

This letter is late for the month, sorry.

This past month has been a deeply moving one for me. I have begun to see some of the first fruits of what God has been stirring in my heart for more than two years now! As far as the organization of CCMP goes our main objectives are centred around impacting poor communities in the name of Jesus but on a more personal level I am driven to open doors and create opportunities for others like myself to stand in answer to God's call, to us all, to preach the Gospel and care for the poor.



Since sharing the ministry at Lighthouse Family Church in May, many from that congregation have responded in some way and the youth (Firehouse) began planning to come out to the Ubomi Obutsha Centre to run a holiday club during the mid year school holidays for the younger

children in the community. On Wednesday 28th June we held a training workshop in conjunction with Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) in cross cultural ministry and we took some of them for a short tour of some of the poor areas we work in and a visit to the Centre in Kwazakhele from where they would be running the club. The following week they went on their annual youth camp where they received more training and began putting the practical aspects of the Holiday Club together for the following week.



The club for the kids ran for three days and a fourth day was dedicated to teenagers

from the community. This is something of what I have held in my heart for so long and I was seeing it happen around me. Focus areas for the club were to build foundations for relationships, practically love the children and share the basics of the Gospel of Christ, love and acceptance.



There wasn't a day when the club leaders weren't overwhelmed by the reality of the desperately poor situation so many of the kids they were interacting with live in. The lights were going on! One of them put it something like this: To feel the presence of God is one thing, but to feel the heart of God reaching out, from inside of you, to the child in your lap is life changing and there just aren't words adequate enough to describe it – you have to live it.



The community children had a wonderful time just being held and loved (something most of them never experience), playing games, listening to stories, understanding the Gospel of Jesus and accepting Him as God's sent Saviour for a broken world, watching

dramas, having a good meal, receiving some "new" clothes for those who needed, having someone listen to them, writing to and getting letters from the leaders, etc, etc, etc

The impact of just those four days has been felt in the community and we have seen a little jump in attendance of new children at our regular youth programmes. It has been wonderful to see how these few days have built on what we are already doing within this community. Even the parents of these children are more eager to attend the adult programmes we hold for them and we have been receiving encouraging feedback, appreciation and thanks for all that we are doing for them. And everyone wants to know when Firehouse is coming back! - (already planned for September and December)



And because they can see such a difference in their children, many of the parents of the Firehouse teenagers are asking questions about what happened that week. Some of these parents now want to take a few days off work next time to contribute and maybe get involved in some community work! It has been amazing.

For less than 10 of the 25 teenagers involved, this was the first time they had ever been into a “non-white” area, never mind a desperately poor community, before. This was a big step for most of them. Some people I’ve shared this with have been a bit cynical about it but I think that unless you are a “white” South African you will not be able to understand the depth of the transformation that happened in many of their lives that week! The words of Jesus about camels walking through eyes of needles come to mind! (Matthew 19vs24) I’m still working it over!



There are many community projects and churches that we work with in desperately poor areas of our city where just a little contribution from people like these teenagers from Lighthouse Family Church can have such a huge impact. I’m looking for more churches who would like to do these kinds of things and help them to do just that.

What I saw and heard and felt so often during that time was the realisation that what little was given by one person can mean so much to another. It really is easy. I was regularly being asked by someone, often with tears in their eyes, “Mark, how do you come here and do this every day?” I never really had an answer for them, but having thought about it some my answer would be,

“How can I not?” And how do I do it every day? I don’t know. I do know I have never wept as much as I have over the past two years. I see and feel the longing, the hardship, the desperation, the hunger, the need all around all the time. These are my neighbours, my countrymen. These are the ones God has called us to care for! How can I not do this every day!?

Also, coming indirectly out of this holiday club have been a few donations of food and other articles. One in particular I feel reflects for me the spirit of what has been happening in the heart of this church. A lady phoned me to say that she had two full single beds (bedding and all) that





had been lying in her garage for a few years now and she just felt convicted that that really wasn't right! She wanted us to see that someone who actually needs them got them. Two of our teenagers immediately came to mind.

Andile (Mabhele) is 17 years old and comes from a family which has long been on our programme. Coming from a home where drunkenness and disorder were the norm, his mother has worked hard to turn things around and has volunteered at our Centre for a number of years. Andile always tries hard, and mostly succeeds, in whatever he does and he is determined to build a better life for himself.



Nokuthula (Nanazela) is 14 years old and was abandoned by her mother when she was 6. Her mother gave her a little money and told her to wait for her on a street corner. She never came back!



Nana was taken in by some family and has always been moved around between family members who themselves are not really able to support her. She has always felt somewhat like an impostor and still has to move occasionally. We help clothe her and see to her school needs from donations and give her some food to take home a few times a week. She never gave up hope that her mother would come back for her until we heard at the end of last

year that she had died in Johannesburg. Her mother had married and started another family there without her! Nana obviously has a lot to deal with and she gets some support through our ministry. She has always had to share a bed with her cousins (usually three in a single bed) and can't ever remember having one of her own. So the bed she received was HUGELY appreciated.



These are just two kids of many others, whose stories are similar and just as heartbreaking, who come to us for love and help and find it in Jesus name. Gifts like these two beds build practically on everything else we do to reinforce a deeper impact on the poor we can reach in the name of Jesus.

Coming back to how I do this every day:- It may sound contradictory but at the end of four days of giving everything he had within him to these poor children; playing with them, holding them, listening to their stories, trying to understand their situation, giving what he could and praying for them. After emptying him self each day and feeling broken and humbled at what he had seen and done and heard and experienced, one of the leaders on the holiday club said this to me, "Mark. I never knew it was this easy!"

Blessings
M a r k

ISAIAH 58:10 "and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday."