

OUR WORK FOR THE LORD IN SOUTHERN AFRICA – MARCH 2010

Les Maydell P.O.Box 2744, Nylstroom 0510, Republic of South Africa Tel.+27 14 717 4100

Linda and I first want to express our gratitude to God for the opportunity and strength to work for Him during the past month (March) and to all of you who have supported us in many different ways. (I apologize that this report was delayed due to the lectures at Loding and other pressures of work.)

SOUTH AFRICA

As I mentioned briefly to you all, the brother who accompanied us to Namibia, Norman Saayman, had to undergo unexpected quadruple heart by-pass surgery. He is fortunate to be alive and is doing well. However, he says he still has quite a bit of pain and it is taking him longer to recover than he thought it would! He and his family, as well as us, sincerely thank those of you who kept him in your prayers.

The lectures held at the Loding congregation this past weekend went well, despite the unseasonal and unusual, but welcome 8 inches of rain that fell during Friday – Sunday. The meeting was held in two tents joined together and at times, water flowed in underneath to wet our feet.

Some did not make it due to the weather, but still there were over 200 in attendance, and most of the speakers did excellent jobs. The Loding brethren, although a small congregation, did a very good work of arranging and conducting the meeting. Every single member worked extra hard and as a team to make it possible. The brethren who attended showed their appreciation by individually helping them with food costs. Two women responded to the gospel. Fortunately for us, our hospitality to David Beckley and a van load he brought from Venda, paid huge dividends: we could never have got to the meeting without Dave's 4x4. In the dark and when it's actually raining, it's worse! Two of our other guests, Joel Williams and his American friend, James Buchanan

(who also were invited to speak at the lectures), helped Linda with some of her computer problems. Unfortunately, however, they were not able to stop the periodic problem of emails disappearing off our screen (as well as off the server itself). This usually happens between downloading the headers and downloading the messages on Windows Live. Unless we happen to look at the screen at the right moment, we never know if other messages were sent. Therefore, if you write to us and we do not reply, *please* write again because we may not have received it.



ZIMBABWE

After a nightmare time getting Bigboy's engine through the border, we arrived at Bigboy's house early Monday morning, March 8th. A team of local mechanics had the truck running by 6 pm that night!

On Tuesday we met Gumpo and went to a congregation where we had never been – Pangani, about 50 miles SE of Bulawayo. Gumpo does an excellent job of translating and we had a very good meeting through Thursday with about 50 women and 10 men (some were from Tombo). Four were baptized. On Friday we went to National Foods in Bulawayo and spoke personally to the man in charge of sending maize meal to Gwanda and ironed out a

few problems. We also bought extra maize meal for five congregations who have not been receiving drought relief since last May because they had a relatively good harvest.

Unfortunately, these same brethren did not fare at all well with their crops this year. On Saturday afternoon I went with Paddy Kendall-Ball to an elders and deacons class at Magwegwe. So far as I know, this congregation is the only congregation with elders in Zimbabwe. On Sunday morning I preached at Nketa Township where Mountbatten Brewer preaches (Brewer is sitting next to me). I also taught the Bible class for the men, and Linda taught the women. On Sunday evening I preached at the Hillside (morning) congregation who worship in English. (There is a Hillside (afternoon) congregation who shares the same building and worships in Ndebele.)



Early on Monday the 15th we left to spend the week working with 80-year-old Enoch Ncube. When we got to Mangwande (about 150 miles NE of Bulawayo), they had just sent brethren home who had walked from Mankunzane, about 4 miles away as the crow flies. They said they were expecting us in April, not in March! Enoch suggested they call their members to meet the next day, and we drove slowly to Mankunzane (the roads are terrible), arriving about the same time as those who had walked. Because the brethren there live relatively close together, they were able to call everyone together within a couple of hours. The unexpected meeting turned out to be a real blessing: six responded to the gospel. Some of the brethren from Mankunzane walked back to Mangwande the following day, and there one person was restored. From Mangwande we travelled about 80 kms to Enoch's village at Hogo and stayed through Friday morning. Members from Sunrise and Cinderella congregations were also present. We had not been to any of these congregations since 2007 and really enjoyed working with Enoch who is still strong in body with a sharp mind and full of energy. He works hard on his small farm as well as always being busy teaching the brethren and the lost, Psalm 92:14. Enoch is pictured on the next page, off-loading maize meal from Gumpo's truck.

On Sunday we had a great experience worshipping with the congregation in Gwanda. We had not been at a worship service with them since they were a small group of about 15, meeting in Bigboy's house. There were about 75 in attendance on Sunday. Some of the young men attend the local college and are committed to going door-to-door with Bigboy, teaching the lost. They are also very capable of preaching. Bigboy and others have worked hard, and this congregation has a wonderful potential. (Bigboy is in the center of the picture with the tie. They meet in a school.)



After services we traveled to the border. We had heard about how one of our fellow-workers, Warren Scholtz, was hijacked in the border area, just 2 days before that. (Thankfully he was not seriously hurt.) We got behind a truck and followed it – and someone else got behind us. We thus had an impromptu convoy, making the journey much safer and less stressful. I mention this because I know many of you heard about Warren. To be honest, we feel safer in Zimbabwe than in S. Africa. I know Warren would never have pulled off on the side of the road to get something out of the back of his pickup if he were in South Africa. But now, unfortunately, more serious criminal activity has crossed the border into the southern part of Zimbabwe and so we will have to take extra precautions, just like we do in S. Africa.

DROUGHT

Everywhere we went it was obvious that there had been insufficient rain to produce a crop. Some may get a LITTLE if it rains again. I urged the brethren to keep what little they may get for seed. I also taught strongly on church discipline (removing sinning brethren from the congregation and taking their names off the drought relief list). Everywhere we went, brethren begged for bibles and songbooks. We told them that we scarcely receive enough for food – do they want Bibles or food? They all were emphatic that they are grateful for the **food** and will wait patiently for Bibles. We do thank a sister in the USA who donated money specifically for Bibles. They were received with great joy. Like many of our Zimbabwe brethren, we are truly humbled by your generous, heart-felt response to their needs. (Drought report below.) May you be blessed as you have blessed them and us. Your servant, Les Maydell.



DROUGHT REPORT



I will be honest in telling you that the drought presents many challenges. Congregations are growing, and some undoubtedly become Christians so they can receive physical assistance. All we can do is teach the consequences of dishonesty and let God judge the hearts. Fornicators and drunkards are another problem. I sincerely praised the brethren at Mangwande for being open about two men who were drunkards. Again, I and others do the best we can to teach what is right. I spend much time preaching on sexual immorality and 1 Corinthians 5 than on any other subject. Another big problem is to find a reliable supplier of maize meal at a reasonable price, especially in Gwanda, a small town. As the months went by, the Gwanda supplier lagged further and further behind with supplies until finally, in

December, the Christians in Gwanda South never received their maize meal by the end of the month. Bigboy requested that I find another supplier. I thought if I did, we would never see the 5 ½ tonnes still outstanding for Gwanda South, but Bigboy has kept the pressure on the Gwanda supplier, who has bit-by-bit fulfilled his agreement. In the meantime we are now getting maize meal shipped from Bulawayo to Gwanda. Because there has been a terrible drought over virtually the whole of Zimbabwe, we may need to resort to shipping maize from South Africa again, but this will be costly. The messengers (Bigboy and Gumpo) are stretched very thin to meet their obligations to deliver all that maize meal in vehicles that are constantly falling apart due to the bad roads, plus the pressure of time to fulfill their primary purpose of preaching and teaching the word of God. God has blessed Gumpo with relatively good health and strength, but he *is* 74 years old now, and it is not easy for him to keep up the work that is so strenuous both mentally and physically. It is also not easy to find someone to help him since so many mature Christian men have left the country seeking employment – and it is not a job for just anyone. Those few who have managed to get employment do not want to give it up, and those needing employment may do the work for the wrong reason (to be paid) instead of doing it out of love. We continually pray about this. Things have been particularly rough with Bigboy the past few months as he had to fall back on his old one-ton pickup truck to do the deliveries – that's 20 deliveries per month down hundreds of miles of horrible roads – while we tried to source a good 2nd-hand engine to replace the one that overheated. (I have ordered a gauge that sounds an alarm when the engine starts to overheat – it is so easy to fail to keep a constant vigil over the temperature gauge, as I know from my own experience. It is easier to see when a warning light comes on, but vehicles over here don't come with warning lights.) Gumpo's pickup truck was in such bad shape that just about the whole body had to be welded together again and repainted. It is old now as well as just not being suitable enough for the rough roads which continue to deteriorate horribly. The black-top roads are the worst because you are traveling along at normal speed (35 mph) and suddenly the road just becomes filled with scores of deep potholes which you have to swerve to avoid (meanwhile avoiding on-coming traffic). Sometimes you can't swerve and then your vehicle takes a beating. If it is heavily loaded, that makes it worse. Gumpo and I have been talking many months about a more heavy-duty vehicle for him. We were hoping that there would be a break in the drought relief at harvest time, and perhaps then money could be sourced for that – it will need about \$10 000. However, it does not look like there will be any congregations (in the area where I am a messenger) who will reap any kind of harvest this year – which means more money will be needed for maize meal, but the need for a heavy-duty truck is more urgent than ever. So brethren, I am informing you of the challenges and how we try to deal with them, plus continuing to ask for your help.



On the positive side, we rejoice greatly with sincere thanks to you and to God that we have been receiving enough money to feed our brethren. We also are happy to say that the Zimbabwe brethren have been very good about returning their drought receipts and we now have a few hundred of them that we hope to get off to you within the next week. A few slips here and there did get lost, and Bigboy's wife washed some of them when he left them in his pocket! Gwanda South slips for December are not yet there because of the delay in supply, but otherwise all are there through January and some even for February.

We have finished going through the receipts, and our hearts were so touched by some of the messages. Here is a brief conglomerate letter for those of you who only get brief messages on your receipts. "We thank you very much for your mercy. God says I will not let Mine hunger.... Brethren it was our desire to progress and go forward with your assistance. We planted the seeds you gave us, but everything was burnt by the sun. The crops died.... The situation is very bad everywhere. So we beg you to keep on going forward with your help.... We briefly say to you, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. You are comforting and saving the starving Christians. You are so generous with your talents. May God multiply your talents....



May God bless all the hands of our beloved brethren forever and ever. You are the faithful servants in the Lord's church. We have never met before, but your deeds can speak to us." There is also satisfaction expressed in the letters that the messengers (Gumpo and Bigboy, with some help from Newart Ndlovu) are doing a good job.

Brethren, we can only echo the words of Paul: *For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God.*