

# OUR WORK FOR THE LORD IN S. AFRICA

November 2009

## TRANSPORTATION TROUBLES

As mentioned in my last report, I did a lot of research and decided to replace the 1800cc Mitsubishi engine in the camper with a 2000cc Toyota 3Y engine – a special import from Japan to third-world countries. (Due to strict pollution controls in Japan, engines have to be removed from cars when they have done 35,000 miles.) The 3Y engine parts are far more readily accessible all over southern Africa, and the 1800cc engine was underpowered, especially considering we also pull a heavily-loaded trailer. I was recommended to a mechanic in Pretoria with experience in doing this exact specialized modification. By the time I got the camper back, I was beginning to wonder if I couldn't have done a better job myself, and this was confirmed when the camper could not go over 50mph on the ride home – and the engine was running hot. I spent two days fixing all sorts of things that were wrong, but not solving the over-heating problem. Then I got two local mechanics to spend two days on it. Instead of leaving Monday afternoon as we had planned, we got up at 4:30 am on Tuesday morning, hoping to make it just in time for our first meeting. At first all went well as we had unusually cool temperatures (50's,F). However, as the day warmed, the engine ran hotter and hotter, eventually overheating on a mountain pass, where we had to stop for an hour to let it cool down. I bought and installed a radiator fan just before crossing into Zimbabwe, but we had to stop again, even though the road was flat. We eventually got to the meeting 5 hours late, but the brethren were waiting patiently. Linda and I discussed whether we should risk going further. We decided to travel from place to place at 5 am when the day was still cool and try to do the work we came to do. This worked very well, and the Lord blessed us with good meetings. However, I am still finding things wrong (today I found lumps of lead bigger than my thumbnail lodged in the thermostat), and I have still not got to the root of the problem.

## GOOD MEETINGS

In all the meetings, brethren came from surrounding congregations as well, walking up to 30 kms. Linda took the women and I took the men for about 7 hours of classes during the day. In the evenings the local preachers and I took turns preaching. I did not count the baptisms, but I am sure there were at least 20. This shows that the local brethren are working hard. Our lessons were based on the book of Mark, but I also covered the kingdom in prophecy, and how the kingdom and the church are the same. Subjects that naturally arose as we studied were evil spirits and ancestor worship, marriage, authority, and baptism of the Holy Spirit. Everywhere we went there was a terrible shortage of Bibles, so we printed a copy of the book of Mark plus the first two chapters of Acts for each person.

The first 2-day meeting was arranged by Elias at Mulgaladivha, about 25 miles from Beit Bridge. About 25 men and 75 women attended. We then went for a day to a new congregation at Safari, about 40 miles from Beit Bridge where about 20 men and 40 women attended. Samson Musandiwa accompanied us to these two places since he speaks the local language (Venda). He is recovering from a second stroke, and can speak slowly and distinctly with much effort. The brethren are patient because they love his teaching and song-leading.

Lining up for food at Mugaladivha (Photo 1).

The money for the food and our trip expenses come from four individuals who contribute towards this work regularly. We are very grateful. Without their help we could not do this work.

The West Nicholson brethren managed to obtain a very nice hall for the weekend meeting. They all worked very hard to make it a success. There were about 40 women and a dozen men. They live in a small town and most earn a meager living by selling things at flea market stalls. Yet they collect enough on Sundays to rent a hall to worship in and help one another over and above the drought relief. Sadly, West Nicholson is much like Corinth – and so the church faces the same kinds of problems. However, there are some very good brethren who are trying hard to turn things around.

Bigboy arranged for us to spend three full days at Silalatsani in Filabusi. He also carried the food for the meetings for the whole week in his pick-up so that the extra weight would not cause our camper to overheat. About 25 men and 75 women attended. We thought that three long days might be too much to keep hearing the same teachers, but my translator said, "It depends. If we are just listening to sermons, it's too long. But we like being able to discuss things in a class setting." The third evening, when Linda and I were totally exhausted, the preacher's wife came to Linda and requested more teaching. If I was tired, she would understand – but then she would call all the women for Linda to teach! So I taught once again while Linda cooked supper and made our special vegetable juice. When we left at dawn the next morning, the women ran in front of our car, waving branches and singing. These people, especially the women, were also extremely expressive in giving thanks for the seeds, the maize meal, and the teaching. Since they perceived that Linda has a bit of knowledge of Ndebele, they decided they could write letters of thanks to us, as well as making mats and baskets for Linda. "We love to lift up our hearts that burn with desire to thank you for the gifts of maize, seed, and the words given by you. We are thankful that the Lord has been with you."

We picked up Newart (who arranged the meetings in Mberengwe) and his wife (who translated for Linda), and proceeded down a terrible road to Chingezi, arriving at 9 am. The brethren were waiting for us. They had built a grass-topped roof to give shade to the teacher. The preacher said, "Good! You have arrived at the expected time. Let us begin right away without taking food." To be on time in Africa is amazing. To want to study before eating breakfast, after having walked such distances, is even more amazing! One of the men baptized that day had never before attended a meeting of the church of Christ. On this day he walked about 15 kms with his wife, a Christian of 25 years. It seems that her good life finally convinced him to obey the Lord. He was so excited, he was virtually jumping up and down. These brethren also expressed much thanksgiving for the seeds and maize meal. It was interesting to me that on this day, my 69th birthday, the brethren at Chingezi, who had never met me before, asked me if they could call me umdala – the old man. I told them that I am thankful that God has blessed me to be old, and I pray for even more years that I might continue to work with them.

United in Christ after 25 years (Photo 2).

The preacher and his wife at Chingezi (Photo 3).

The roof the men made to shade the teachers is in the background, and the wife is holding the gift she made in appreciation for maize meal and seeds (Photo 3).

The heat experienced during the rest of our trip suddenly changed over night, and all rejoiced as the first steady rain of the season began. We were absolutely amazed at the large crowd that arrived at Dolo (Newart's village), especially as many walked well over 20 kms, and the weather was so bad. Over 200 women and about 50 men attended – far too many to fit into the church's building. Since the weather prevented us from meeting outside, we had no combined services at all for those two days. Linda taught the women at the building and I taught the men in a large round hut at Newart's mother's house. Although we don't think the rain was enough to enable the brethren to plough, we are hoping that it will improve the grazing so that the donkeys and oxen will have strength to plough when it rains properly. (Last year some brethren's donkeys dropped dead as they tried to plough.) The cool weather enabled us to travel the long way home without experiencing any difficulties.

The men at Dolo (Photo 4).

## DROUGHT RELIEF

We sincerely thank every one of you who have contributed to the needs of the brethren. Again, the Lord working through His children supplied just enough money for each Christian to receive 10kg maize meal. They have all received their seeds and are praying for a good rainy season. Please pray for this as well. "The prayer of a righteous man avails much." Again, I want to stress how very grateful they and we are for the relief you are sending. We have received more slips and will send them out shortly. Unfortunately, the need is on-going, and we need to send money for maize meal by the 20th of November so it can reach the brethren by the first of December. So far we have received \$3250, leaving us with a need of \$11,250.

We are thankful to the Lord who gave us the opportunity to do this work and blessed us with a safe trip. We are thankful to our Zimbabwe brethren who gave us the opportunity to be with them and encouraged us by words and attendance. May the Lord also bless you with many opportunities to do good.

Your fellow-worker in Christ, Les Maydell

## DROUGHT REPORT

Money reported as received for October's drought relief: \$12,531. The shortfall of \$1440 was covered by: Hwy 367 Church of Christ, AR-\$1000; H family, MS-\$100; F family, FL-\$50; Ojai Church of Christ, CA-\$100; Kemper Heights Church of Christ, TN - \$200.

Money so far received for November: Riverview Church of Christ, FL - \$500; K family, FL - \$500; M family, MN - \$100; G family, MO - \$1000; Unknown - \$150; Adam's Place Church of Christ, Murfreesboro TN - \$1000. Total: \$3250. Shortfall: \$11,250.

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