

Nylstroom News

October 2008

OUR TRIP TO THE USA

We had a wonderful trip. It was so good to spend most of our time with our children, grandchildren, and Linda's mother, but it was also good to get home and find all well. I just want to thank those who helped us financially so we could make the trip. We came back feeling very well physically. My broken wrist has just about recovered, though I still have to work at increasing mobility. I am again able to drive, and we hope to start on our travels within the next two weeks, although we are not yet sure where we will be going! Things are still uncertain in Zimbabwe. Some areas of Zimbabwe are fine, but since there is still concern among the brethren in the area where Bigboy and I are messengers concerning benevolence, we may go to Namibia or to another area of Zimbabwe, Lord willing.

BENEVOLENCE FOR THE SAINTS IN ZIMBABWE

The suffering of the people of Zimbabwe is escalating rapidly as the political crisis remains unresolved. Mugabe has not honored the agreement he signed in September, so there is no government of national unity and therefore almost no food in the shops, no medicines in the hospitals, no seed for planting, etc. Many American brethren have come up with various ways of getting benevolence to our brethren in Zimbabwe, and for all those efforts we gratefully praise God. All concerned are doing their best to neither duplicate benevolence nor leave anyone out. The food situation is extremely critical.

For the past 18 months, drought relief has been getting to the 19 congregations in SW Zimbabwe where Bigboy and I are messengers without a hitch. The brethren are extremely grateful for what they have received, especially since your benevolence has kept them from the severe hunger that so many in Zimbabwe are experiencing. However, the political impasse has caused Zimbabwean currency to devalue to the point that foreign currency is now becoming the medium of exchange in the major towns and cities. Because people have no choice but to pay what is asked, there is high inflation, even in foreign currency terms. Up to now, Bigboy has done an incredible job of sourcing and delivering maize meal to each congregation, although a few times he has had to deliver money instead. However, this last month two problems have arisen. First of all, it seems there is no maize meal whatsoever available in Gwanda or Bulawayo, so Bigboy gave the brethren cash (Zimbabwean currency because these people are in rural areas) to buy whatever they could. What the brethren normally did in the past was pay to put their names on a list so that when government maize is delivered to hospitals and prisons, they are able to purchase what is left. Most have done this again, but no one has much hope that any maize will actually arrive. Alternatively, if they hang on to their money and try to find food elsewhere, it becomes worthless in just a few days. (Zim dollar inflation is over a billion %.) It's a no-win situation. The second problem is that maize meal has tripled in price in US\$ terms in the last month, so even if the brethren are able to get maize, their money will not buy sufficient for them. This is what I learned from Bigboy within the first two days of arriving home last week.

A NEW PLAN

This all troubled us greatly the entire weekend, and we spent a lot of time praying about it. Finally Monday morning, when businesses opened, I was able to start searching for another plan. The good news is that, by God's grace, I found a way to buy maize in South Africa and have it delivered to Gwanda for about double what we were paying (instead of triple). Here is a proposed plan to pay for it: Almost every congregation and individual who sent benevolence, sent a lump sum to cover 10 months. The money from six of those months has been spent. So I hope these brethren will not mind if I take the money from the four remaining months and buy maize meal for two more months. This means that, before the end of December, we will need to start over from scratch with raising money for drought relief. It is impossible to say what things will cost at that time, but hopefully prices and transport costs in South Africa will remain stable. However, inflation in S.Africa is at 13% and analysts expect the dollar to weaken against the rand, so that needs to be taken into account. Therefore we are looking at something in the order of US\$3000 per month to feed 525 brethren in 19 congregations. Hopefully, the brethren will be able to start eating off the land by April, so we are looking at aid for 3 months, or a total of US\$9000, maybe a bit less, maybe a bit more. I realize that many in the US are going through a difficult time economically, and I hate to ask for so much money, but I can only say, "He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given." (Prov.19:17) Below is more information, including a list of the congregations and how much money I estimate will be needed for each one.

SEED

Yesterday and today the first rains of the season have begun here in Nylstroom. The rains are due in Zimbabwe at any moment. However, virtually NO ONE has seed to plant. No seed was gathered from last year since there was almost total crop failure. The foreign aid agencies whose work was stopped by Mugabe have been allowed to resume operations, but it will take them months to get into full swing again and distribute the seed, fertilizer, etc. that they normally do. By that time it likely will be too late to plant. So, my next project is to try to get seed to the brethren, for without seed there will definitely be no harvest! I have not been able to find the right seed here yet, but Bigboy's friend told him of some in Botswana and he will go fetch it, Lord willing. We have enough spare money in the work fund / teaching trip fund to pay for one ton, which is all that will fit in Bigboy's truck. It is not enough seed, but it's a good start. (We estimate seed is \$903/ton, petrol to Botswana and back plus customs duty is \$175, and petrol to deliver the seed to the congregations is \$192.)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Much prayer and effort is needed to relieve the situation with our brethren in Zimbabwe, and we ask you to join with us in this (and/or with others who are also helping).

Your fellow-servant of the Lord, Les Maydell

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT DROUGHT RELIEF:

If anyone has any questions, please feel free to email me.

The 19 churches some of you have been helping are located S of the "B" of Bulawayo, fanning out towards the Botswana border, towards the top of the "A" in Botswana and the "L" in Limpopo. It is generally a very dry part of Zimbabwe, but if rains are good, brethren can grow millet and drought-resistant maize.

Gwanda is a town located approximately at the bottom left corner of the "B" in Bulawayo, so the area we are talking about is known as "Gwanda South."

Here is a price comparison of what maize meal cost in the past and what it costs now.

Price in the past for mielie meal from Zimbabwe Grain Marketing Board
Approx. US\$3 for 10 kg (22 lbs), including delivery to the rural areas.

Total cost: US\$3 per person

Price in Zimbabwe now.
IF obtainable - very difficult to find.
At Mutare (Eastern Zimbabwe):
US\$8.33 for 10kg
At Gwanda (70 miles S of Byo.):
US\$10 for 10 kg, when last
available.
Delivery from Gwanda to rural
areas: \$420 for 525 people
Total cost: US\$10.80 / person

Price in SA plus transport to Zimbabwe
(assuming 1US\$ = R10)
\$3.34 for 10kg (price in SA)
\$1.18 for 10 kg (transport to
Gwanda from Johannesburg)
Delivery to rural areas: \$420
for 525 people
Total cost: US\$5.32 / person

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churches being assisted

List of Congregations needing relief.

NB: We have money for Nov. and Dec. We will need to send the amount for Jan. before the end of Dec.

Congregation	Those in need	Amount needed per month	Total needed (Jan, Feb, Mar)
1. Nhwali	46	\$276	\$828
2. Patana	36	\$216	\$648
3. Sibozza	29	\$174	\$522
4. Munyangane	17	\$102	\$306
5. M'halipe	30	\$180	\$540
6. Newline	14	\$ 84	\$252
7. Ngoma	42	\$252	\$756
8. Dendele	32	\$192	\$576
9. Whunga	28	\$168	\$504
10. Dombolidentje	16	\$ 96	\$288
11. Matshutshuta	20	\$120	\$360
12. Mashaba	25	\$150	\$450
13. Mapate	30	\$180	\$540
14. Gungwe	15	\$ 90	\$270
15. Selonga	40	\$240	\$720
16. Guyu	35	\$210	\$630
17. Phelele	15	\$ 90	\$270
18. Causeway	25	\$150	\$450
19. Sengezane	30	\$180	\$540

Those needing relief