

Missionary Work In Namibia, South Africa And Botswana

As previously reported in Carelinks, our brotherhood has recently gained a wonderful worker in the form of brother Andre Raymond of Switzerland. Raymond was a Lutheran pastor who had lived in Namibia for 10 years as a missionary. He obtained a copy of *Bible Basics* about 10 years ago, became persuaded of the truth, and has been teaching all those doctrines for some time. He left the Lutherans and has taken a humble job in his native Switzerland, working night shifts all year in order to get time and funds to visit his beloved flock in the Namibian desert twice / year. He's been visited and interviewed in Switzerland on two occasions and we are totally confident of his doctrinal agreement with us. We take our commitment to our new brother, and his to us, very seriously; therefore a visit was made together with Andre to the 200 or so folk he's baptized in Namibia who share our understanding of the Gospel. We weren't disappointed, and returned with an abiding impression of our brother's single-minded integrity and his lonely stand for truth and commitment to those who have accepted it. He's running a one man band out there, and it was our pleasure to see his work and now think of ways to support it.

We made the long journey across the Kalahari by God's grace- 3000 km. of desert driving, made dangerous by the animals that constantly dart across the Trans-Kalahari highway. You can click on the photos to get a larger image.



Photo: The van in front of us was totalled by hitting a donkey. You'll see the dogs trapped in the back of the canopy- the driver was hunting leopards, using his dogs to chase the leopards up into trees where he could shoot them. But for God's grace, that could've been us.



Brother Andre uses Afrikaans *Bible Basics* material in order to teach the people; although most of the ecclesial membership is illiterate, there are some elders of the ecclesias who are literate, and they try to share the material as far as they can with the illiterate membership. Virtually nobody speaks English- Afrikaans is the universal language, as the brothers and sisters tend to speak different tribal languages. Here's brother Ezekiel with Afrikaans *Bible Basics* and *Introducing Bible Basics*.

There are 5 congregations which our brother has founded and lovingly supports. One is in a squatter camp on the outskirts of a small town. Conditions in the squatter camp are awful. The 'rung below' living as our brethren and sisters are, would be simply lying in the sand and waiting to die.



We accompanied Andre visiting the various brothers and sisters who have been baptized. We spent about 15 minutes with each, trying to provide words of comfort, encouragement as to the certainty of the coming of the Kingdom when the deserts shall be changed, and reinforcing basic doctrinal issues and warning them against returning to traditional beliefs. Crouching down with the sisters as they were washing or cooking, endless tasks given the limited water, we sought to get these messages across in simple terms. Here we are reminding a sister that it's what comes from within the heart that's most important, and we're not to fear the traditional "demons" and witch doctors:



Photo: Duncan running through the basic doctrines of the Truth, with Andre translating to Afrikaans



Raymond really is a Moses-to-Israel figure for the scattered brethren and sisters he has converted. His body language speaks volumes as to his care for the marginal- the very ones to whom the Gospel is so powerful.



We were able to visit the ecclesias far out in the Kalahari. This involved driving for hours at low speed across the deep sand. If you come off the "beaten track", you easily get stuck and sunk in. At Donkoboss there is no way of telling the people ahead of time about a visit- the only way of getting to the nearest road is to walk, which takes two days. We were very impressed by the meeting- the sisters wore their brightest clothing, and as we waited for the members to arrive- all walking long distances over the sand- we were impressed by the reverent but enthusiastic singing. Brother Andre taught well in Afrikaans, and local brethren gave prayers which the congregation listened to in silence and with closed eyes [unusual in many African churches] and said "Amen" at the end. We felt a reverence and depth of appreciation present.



PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

Carelinks have been happy to review and support some of our brother's efforts. Br Andre is constantly giving advice and setting up self-help projects, aiming towards self-sufficiency and dignity wherever possible.

Giving advice as to how to build better shelters:



Conditions and mortality are depressing and awful. The mortality rate is high, and bodies are just buried in the sand, with a stone or piece of scrap metal the only memorial- many don't even have that. Yet the bodies are often buried with no protection. Cindy was constantly commenting that the whole situation is a text book case of a disaster waiting to happen regarding cholera. Poor nutrition and widespread HIV means that resistance to infection is very low- everyone seemed to have sniffy noses.

Photo: Graves in the squatter camp



Andre has designed coffins, and funds a woodworking course at the building in the squatter camp which he has built for his work.

Photo: Brother Andre's coffin design, and instructing how to make them from chipboard:



Out in the villages, it's hard to scratch a living- little water, sand which won't grow anything, and these days, very few animals left to hunt [traditionally, the tribespeople survived as hunter-gatherers]. There are ostriches around, and gathering their eggs is something the sisters do. The bushmen make necklaces and beads from the ostrich eggs, firing them in a fire to change the colour of the various segments of the eggs. We suggested that we could try to take orders for these ostrich-egg necklaces- the problem is that these sisters live so far away from civilization, we'd have to wait until Brother Andre goes there again in 6 months time to actually get them. But if anyone's interested in ordering, do let us know at info@carelinks.net .

Photos: Cindy with one of the necklaces, and the sister who made it rather bemused to have cash in her hand



Literacy Project

Bro. Andre has built a hall near the squatter camp which is well used for various projects. A literacy project is run in it each day, teaching young children to read and write. Andre has got some small grants for this project but some of these are being withdrawn. It's a great project and we do believe that providing such basic education, as well as feeding each day, is about the only long term way to help the children out of the poverty vicious circle. We're very enthusiastic about this project, as with all of them, because Andre is able to keep an eye on things and is twice / year "on the ground" there- plus he's known the people involved for a long time.



Basic advice and education is something that can be given all the time- here's the granddaughter of one of our sister's sitting in the sand playing with a scrap piece of asbestos. The little child's mother has died, and the elderly and infirm grandmother seeks to raise her as best she can. Giving *advice* about things like asbestos is free- but it all takes a huge amount of time, to practically educate a scattered group of 200 bre & sis *and their families*.



One of the major problems facing our brothers and sisters living in the villages are that they're simply so cut off from society- it takes over 2 days for them to walk to the nearest main road. They're cut off from medical aid, opportunity to sell whatever they manage to raise or make, unable to buy anything. Further, they spend much of the day walking around looking for firewood or carrying water.

Photos: Children are all over the place, carrying firewood and water



Andre hit on the idea of making donkey carts for the brothers and sisters- wild donkeys are plentiful there. Most of the material required can be made from local wood or scrap metal- apart from the tyres. We therefore obtained 10 old tyres, loaded them on and in the van, and made the 5 hour journey out to the two most isolated ecclesias. The last 2 hours we drove at about 20 km / hour over tracks through deep desert sand. One slip from the beaten track, and we were deeply

bogged down, needing seven men to push us out. We eventually let the tyre pressure down from 220 psi to 90 psi- we just wouldn't have gotten through otherwise.



Photo: Loading old tyres on the roof of our vehicle



Photo: Letting the tyre pressure down on our vehicle



Photo: A curious mother watches as we unload the tyres



Photo: A donkey cart [although ours won't be as good as this one!]

Giving basic clothing and food is of course an obvious and necessary way of assisting this dire poverty. We were able to take several bags of clothing kindly collected by sisters in Johannesburg- here's our brother with some of it, and he expresses his genuine appreciation for it:



The desert people traditionally were hunter-gatherers. But climate change means that there is even less growing in the desert than previously; and the temperatures range from -5 at night now in the Winter, to +55 in Summer. And there are very few animals left to hunt now. So basic existence is a huge issue. We assisted Bro Andre in buying food and distributing to the sisters. Their husbands typically go away for months at a time to try to find work in the towns or on the farms, and return only occasionally. These sisters really have a hard existence and mortality is very high amongst them.

Photos: Distributing parcels of flour and nutrition packages



On the long journey, we took the opportunity to follow up *Bible Basics* contacts in South Africa and Botswana. We were pleased to visit one of the new Bible Education Centres in South Africa, and to see the various language editions of *Bible Basics* being put to good use. Elsewhere on our travels in the area, we're delighted to report the baptism of ADE. a 33 year old schoolteacher

who has been searching for Truth for many years. His baptismal photos truly resemble the new birth which baptism is, and we have great joy in his being "born of water".



We were delighted to receive a very grateful email from our brother:

"How are you and your wife today? I have been thinking of writing you earlier than today but i have not been really chanced. Thanks for the picture and for taking out time from your busy schedule to visit, i must confess, i am richly blessed by your visit. I thank God for your life and ministry and i pray that the Almighty God will continue to be with you and strengthen you (Amen). You have given me a new life through this baptism and every now and then, my spirit is always lifed to his throne, i am most thirsty for his words and my life has changed totally. However, i will always want to be hearing from you, reading from you and get inspired by your message of hope. See me as part of your family, a family of God and feel free to contact me incase you have an assignment for me here. Once again, thank you and remain blessed in Christ. Looking forward to reading from you soon and bye for now."

Support for this work in Namibia is required- it can be sent to CCM through the usual channels (see <http://www.carelinks.net/about/donate.htm>). Here we have a great opportunity to meaningfully alleviate human poverty in a realistic way, with brother Andre regularly visiting and overseeing the work. We made the effort to go out there and see this work for ourselves- and we have returned with every commendation of it to you.