

Dear family and friends

31 August 2008

Our Sunday worship adventures have changed yet again. From working with a small group (Tshitithuni village), we are now worshipping and working for the next three months with the larger church in the Tshirenzheni village. This group has consistently grown in number throughout the years. Originally they worshipping under a tree and today, thirty years later, they have just built and paid for a large brick building with a corrugated tin roof.



Tshirenzheni church

About the building. We found it fascinating watching it develop.

They were meeting in a small building made of concrete fencing. But instead of tearing it down, the builder simply began digging a deep ditch around it, poured concrete and began building the brick walls. A year passed by while accumulating funds. When the bricks were high enough they added the wooden tresses and tin roof. THEN the older building was dismantled (and to be passed on to a smaller church needing a building). Another year passed by while we all walked on cinder gravel (see picture above) before monies could be collected for the cement flooring. Then it was another wait before windows were added. Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed the fresh breezes, but now dread the coming summer heat – for there will not be any insulation (what is that?) between me and the tin roof, ever.



See small building inside

Now, about the Christians meeting there. A few own vehicles, but most everyone arrives "footing". There is one old couple whom we knew from early days (1980s). She still never misses a service, hobbling in carrying a big smile for everyone. I can remember her carrying two chairs on her head from her home to the worship place (a small mud brick building with a low entrance) just so the men could be comfortable (men sat on chairs, women & children on the dirt flooring – yes, and me too.)



Samson Nemaname

Today, there are three wonderful men who are the core of this church. Samson Nemaname was a young man when we first met him 30 years ago. He taught everyone around him that he could collar. Two thirds of this large congregation are the result of his quiet man of suffered from a brain his love for his wife She is gone now, but reach out to others, wherever he can. Samson's is Mike school teacher. He has



Edward Dongola

personal efforts. Edward Dongola is a wonderful spiritual strength. His wife tumor and the entire church witnessed while they battled to keep her alive. Edward continues to teaching and serving Another "son" of Mushoma who is a wonderful sense of He is always ready to



Mike Mushoma

humour and enjoys good conversation. translate for Dave. Philemon Matumba, the third "son" has been teaching the adult Bible class for a number of years – with only a few in attendance each Sunday. Yet he perseveres.

The women? Of all the lovely ladies, Violet Tshikhudo immediately comes to mind. Although her husband is not a Christian, not only is she where any teaching/learning opportunities are offered, she has been faithfully teaching the children every Sunday morning. Her steady efforts are already bearing fruit. Why? Because those children are now sitting in Dave's teen class and he is having a great time working with them. Truly this situation is a first for him in South Africa – all because of one woman quietly carrying the ball and never dropping it.



Violet Tshikhudo



Teen class

The classes? Just as he did at Tshithithuni, Dave offered to do the same with this group, at the request of Samson Nemaname. After several weeks' discussion (nothing is decided quickly) they asked him to fill their Sunday morning with Bible classes and preaching. Dave agreed, but whew! what a load. The children and teens arrive first at 9am for an hour and a half class. (Violet and I team teach the young children, ages 8-12.) The last 10 minutes are taken with the two classes coming together and working with rhythm memorization of the books of the Bible in the Venda language.

Then everyone (everyone!) assembles for the adult class for another hour and a half. Dave has picked up in the book of 1 Samuel where Philemon left off and is trying to increase their knowledge, not only of places, times, and events of that time period in Bible history, but also to demonstrate just how available applications can be made from these Old Testament events. I truly wish I could video one of these sessions for you. They eat with gusto, their attention is total, and Dave loves it. Worship usually includes a sermon that ties his two classes together from that day's material. The Lord's Supper is shared from a small shallow wooden box containing "American" small cups, a saucer for the bread, the young men arising to serve after a "mini-sermon" has been preached. The morning worship ends at 1pm. The group continues to sit and discuss what they had learned, but the Beckleys must leave, for Dave has another commitment and we still have to travel another hour to reach home. I drive – while Dave eats and grabs a nap. He then goes on to the large prison nearby, carrying the Lord's Supper emblems to the three churches within. By 5pm he is one tired preacher! We complete the day with a shared evening meal with the Chaffins (who have had a similar day) and afterwards we sing hymns until 8pm – because Dave STILL has to stay up and prepare for his Bible classes that he has the next morning.



Adult class

So, here I am preparing for another Lord's day of worship. My efforts to teach the children while encouraging Violet to additional efforts is going swimmingly. Team-teaching is a new concept over here, but then again, its not. When the translator feels confident to add his/her two cents worth to help the students have a better understanding, then we are very thankful they do so. Violet and I are enjoying the process and we both will be learning from each other.

My love to each one of you, Joanne/Mom/Granny