now meet every day in the hall where they sing and worship and praise God for the way He is working in their lives and they share with each other the new commitments they are making to change their destructive ways of living and encourage each other to be strong because God has heard them and has come to their aid! Esther, a leader among the ladies of a nearby Seventh Day Adventist Church and one of our volunteers, shares and teachers from the word each morning and so many of these people are so happy that they now have a place where they can go and hear God's word and it doesn't matter how they are dressed! Its been amazing. I'm sorry I don't have a picture of this for you yet.

Time will tell who is serious and who is not but this harvest is ripe! I'm looking for a copy of the Jesus movie in Xhosa on VHS or DVD. Anybody?

Over the past week we have also seen attendance of ALL our kids' programmes surge up by nearly 50% compared with the attendance since the beginning of the year. These kids are all coming from the homes of the adults who have been coming to us for food every day. This is going to make us move back to some basics in these programmes and redo some of the stuff we have done in the past so I hope we won't lose some of the kids who've been there for a while.

Monday also saw my teen lifeskills class have a visitor from Japan! Sayaka Kono, 22 years old, is visiting SA as part of her university studies researching the teaching of English as a second language around the world! She shared with them about her life and her country, taught them to speak a few Japanese phrases and shared some Japanese treats (food) with them. Then she told them about her own experience learning English as a



second language and what it has enabled her to do in her life. It was GREAT stuff and the teens just drank in everything they could learn about another culture they have never been in contact with first hand before. I am so glad they got to hear how important it is to learn to communicate in English from someone other than myself, an English speaking umlungu (white man)! It was beginning to wear a bit thin!

OK. That's it!