

NYLSTROOM NEWS

November 25, 2008

SEED

We cannot give enough praise and glory to our great God for your overwhelming response. Even to those who gave "small" amounts - it made a big difference to someone. For example, if God sends the rains, \$25 will enable two farmers to feed their families for a year! After the first load was delivered to the brethren in Gwanda South and other areas south of Bulawayo, we were able to place a second order to help brethren far south at Beit Bridge and north of Bulawayo all the way to the Vic Falls area (Binga). This seed was delivered last weekend.

During the week we spent in Zimbabwe, they had rain just about every day, from the southern border all the way to Bulawayo and west to the Botswana border. We hear the rain extended up to Binga. Many have plowed and planted their seeds already. We have had many sincere expressions of thanks from the brethren for the seed -- not only for the seed itself, but for the opportunity to do their work. "We are some word above happy." "Our prayers have been answered." There was much difficulty in getting the seed paid for and delivered. We give grateful thanks to God, not only for you brethren, but also for those in the banking and business world who had a heart for the suffering of the people and went the second mile to make it possible.

TRIP TO ZIMBABWE

We had not been to Zimbabwe for exactly one year. We were impressed that the preachers had been working hard to build up the brethren. We found the brethren as strong in the faith as before, if not stronger.

About 100 people from 7 congregations gathered for a two-day meeting at Tongwe (Beit Bridge area). We were late getting started the first day because of car trouble (a mud-dauber had clogged the fuel filter) and a nightmare traffic jam at the border. So they made up for it a bit the second day by starting at 8 am! Linda and I came prepared with some new lessons we had written on marriage -- a subject they had requested. They really expressed appreciation for the lessons. One preacher told Linda that from past teaching she has done, he can see a big change in the lives of the women. Samson Musandiwa accompanied us. He had a stroke a few months ago and is slowly regaining his speech -- but he can still lead singing very well! The brethren had heard of his illness, and were so excited to see him. We think the trip was encouraging to both him and them -- as it was to us. From the congregations in this area we received several letters of thanks for the clothing which Brewer delivered on his way back to Bulawayo after Sibonakele's operation. This is the clothing many of you shipped when the US Post Office still allowed surface mail. We did not see any signs of malnourishment among these brethren. Although they have received some sporadic drought relief, they are mainly coping because they are near to the SA border and able to purchase maize by giving money to their headmen.

From Tongwe we moved about 200 kms northwards for a single evening at West Nicholson. Bigboy also brought brethren from Gwanda and Colleen Bawn. The brethren were so very happy to see us. Two of the men had received very severe beatings during the election violence. Several residents were herded into a vacant corned beef factory and systematically tortured and beaten with cudgels and tyre rubber. One man showed us his hospital report. It states that his injuries are severe and likely to result in permanent disability: renal failure. Several months later, he still has trouble sitting and urinating. I had specially prepared a lesson on spiritual comfort, using Psalm 23: 4, Romans 15:4-6, and the OT examples of Hoshea (no comfort) and Hezekiah (comfort). I concluded with the beautiful prophecy of Isaiah 40. The man with the worst injuries is one of the most kind-hearted people we have met. He gives almost his whole salary to helping others.

On Sunday afternoon I preached the same lesson at Kensington, near Bulawayo, a large congregation with about 100 in attendance. In the morning I preached on Personal Discipline at Queenspark, Bulawayo -- a congregation of about 50. Even though these brethren live in town, their extended family property is out of town, so they also received seed. Most of them are now either unemployed or earning so little they cannot survive, and so they and their extended family are also dependent on subsistence farming. For example, a teacher earns Z\$80 000 per month. A loaf of bread costs Z\$500 000. Many schools have closed their doors. But many teachers elected to remain at school until the end of the school year out of love for their students.

One of the men who was beaten is thanking Bigboy for bringing bread to the meeting at West Nicholson. "We have not seen bread for months." [see picture below]

BENEVOLENCE

As you know, for the past 2 years, Bigboy and I have been messengers for the 19 congregations in the Gwanda South province; and Foy Short, Gumpo and Bigboy have been messengers for about 55 congregations in other provinces, mainly to the south and east of Bulawayo. As you also know, in September the congregations in Gwanda South experienced difficulty due to the fact that locally produced maize is no longer available to the general public, and virtually no maize is available in the rural areas. Therefore all maize has to be imported, and this costs over twice what we were paying. This same problem happened to the other 55 churches. Another problem is that Foy is now well into his 80s, and is just no longer able to continue the excellent work he did for so many years. After much discussion with Foy, Bigboy and Gumpo, the most sensible and the most economical solution to these problems, at least in the short term, seems to be for me, together with Bigboy and Gumpo to become messengers for all 74 congregations and to ship maize meal from South Africa up to Gwanda and Bulawayo, where Bigboy and Gumpo are committed to working tirelessly to travel hundreds of miles down terrible dirt roads to deliver it all. (We are looking at about 28 tons per month -- and they each have a one-ton pickup truck.)

After speaking with Bigboy and Gumpo, we determined that at this time everyone is in need, even in city congregations. (Previously we were only sending help to some of the Christians (the neediest) in each congregation in Gwanda South, and none to brethren in cities.) The brethren who receive parcels are extremely grateful for them, and those who send to them need to keep doing so, but the brethren also need their staple food. Please understand -- 10 kg per person per month is not supplying all their nutritional needs. Those in the cities need supplementary food parcels and those in the rural areas need to supplement with roots, insects, wild fruit, and small gardens near rivers. We did not go into the rural areas, but Rob Buchanan and Bob Buchanan found some malnourished children of Christians just about everywhere they went, but particularly in the areas north of Bulawayo. They did not receive any specific names of people who had starved. However, it is a shame to us that any of God's children should even be malnourished. Please pray that those endeavoring to help our brethren have the ability to get the job done. Seriously, we need God's help in this matter as the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe worsens daily.

Finding out the government regulations and finding a reliable supplier of maize meal and transport company has been extremely stressful, difficult, and time-consuming. The first shipment, bought a month ago is still stuck at the border. However, once the wrinkles get ironed out, we should have a consistent availability at a consistent price.

A full report of exactly how much money was received and all costs involved is being sent in a separate email to all those who contributed in any way -- seeds or drought relief or generally. It is also being sent to all congregations/individuals who contribute to my monthly support. If you contributed and do not receive the report, please contact us. If you are interested in contributing towards drought relief and would like more information, please let me know. Presently, we are looking for about \$14 000 per month. We have received about \$7000 for January, but in order for the maize meal to arrive in time, we need to order and pay within the next 2 weeks.

With deep thanks to God, my brethren, and my far-above-rubies wife, Les Maydell.

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About 1.5 tons of seed

