

19 November 2006

This year really is coming to an end fast. Isn't it amazing how every year seems to come to an end quicker than the one before? But 2006 really has been a whirlwind year in so many ways.

The Bixlers moved back home and I took over the reins driving and directing the ministry of CCMP.

We opened our doors to the community around our Centre in Kwazakhele a little wider and were inundated with families who are unable to meet their own needs and we have been able to provide some basic foods and other necessities (like clothing and blankets) to many of them. Our (and when I say "our" and "we", I am including all of you who contribute in some way) efforts have assisted many of these families to somewhat stabilise their situations to the point where they are able to begin living beyond a 'survivalist' mentality and begin considering their lives and the futures of their children in a broader context.

We have had an amazing response from people, both from within and from without the community, who have given of their time, their skills, their resources and their hearts to unselfishly work together instilling hope and direction in the lives of literally thousands of people and children in our city for whom life is a constant struggle to just survive.

We have begun new programmes and improved old ones by developing people from the community and giving them the opportunity to contribute constructively and combined resources, where we have been able, with their effort to see some encouraging results as people begin to see the fruits of their labour.

We have begun developing key relationships with other entities in the community (ie: the Day Hospital, local ward councillor, schools, etc.) to offer help where we can and to request help where we have the need.

As we move into the final stages of 2006, we are beginning to plan and prepare for 2007. As households stabilise further, we will be working towards programmes which confront many of the social issues (like HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, gainful employment, etc.) which keep the community bound in poverty.

Being more assured that what we are able to do for the youth of the community will not be lost or squandered because of neglectful or abusive circumstances in many homes, we will work hard to assist them to develop their characters, abilities and aptitude to cope and even excel within their formal schooling environments helping them build their inward lives that will enable them to succeed.

There is so much to be done if we want to see promise in the future of our country and our city and it can sometimes be incredibly frustrating when things do not simply fall into place or move as quickly as you might want, but I do believe that it is perseverance and persistence that will bring about the result we would all like to see.

But, coming back to the end of this year

The end of each year with the holidays and Christmas and the arrival of a new year is a great time for some of us but a sad time for others. Especially those who do not have the means to enjoy the season as some of us are able to. For some life remains the same burden, becoming painfully heavy at this time.

As we did last year, we are raising money which we will use to buy some inexpensive toys for the children who have shown a certain level of commitment to the programmes we offer. These gifts are for the most part the only toy, or personal possession, most of these children will receive this year. Last year we gave special awards to some of the teenagers, who showed high levels of

commitment to developing their own lives, respect to others and a good work ethic. This year we want to reward around six of them with an outing to see a movie in a cinema and meal at a restaurant to encourage them that their effort is not in vain but worth their while. Just think of what we do for our own kids – this will be a first for them all six of these teens!

We would also like to be able to give some of our fulltime volunteers financial gifts before Christmas. These are people from the community who themselves struggle to keep going or who are unable to find employment for various reasons, but rather than sit around doing nothing they come together at our Centre every day and become mothers to neglected children, growers of food for the hungry, teachers and moulders of vulnerable little characters and workers for the welfare of those who are in need. They do this without asking or expecting reward but we want to acknowledge them and bless them.

At the beginning of the new year we would again like to help as many scholars as we can with school equipment. Those who really need it. A big part of our focus next year will be on helping kids develop their ability to make the most of their education and providing, for those who sincerely need, the resources necessary to succeed.

If you would like to be a part of making these things happen, I invite you to contribute R50 or more (we'll obviously accept smaller amounts too!) that we can combine with other contributions and bless the people I've told you about here. You can deposit the money into our cheque account at:

First National Bank
Combined Christian Ministries to the Poor
Account number: 62000371170
Branch code: 261050

If you are giving towards the year-end gifts, reference your deposit "Year-end gift" and if you are giving towards school supplies for next year, please reference your deposit, "School supplies."

Sharing the ministry at a men's lunch recently I asked the question, "How does the Gospel of Jesus Christ and God's call to us to care for the poor apply to us here? Now?" They are things that are "lofty" to reflect on in church, but which require action each day we live. Here. Now. The suffering of others around us is often because those of us who are able to, do nothing about it!

LK 10:30-37 Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

There are many around us who live in poverty through no fault of their own, but "who fell into the hands of robbers" who stripped them, beat them and left them half dead. Instead of being the ones offering advice, walking by on the other side, criticising and thinking that it has nothing to do with us – let's rather act and "do likewise". Here! Now!

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Mark Lawler
(Ministry Director)

