

From our street to yours ...
Glyn, Susan, Maeyken, Adriaena
March 2007
#4.2



Kira with Glyn, Adriaena, Rebecca and Kasper in Durban at New Years

God works in miraculous ways.

Each student at the Canadian Mennonite University is required to complete a practicum course before they are able to graduate. I always knew that I wanted to fulfill this requirement by doing work abroad. Therefore, at the beginning of my third year in the international development studies program I began to plan my volunteer experience. By January 2006 I thought that I had found the perfect fit for my practical experience. I was off to Umtata, South Africa to work in a clinic, combining two of my interests health and international development. However, complications arose and through a difficult process decided that Umtata was not the place that I was supposed to be. I was sad that all the work that had been done by me and others at CMU would not bear any fruit, but without my knowledge God was planting seeds in other places.

This is how I ended up boarding a plane in Winnipeg and landing in Gaborone, Botswana last September. I spent six months there learning and working as an intern with Mennonite Church Canada and not once did I wish that things had turned out like I planned for originally. There were ups and downs throughout the months, but in the end I would not have changed a thing.

God continued to work in my life throughout those six months. Participating in the work of Mennonite Church Canada I knew that part of my internship would be church related. I have grown up in the church and have spent many years working in camping ministries in Manitoba, nevertheless I was very nervous when I arrived in Gabs to find out that I would be connected with a Brethren in Christ church. I felt as though I was as prepared and excited as I could be to work with a non-governmental organization, but I was not certain about committing myself to a church I did not know anything about. Reflecting back on my experiences I have come to realize that it was there with the Zimbabweans, Zambians and Batswana of the Brethren in Christ Church in Gabs that I felt a comfort that I did not feel in my other two placements and although you could sometimes hear me grumble about having to go out at night for Bible study or prayer, once I stepped into the church and greeted my sisters and brothers I was happy and at peace.

I have been back in Winnipeg for a few weeks now. I left behind the warm weather of Gabs and am looking out my window at a fresh snow fall. Botswana seems light ages away, but the memories I have remind me of the people that were integral to my being while in Botswana and then the great divide seems to shrink in size.

Kira Friesen



Greeting everyone at the conclusion of worship

Upcoming Events

Mar. 30 - April 1 Glyn visits Lerala to help the Bible class.

April 6-9 Paseka (Easter) We will worship with AICs all night for the weekend

April 10-24 Philip Cutmore - Glyn's nephew will visit after being in South Africa for an "Out of Town" course from CMU.

April 21 - May 18 Friends Shirley and David Froese visit.

May 15-28 Bluffton College student trip.

Blog

Since mid October we have been keeping a blog. We are aiming for weekly updates. There is a link to the blog from our website. Or follow: <http://thegatheringsite.ca/botswana/>



we arrived here. As people from Zambia and Zimbabwe emigrated south, the church too came south. But more than just an ethnic church following the migrations of it's people, the BIC church in Botswana is also an evangelical church, reaching out with the good news of the Gospel of Jesus. When we arrived the branch in Gaborone, the one that Kira was connected with, was a small group of about 30 at worship. Today it is a congregation of two to three times that number and is bursting out of the building it was using. They have just moved into a tent to give them the needed space. The Gaborone congregation worships in English with translation into Setswana, which makes the congregation an easy one for a short term worker like Kira to participate in. It also makes it a great place for us to worship.

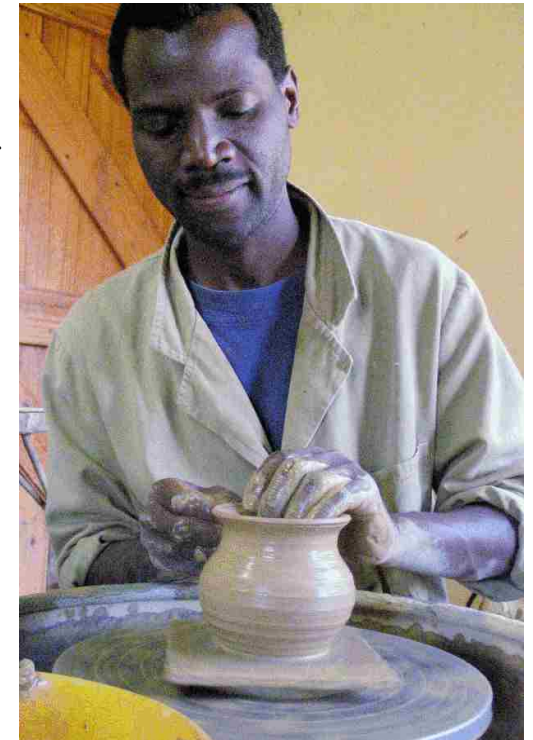
Since we have been here they have started a congregation in Gabane, a village just outside Gaborone. The person who has been appointed there as pastor is a friend from Zambia, and a potter. Maeyken says that he and his wife are the smiliest people in the world. Just really nice people to visit.

During MWC in Zimbabwe there were discussions between church leaders around the world. One outcome of those meetings was a call for greater connections between Mennonite mission work and local Mennonites. In our case we are not working with Mennonite churches, and not trying to start new churches. We are working with African Independent churches. But since MWC we have also been reaching out and developing friendships with the local Mennonite presence the BIC church. They have a missionary from Zimbabwe, and are not looking to us for that. Rather we are able to be mutually supportive. Kira's time with them has helped deepen that friendship. We worship with the BIC church a number of times a year, and have a variety of other contacts.

Glyn

The Brethren in Christ Church in Botswana

The Brethren in Christ (BIC) Church is part of the world wide family of Mennonite/Anabaptist churches. Some of you may know BIC churches in North America. They are a large denomination in Zimbabwe and Zambia. The Zimbabwean BIC church hosted the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) in 2003 just before



Birthday Parties and Getting Older

Adriaena loves her birthday. And when the calendar turns to March we are all bombarded with plans and dreams to make this one the best one ever.

This year she got to celebrate three times. Disappointed that Kira was leaving before her birthday we celebrated both Kira's March birthday and Adriaena's before Kira left. On Friday March 16 she had 9 friends over for the afternoon. (9 plus 1 equals 10 - the number that she has reached!) They had a great afternoon of swimming, eating, swimming, playing games, swimming, playing games and swimming some more. It's been so hot here the pool was a welcome part of the party. Then the actual day of her birthday her friend Neo came over after school and joined us for a birthday supper (as well as two young adult friends Emma and Michelle) and slept over. (A sleep over on a school night is very special!) So now Adriaena has officially entered the double digits and we all look forward to seeing what this next decade holds for her!!

Maeyken had a very intense start at Westwood School with lots of homework and catching up to do with the other students. After the mid term break things have been a lot easier and she has found her niche. She is thoroughly enjoying the social aspect of school and continues to baffle her mom with her love of Math and Science!!

As for Glyn and I perhaps the white of my hair in the picture says it all! (I really don't think it's THAT white!) I was happy to get Glyn back after his time in England. We did quite well without him but there were some things that just had to wait until he got back. (It took him the better part of a day to get the computer back to order.) Those of you who know Glyn can picture the myriad of wires and cords that are connected to this thing and that thing under our computer table. When something went wrong the girls and I did what might be considered by some to be a "quick fix" but functional! Maeyken declared half way through that Dad would never be allowed to be away for more than two weeks 'cause that's as long as our computer skills can handle it.) I being the non techy person still thinks that he just makes everything too complicated. So we're all back in our normal and welcome places of expertise within our family system!

Susan



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Our web site:

which includes pictures and
previous newsletters:

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Witness

*We welcome
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Please Pray for...

... Mission Worker for Francistown. Mennonite Mission Network has identified someone who has been approved for ministry, who fits the needs for Francistown and who feels an emerging call to join us here in Botswana. We are very excited about this possibility. The Ministry Support Team (MST) is now working to get together financial support. (Network personnel must have their cost of being on the field in pledges or cash before they come. This can be a challenge for first time workers who do not yet have a support base or stories from the field to garner support.) Please pray that American churches and individuals will come forward to support this person. If you belong to a Mennonite Church in the US and wish to support the work in this way please contact Barbara Eichorn (secretary to Africa Network Administrator Steve Wiebe Johnson).

... Bluffton University learning trip. Bluffton, a Mennonite Church USA related university is sending 11 students here in May. They will be living in the village of Pitseng for much of that time. Pray that their time here will be meaningful, and they can keep their eyes open to learn much. We will be connecting with them at various times, and are currently involved in planning their time.

... Emerging classes. We have several locations interested in starting classes. Glyn's trip to Lerala will encourage an existing group and invite others from AIC churches to attend. Please pray for us and for the Batswana leaders who want to begin classes in their villages and churches.

Give Thanks for...

... Christina Søvndal's work permit to teach in Botswana. Westwood International School reapplied for her permit, which she now has for two years. This is a huge relief for them as a family. Also give thanks for their ongoing adjustment to being in Botswana. Continue to pray especially for Annika who is shy when it comes to speaking English and for Rebekka who continues to find somethings about life here in Botswana and at school more difficult.

.... Glyn's trip to the UK. It was a great time of learning and also a great personal and spiritual journey. He took lots of time in the library (Imagine studying with great materials, but without a paper of exam at the end). He was also able to visit some friends he has not seen since 1987. He has already seen the benefits of some of the reading in a greater understanding of the culture and churches here.