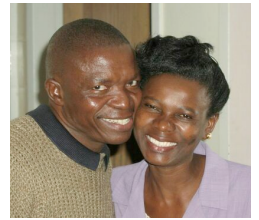




"Raised to Praise"

26 May 2003



Warmth, shelter, food, clothing, security.....the list could go on of things which tend to make our lives comfortable. Recently, Kevin Zakariasen and I took an evening trip to the inner city of Johannesburg. Before our eyes, street children were trying to get money for food by parking cars, while most were "smoking" glue to keep their minds off the chill of the night air and their nagging hunger. It is nearing winter here in South Africa, and many of these children are without shoes. They are in need of hats, mittens, an education and loving compassion. Above all, they need Christ!

We, as Christians, have abundant opportunities to meet the spiritual and physical needs of these children. They are forgotten and ignored by most. Although these children are poorly cared for, they cannot just be taken off the streets. We need to work through the courts with social workers who can help us with permanent placement. Some organizations have established shelters to give these children food and a bed for the night. We want to provide more than just food and a bed. This is why we are striving to assist local churches in meeting the needs of orphaned children by giving them a dad of their own, a mom who will love them unconditionally, and a family where Christ is the center of the home.

Zoning/Construction

Since our last update, we have continued to pray for the approval of the rezoning. As a staff, we have been blessed through our time of meeting to pray on Wednesday mornings at the site of this desired property. As we met this past week to pray, it was with great anticipation of the day we will receive the approval. Prayers of thanksgiving were expressed for what God has done and is continuing to do as we seek His will.

The authorities informed us that this past Friday was the day they would be voting and that everything looked good for the approval. We have been led to believe this before, so we prayed earnestly that it would take place as planned and that God's perfect will would guide the vote. However, in the time preceding the vote, questions were raised that must be answered before the vote can be finalized. I am meeting tomorrow to help answer those questions. We continue to rest in the knowledge that we serve a God whose timing is perfect, and we believe that the months of waiting have been for the good of this ministry that God is establishing. When we receive word of the outcome, you may need to cover your ears for there will be joyous shouts echoing from Hammanskraal! Please take a moment right now to pray that God would allow the decision of rezoning to be finalized, permitting us to move ahead with building a village for His glory.

Family News

The Matjenis and Phagos are now well settled into family life and rejoicing in the joys and challenges of parenthood. We were blessed to have our staff join with Pastor Elias

Matjeni's church last Sunday for worship, and what a thrilling moment it was when the children, including three of Bethesda's children, stood up front to sing "Change my heart, O God". To know that two of the three have made decisions to trust Christ at an early age brings joy to our hearts! Psalms 8:6a says it well, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise..." For God's glory, we desire to see the children at Bethesda "Raised to Praise"!

We are excited to announce the arrival of our third houseparent couple to Bethesda. Fritz and Masello Shikwambane are moving onto Bethesda's property on June 2nd, along with their son Gomolemo. They will be opening their home for another 8 children to eventually be brought into the loving care of a family who is committed to God. Please pray for the Shikwambanes as they get settled and prepare to open their home and hearts to the children God brings to Bethesda. Continue to pray that God will give wisdom in abundance as we seek godly houseparents as well as the children whom God desires to live at Bethesda.

Teams

On May 15th, we welcomed nine students from Cedarville University in Ohio. They have encouraged us with their willing spirits ready to serve, and we pray that this will be a time in their lives when they get to know God in a deeper way. They have already given much energy to work projects around Bethesda and spent three afternoons last week ministering to children in the community through a sports time. Each afternoon, more than two hundred children listened as the team presented God's truth through songs, drama and music. The reality of the situation is that some of these children, who have lost parents and are now living with relatives, may one day come to Bethesda. We pray that the God who is able will protect them as they face the daily pressures of their culture. Please pray for this team as they continue their ministry and for a team from Faith Baptist Bible College who will be joining us from June 12th to July 12th. Pray that they will be lights, shining brilliantly, as they reflect God's love and compassion.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers for this ministry. Continue to pray that Bethesda Outreach Ministries will be a light in the community to direct broken lives toward the God we are privileged to serve!

John Mixon
Bethesda Outreach Village Administrator
