

SOUTH AFRICA LINK

56 Daphne Road, Maroelana, Pretoria 0081, South Africa

Tel: (0027) 123466198

cell: (0027) 724331090

Fax: (0027) 866265604

email: sduncan@mweb.co.za

10 April 2010

Dear Friends,

We hope that you all had a very blessed Easter. We had a very busy but enjoyable time and were able to spend some of it with friends from the UK. Derek and Pauline Turner from Laurieston, near Falkirk, were in South Africa visiting Pauline's sister's and they took some time out to visit us as well which we enjoyed very much. They brought with them Easter eggs, in particular the Cadbury's cream eggs which we are very fond of and you cannot get here in South Africa. So as you can imagine not only their presence was appreciated but the treats they brought with them as well!

There were many people who wanted to meet with them again, those from the church who had visited Scotland and had enjoyed their hospitality, particularly Violet Mashao, our Session Clerk from Mamelodi, so we had a lovely lunch on the Saturday with old friends who were so pleased to welcome Derek and Pauline to South Africa. It had been raining for most of the week and Good Friday was particularly wet so we were very concerned about how we were going to host such a big crowd in the house as we had planned it all counting on the sunshine and being able to use the garden. However, God was on our side as the sun rose on Saturday morning and it was a beautiful day - the rain returned on Easter Sunday! We had services on Good Friday and on Easter Sunday Graham baptised Zwai (the new minister at St Andrews) and Thandi's son Zipho and after the service they provided lunch for the entire congregation. It was a great time of fellowship. After attending the service at Mamelodi, Derek and Pauline were able to join us at St Andrews and join in the luncheon fellowship so they were well kirked for Easter!

A few weeks ago we went to Polokwane where two probationers were licensed in the Presbytery of Limpopo. One of them Dikobe Molaba stayed at Sedibeng during his training, and Mrs Tati, the other licentiate, is the wife of Rev Mathemba Tati who was one of Graham's students in the 1980's when we were at Fedsem. They are old friends and colleagues from Amatola Presbytery where we had served in the 1970s and 1990s, so this was an important occasion for us to attend. We had to get up very early on the Sunday morning because it was a two and a half hours drive from Pretoria to the church and the service was to start at 9am. We arrived in plenty of time and the service lasted for almost 6 hours. Fortunately it was quite cool which was a blessing because the church was packed with most of the presbytery congregations present.





As always at these occasions there was a marked absence of white ministers and congregants from their churches. One could almost believe that the UPCSA was a black church only, particularly since Graham and I very often, as on this occasion, are the only whites present. We always find it so sad that our white colleagues do not attend such services because they are so rich in spirituality, fellowship and are a great cross cultural experience. Although the services are very long, because they are so different from our traditional kind of western service, time passes almost without us noticing it and of course the singing and the dancing is so wonderful and full of joy that one could never say it was boring.

We shared with you in the last letter how we had spent some of the money sent by you via South Africa Link. Since then we have used some more of it: we were able on your behalf to help finance a workshop for the congregation at St Andrews where Graham has been working as a colleague minister (pictures at the end of this letter). One of the issues to emerge from the workshop was a commitment of the congregation to always worship together at communion. At present the Afrikaans section have most of their communions on their own which seems to be a denial of the unity Christ creates in the sacrament. This has a historic aspect as separate communion became the norm in the churches of the Dutch Reformed tradition from the 1850s 'due to the weakness of some' (white people). This is therefore an important milestone in the development of one congregation though there is some resistance to the decision.

We were also able to assist a minister's widow who had a stroke and her family were worried because she did not have proper nightwear and toiletries for use in the hospital! We also assisted a young Zimbabwean refugee who is staying with us; he has through great patience and persistence managed to register to do graphic design at collage here in Pretoria. He really needs a computer with a graphic programme on it for this course and we wondered if there was anyone who might have a laptop that they no longer use we are sure that Ivar would take it out with him when he comes in May? This young man has such potential despite poor circumstances and it would be wonderful if he could be helped to realise his dreams! Please contact either Ivar or ourselves if you can assist. We were also able to assist another young person with some finance towards driving lessons which will help in getting a job because a driving licence is a very big asset in job hunting here in South Africa.

Needless to say the money is just about finished; we have kept a little aside for any emergency as we constantly come across serious emergencies and it is so good to be able to respond in kind as well as prayer. We cannot thank all of you enough who have contributed to the fund sent to us from SA Link as you can read we have used it well (we hope you agree?) and many people have benefitted from being fed to being assisted in relating across the barriers that separate many people in SA. We see so many people suffering every day in some way or another and it is thanks to the generosity of many of you in Scotland we can at least ease the suffering a little for some in a very practical way.

The big news here in South Africa is of course the murder of Eugene Terreblanche and the foolish rhetoric of Julius Malema, President of the ANC Youth League. We are becoming very concerned about the bad press this may be causing overseas and how it will affect the World Cup. It is so sad that this is happening now because hosting the World Cup is so important for the majority of South Africans of all races and the majority of the population have gone or are going the extra mile to ensure that those who come here will have the best experience of their lives even if the team they support does not win! Please, please, any of you who are planning to come do not be put off by this bad press this trouble is being caused by a minute percentage of the population. It is such a pity that they are catching the eye of the media instead of all those who are working hard to make this event a huge success.

Sandra had a short spell in hospital in February, it was a bit of a scare at the time as she had a growth in her womb and there was a suspicion it might have been malignant. But after a hysterectomy, tests proved it not to be but because of age, etc it was better to have it removed in any case. She made a very quick recovery and was up and about driving, walking etc within a couple of weeks after the surgery. She continues to assist PhD students with proofreading their theses. She is presently working on one from a Korean student on the ethics of the destruction of the environment by our affluent lifestyles. She is finding it very interesting and learns such a great deal from the work of these students.

We are looking forward to the visit from Ivar - you all know who he is since he distributes our newsletter so efficiently. He is coming for football and holiday. We hope that he will have a rest in between all the matches, he is so well known here in SA as well because of the generous way he has hosted, arranged and shown the many students and South African visitors around Scotland. All of these friends want to host and entertain him. He could come for three months and it would hardly be enough time for those friends he has made here!

Graham continues to be busy at the university where he has become the faculty Programme Manager which just means more and more meetings as well as being more involved in the development of our new theology programmes. Prof Johan Buitendag, our Deputy Dean has been appointed Dean of the faculty and has a quite different leadership style to the one we are used to so much more work is delegated, especially to heads of departments. He managed to end last year with seven distinctions for the courses he was doing in the post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. He has two more to complete this year to graduate.

We continue to enjoy the company of our grand daughter Nicole; she is with us today and has said that if we swim with her she promises to ignore us for the rest of the day so that we can finish this letter! Now we have to say that the pool is outdoors and because it is autumn the temperature drops considerably at night making the water pretty freezing! We suspect that the shock of the cold water will cause us to have heart attacks! We are trying to strike an alternative deal with her! Our other grandchildren are well except for the new baby Kairn who has had a spell in hospital. He is home now but has caught cold and the poor wee soul is just not himself at all. It is at times like this we feel the distance so acutely from the rest of our family we so much wanted to be with him and to support his mum through this sad time. We have not heard much from David for a while so assume that all is well. Susan and Richard are going through a difficult time at the moment with Richards work - this recession has hit so many people and some worse than our family nevertheless we would appreciate your prayers for them and all those who are struggling because of the recession.

We thank those of you who constantly keep us in your prayers we are very aware that without them life would be so much more difficult. Once again we thank all of you who have supported our work and enabled us to give some practical help which has made such a difference in many of the lives we have managed to touch. We pray that God will continue to bless you as He has blessed us.

With much love from
Sandra and Graham

And here, as promised, are some of the pictures from the workshop at St. Andrew's (see p.2)

