

10 Nower's Street
King William's Town
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Dear Friends

I think most of us are feeling a little weary as the semester begins to wind down. Classes have finished, then there was study week, followed this week by exams and the inevitable re-sits. Many of us have been hit by flu bugs as the temperature fluctuates between 4° and 30° in one day. I have struggled with a lung infection for about four weeks now.

We have had to deal with several tricky issues and in this I think we have realised (not for the first time) that we have a really supportive and harmonious team here at Dumisani. We have been so grateful for the godly way that people have discussed and prayed over issues and we have seen God's hand at work even through difficult situations. We are conscious of what a gift it is to have been given such a wonderful team to work with here. It would be so easy to take them all for granted. Please pray with us, prayers of thanks for each member of our staff but also prayers of protection that the devil will never succeed in dividing or causing mischief within the group.

An ongoing issue in many churches is for Christians from the African traditions to decide what cultural practices are compatible and what are incompatible with Christian faith. Ancestral worship is a strong part of the amaXhosa culture. When Christians have left these practices, they often find that they are ostracised within the community. Some feel that they do not wish to leave these practices just in case things go wrong. It is a problem within our churches which must never be underestimated. Please pray that the eyes of many will be opened to the error of these practices and the desire to do only what is glorifying to God.

We had a great time with John Blanchard a few weekends ago. He came to do a day conference for us. He told us a story about two pastors in America: One said to his friend, "How is your church going?"

"Very well," replied the friend. "On a good day we get about three hundred to our services."

"That is very good for a small town," the first pastor commented. "How have you managed that?"

"I said we got three hundred on a good day," the friend said. "The trouble is, we have never had a good day yet!"

This was a bit like our time with John Blanchard. Everything that could have been going on in King was going on in King. In the church a hundred yards down the road was a very big wedding. All through the morning, car hooters blared and songs were sung at top volume. It was also just after the national elections and there were political parades and protests and many people who would have attended had returned to their home towns for voting. Nevertheless, those that were able to attend found it to be a very useful and challenging day.

On the power front, a few people have asked what the situation is now. We no longer have scheduled power outages every week. Now the power just goes out – and sometimes for whole days. The scheduled power outages were much easier to cope with as you could plan around them. Now we have no idea when we will be without power and for how long. We reckon that as the winter kicks in and more people are running heaters, that this will make the problem worse.

The burglars in the town have realised that when the power is out, the burglar alarms don't work. Last week two families that we know well were burgled on the same night, one woman being held at knife point for quite a while. Please pray for safety.

Susanne and I were running another Sunday School workshop this month for a group of churches. It was completely different from any that we had done before. For a start, it was completely attended by white people. This made us feel quite uneasy and realise that there are still major problems with integration of ethnic groups. The course was to have been held in East London, but had been moved to King William's Town. It was a bit frustrating that they had not come to our regular workshops but wanted one of their own. Having said that, it did make it easier to address some of these

issues head on as well as being able to speak without an interpreter. We did have a good time and I think that it was worthwhile. We often think of our work as being primarily among the amaXhosa, yet we realise how much support all groups of people need.

Children are often given a low priority in some South African communities. This is the case in some churches too. The children aren't encouraged to go to church and when they do, there is often nothing there for them. We really want to help the churches see the need for much greater emphasis on work with their young people. We heard this week of the tragic death of the son of one of the local elders. He was murdered after rumours were spread about him. For so many, their Christian faith does not impact upon their everyday lives. Please pray with us that this generation of children and youths will be won for Christ and that the church no longer neglects its responsibility to teach and train them and to covet them for the Lord.

One of our most godly Bible Women died suddenly this week. Her name was Mrs Magodla. Her grandson, Ikho, works with us at Dumisani. She was a wonderful woman – always very encouraging and wise. We will miss her greatly. At our Bible Women meeting this week, we were very conscious of her absence and many of the women spoke about what she had done for them and how she had guided and encouraged them.

At our Bible Women meetings, after the teaching time we give the women a chance to share with us anything that has occurred in their church work that month. It is usually a time of listening to many harrowing stories. This month, among other stories, we heard of a visit that one woman had made to a family where the husband had shot his wife. Another visit was made to a family where the son who had a criminal history was axed to death in front of his family. Another woman visited the family of a man who had slipped while washing and died. Another told us of a young man who had hung himself.

Then one woman stood up with tears in her eyes and I thought, "what now?" But she told us that her husband of thirty years had given his heart to the Lord and joined the church. It is sometimes easy to forget to expect to see God at work in amazing ways.

Over the next few weeks, Alistair is preaching in the Uniting Presbyterian church in King William's Town. It is almost completely a 'black' church and full of interested and committed people. We are having increasing contact with this church in terms of financial commitment and attendance at day conferences, evening classes and frequent visits to the book shop. We are very thankful that God has opened this door for greater communication.

Prayer Points

- Give thanks for the people that God has brought to himself.
- Give thanks for the students who are working diligently and with purpose.
- Pray for the students as they sit their exams and return home for their winter break.
- Pray for safety on the roads for staff and students alike.
- Pray for the building fund so that we might be able to go ahead with our vision to develop the work at Dumisani.
- Pray for the church in South Africa that it will know blessing and be serious in being a good witness to the living God.

Love to you all and much thanks for your prayers and support

Alistair and Jenny Wilson