

NYLSTROOM NEWS – Special Request

October 31, 2008

THANKS FOR DROUGHT RELIEF

We are overwhelmingly thankful for your wonderful response to our request for help for the brethren in Gwanda South. That need has been met, with many others also volunteering to help. It is so awesome to see the love of God in the hearts of our brethren.

As mentioned last week, I have found a way to ship maize meal directly to Gwanda from South Africa. I had to nag and prod the supplier, but the first shipment of 5.25 tons should go out early next week. We are praying that all will go well with it crossing the border and getting to its destination. Government regulations change in the blink of an eye! If it works, that will be a big load off our shoulders. Maize meal is currently selling in Bulawayo for US\$750/ton. This shipment, including delivery to Gwanda was US\$452/ton.

NEED FOR SEED

As I mentioned in my last newsletter, I planned to see about our brethren's possible need for seed. Without seed, there will be no harvest, and no food for another year. This turned out to be a much greater job than we anticipated, needing much prayer, patience, and time. It was only this afternoon that the last piece of the puzzle fell into place and I was able to write this letter. Linda and I are not asking for this lightly. We prayed much about this. We spoke to others about whether or not it was a wise thing to do. We have spoken to or corresponded with brethren in Zimbabwe, American preachers who work in Zimbabwe, seed companies all over South Africa and Zimbabwe, several different UN officials, and various NGO (non-governmental-organization) officers, as well as doing a lot of research on-line. We wanted to be sure that 1) we do this in a wise, Scriptural way. 2) there is really a need, and no one else is going to duplicate this need. 3) we get the right variety of seed. 4) we get the seed for a reasonable price from a reputable source. Time is not on our side. According to FAO, (Food and Agricultural branch of the UN), seed must be out to the farmers by November 15th, especially because meteorologists predict average to above-average rainfall for the first part of the growing season and below-average rainfall for the second part of the growing season. We want to say that, to a person, the UN and NGO officials were efficient, knowledgeable, helpful, and encouraging. It is only due to their help that we were able to find seed at a reasonable price. (Seed is expensive.) They admitted that, due to governmental upheaval in Zimbabwe, they were unable to do their normal work of getting seed out to the farmers in time, and whatever we could do, even in a small way, was most important. According to newspaper reports, only 20-30% of farmers have seed at this time, compared to 80-90% who normally have seed by this time. There is only one place in Zimbabwe where seed is available, in Harare, but they are willing (for a fee) to deliver to Bulawayo and Gwanda. However, you have to pay in foreign currency, and that is why NO seed whatsoever is available in shops. There is no seed in South Africa of any variety used in Zimbabwe – plus stringent export/import fees and paperwork. There is seed in Botswana, but an import permit is difficult to get and the seed costs twice what it does in Harare. How tragic it would be to be hungry and watch the life-giving rains come, but have no seed to plant, no way to "labor, working with your hands what is good," no hope for harvest. Thinking of this, our hearts really went out to our brethren, and so we are motivated to put this need to you and ask for your help. We are asking for help for the 649 brethren in Gwanda South plus the 2040 brethren in the other provinces south of Bulawayo. (These are the congregations for whom Foy Short has been a messenger, but Linda and I have also worked extensively with these brethren in the past.) We reckon there are about 1600 homesteads among the brethren and so we are asking for 5kg of seed for each homestead. That is half of what the NGOs normally supply, but it is all I can personally manage to "rob Peter to pay Paul" by Monday, and it gives each family at least enough to plant one - two acres, something they can do by hand if they have had to sell their animals to get food.

If the brethren are going to get seed by November 15th, I will have to pay for the seed on Monday in order for it to be delivered to Bulawayo and Gwanda by the end of next week. That gives Bigboy and Gumpo one week to get the seed out to all the rural areas south of Bulawayo. Here are the estimated costs:

8000 kg (8 tonnes) seed: US\$19,500
Transport to Byo/Gwanda: 1,000
Transport to rural areas: 1,050
International wire fee: 45
TOTAL: US\$21,595 (\$13.50 per family)

Brethren, it is extremely extremely difficult me to ask for this much money. I have been assured by a UN official that the seed source is reliable and that if I transfer the money to their account, they do have stock and will deliver. I also realize that it may not rain! However, if you still want to help, we know the brethren will be so very grateful. If you wish to help, please let me know how much you intend to send so that I will know if I will be able to afford to buy that much seed on Monday. Even though I know I won't be able to have your money in our account by Monday, just knowing it is coming will enable me to go ahead and use other money, knowing it will be replaced.

(Please make checks out to J.L. Maydell and post to our daughter: Mrs. Melody Harbig, 9876 Morris Glen Way, Temple Terrace FL 33637.)

Due to the fact that we have been unable to go to Zimbabwe for nearly a year now, we have had difficulty getting communication going between congregations receiving help and congregations/individuals giving help. (The main batch of thank-you letters was lost in the mail.) We hope and pray this will not be the case in this instance. The brethren at Tongwe, near Beit Bridge, have invited us to come up there for a meeting as soon as it can be arranged. By the time we finish the meeting, Bigboy and Gumpo should be finished delivering the seed. Then we hope to personally collect from them letters from each congregation, signed by at least two men, expressing their thanks, giving their address in case you would like to contact them, and stating exactly how much seed was received. Things in Africa do not always go as we hope, but we are sincerely making every effort to do this properly.

Below is a list of all funds already received or promised that can be used to buy seed. If anyone has any concerns or further questions, please feel free to contact us.

Ch.of Christ, Riverview,FL - 1412
Ch.of Christ, Cahaba Hgts,B'hm,AL - 1088
Ch.ofChrist, Antioch, FL - 3000
(See *Note below) - 3102
Mrs D, TX - 30
Miss M, CA - 250
Families at Clearwater, FL - 420
Ch of Christ, Hungary - 250
T family - 500

M family - 100
Unknown, deposit - 600

K family, AL - 300
V family, TX - 25
Mrs K, MO - 100

TOTAL: \$ 11,177

Amount still needed: \$ 10,408

*NOTE: In my August newsletter I reported on the operation of Sibonakele Sibanda. I am happy to say that the operation has, up to this point in time, been completely successful! Sibonakele has made a remarkable recovery. She is now able to talk and is learning to walk. Another blessing is that an NGO in Zimbabwe donated towards some of the hospital costs. Not only that, but the assisting surgeon (cardiologist) and the anesthetist also decided not to charge! Some money was set aside for follow-up visits and on-going medication. But even after that, \$3102 was left-over, and the money is now able to be used for seeds.

Thank you brethren for working together with us in fellowship and prayer. We thank the Lord for helping us to this point, and we pray His blessings so that the brethren can have their needs met. May God bless us to do good, not only physically, but especially spiritually. Les Maydell

He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper; either this or that, or whether both alike will be good. – Ecc.11:4-6.