

NYLSTROOM NEWS

October 2007

RETURN FROM USA

We had a wonderful trip to the USA! It was a blessing to spend time with each of our children and many brethren. We were glad to get home after a long journey and find all well. The country was in the grip of a severe water shortage, but after a week it began to rain. We have already received more rain in the last 2 weeks than in the whole of the last rainy season. Southern Zimbabwe has received good rain, but the central areas have not had any rain yet. They need our urgent prayers as they are terribly short, even of water to drink.

The oncologist postponed my appointment and it was only yesterday that I was able to get all the blood, x-ray and sonar results. We praise God for His abundant mercy, granting me a clean bill of health for the past four years.

LOSS OF A MOTHER IN ISRAEL

I was scheduled to speak at Maboloka on 30 September, but one of the men phoned and asked me to postpone my visit since an emergency situation arose at his work. Sadly, during the next week our beloved sister Martha, one of the strong pillars of that congregation, passed away unexpectedly due to cancer. Her cancer had returned after two years of remission. Knowing nothing further could be done, she hid her pain and carried on as normal until one day she could not stand the pain any longer. She collapsed and died the next day – an amazingly strong woman with immense spiritual reserves – a terrible loss to the congregation and to her family, especially to her husband and teen children. Linda and I traveled to Maboloka three times to help with the funeral and to try to comfort the family and congregation.

ZIMBABWE

When we heard that the government had lifted its restriction, and was allowing foreigners to again bring US\$300 each worth of food into the country, we determined to visit our brethren in towns who do not receive drought relief and who are unable to find food in the shops. Samson Musandiwa went across the border with us, just to get his food allotment through customs, and then took a taxi back home. This enabled us to take up \$900's worth (about a ton) of maize meal, rice and dried beans – all we could carry. This was we were able to do because we had received some money from individuals to be used at our discretion. We took food to five congregations in the Bulawayo area, plus the congregations at Colleen Bawn and West Nicholson. All were extremely appreciative. Although each person only received enough for a few days, it was a very big psychological boost to know that brethren truly love and care for them. It gave them courage to hold on to God's promise that He will provide.

Unfortunately our brethren in rural areas are also not faring well. Over two months ago, a brother got permission from the Grain Marketing Board to buy ten tons of maize for the 19 Zimbabwe congregations where he and I act as messengers. We paid for that grain, but to this day, the GMB has not received any grain from the government as promised. Now the government has promised to deliver maize directly to the rural areas. The grain will go first to schools and hospitals – and then to those whose names are on a waiting list. However, to get on the list, you have to pay. So this month's drought relief has gone in money form directly to brethren so they can put their names on that list. The Zimbabwe brethren are taking great pains to be honest and transparent to the supporting churches. Please pray that, one way or another, the brethren will receive food. Many of our brethren, in both towns and rural areas, are losing weight and are never able to eat until they are full. Some are ill due to lack of proper nutrition.

At a number of places where we dropped food, the brethren told us that they were making plans to walk scores of miles to a planned gospel meeting at Saphila, Bigboy's rural home. We were so encouraged by this incredible effort to do something positive in these difficult times. We cannot give enough praise to everyone helping to make the meeting possible. With just a few days to go before the meeting began, the brethren still did not know where they would get the food. Everyone just promised to bring bits and pieces of what he could spare. I kept back 80 pounds of the maize meal we took up to Zimbabwe and gave it to Bigboy so that everyone could eat at least one time. I managed to get through to Bigboy now on the phone and he told me that a record crowd of nearly 400 people attended. There was enough food and seven were baptized. What a wonderful effort!

While in Zimbabwe (the weekend of the 7th), I preached three times for two different congregations in Bulawayo. We would have liked to have stayed longer, but we are listening to our African brethren who are advising us to stay out of rural areas during this time of intense political campaigning, building up to elections early next year. Thus we are planning to make some trips to congregations in South Africa, Botswana and Namibia in the months ahead.

We praise God for the part we have in this work and for the many ways in which you help us.

Your fellow-servant in Christ, Les Maydell.

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