



June 2015

Dear Friends and Family,

A few weeks ago, South Africa celebrated 21 years of democracy. I am sure many of you will have seen reports in your own news bulletins. In our family we enjoyed a public holiday and took the opportunity to read a good storybook explaining the significance of the 1994 election to our kids. This prompted a lot of discussion in the kitchen where we had a 'bake off' with one of our neighbours' kids. The children were quick to name some of the good things the democracy has brought which, of course, affect them directly. Nonetheless, we were mindful that South Africa as a country is facing significantly challenges at the moment and we wanting to remind them again of how to be Christian in a land that remains so complex.

Because we love this country, we want you to join us in praying with more insight for some of the issues that are affecting it adversely. For this reason we thought we would first share some of the current national issues. We almost always share our local ministry at St. Thomas, but periodically we feel it is also useful to give you a broader glimpse of our context for gospel work, in this wonderful but troubled land. So before getting to life in Heideveld, let us share a few points for prayer...

Racial tensions are high and much you read in the media is saddening. Xenophobic attacks in Johannesburg and Durban have forced many foreigners (mainly living in the informal areas) to be fearful. The economy is weakening daily; regular power cuts have become part of daily living here as the major power companies are enforcing 'load shedding' as the country struggles to produce enough electricity. We have got used to services without our band, bible study by candlelight, but more disappointing was when last week's large youth rally has to be cancelled because they couldn't guarantee electricity for the evening. Our struggles, however, are little. We think of those in the informal or dangerous parts of our country where lack of electricity increases crime and hardship. Our postal service has seriously broken down after lengthy strikes by workers over pay. The government departments of Home Affairs and Social development are so overworked that the system simply isn't operating well. And South Africa ranked second bottom in the world for education.

A letter written from a senior church leader in our denomination reminds us that *'Unlike others, God's people need not stand helpless on the sidelines. Not only should we be doing and encouraging right but we can also call on the King of Heaven to intervene in our land. Biblical history teaches us that God opens great gospel opportunities in the most difficult of times. But we must watch and pray for it. Many people are losing hope in earthly systems and solutions. This is not a time to shrink back but rather for us to proclaim Christ to our land.'* We would covet your prayers.

Turning to Heideveld and life at St. Thomas, we have much to give thanks for. The church is growing; Sunday morning services are definitely fuller on a regular basis. Ramon, a first year apprentice at St. Thomas is doing really well. Alun is thoroughly enjoying working alongside and training him. How exciting that our church now has four staff members – three full time! A real area of growth this term has been our young adults' bible study groups on Thursday evenings – groups that meet in our home. We split in the group into two last term allowing Ramon to gain experience at leading his own weekly study group. We have tea and fellowship together at the beginning and end and disperse into two rooms for the study itself. This has worked really well and the group is growing steadily with around 15 core members. Alun and Ramon meet together in the week to study the passages and prepare appropriate questions – Revelation was an exciting book this term! We move onto Jonah tomorrow night. We continually give thanks for giving us Gary and Velma to lead us and wonderful colleagues in Ramon and Brigitte (children's worker who is also part time with Arise).



Turning lastly to home, Saturday nights have become board-game nights! With Malachi down at 7:00, Likhona and Ilana love the treat of staying up a bit to play games with Mum and Dad. 'A ticket to ride' (or 'trains' as we call it) is fabulous fun! Likhona is proving to be a tougher opponent to Dad with chess these days – we must introduce him to draughts soon. Our older children are also enjoying sport at school – Ilana has been introduced to netball and hockey this term and Likhona has participated in his first inter-school hockey matches. Malachi is enjoying pre-school at home and loves the original 'curious

George' stories. It would be a conservative estimate to say that we have read these seven stories at least 50 times in the last 60 days! Dressing up and imaginary play are the activity of choice – Mummy turns into a firefighter or a pirate most days at the moment! Desperate to be like the older children, he too asks for 'homework' and is eagerly learning to read his numbers and initial phonic sounds through play. Debbie has had some health issues. In January, she was diagnosed with Coeliac Disease and so is getting used to a strict gluten-free diet. We are thankful that we are privileged to be able to have medical insurance that allows us excellent care here. She has also had (and is still recovering from) a nasty virus that affected her breathing at night, and caused coughing and vomiting. She is on the mend but would appreciate prayer for a full recovery before flying to the UK.

We are looking forward to Home Leave later in the month. As the ministry has grown, Alun's job has grown too and he particularly has been very busy since Christmas. We are all looking forward to a chance to refresh and enjoy precious time with our family and friend that we don't see enough of this side of heaven.

We do need, lastly, to make you aware of our current situation regarding our financial support. Over the years we have been blessed and deeply encouraged by hundreds of individuals and partner churches that have allowed us to serve here. Some of those supporters have (for good and valid reasons) had to reduce their support at different stages. Crosslinks looks after us very well in this regard and have prompted us to share this need with you so that we can, God-willing, continue gospel-work here in Heideveld. When we visit our churches, we will be sharing our updated profile outlining ways to partner with us. In the meantime, should you wish to support us, you will find the ways to do so outlined on the crosslinks website... www.crosslinks.org Thank you for your generosity whether in prayer, finances, hospitality or correspondence. It is all appreciated greatly.

This comes with our love and prayers,

Alun, Debbie, Likhona (10), Ilana (7) and Malachi (3)

Please contact your local Crosslinks office to change your contact details

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