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NEWSLETTER

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Dear friends, greetings from Marondera! This summer has been the wettest in many years. Nevertheless the new farmers could not manage to sow enough mealies to supply in the country's demand. Luckily the remaining European farmers have experienced a period of political calm.

In our HIV/AIDS ministry our focus has moved from giving information about the illness, to motivation of the males to take their rightful place in their families. There are many stereotypes and stigmas that need to be broken down before these men can fully fulfil their Biblical role the way the Lord ordained it. One of the most difficult areas is to lift fathers from their comfort zone of "as long as things are okay in my immediate vicinity, everything is fine". The middleclass male has no eye for the many children who are growing up without parents due to AIDS and the implications of this for the community. Older Shona men still respect their cultural responsibility towards nephews and nieces, but many others are only too glad when these children disappear into the slums of Harare or over the borders.



The past few months have been a time of mixed emotions, a lot of contemplation and, of course, a time of biting the bullet...I spent many hours on my own while welding and grinding chairs for the reading room at St Cyprian Primary School. It is surprising how many deeper life questions surface at these times. One is that if one is pleading with others to give children opportunities denied by the system, you yourself must also put action to words.

Well, we are trying by transforming an old storeroom at the school into a reading room for the children. We have to work as funds allow. Last year we could make bookcases, then funds ran out and we had to wait to put in the ceiling. Eventually we obtained some paint and now we are tackling the chairs. My aim was to make sturdy chairs that would withstand boisterous children for many years to come. I trust that I have achieved this, but only time will tell.



It was a lengthy process, because I am not the world's best welder and I make mistakes, but it was very satisfying and rewarding to work with my hands and create from wood and steel. Work on the reading room is not finished, we still need an electrician and we need to make burglar bars.



We did not allow ministry to people to take a back seat in this time and have utilised various opportunities to attend conferences and workshops for leaders and talk to them about matters of the Lord.

For now it seems that the normal lives of people will have to take the back seat to the political parties preparing for the coming election. Any government official that can read and do addition is ordered to attend training opportunities. Their office work or teaching obligations must wait or be taken over by others.

We have also seen the first shockwaves of intimidation gangs influencing the daily routine of people negatively. Detours have to be taken to work, some friends must for now stay away and all kinds of questions about where, when, who, need to be answered. Permission must first be obtained for church meetings in public places.

Shortage of funds has seriously curbed our movements and initiatives. The reduction in the Rand exchange rate has also not helped matters. We could not visit the remote country areas during

the past few months, but tried to make a difference and bring hope in the lives of people in and around Marondera.

The Lord always does something to remind us that He is still in control and that He is there for us. We launched a Bible-reading programme at the beginning of the year together with a few Christian friends. The discipline that reading through the Bible at a given time demands, is becoming a spiritual anchor for a few of our friends. We receive feedback constantly on how the Holy Spirit is breaking open familiar well-read sections of the Bible for them and revealing new things. Numbers 7 on the face of it, seems to be a lengthy piece of factual information, leaning towards boring and repetitive for the reader, yet it stresses that every tribe, no matter how small or big or important or ordinary, is equal to the others before God. Each tribe had equal share in the Lord's work. In the same manner the story of Balaam in Numbers 22 reinforces that no one can curse someone blessed by the Lord.

Please pray:

1. For the safety of all people in Zimbabwe during the election time.
2. That church leaders will hold fast and be true to their calling and will not become part of the political situation.
3. That men will come out of their comfort zone and take up their responsibility as fathers of their families.
4. For us to keep focussed on our calling, for health and finances and to be able to continue with our work.
5. Please examine your hearts to hear whether the Lord is not calling you to support us.

THANK YOU

We want to say a special thank you to everyone who supports our work in Zimbabwe; whether it is through prayer or financial support. It is a great consolation to know that people are not forgetting us. Without your communication, love and support, we will not be able to continue. May the words of Balaam over Israel also be true for each one of you: ***"There is no magic charm, no witchcraft, that can be used against the nation of Israel. Now people will say about Israel, 'Look what God has done!'"***

Love in Christ, *Jaco en Beulah de Bruyn.*



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