

From our street to yours ...
Glyn, Susan, Maeyken, Adriaena
March 2008 #5.1



Our house in Gaborone

house outside of a small Ontario town. It is the house I came home to from the hospital as an infant. My parents still live there and for me going to visit them has always meant going home to all the memories and sounds of that place.

Now all of us are a bit schizophrenic when it comes to the question of where is home. Our home is in Botswana. Our ministry is here. Our hearts are here. We enjoy the challenge of living in a country that is so different from the one that we hold our passports in. We have come to love the people in a way that is from God and of God. We have our frustrations and often wish for what might seem the more sensible way of our home country. Every time we venture out of our yard something happens that reminds us that we are not on familiar ground. But the longer that we are here the more the unfamiliar becomes familiar.

But then the true test comes. We return to the country of our passports, our first home, and discover that the familiar has become unfamiliar. Staying on the “right” side of the road is a constant challenge. Driving around traffic circles that are too small is frustrating after driving traffic circles in Botswana. Strange things surprise us. Having visa purchase statements handed to us almost instantly after the card has been swiped is a shock. We miss the opportunity to carry on a conversation as we patiently wait for the paper to appear. Pumping our own gas is an experience that the girls find novel. Passing through borders without having to get out of the car and fill in all of the necessary paperwork is a pleasant treat. But the most laughable one has to do with currency. Maeyken and I were paying for a treat at a local coffee shop. She had the money and needed to find 30 cents. Frustrated she put 20 cents on the counter and then handed the wallet to me with laughter in her voice said “I don’t come from here. I don’t know this money.” I proceeded to use up my

Home is where the heart is!

In 2003 when we moved from Canada to Botswana it took a while for our hearts to join us. In the midst of moving countries, changing ministry focus and leaving friends and family far far away we found ourselves in a sea of first time experiences. Upon arrival in Botswana we encountered a new environment that eventually would become our home. That day came at different speeds and in different ways for all of us. But strangely enough it has been when we have lived in Canada during North American Assignments that we have all truly understood where home is.

I have always considered myself to be a bit schizophrenic when it comes to “home,” Glyn and I have made several places home in our married life together. And yet much to Glyn’s dismay I would claim to have two homes. The place where we lived was definitely home. And yet so was a farm



Susan’s parents house in Ontario

smaller coins. Forgetting where I was I put out 2 pennies thinking I had put out two 5 cent coins. (In Botswana the lowest coin is a 5 thebe coin and all amounts are rounded to the nearest 5.) The waitress just looked at the coins and in a monotone voice said “and that would be two cents”. The problem is that I look and act Canadian. And I am but I’m not!

Wadsworth First Mennonite Church Sunday School class



North American Assignment

Our many thanks to all of you who helped to make our North American Assignment time fun and meaningful.
... to our partnering churches in Ontario who put on such an amazing night celebrating the culture of Botswana and our ministry here.
... to all those congregations we had the opportunity of worshipping with and sharing some of our ministry stories and thoughts with. Thanks also for the amazing pot lucks that many of you had!
... for the pastors of our partnering congregations who took time out of their busy schedules to get to know us better and help us understand your ministries better.
...to our many friends and relatives who shared your homes and your space with us and who fellowshiped with us over good food in your homes, the local café or Tim Hortons!



Amy Susanna and Susan with the Toisane family in Lotlhakane.

The Botswana culture has helped us to grapple with this identity crisis. There are two questions that are asked to determine someone’s identity. *O tswa kae* (Where do you come from) and *O nna kae* (Where do you stay - literally where do you live) The first is identity. It is the place of your birth and the past generations of your family. It is the place where you will return when you retire. The second is the place of work and where you make your home in the here and now. Both are homes. Both capture your heart but in very different ways.

Home is where your heart is. But home is bigger than that. Home is where your ministry is. Home is where you are living. But home is also where you come from. Where your roots are. The place that has formed you to be who you are. So we will continue to live with two homes and enjoy the privilege of knowing where we come from and where we stay!



Ministry in Botswana

Time did not stand still while we were away nor has it stood still since we got back. Here’s some of the things that we rejoice in:

Amy Susanna Good from Wilmot Mennonite Church arrived in Botswana on Feb. 2nd for six months. Susanna has been living in Lotlhakane (same village that we lived in) for the last month learning lots about the culture and herself. Soon she will return to Gaborone for other ministry opportunities.



Susan and the Kanye class members

The **Kanye Bible class** is going strong. We had the opportunity to visit a class. How exciting to hear students commenting on how much this Bible study has changed their lives. A pastor talked about how his sermons are better now. A woman said even the way she treats her children and deals with conflict at home has changed. Another said she didn't realize how much there was to know until she started studying.

Susan was part of a **funeral service** for the elderly husband of one of our dear Batswana friends. Mma Buitumelo, a leader in one of the AIC churches in Old Naledi, has a long history of involvement with the Mennonites. When Susan visited her after her husband died she told her she wanted her involved in the funeral because she wanted a strong woman's presence. What a privilege it was to attend the prayer services and the burial. The male pastors from the local branches were in charge of the funeral service but Mma Buitumelo's desire to have Susan do the committal was not to be ignored. When we got to the burial site there was a bit of confusion as we arrived at the same time as another funeral procession. Here people are buried in order of death. There is no such thing as family plots. So to make things more complicated the two plots were side by side. There was a quick meeting of the leaders of both groups and it was decided that I would do the committal for both men. As I stood by the graveside as the two graves were

being filled in the dry smell of the red sandy earth permeated my being. I was once again struck by the importance of this time of filling in the grave as a part of the grieving process. I was even more humbled when two women came up and took the shovels and shovelled dirt into the hole something I had never seen before. Women pastors are not the only people finding themselves free to be themselves in non traditional places.

Glyn also spent a weekend in **Francistown** with our partners there. It is great to see that the Bible class has continued to be a strong group without regular encouragement and support by a mission worker. We were thrilled to be able to tell them that after five years they will once again have a Mennonite Mission worker living in Francistown. Melanie Quinn, a Mission worker with the US Mennonite Church will arrive here in Botswana next Monday (17th) for a three year assignment.

We've also been doing some planning for future events.

March 27-April 1st Mennonite workers from South Africa will join us for a retreat at a nearby game reserve. We are looking forward to fellowship, spiritual growth and fun. We feel so privileged to be part of such an amazing team of Mennonites who are ministering in Southern Africa.

April 5 Phil and Christine Lindell Detweiler will conduct a workshop on a Community Health (CHE) Evangelism Workshop for AIC church members and others. They are very excited about this programme as a tool for outreach.

April 6 Steen Søvndal, our Danish friend and colleague, will be leaving Botswana with his family on April 18th. On this evening we are inviting all of the people who have had ministry contacts with Steen to join us at the Mennonite Ministries Office for a "Tsamaya Sentle" (Farewell).

April 24th Glyn will join the youth of the Spiritual Healing Church at their annual retreat at their head quarters in Matsiloje (near Francistown). He has been asked to bring some spiritual input for their retreat.

Upcoming Events

Mar 21-23 Easter weekend
(Pasaka)

Mar 27 - April 1 Mennonite
Retreat

April 2 Glyn to Pitseng with
Tim Lind and others to plan for
a Bluffton Student visit in 2009

April 5 CHE workshop

April 6 Søvndal Farewell

April 7-9 Susan to attend a
Joining Hands conference

April 8-30 Glyn's parents visit

April 12-May 12 School break

Apr 24 Glyn speaking at
Spiritual Healing Church youth
conference

Blog

I will aim to regularly add things that we see and experience in our lives that we think you would also be interested in. I have sadly left this undone for too long... There is a link to the blog from our website. Or follow:

<http://thegatheringsite.ca/botswana/>

Our Family Life:

Life for us as a family has not stood still either. This has been a really full and busy term.

Maeyken has settled into the subjects that will be hers to study and enjoy for the next two years. The programme is two years with portfolios and other work that is collected through out this time and then sent to England to be marked. The programme culminates with a series of exams in November of 2009. It is a really solid academic programme. She continues to take piano lessons, is dabbling with guitar right now and helps once a week with the junior swim squad at Thornhill.

Adriaena is adjusting to Standard Six and the expectations that come with it. Her days are busy so she is learning the skill of being disciplined! In addition to swimming and piano she is also continuing with Girl Guides. This year she



Our kids with the children of the Wadsworth Mennonite church in Ohio.



Adriaena with friends trying to remember how to skate.

is a leader of her group. She loves the structure and discipline of the Girl Guides. But her biggest enjoyment of the year seems to have been found in Ballroom Dancing. On Saturday they had an all day workshop and then a performance in the evening. She did an amazing job with the Waltz, the Jive and a bit of hip hop although she admits that hip hop is not her favourite.

We have been busy planning for Glyn's parents who will arrive in South Africa at the beginning of April. Glyn and Adriaena will meet them in Johannesburg and spend about 10 days enjoying the sites of the Nelspruit area of South Africa and the Kruger Game Reserve. Then they will come to Botswana for about two weeks to experience a bit of our life here. We are looking forward to introducing them to our life here.

Contact us

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(Just remember that we are 6 hours
earlier than Ontario!)

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Please Thank God for...

... an amazing **North American assignment** and for all of those things mentioned earlier in the newsletter. We often resonate with Paul who wrote those letters of thank you to the various saints whom he got to visit on his travels. Without you and your prayers our ministry here would not be possible.

... the excitement of the **Bible class** in Kanye.

... **Amy Susanna** and how God is working in her life right now. We are excited about the opportunities that are yet to come!

... funding that came through for **Melanie Quinn** and that she will soon be with us in Botswana She arrives Monday March 18.

... the decision by **Wilmot Mennonite Church** to become an official partner with us and the ministry here in Botswana.

We ask you to pray for...

... our **retreat with the other Mennonite workers** in Southern Africa. May God renew us in ways that we could never dream possible.

... **Melanie** as she settles into life and ministry here in Botswana.

...the **CHE workshop** that Phil and Christine will be leading.

...the **Easter Celebrations** where people travel long distances with often limited sleep to celebrate the Lord's resurrection with the members of their church. Pray for us as we interact with a couple of churches during this time.

... Glyn, Tim Lind and Jonathan Larson as they **visit leaders in Pitseng** and make plans for a second group of Bluffton College students who will come in May 2009.

... The **Søvndal's** (Mennonite Church Canada mission associates with us here in Botswana) as they wrap up their time here in Botswana. Pray for good goodbyes and a good return to Denmark.



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