

FEBRUARY UPDATE (5)

Hey Guys,

It has been a little while since we last wrote and lots of things seem to have been happening. It has been a challenging time with real a mixture of ups and downs, the rough and the smooth.

Today Gus is helping Letsema move into his new house. Work on the building had almost completely halted over the last couple of months for various reasons, but the situation that required initial urgency had changed so the pressure had been off. However last week the windows went in and Letsema decided it was time to make the move. Work still needs to be done (finishing the pig pens, interior walls, pointing, plugs etc for future electricity and so on) so this will continue over the month. At the moment there is no toilet so Gus and Mark are hoping to get that built today while Letsema and his family start unpacking. Can you imagine moving in without that particular facility ready? I can't but the people here are made of harder stuff!!! Once he is settled in, he can start to gather the people around and see where God leads it.



It is the start of a new school year here and so education has come to the fore. Our worship band consists of three lads (early 20's) who live at the local orphanage. None of them could play an instrument a year or so ago but Thabo gave them the equipment and told them to learn. They learnt the keyboard, guitar and drums in about 6 months and are now our (only) musicians. They are excellent and really lead us well into the presence of God. One prophecy over City of Joy church was that we would demonstrate 'lingering in the presence of God' and this is certainly becoming the case!

Anyway they were seriously behind in their education and by the end of last year had only just finished primary school. Sponsorship for the next leg of their education was proving difficult because of a missing death certificate and the orphanage decided it would be best to send them away to be educated at a boarding school. However this would mean they would still be studying in their late 20s and we would lose our worship group. We started looking around for something local and Gus managed to get them into trade school (after some persuasion and special cases pleaded!) So in 2 years, they will come out as 2 trained carpenters and a bricklayer! This situation was a real encouragement to us!



At the end of our Pre School Christmas party. As you can see we had been busy.

We are now responsible for supporting them through this education and, with help from Church in the Peak, have managed to pay their first term fees and get them kitted out with tools. They are looking for their own place soon as they are really too old to stay in the orphanage so we will be looking to support them in that as well. As this was happening, we also managed to get a friend of ours back into school, who couldn't afford to finish. She has two years before she will complete school. Schooling here, is colossally expensive and I am amazed that anyone manages to get their child through secondary education. On top of the actual school fees, uniform and stationary, books can cost hundreds of pounds. They don't have the second hand

shops we have or cheap books. It is a huge pressure. A girl at home group this week was also praying for provision of books (if you can't get the correct books, you can't continue the subject). It is a big concern here and one that those of us in the UK would barely consider with our free education system and books provided.

Some of you may have already heard but yesterday 'little Thabo' who worked for Bokaletsa Bana (the kids club project) died suddenly in the night. We have spoken of him in a previous newsletter and he was a key member of the church and a friend. He suffered from epilepsy that was controlled by drugs, however the hospital often ran out of the drug and this would send him into terrible seizures. This is what happened this time, they ran out and he was meant to pick up the drugs when they came in yesterday. He never made it. He was in his early 20s and it was totally avoidable but for the incompetence of the health system. It is a big loss to church and very hard for his grandmother, Anna and sister, Mogho (who he lived with). His Gran has buried her husband, her children and now her grandson and yet she faithfully, quietly serves in our church and loves Jesus, someone we could learn so much from. Please pray for the church, for the family and that the funeral will testify to the hope that Thabo had in Jesus and that is available for us all.

The church is doing well, with numbers increasing and our hall regularly packed out. It won't be long before we outgrow it. We are praying for somewhere that is bigger, prominent and on the taxi route (as so few people have cars). A new family group started this week and Gus has been given the Ha Mabote group to lead for a couple of months training up Pitso to take over in April. Although the first week we had no people at all, we have had a wonderful turnout since with about 15 people coming each week. We were thrilled when 12 people turned out this week in the rain! (Rain often stops play here).

Becky is encouraged that some of the ladies who first visited 'mums and toddlers' are now regularly at church and joined the local family group. This was exactly what she was praying for, that it would be an open door into the church. Her adult language class has turned out quite small but they are working hard and hoping to make some real progress in the forthcoming weeks. Students and Twenties continues to be enjoyable, well attended and just beginning to focus on some more challenging bible studies. They seemed to really value it last week and joined in wholeheartedly. Again we are planning to hand this on to local leadership by April with Pitso and Lucia heading it up.

In April we will be off on a nice seaside holiday, followed by travelling to Johannesburg in mid-May waiting for the arrival of our next baby. So April seemed like a good time to pass things on.

One of the biggest disappointments over the last month was the failure of many of the maize crops planted in November. The crops were planted by Mark and Gus according to the 'Foundations for Farming' techniques; the seed was provided freely for the people and their contribution was to weed it, look after it and enjoy the fruits. However over Christmas there was 5/6 wks of no rain, and this combined with lack of faithfulness has meant most have been lost. It was upsetting to see that the patches had been completely neglected, even next to other crops that they had looked after. It was hard to understand too as this provided them and their family with food so surely it was important to invest time into its maintenance. It is important to weed continually, as the weeds easily kill the baby plants. It was evident that cattle had got into a couple of patches and eaten everything in sight. The chief's patch had also failed. Gus and Mark went over to Pete West to seek his advice and he showed us the vast difference in those who tended to their crops and those that didn't... they were a failure like ours. He has seen amazing success with this technique, producing yields of 10 times the national average and often more than this. He was a good guy to pick his brain. So next year, we plan to start earlier, probably planting in September (Pete says that Lesotho is consistently hit by a dry spell in December so it would help to get them in sooner so they are more established when it comes) and spend much more time training the people and emphasising the importance of weeding, mulch etc. We pray that we will have more success in the future.

As a family we are really well although we do confess that it gets quite lonely here at times and we long to hear from friends at home. We love your emails! Becky is having a smooth pregnancy and gradually getting bigger. Her legs are sore with the heat but other than that baby is active and kicking (although quieter than Gideon was... yay!) Gideon is wonderfully energetic, chatty (two languages mixed together) and exuberant. We are usually ready for bed as soon as he is in. He's so exhausting. *Our* sweetcorn patch has done really well (bigger than this now and we are eating so much of it!) Also our veg patches are wonderful with tomatoes, spinach, cucumber, lettuce, butternut, cabbage... I could go on!

Anyway thanks again for your prayers, emails, and financial support. We appreciate it all.

Loads of love

Gus, Becky and Gideon xxx

