

31 August 2006

Hello everyone.

Man, have things been busy! And all when I'm trying to shift my focus to support and fundraising!

I'll try and keep this letter short but you never know!



We had some flooding a few weeks ago and although our Centre and the community around it weren't as badly affected as other communities in low lying areas, we still had 24 families whose homes were devastated and we were able to help them from the many donations we received. It was incredible how the donations were just right for what was needed – i.e.: enough large bags of rice for



large families and enough smaller ones for smaller families, etc. We were so blessed with donations of food, clothing, blankets, towels, etc from individuals and organised collections that we have been able to help a further 196 families in the other communities we work with.



Some of our supporters even went door to door in their neighbourhood to collect clothes, blankets, food, etc for us to distribute! We have filled and emptied our store four times over! All that was



given was truly helpful, but we came to a conclusion that to have a big washing machine and tumble dryer available to these people would be a very real practical help to them in these times. Well, maybe next time!

Two of our supporters from St Johns Methodist Church have started coming out to the Centre once a month to share a Bible study with the food parcel recipients who meet in the hall on Tuesday mornings. They are following a theme of relationships for now. It has been great to see people from the community really change this year and rather take the effort to come to the Centre and learn something than sit at home trying to find a way to numb their existence. Many of these people are finding a purpose for their lives and I see that as the first step towards a better future for themselves and their children.



One area of purpose for some of these people is the vegetable garden we are preparing to plant. The school behind our Centre, Mzomtsha Primary, has given us 1000m² along our dividing fence to cultivate and a married couple from Lighthouse Family Church who work with Farming God's Way (see website at: www.farming-gods-way.org) are facilitating this project. Farming God's Way is a method of farming developed in Zimbabwe that involves minimal soil disturbance, etc. - see the website.

What's really exciting though is that the people from the community who are involved are trained to apply the same principals of cultivating the land (effort, standards, measurements, timeframes, watering/feeding, coverings, etc) to their lives in general and that if they do, as they see the growth in the garden, they will also see growth in their lives. It really is so simple and so practical.

We are using the Wednesday Workshop to do this training and preparation with around 40 people participating. Two workshops have been held so far and there will be one more at the end of September when we will also be planting the first patch or "Demo Garden". In the meantime we are sourcing many of the things we need (fencing material, hoes, spray to kill off grass, compost, seed, cut foliage/grass for ground cover, etc). The produce from the garden will mostly be processed into a vegetable soup base and fed into our food distribution system to improve our capacity to nutritiously feed the hungry in poor communities while work is being done to better enable them and their children meet the needs in their own lives and move towards self sustaining futures. We hope to be able to partner with other schools in the area and establish three more similar gardens by the end of 2007.

Orange season is coming to an end soon. This season we have collected and distributed 14.4 tons of oranges and can possibly still get another 2.4 tons – there are only one or two more weeks left.



Probably the most significant event this past month has been a training workshop on Community Development facilitated by The Barnabas Trust (BT - a training and mentoring organization) held over four consecutive Mondays. Our goal with this workshop was to educate volunteers on aspects of healthy communities, team work, roles and responsibilities, volunteerism, etc. As part of our effort to network better with



other small groups in the area (i.e.: neighbours cooking meals for poor families in their street) and institutions like the schools, clinic, day-hospital and churches, we invited them to send representatives to participate to help us all "get on the same page" and work together more effectively. One discussion in particular on A Healthy Community: Problems, Causes and Solutions had me really excited. Many saw the problem with things they never before considered as a problem and with some very fruitful debating agreed on very real solutions. Most of the participants left with new understandings and some worthwhile

ideas to put into practice. A big, "Thank you!" to the BT trainers!



The Barnabas Trust will be returning in the future to do further training with the Ubomi Obutsha Centre volunteers and things look promising that the Centre will join the BT mentoring programme which lasts two years with a possible third year of follow-up and support.

Sadly one of our great new volunteers, Mama JJ died from a stroke three weeks ago. She's only been with us since April and we already miss her dearly.





We had an interesting visit from an ex PE pastor, currently working as a missionary in Japan, with four of his fellow pastors from the Reformed Church in Japan! They were very intrigued by the work of CCMP and the Ubomi Obutsha Ministry Centre. They have returned to Japan and will be looking for ways that they may be able to support us. Amazing to get a visit like that from a country where the Christian population is only 4% of the total! We hope to

hear from them soon.

I've also had some very encouraging meetings with churches who share similar visions and desires to reach out to the poor and we're working on ways to bring it all together and work together in doing what we feel God is calling us to.

Please note my new email address: mark@ccmp.org.za . We have been kindly donated some webspace but it will still take a month or two to get it looking right and working usefully so don't rush off to check it out just yet. The idea is to have a place on the web where those with access can see who we are and what we do and who's involved – which will probably mean your name will also be in there somewhere (if that's ok with you) not as a brag but as an encouragement to others. I'll still check my hotmail account for a few months though.

I need to list some needs here:

- Personal support: I currently have 36 of the 50 R100 monthly commitments I believe God has given me as a fair target for now. Maybe you would like to become a part of that. Thank you those of you who are supporting me this way.
- The items listed above for the vegetable garden.
- Your old, low resolution digital cameras – lying in that bottom drawer or cupboard that never gets used! (I know they're out there) – We need them so that we can get more pictures from the community projects as part of our feedback system and for the website, a few pictures often say so much more than many words.
- A decent trailer to help cart donations to where they're needed.
- Your prayers and for you to spread the word about what we do and to give people the chance to get involved.



If you can help with any of these things, let me know at mark@ccmp.org.za or 082 473 4389 or 041 360 2780. Thank you!

(I never do get to make these letters short and to the point, do I?)



What has really encouraged me this last month has been the willingness of people to give and to do. Not worrying about denominational differences but concerned about living out the love and grace God has given them. Through us God can reach all those who need Him in our city. But we must be prepared to get on with the job and not wait for some grand scheme that can solve everybody's problems to reveal itself. Well, there actually is already a grand scheme

and it has revealed itself but we get reluctant to participate because our place in that scheme is just working on the ground!

But the scheme will work if we are prepared to work on the ground. And the grand scheme will continue to work as long as we are willing to keep working on the ground.

Blessings

M a r k



Titus 3vs3-8: "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone."

