

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

May 2004

#3

Life in Botswana

Many of you are curious as to what life is like here in Gaborone. Is it different from Ontario? Is it the same? The answer is both. Here are some stories that will give you an idea of the types of things we experience and encounter on a daily basis.

*Tuesday evening as I was chauffeuring students home from class I came upon a traffic circle. There in the middle of it was about a dozen cows contentedly chewing on the grass. I stopped in the middle of our conversation about Abraham, Sarah and Hagar to make a side comment about these cows. On the way back I passed through the same traffic circle. Two police officers had arrived and were chasing the cows out of the circle. It is actually illegal to have cows within the city limits but cows, donkeys, goats and sheep are common along all of the other roads.

*Driving is always a challenge. There are often huge potholes in the paved roads to manoeuvre, speed bumps to slow you down or slow moving cars with a square board hanging from the trunk with a big red L on it. (L for learners.) Traffic lights (known as robots here) are also a challenge. When lights turn to red several cars will still go through. Yesterday, I was driving with Nathan. He was the third car to go through a red light. He looked in the rear view mirror and said “always good to know you’re not the last one through!”

*Our household helper asked me for money for transport yesterday. People get paid at the end of the month and she’d run out this month. So I gave her 5 Pula (\$1.50 Cdn) when she left. This will cover her until she gets paid on Friday.

*Every Tuesday evening I go to Old Naladi to participate in one of our Bible Classes. At this time of year it is dusk as I drive in so it makes driving more of a challenge as I dodge deep ruts on the road, people walking and children playing on the road. Old Naladi is a part of Gaborone that is known for it’s population density and poverty. While the government has plans to improve the roads and services right now the roads are mostly gravel, in poor condition and many people live without electricity or water on their plot. Old Naladi always reminds me of the real needs here in Botswana.

*Motlalepula (the young woman from our village live in), pictured above, visited us last week with her 2 month old baby Larona. Motlalepula proudly called me the baby’s grandmother. Not a distinction in life that I’m ready for yet but here it is seen as an honour. And so I am honoured to be Larona’s grandmother!



Susan

Email change

Please note our Botswana email address is _____
The address that ends in @golden.net will no longer work. Please check your address books. Thanks.

Congregational Partnerships

We need partners to do what we have been sent here to do. Congregational Partners are congregations who will take an interest, pray and support the work that is happening here. Partners are also congregations that share with us needs so that we can pray for you. If you think that your congregation would be interested in being a partner with us in this ministry with African Initiated Churches in Botswana let us know and we will help make the connections, or contact Ingrid Miller at the Mennonite Church Canada offices.

Bible Classes and Sacrifice and the Future.

This week the Wednesday evening Bible class finished their study on the Passion of Jesus, his death, resurrection and ascension. The books we use have all been written by Mennonite workers over the years. This one was written by one of our Canadian predecessors, who has been in Canada for about 10 years now. The books are well laid out and basically self explanatory. They are designed to help people learn the basics including some background and pointing to the theological significance of a particular story. Each class also includes questions that are designed to create discussion. These courses are good adult Christian education materials. Nothing too deep but not just surface either. The educational approach is different from what is typical here. Schools are designed to communicate facts so teachers lecture. This creates a desire to get the answers right. Discussions are not part of the mind set, and after many discussions we get the question, "so what is the answer to write down?"

Last week the teacher of the class looked at me and said that this was simply wonderful. He said he had learned so much, especially about sacrifices. He said many of the Independent Churches have sacrifices of one sort or another, but that clearly they cannot offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. There was then a discussion about whether or not there could be sacrifices for healing.

Living cross culturally sometimes seems easy. One can convert traffic lights to robots, dollars to Pula, or driving on the right to driving on the left. But sacrifices?? We did not spend a lot of seminary time discussing sacrifices. Perhaps a lesson in systematic theology on atonement. One lesson! I never would have guessed that a few more weeks on the topic would have been helpful.

I had a great feeling as the class leader was telling me about how helpful the course had been. He was not thanking me for my input, because mine had been relatively minor and much of the sacrifice material had come up while I was in South Africa. He was thanking me for being a Mennonite. He was thanking me for the Bible study classes which have been set up over the years by the "BaMennonites". It was good to hear his words of encouragement and to know that while I was hearing them they were not primarily for me. It felt great to be part of this thing that is rooted in the churches here and that deals with topics that are culturally meaningful, even when I have to struggle to get on board.

Earlier last week Susan and I had been working through our priorities for the next months and the next years. What were realistic goals? What could we do, what should we do? We see one important area of our ministry to support those teaching the Bible classes. The people who are teaching are not trained teachers. Many are not pastors. The teaching method, particularly encouraging discussion often does not come naturally. It becomes too easy to look to an expert, or to look to an answer book for the authoritative answer. And yet to really understand what the Bible is saying to us today, we need an opportunity to struggle with the ideas and concepts, to struggle with other people and that means discussion and it also means answers that are not neatly laid out and may challenge preexisting beliefs. So we need to continue helping teachers be question askers, and discussion enablers rather than answer providers.

Glyn

In the Future

May 21, 22 Glyn is in Serowe for the ordination of a Bishop in the Spiritual Healing Church

May 23-25 Glyn in Francistown to connect with the Bible class.

From the girls:



Maeyken and Adriaena are both well into their second term at Thornhill. While they both enjoyed their term break they were happy to get back to school and friends. Or is that friends and school! Since we are now into fall/winter season it is not so easy to get out of bed. At 6:00 a.m. it is still dark and the house is cold.

Both of the girls have also started taking piano lessons. For Adriaena this is a brand new experience. We managed to get in with a well sought after teacher. All of this is made possible and easier by the AIMM (African Inter Mennonite Mission) piano. This piano was purchased by the AIMM Women's Auxiliary a number of years ago for the explicit purpose of allowing children of Mennonite workers access to piano lessons. It was moved to our house when the Teresa and Bryan Born and family returned to Canada in March. This piano is very much an answer to our prayers!

One of their highlights from our trip to South Africa was visiting an orphanage in Umtata. Here they were able to hold and play with some of the babies. In the short time we were there Maeyken also got very skilled in changing "nappies"!

Pictures:

Above: Adriaena and a baby at an orphanage in Umtata South Africa.

Right: In the Drakensberg Mountains in Lesotho (near the highest point in Africa south of Mount Kilimanjaro)

Next page: On a hill in the Drakensberg Mountains, South Africa



Contact us

Mail us at:
Susan Allison-Jones &
Glyn Jones
Box 33, Gaborone,
Botswana

Email us at:

See pictures at

Please Pray for...

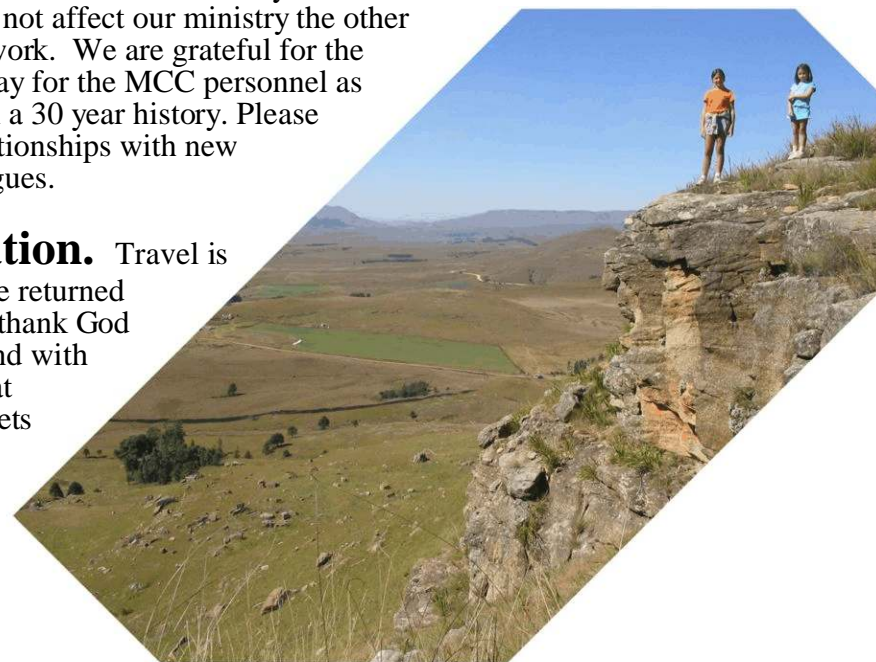
Language acquisition. Learning Setswana continues to be one of the most important things we are doing but also the most difficult. Please continue to pray for us as we learn Setswana and as we discern the best way for each of us to learn.

Organizational changes. We have been sent here by Mennonite church Canada through African Inter Mennonite Missions (AIMM). AIMM is in the midst of significant restructuring. There are two sets of meetings in June that are focussed on these changes. Please pray for those involved in these meetings that they will be creative in thinking through new ways for AIMM to fulfill God's call today.

AIC Bible teaching ministry. As outlined in Glyn's article the Bible Teaching ministry among African Initiated Churches (AIC) is very strong and dynamic. Please pray for the teachers. Please also pray for people as they adjust to a different presence of the Mennonites in the classes. (Due to our limited Setswana we cannot participate as fully in the classes as our predecessors could.) We are also in conversation with a pastor about beginning a class in a nearby town. Pray for us and for this pastor as we continue these conversations.

Ministry Colleagues and Friendship. The Mennonite Ministries Botswana Team has shrunk dramatically since Christmas. Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has announced that by next July they will no longer have a programme in Botswana. We will be the only Mennonites left working in Gaborone. While this should not affect our ministry the other Mennonites are a big part of our support network. We are grateful for the new friendships that are emerging. Please pray for the MCC personnel as they work at closing down a programme with a 30 year history. Please continue to pray for us as we nurture our relationships with new friends, and walk with our Mennonite colleagues.

Travel, Work and Vacation. Travel is neither as easy or safe as in Canada. We have returned from a wonderful couple of weeks away and thank God for safety. Glyn will be travelling this weekend with other people and by bus. We regularly drive at night (remember it is our winter now and it gets dark by 6pm) on roads with few or no street lights. Sometimes it is difficult to see pedestrians, other cars, or even the road. Pray for safety as we travel, and that we will be wise in choosing to travel and when to travel.



*We welcome
your
contributions
for our support
and invite you
to send these
to:*

Mennonite Church Canada WITNESS
600 Shaftesbury Blvd
Winnipeg MB
Canada R3P 0M4