

OUR WORK FOR THE LORD IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

February 2010

NAMIBIA

As mentioned, we took Norman Saayman with us on our recent 3-week trip to Namibia. Our first meeting was with the Donkerhoek brethren on their regularly-scheduled Friday evening song practice. Norman and I were invited to teach them a few new songs, and we had a great time singing and praying together. (The brethren lead beautiful prayers.) Afterwards they mentioned that for the next 3 weeks they had their own men scheduled to preach each Sunday, (whereas always in the past they had always invited us to preach). They said they would discuss among themselves and let us know about classes during the week. On Saturday we went to visit Leon, who is preaching at the congregation at Okahandja Park ("the hill"). He gave me a letter recently written and distributed to all the churches in Namibia by a talented speaker and intellectual young man who, during the past few months, had a lot of influence on the Donkerhoek congregation, although he was no longer worshipping with them by the time we arrived. Unfortunately, his basic thesis was that the Church of Christ was a denomination because it had made a pattern where there is no pattern. He especially downgraded the "five acts of worship." The Donkerhoek congregation had thus decided to leave a collection plate on the table after worship for any who felt they wanted to give, but not to make a collection during worship time because they no longer considered giving "an act of worship." Another issue was the "one cup" issue. They seemed to think we were trying to bind many cups, but we assured them that, although we did not think one cup was essential, we did not teach it was wrong to have one cup. They were still having the Lord's Supper each Sunday, but some at least were no longer sure it was necessary to do it every week or on Sundays only. This is not a new teaching in Namibia. I want to quote from a brother formerly associated with World Bible School in South Africa and Namibia. This quote is from a correspondence course he adapted from the One Nation Under God course, called Adventures in Eternal Life, and in the past it has been distributed to every congregation in Namibia. "There are no directions in the New Testament concerning how an assembly of disciples is to be conducted. Since there are no specific directions, God expects us to use our imagination in order to determine what to do. We are thus free to make decisions concerning what we want to do when we assemble."

On Sunday Norman attended at Donkerhoek, and Linda and I went to the Okahandja Park congregation where I was asked to speak. After worship, we went to pick up Norman and arrived just as the service closed. There seemed to be some hesitation, but they agreed to keep to the same schedule they had during our past visits: Bible studies Tuesday - Thursday evenings. On late Monday afternoon, when Linda had arranged to teach her daily children's class, I went with Linda and coincidentally was able to speak to one of the men. On his own, he began to bring up these troubling issues. This opened a door to further studies, leading to more men becoming involved as the week progressed. The men, to their credit, were very adamant that they were not going to be swayed by anything Norman or I said, but only by the word of God. Eventually we were asked to come an hour earlier each afternoon where a lot of discussion took place, each man taking part. The studies lasted 2 ½ hours. After the Tuesday Bible study, the brother whose turn it was to preach the following Sunday invited me to preach. I preached on "Is There a Pattern?" However, before I even got up to preach, one of the men stood up and made an announcement that the men had met the day before and had decided that they had made a mistake: the Lord wanted Christians to give each Sunday and thus it was an act of worship to Him. And so, much to our delighted surprise, they took up a collection. One of the men at the worship service, who had not come to the studies during the first week, was very upset because he thought Norman and I had pressured the men into doing this. He showed great courage and maturity by coming to the study the following Tuesday and questioning the other men in our presence as to what had happened. The men assured him that they had held a meeting on Saturday to make a decision, and that Norman and I did not even know about the meeting. After that he attended every study and seemed to be satisfied that Norman and I were not trying to destroy the congregation's autonomy, but were only presenting Scripture and encouraging them to study and decide based on what is written.

The more they studied, both with us and independently, the more the word of God drew them together in unity. After an initial shaky start, there seems to even be an even closer bond between us and them. Linda had four Bible classes plus several individual studies with the women, and they seemed to be greatly encouraged by these as well. Norman was invited to preach on our last Sunday there. Even though the congregation had this serious problem, we see much growth in character. The humble way they handled the truth when it was presented revealed great maturity. We were greatly impressed to see how much they care about each other and have rallied to help one another with various needs. It also seems that some of the brethren have overcome some serious sins that were hindering them in the past. Prayers are being answered, and we sincerely thank those of you who pray for us and for the brethren we work with.

Leon, who holds a secular job and who used to do most of the preaching at the Donkerhoek congregation, left there several months ago under unhappy circumstances and started to work with the congregation at the hill. The breach with the Donkerhoek brethren is in the process of being healed, and I believe it will be healed in time, but in the meantime Leon and his family have been a great help to those struggling brethren. Norman and I studied with various non-Christians at the hill each morning for 2 hours. Every single person that was taught has a major problem with habitual fornication, and none up to this point have been willing to change. One of the brothers had fallen away because he entered an adulterous relationship. Two women who were recently baptized when not in a relationship, made the decision to go back to fornication when the opportunity presented itself. We had an opportunity to speak to one of them, and tried to restore her, but she went to one of the men and complained about our teaching. She said she didn't understand why the "church of Christ" was so strict about marriage, she was going back to her old denomination where living with your boyfriend didn't matter. A few days later I had the opportunity to preach at the hill for the second time, and I preached on the purity of the church. I took a handful of dirt from the floor of the shack where they meet and dumped it into a glass of water and asked them who wanted to drink it. They understood, but they have a hard time doing what is right since they live in the "Corinth" of Windhoek.

Both we and the brethren feel that there should not be such a long time between visits as last time, and so we (including Norman, who was a great help) have scheduled a return visit for mid-May, Lord-willing. We are very grateful to the brethren who have sent money to help with the costs of this trip.

ZIMBABWE

Lord willing, we will be going up to Zimbabwe in about two weeks. We hear again that the rains have not been good in many areas, so we plan to bring back word about that, along with thank-you notes from the past 3-4 months. Your response to the appeal we made just before our trip to Namibia was truly phenomenal, enabling the maize meal to get to the brethren just a bit late. We are just overwhelmed by your goodness. The brethren are extremely grateful for your alleviation of their physical problems. We too, are so thankful for your help in sharing our emotional load. For the first time in some months, the money needed has arrived with time to spare. This eases our minds a lot, and we are sincerely thankful. Many have written to ask if there is still a need. Unfortunately we will have to say "yes" for the next several months.

DROUGHT RELIEF REPORT

January expenses:

Maize meal went up 12%, so that impacted the cost by approx. \$1300.

Maize meal: 9.66MT@\$425/MT + 20.44MT@\$426/MT = \$12,812.94

Petrol & Maintenance for two trucks: \$3235

Bank fees \$200.

Total: \$16,247.94

Money received for January, reported last time - \$5760

Money received for January since last report:

\$406 - A family, FL (Oct/Nov deposits); \$153 - M, FL (Oct-Dec deposits); \$400 - H family, TN; \$100 - H family, MS; \$500 - Riverview C of Christ, FL; \$1560 - D family, FL; \$102 - M, FL (Jan-Feb deposits); \$4000 - Antioch C of Christ, FL; \$50 - LG, Jan; \$100 - D, TN; \$50 - Mrs F, AL; \$300 - G family, TN; \$100 - M,

TX; \$100 - V family, IN; \$2000 - C of Christ, Westpoint, NY; \$500 - A, TN.

Total for January \$16,231.

Money received for February:

\$1000 - Westside C of Christ, Casey, IL; \$25 - G family, AL; \$2000 - Hercules Ave C of Christ, Clearwater, FL; \$200 - W family, LA; \$2000 - A family, IN; \$1000 - W family, TX; \$400 - N Little Rock C of Christ, AR; \$252 - Kemper Heights C of Christ, Hendersonville, TN; \$100 - Anon, MN; \$8732 - C of Christ, Blue Springs, MO; \$1000 - Adam's Place C of Christ, Murfreesboro, TN.

Total received for February: \$16,709

Money received for March so far:

\$1000 - Westside C of Christ, Casey, IL; \$100 - H family, MS; \$200 - Kemper Heights C of Christ, TN; \$200 - G family, TN; \$25 - B family, GA; \$50 - D.C., AL; \$100 - D family, TN; \$200 - Anon, AL.; \$609 - A family, FL (Dec-Feb deposits)

Total received for March so far: \$2,484.

We thank God for the way He is working through your prayers, emails, letters, and financial help to enable us to work for Him in Southern Africa.

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Donkerhoek congregation