

From our street to yours ... Glyn, Susan, Maeyken, Adriaena

April 2004

#2

On Easter...

As I write this we are in the middle of the Easter weekend. I remember conversations in Canada about worship at Easter and how much time you can expect people to spend at church. Last night, Jackson, our Batswana friend who was to guide us, was to meet us at home at 9pm. He arrived closer to 10. Worship was to start at 10 but we got there at 11 and things really got going at 11:30 pm. My guess was that there were about 130 people in a building about 20' by 30'. At about 1am, another 20 people arrived and all fit in. Shortly later, a few more came and there was room for them too. We were not worried about getting too cool.

The worship service had a couple of different elements, interspersed with lots of singing. One woman joined the church and got a new church uniform. It was prayed over and then she was led away to get changed. She returned with several other women, singing and was prayed over again. There was a season of preaching. No one spoke too long but there were seven preachers, again all interspersed with singing, even singing within a sermon. Even though it was late Friday night (really early Saturday morning) we were looking at the text of the last supper. Susan and I were both part of the preaching group. In many ways it is a wonderful way of preaching because you do not feel that you have to cover all the bases. Not only do you need to leave room for others to speak, but different people approach texts differently. The problem for us is that our Setswana is not good enough to understand what is being said and some of what was said was not in Setswana. The church included branches (congregations) in South Africa who speak Zulu, and some in Northern Botswana where Kalunga is used, though most of the service was in Setswana. One of the preachers kept talking about a cat and both of us were wondering how a cat fit into communion. So it is difficult for us to build on what else has been said (except for what each other say). So we speak as we are led or as we can. At two in the morning, I was not sure if it was being led or not.

After the season of preaching we had foot washing and communion. And take note, it was in that order. I remember having conversations about the order you should have the two. It was foot washing first. We were led to a bench in the centre of the congregation where a bishop washed our feet, served us bread and wine, then layed hands on us and prayed for us. This was done for everyone who desired, which we guess was a good majority of the worshippers. Meanwhile everyone else kept singing, surrounding those taking communion with strong affirmations of faith.

The Easter weekend for most African Independent Churches (that is who we are working with) is spent at their denominational headquarters. There are something like 70 different denominations and each has their own headquarters, often located at the founders church. Thus few are in Gaborone. We were at the headquarters for the African Holy Apostolic Church in Zion. The Easter weekend is not merely a time of worship and celebration, but is also the annual business meeting. They worship from 10pm or so at night through to dawn, and then during the day the decision makers have meetings. I sat there last night wondering how it would affect the business meetings of our denominations/conferences if we spent that much time in worship. And also how it would affect those meetings if the worship had happened all night, and we were trying to make decisions during the day. I had some strange images of Canadian delegates wandering about in a daze with name tags, and meal tags and their bags of goodies, and mixing that with the people in front of me singing, and moving, and dancing, and laying on of hands. Faith is nurtured and churches built in a variety of ways through God's Spirit.

Glyn

It worked!

We have been writing a letter periodically to let you know what has been happening. We tried something new last time. We got little feedback on the format. We can only assume that it worked. If you have problems with it, please let us know, and we will try to accommodate the various needs.

Please note our Botswana email address is _____. The address that ends in @golden.net will shortly not be used. Please check your address books. Thanks.

Congregational Partnerships

We along with Mennonite Church Canada Witness are seeking congregations who would like to partner with us in this ministry with African Initiated Congregations here in Botswana. If your congregation is interested please contact us or Ingrid Miller at the MC Canada offices.

Ministry Musings

I remember our first days here in Gaborone. My thoughts during those days were very much on the newness of everything. I reminded myself over and over again that soon everything that seemed so unfamiliar would feel like home. Now after eight months things are beginning to have more of a “home like” feel. Driving on the left side of the road is feeling much more natural although both of us are still known occasional to go to the “Canadian” side of the car only to find the steering wheel on the other side. We can now find our way around Gaborone although Glyn better than I. With my challenges with directions at the best of times I still find myself confused in areas that are unfamiliar. All of us are making friends outside of the Mennonite circles. We have been blessed with meeting several Christian families who have children our girls ages. It seems that God is meeting our needs for friendship here in Botswana.

We are also beginning to get a grasp both on the past and present ministry with African Indigenous Churches and our place in it. It feels good to go to Old Naladi (a heavily populated part of Gaborone where many AIC churches are located) and be greeted by people who are genuinely happy to have us come for a visit. On Saturday night of Easter we joined a congregation led by Bishop Mma Mosole. She is an older woman who has worked with the Mennonites for many years. After we joined the worship service she addressed the congregation. We knew she was talking about us. Just when we thought she was finished we would hear the words “Ba Mennonite” again. She has a deep respect for the Mennonites as do many other people from the Independent Churches with whom we work. We feel humbled by this for it is nothing that we ourselves have done. We are reaping the benefits of years of Mennonites working here in solidarity with these indigenous churches. Our task now is to continue to build on these relationships and build our own relationships with people.

Both of us are attending various Bible classes that are being led by Batswana. There is strong leadership thanks to the hard work of our predecessors. One of our tasks will be to continue to develop leaders. These classes are where some of the interesting (and difficult) theological questions come up. We are quickly learning some of the “hot” theological topics and working at ways to answer questions true to our own beliefs but in a way that is sensitive to their cultural or theological understandings.

Our task when we return from holidays will be to set some personal direction and goals for the coming year. There are many directions but only so much time and energy.

Susan

Lessons in Faithfilled Living

A friend of ours recently moved to Gaborone with her family from a quiet village. Unbeknownst to them they moved next door to a church that frequently has evening and all night services. This is not uncommon in Botswana. However this particular church chooses to amplify their services. This meant that night after night our friend and her family have endured many times when they are kept awake by singing and preaching. One night exasperated she opened her Bible hoping to calm her spirit with some scripture. It opened to the words of “whoever is not against us is for us.” (Mark 9:40) As a fellow believer it seemed God was telling her to relax and rejoice in the ministry of this church despite the cost to her family. What would you do if you were in her place?

In the Future

April 8-May 11 Fall School Break.

April 18-25 with Brian Dyck and Lynell Bergen in Umtata, South Africa. They are Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers and also work with African Independent Churches.

April 26-May 8 Vacation in South Africa, Durban, Drakensberg Mountains.



Clockwise: Maeyken, Nenia Lomborg, Adriaena, Hannah Taylor, Rebekah Taylor, Daniel Taylor, Thea Lomborg, Silje Lomborg.

From the girls:

School and friendship continues to consume most of the girls time. They have both had very good first terms at Thornhill. Through Thornhill we have also made friends with three families: the Taylors, Lomborgs and Härkonens. The pictures on these pages are the children from these three families.

From Maeyken:

For my camp trip with my class from school we went to Modumela Lodge. We were gone for four days. We went by train. We started at 10:00am and we got to Modumela lodge at 6:30pm. In Francistown we took a bus to the lodge. For the rest of the day we sang songs. We went for a game drive but didn't see much. The highlight of the trip was the absailing down from a 10m cliff. I was the first one to go down in my class. The best game we played was "Stalk the Lantern" where you had to stalk like a prey to try to get to the lantern in the grass.

It is boring right now because there is no school. My teacher Mrs French is not returning next term. We are sad because she was a good teacher. Next term we will have Mrs. Pringle. At school I am learning to play the treble recorder, I am in a choir and am part of an after school art class.

From Adriaena

At school the Standard Twos and younger did a play. It was about the planets. My class was the last class to perform in the play. We were earth and all of the other classes were planets. I was a passenger in a safari. We travelled on a earth train. We went to Africa and under seas. And to a cold place. My best friend was part of Africa and she was the zebra. She was the first zebra. My line was "Look at the lions and get a picture of the zebra." My mom laughed at how I said zed-bra not zebra. But my teacher said I had to say zed-bra.

PS From Susan Maeyken has picked up quite a definite South African accent. It is quite interesting to listen to her speak. She has repeatedly told me that I may as well get used to it 'cause this is the way it's going to be!

Other stuff

For several weeks our phone did not work and so emailing was difficult. However, we have appreciated your emails. And we have been surprised to get the occasional letter, card or package in the mail. We know you are busy with your own lives so it's wonderful to know that we haven't been forgotten.

Please note that our web site address has changed. Glyn will try to put new pictures on the site before we leave for South Africa



Clockwise: Anne Härkonen, Maeyken, Elina Härkonen, Adriaena.

Contact us

Mail us at:
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See article in “Share the Light”
Mennonite Church Eastern Canada’s
mission newsletter.
www.mcec.on.ca/missions
To get to our article:
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Please Pray for...

Language acquisition. We have had Setswana classes 3 times a week and are progressing. However we are a long way from being able to communicate effectively. We will be taking a break from Setswana while in South Africa. Please continue to pray for us as we learn Setswana.

Understanding of our ministry with the AIC people. We are meeting many new people, and are working hard to remember who they are, which church they are connected to, how to find their home, and their church. We are also trying to understand the Bible teaching programme and how we can assist them in carrying on this important ministry. An important part of our visit with Brian Dyck and Lynell Bergen in South Africa is to continue the discussion and processing what next steps could be valuable. Please pray for us as we make decisions as to how to most effectively use our time with the AICs.

Ministry Colleagues and Friendship. The Mennonite Ministries Botswana Team has shrunk dramatically since Christmas. We have gone from 12 adults to 6, and from 8 kids to 4. Some very good people have left. We are missing these families. We enjoyed their friendship but also found their breadth of knowledge and experience invaluable. Pray for them as they make their own transitions. We are also grateful for the new friendships that are emerging. Please continue to pray for us as we nurture our relationships with these friends, our Mennonite colleagues and those with whom we are here to minister to and with.

Travel, Work and Vacation. Travel is not as easy as it is at home, yet there are all sorts of wonderful places to go. We will be travelling for 2 days to get to Umtata in South Africa, and are looking forward to our time with Brian, Lynell and their two sons. Then we will be travelling north to Durban, and other sites in South Africa. Please pray for us as we drive, and as we vacation. Pray for safety and that we will have fun as a family, relaxing away from the concerns of school, work and language study.



Circle dancing during worship at an African Indigenous Church