

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



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

March 2008

Dear Friends

What a quiet month it has been! Well, for me it has, although Alistair has a completely different perspective. I had surgery towards the end of February and have been recuperating ever since. God was so good to me. He gave me a Christian friend in the bed next to me (also having a hysterectomy), as well as two Christian nurses and a Christian physiotherapist. We had a lovely time praising God together. Since getting out, I have not been able to do too much, so it has been a good opportunity to be able to spend large chunks of time studying isiXhosa. I got out of hospital on the Saturday. The temperatures were hovering around 40°. We arrived home to find that there was no power in King William's Town. This meant that we couldn't run our fan. It was not long before I was wishing to be back in hospital with the air-conditioning. Monday too was without power for part of the day. I am sure that you have already heard of the power crisis that we are facing in South Africa. Since the end of apartheid fourteen years ago, the electricity stations which used to only supply about 20% of the population with electricity, now need to supply an increasing number of homes as equality is being sought. No extra power stations have been built, and so now we are facing a major electricity crisis. We can only run our hot water for a short time each day. We also face regular power cuts as the power company tries to share out the electricity manufactured. We have been told that we should not be without electricity for more than two days a week, but we never know what two days they will be. Towards the middle of the year, we are to move to electricity rationing, where every home will be allocated a certain amount of electricity before being cut off for the remainder of the month. It seems highly likely that this will be a long-term problem, running into a number of years. As you can imagine, it does limit a lot of the work done in Dumisani. We have now, through the generosity of friends and congregations in Scotland, been able to purchase three lap-top computers, so at least they can run for a short space of time without mains electricity.

Our Sunday school teachers' day in February went well and was very well attended. Suzanne Goosen helped me with it. She is a missionary to the Zionist church in South Africa. The Zionist church is a Christian church which incorporates a lot of traditional African customs - not always, we feel, in keeping with the teaching of the Bible. Luaan and Suzanne Goosen work with the Zionist Church to try to encourage them to follow the Bible's teaching and to be discerning as to what in their customs is not acceptable within the church. Many of the Zionists in the rural areas do not have sufficient education to be able to study the Bible for themselves, so they really benefit from the work carried out by the Goosens.

We realised that we were duplicating a lot of the work, and as I was needing a new partner since Thys left, we felt that it would be a good idea to combine forces. Suzanne went down very well with the students and so once more we find ourselves giving thanks to God for his provision. We were concentrating on encouraging children and teachers to their faith and focussed mainly on using the "wordless book" (an evangelistic aid which is composed of blank pages of various colours which symbolise various aspects of the Gospel message). The Sunday school teachers made wordless books for their own use and a church in America had made leather bracelets with beads the same colour as the wordless

book as a slight variation on the theme. The teachers left very pleased with their new tool. We had worried that these beaded bracelets might be seen as 'Christians' magic', as beads are often used by the Sangoma (witchdoctor). However, the people thought that it was a good way to arrest people's attention and get them listening to the good news of Jesus Christ.

Those of you who have been reading our newsletters for a while will remember me talking about our gardener, Lindile. He told us the other day that he has become a Christian and has been baptised. We are of course delighted, but slightly disappointed that he has joined the Zionist Church.

Another name from the past is Audwa. She is one of the girls whom we put through the computer course along with David and Lindile. She gave birth two weeks after finishing the course, which was a great surprise to everyone, including her mother whom she lives with. We have just learnt that the baby has died aged five months. From the symptoms we suspect AIDS but that is never written on the death certificates. Please pray for Audwa and her family.

Our new intake of students has settled in well. We marvel when we see Wayne talking to the students in fluent isiXhosa and the ease at which they have accepted him into their midst. Our coloured student too has become a firm part of the family. He had been asked to talk in one of my classes as to how God's word had illuminated the state of his heart and had shown him how to become right with God. He spoke openly and honestly and you could tell how much he was admired by the rest of the class. At the end, one of our Xhosa ministers asked if this man could close our time in prayer. For the first time since we have been there, the class ended in a prayer said in Afrikaans! We must not underestimate how difficult this could yet prove for these two men. Apparently, in the past a couple of white people have enrolled but each time pulled out because they felt that they had so little in common with the majority of students. So please keep praying for them.

March is also the time for the graduation ceremony. There were only about twelve graduating this year as so many had stayed on to do the degree. Although smaller than in recent years, it was as ever a great event, full of vigour and enjoyment.

The college is closed for the long Easter weekend and then closed again for two weeks' Easter vacation. In South Africa, Easter is the main highlight of the Christian calendar with a number of services across the denominations each day of holy week. The Xhosa churches usually have big conventions over Easter. Many thousands of people countrywide pile into overloaded minibus taxis and travel many hundreds of miles to conventions. The roads become very congested and the accident rate soars. The Free Church in Southern Africa has its own Mamas' conventions as usual. I have been excused attending this year as I think six hours on a bench after surgery is possibly a bit too much. Alistair, despite not being 'a Mama', made an appearance on the Sunday and along with Norman and Angela suffered from a week-long tummy bug after eating something 'suspicious' at the meal afterwards.

Regards to you all

Alistair and Jenny Wilson

Prayer points

- Safety on the roads
- Continued happy integration of the students
- The Sunday School teachers as they bring God's word to the young people in their congregations week after week.