



February 2017

Dear Friends and Family,

'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures forever.' Psalm 107:1

Our last newsletter reported a season of considerable uncertainty. We are incredibly thankful to report that the Lord has taken us through this and allowed us to enjoy calmer waters at the moment. Not that life is not busy, (no family of six can claim that!), but a lot of the stresses have been lifted. Gary Bedderson, our minister, returned to St. Thomas in December in much better health. He has relocated his office to help protect his health going forward. We are thrilled to have him back!

Crossword was fantastic and well worth the huge amount of administration that Alun took on in the weeks leading up to the event. Studies on Nehemiah were challenging, as were a mini-series on the 'non-negotiables of the faith'. We had a mature crop of leaders this year that spent much of the week disciplining the young people on camp. We learnt recently that, according to the feedback given by the campers, 30 teenagers professed faith in Christ for the first time, including two of our number at St. Thomas. This is cause for much rejoicing! Thank you to all who gave financially – we hope this encourages your hearts as it did ours.



The St. Thomas teenagers at Crossword Youth Camp, Ramon is in the centre holding Timothy



The Sunday-school Christmas dance group

Debbie and the Sunday-school team worked hard with the kids to prepare for our carol service. The children sang two gospel-proclaiming songs and danced.

We have about a dozen new children from unchurched families in the community, including some from Muslim homes. Pray that they will make St. Thomas their home long-term and that they would come to living faith. We pray this mindful of

the wonderful way that Ramon (now studying at bible college) and Dillon (our current kids' club and youth helper) have grown up through children's and youth ministry to go on to serve so faithfully. How wonderful it would be to see many of our current Sunday-school leading Sunday-school themselves in ten years' time!

Ramon (along with his wife Marjorie), has just moved out of the manse as they have relocated to Muizenberg where Ramon will be studying full time at George Whitfield College. God has grown them deeply in the last few months and we have enjoyed their friendship. Thankfully we will continue to see them with Ramon leading the second bible study group in our home each Thursday, and serving at St. Thomas on Sundays. Moving *into* the manse next weekend are Kathelo and Delight Meslane. Katleho has been employed to head up children's work at St. Thomas full time; our kids are already enjoying getting to know him better and we look forward to having them as neighbours. Please do be praying for them as they settle into a church of a different culture and language. Pray that the racism so prevalent in our land will not cause disunity in our church and hamper gospel witness. Pray rather that God's people will humbly learn from each other and benefit from our diversity – together proclaiming Christ to all people.

St. Thomas' pre-school has received lots of new enrolments this year. We expect to reach a full class of 30 in the next few weeks, making the need to build on the site more urgent. Pray for Gary as he looks for another teacher and champions the fundraising effort.

In family news, Likhona turned 12 at the beginning of the month and has returned to Pinelands North Primary to begin grade six. He has a Christian teacher this year that seems really excellent for him. Likhona's birthday gift was two pet rats 'Ratatouille' and 'Geoff'; he continued to show real responsibility for our chickens, quails and rabbit and thus has an 'indoor pet' at last! Likhona is also 'addicted' to his rubix cube and can now do it in less than two minutes having carefully learnt some of the algorithms.

Ilana started at Grace Primary in grade three. We truly thank the Lord for this opportunity for her, having wrestled with the decision for a long while as to whether or not to change her school or to move to home-schooling. A thoroughly Christian environment, small classes, far less structured assessment, a rich curriculum and remedial help is a real provision; she is absolutely loving it and comes home bursting to share what she has learnt! What an answer to our prayers this is and a weight off our shoulders.



The Burt children at Christmas

Malachi begun another year home schooling and is loving it. Unlike UK schools, Malachi is only set to begin grade one in 2019, despite turning five in March! We are thoroughly enjoying a curriculum called 'Little Footprints' which is a literature-based programme for his age group with stories throughout South Africa. We are finding that home-schooling Malachi rather than sending him to pre-school is allowing us wonderful freedom and flexibility and is the right fit for our family at this time. Timothy is now crawling at lightning speed, is messy beyond words, has developed an ear-piercing screech and needs to fast lose the habit of hair pulling and biting! He is super cute and much adored by all.

As always we value your ongoing partnership with us in the gospel as we begin our eleventh year here. We are set to return to the UK for five weeks in June/July and look forward to catching up with many of you then.

With every blessing,

Alun, Debbie, Likhona (12), Ilana (8), Malachi (4) and Timothy (10 months)

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