

10 Nowers Street,
King William's Town,
5601,
Eastern Cape,
South Africa.

 a.i.wilson@bigfoot.com jenny.wilsonrsa@gmail.com

February 2008

Dear Friends

It seems like such a long time since I wrote to you all and of course it is. Our last letter was in October. We left for the UK in November which turned out to be a very busy month in many ways.

Our trip to the UK was very enjoyable. It was so lovely to meet up with friends and to get the chance to pass on some of what our work in South Africa entails. We were touched by the generosity of so many and the obvious desire to be involved in God's work here. Thank you!

When we left the UK we had on our winter clothes and as we touched down in King William's Town, we realised how overdressed we were and how white we looked as we started stripping off our layers.

Settling back in has been a bit of a whirlwind experience for all of us. The children had a lot of catching up to do and for the first week and a half were working from when school finished at 2pm until around 11pm at night. Stephen still had to be up shortly after 5am in time for catching the school bus at 6am. I think that we are now all caught up and ready to step back into a more normal pattern of life.

We had a week to prepare for the start of the new Dumisani session and then classes started properly on Monday 11th. We have about 20 students in first year which brings our numbers up to around the 80+ mark. Even two weeks into the term, we are still getting people enquiring if they can come and study this year. They seem to be a great bunch – full of energy and enthusiasm. We have our first white student and our first coloured student. This is a great move towards more integration between the races. It seems crazy that fourteen years into democracy, the colour of people's skin is still an issue. It is such a privilege to be able to serve the formerly disadvantaged group in the Eastern Cape but it is an even greater privilege to be able in some small way to affect greater understanding and integration of races and to show that in God's family the barriers of colour, race, gender, financial position and age are non-existent. One church alone has sent us six new students this year. We even had a well-known local gospel singer as a student, though he has already had to withdraw from his studies this year because the government has hired him to run AIDS awareness workshops in schools during the coming year. He hopes to return to his studies at a later date.

My input into Dumisani has increased and I will no longer be teaching in the local primary. I am teaching English, Study Skills and Catechetics (Christian Education). I have always loved teaching but working this week with the groups of students that I am working with, I have enjoyed teaching on a richer level. Unfortunately, after a visit to the doctor this week (following surgery before we left in November) it has been decided that it is no longer safe or sensible to delay having a hysterectomy and so I have been booked in for surgery on Wednesday February 27th. I will therefore have to take several weeks' break from teaching while I recover. This is going to put added strain on Alistair as he takes over my teaching at Dumisani as well as all the jobs at home, the early mornings with Stephen and the late nights and all in the hottest time of the year. The church here and the missionary group are very supportive, so I am sure that we will get a lot of help.

The Dumisani team is not yet complete as we still wait for John Ross to come on board and also for Deon Lombard to join us full time. At the moment Deon is teaching part-time while he works out his notice to his church. As far as John Ross is concerned, we do ask that you pray earnestly that he will be granted a work permit. Work permit applications are complex and subject to the administrative systems of the government, so there is a measure of apprehension until this process is complete, but we know that God is Lord over all matters, so please pray that everything will work out.

With the team in Dumisani growing, office space has now run out and with only the one large classroom, and several large classes, it is now becoming harder to timetable classes so that they can work in rooms large enough. We are considering very seriously whether we must now look for suitable new buildings or build something fitted to our needs. This is quite a challenge logistically and financially, so please pray that we will know how to move forward. It is clear that staying as we are is not a realistic option. We are currently in discussion with the Steve Biko Foundation regarding the buildings. Steve Biko was a political activist during the apartheid regime and died while in police custody. One of our Dumisani buildings is where he had a community centre for black people. If you have ever seen the film 'Cry Freedom', the church where Steve Biko and Donald Woods first meet is a representation of what is now the Dumisani church building.

On Saturday 23rd we have our first Sunday School teachers' training day of the year. These are always well attended and great fun. Please pray that it will be a time that is glorifying to God and useful in helping to enthuse teachers and to impress on them the immense value of the work that they do.

We have just heard that another school bus from our girls' school has been involved in a fatal accident. Both of the teachers travelling with the girls died; one immediately and the other after emergency surgery for terrible injuries. A number of the girls were injured although none with life-threatening injuries. Yet again, we are aware of the dangers on the road and are thankful to God for our safety so far. As you can imagine, our own girls are in a state of shock. Both were taught by both of the teachers concerned. I was phoned by the Principal and asked to go into the school to support the staff and the girls at this time. It was a privilege to be there, although it was one of the hardest things that I have been asked to do. Please pray for the whole school as they come to terms with losing yet another member of the school community. One of the teachers who was killed had already been in two previous school bus accidents. The last one, in which a number of girls and teachers were killed, left her with long lasting health problems and she has only just in the last year and a half returned to work.

Prayer points

- That the students and staff will settle down into a good work pattern which is glorifying to God.
- That we will know God's will with regard to buildings etc.
- Pray for Jenny as she undergoes surgery and for Alistair as he acts as mum, dad, cook, cleaner and chief bottle washer for several weeks.
- That we will continue to know God's protection on the roads.
- Pray for the girls and the rest of the school community as they come to terms with yet another fatal road crash. Pray especially for the bereaved families of the teachers who died.

Much love

Jenny Wilson