

# NOVEMBER 2018



Dear Friends,

## Rick

This semester I've had a massive class (students) called 'Spiritual Life' (a discipleship course), and several smaller ones (8-40 students) on various theology topics. The most interesting course has been about how to respond to witchcraft-accusations from a biblical point of view. This is a very real issue here: one student, when he was still in primary school was accused of being a witch (and was said to be to blame for illnesses in his family). He vigorously denied this, but then was beaten until he 'confessed'. After he 'confessed,' the beating stopped, and he was gradually reaccepted by the family. Another student had a more tragic outcome: while he was still at high school, his father was accused of being a witch. Things got out of hand and his father was murdered by an angry mob. Unfortunately the "Prosperity Gospel" false teaching in churches makes things worse: many Prosperity Preachers lead their hearers to expect that all Christians should be healthy and successful all the time. But inevitably some of their hearers go through hard times – so who is to blame? One way out is to say that someone in your family is a witch and they are blocking your progress.

My Chaplain role means I've continued to be involved in preaching (from Daniel this semester) and again lots of counselling. Big issues are being raised (to do with sexual immorality, money problems and alcohol/drug abuse) and mostly seem to be being dealt with. There have, of course, been some disappointing situations, where people have returned to sin. But many of the students do seem to be working hard to turn their backs on sin and follow Christ more faithfully.

On Sunday 25 November I was involved in the baptisms of some teenagers. I have written before that we have a very big Sunday School attached to chapel. For various reasons this year the baptism class was exceptionally large – over double what it has been in previous years. So that meant that the total number of people we baptised that day was ... 52!



The seminary has been thinking for some time about the possibility of building a "Children's Centre" - a dedicated space for children's ministry within the campus. I think this is a great idea and would help move the children's ministry forwards – there are 500 children and teens in the Sunday School, so there is a lot more that could be done in terms of evangelism and discipleship. There has been progress this semester, because a nicely situated building on campus has become free and it has been dedicated for use as a children's centre. The building has some great outdoor space, but it is an old building (see pictures overleaf). The roof will need to be completely redone within a couple of years and it might be better to rebuild from scratch. Encouragingly, a Harvest Offering has been put towards this new Children's Centre, which will help things get moving.



*The proposed Children's Centre from the outside and inside*

## Alanna

This has been an exhausting semester, but with lots of progress. My main insight has been that I need to be building up others in the ministries I'm involved in, rather than doing things myself. I don't find that easy. It often seems harder than just getting on with something. I'm aware that my tendency has always been to work on things independently, but I know I need to change that in ministry. Please pray for me for humility and an ability to be

encouraging and inspiring. It's too easy for me to see the faults in the way people do things, rather than build them up in the ways they are growing. This applies to home-school with the kids as well.

In Girls Brigade we have continued to grow in numbers of girls and leaders. We are able to split into two groups every week, but would like to split into four age-groups. For this we would need leaders who are committed to coming regularly and leading activities. In the meantime it has been encouraging to have a number of women join us on a more irregular basis. Please pray that God would provide leaders with the time and energy to run the different activities.

We've been studying Ephesians with the older girls. It's full of imagery and so drawing pictures to represent the different ideas has really helped. The girls are remembering what we've been learning from week to week. We're trying to understand the reality of what Jesus has already done for us, before looking at how our lives should be impacted. We've also had encouragement from planting a Girls Brigade 'farm' and growing vegetables, to raise funds. It's been good for them to learn about business, as well as vegetable-growing.

I've started a part-time Masters course at the seminary. It has been great to be in class with the other students and to hear their perspectives. Issues of how to deal with violence are high on the agenda in this area. Please pray for the godly attitudes which I often hear to persist.

Please pray for our pastors and the people they are working with. Many are really suffering financially and from fear and vulnerability. This leads to honest questioning of whether God is really able to take care of his people. Looking at the testimony of the Bible, we see God promise that his true judgement is certain, and that he will rescue those who call out to him. The fulfilment is in the coming of Jesus, in his first and second comings. Pray that Christians would be able to encourage one another in these truths and persevere, and that good theology would be preached in churches and among individuals.

Please pray also for Christian parents and teachers as they try to bring up kids in ways shaped by the gospel. Many people are convinced that the traditional culture of beating is not the best way to treat children, but have not seen examples of alternatives. They feel under social pressure to treat children harshly. Pray for them that they would receive wisdom and see good models, and be able to pass this on.

In Ephesians 3 Paul prays for the people to be strengthened with power through his Spirit, and that they will have power to grasp the unknowable vastness of Christ's love. Please pray for strengthening from Christ for us, our students, and their communities.

Pray for rest and refreshment over the Christmas break.

Love, Rick and Alanna

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