NYLSTROOM NEWS

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NAMIBIA

We had scheduled a trip to Namibia from January 9-31, but Darlington Ndlovu, who was supposed to accompany us, was delayed in Zimbabwe with family matters relating to the death of his sister. It was good that we waited for him because, as usual, he was a very big help to the work and to us personally, especially with the driving. We left for Namibia on 23 January and returned home on 14 February.

After 3 long days of travel, we arrived just a few minutes late for the ordinary Friday evening service of the Donkerhoek (Dark Corner) congregation which meets at Leon's house. We were heartily welcomed and I was asked to teach. Arrangements were made for separate classes on Saturday. On Saturday, Leon was scheduled to teach. Afterwards there was a long question-and-answer session over issues pertaining to the work and organization of the church, mainly handled by Darlington since he was once involved in the same unscriptural practices that they are trying to come out of. They also decided that they would meet with us each evening during the week, and some of the men, depending on work schedules, would come to studies during the day. So for the next two weeks, Linda and I went each morning to the congregation in the huge squatter camp at Okahandja Park (nicknamed "the hill"), and Darlington "hung out" at Leon's house, waiting for men to show up for studies. Then Linda and I would return for afternoon/evening studies. Leon is the oldest member of the congregation (about age 30), and the one who does most of the teaching/preaching. For the first few days, he was still at home recovering from a horrific car accident he had been involved in a month previously. This accident really helped Leon to refocus on what is important in this life; and, because he is such a leader, it seems to have recharged the whole congregation with renewed zeal and determination to do right.

The congregation at the hill is made up of an older man (Pius), his wife, two teen daughters, another younger man (Max), an average of 5-10 adult visitors, and children. The men work all night as security guards and would come straight from work to the studies. (I taught men and Linda taught women.) It is hard to judge the hearts of these people. We just did our best to plant the seed and to leave the increase in God's hands. The main problem is that it seems that 99.9% of the people of Okahandja Park live in fornication. Sadly, we found that Pius's baptized daughter, age 15, had committed fornication and had given birth to a son.

Picture: The men's class on "the hill." Max is to my right and Pius to his right. The meeting place is in the background.

The congregation at Donkerhoek is made up of 2 young married couples and about 15 young singles, some of whom had children out of wedlock before becoming Christians. They are generally well-educated and some have good jobs. All of them have been Christians for about five years or less. Because they are young in the faith and young in years, and because they have lacked good fundamental teaching, they have made some mistakes and have some serious challenges to overcome. However they have already made many things right. They also have a wonderful youthful enthusiasm and were constantly bringing visitors to classes and worship services. Unlike many young people, they were not arrogant, but open to correction. This group has a wonderful potential to be a great light in a Dark Corner if they remain open to the Word and continue to work on growing in the Lord. We feel the next few months are critical. For this reason, Darlington and I have determined that, God willing, we will spend the entire month of April with them. We rejoice that brother Terrell Bunting is making plans to visit them in May/June.

Picture: The congregation at Donkerhoek, meeting in what they call "the mansion." Note that the walls are an old Pepsi billboard.

Orange Free State, SOUTH AFRICA

On our way home, we took a detour to Wesselsbron and Kroonstad, specifically so that Darlington could encourage brethren he had introduced us to two years previously and at that time had helped teach the way of the Lord more perfectly. We found them holding to the truth and thankful for our visit. The brethren at Kroonstad were expressing disappointment that they would not be able to travel so far to Musina for lectures being held there over Easter weekend, so we suggested they have their own meeting. They got very excited about this and are making plans.

Venda, SOUTH AFRICA

We cut our visit to the Free State short so we could travel 200 miles in the opposite direction to the funeral of a beloved Venda sister, Glory Dongola, who died of a brain tumor. She was only in her mid-40s. We wanted to show our appreciation for her husband and family who have faithfully served the Lord for many years and extend our sympathy to them and the brethren. Despite not feeling too well, especially in my right leg, I drove up Friday afternoon, attended a "wake" service that evening, attended the 4 ½ hour funeral service the next morning (including a lot of standing and climbing a mountain to the cemetery), and drove home. On Sunday I felt worse and it seemed I had been bitten by something two places on my leg. On Tuesday, when more "bites" appeared, Linda finally "clicked" that I had shingles! The doctor says I must take things easy for the next few weeks, and for this reason it looks like I will have to cancel a planned trip to the Eastern Cape.

ZIMBABWE

At this moment, the crops in most places in Zimbabwe are looking better than they have for years. However, they do need one last rain or they will lose just about the whole crop. Please pray fervently for rain as the general economic future of Zimbabwe looks very bleak at the moment. Inflation is officially 26,000%, but in reality is twice that. People in towns with jobs are really suffering as it is impossible for salaries to keep pace and impossible for shopkeepers to buy stock. People all over Zimbabwe are being kept alive by relatives from outside the country sending, not just money, but food through the mail or by courier from S. Africa. The brethren in rural areas have been receiving drought relief, but if you would like to send a food parcel to brethren in town who have not been receiving help, please contact Paddy and Sandi Kendall-Ball who are organizing this. Their email address is sandipaddy@yahoo.com.

It now looks as though general elections are going to be held on March 29. Although the vast majority are praying for political change, severe intimidation will likely prevent that from happening. Whatever happens, we pray it will be peaceful and that we will again be able to return and work for the Lord in that country. We are missing the brethren there very much.

We are thankful for your many prayers, continued support and encouragement which helps to make our work both possible and enjoyable.

Your fellow-laborer in Christ, Les Maydell

P.S.

It is very important to us to specifically mention how much we appreciate those who make the work we do possible by their support. Several have made anonymous deposits into our account. We do not know who you are, but your help has enabled us to replace about half of our savings that we lost when I had the accident. We are saving because we know the time is coming when we will have to replace our 20-year-old camper.

Several others have sent money to finance the teaching trips that we make as well as drought relief, Bibles, song books and other benevolence. To them we are sending a detailed financial statement.

May God bless you all and bless us to use these generous gifts wisely.

Donkerhoek congregation

Men's class on "the hill"