



Sidlauskas Update

March, 2018

ROBERTSON, SOUTH AFRICA

There are many things to talk about this time and I'm grateful to be able to boast about God's faithfulness to us, especially in our greatest times of need. I have been learning over and over again that when our situation gets to a point where we are helpless, we are set up perfectly to witness God's ability to answer when called upon.

Believe it or not, we have been here nearly three years and our visas are running out. In order to renew them, the whole family had to go to government offices in Cape Town to apply. We were allowed to schedule all the appointments for the same day. So the day arrived and we departed from Robertson at 5:00AM. Our first appointment was at 9:00, so we should have had plenty of time for the two-hour drive. Our plan was to get breakfast in the city. However, traffic was very bad and we were not going to make our appointment in time. We were praying that the office would have grace with us and that they would allow the missed appointment to be made up when we arrived. As we continued toward the city center, our van died when we pulled off the highway. Carolyn pushed us to a side street and we sat feeling so disappointed that we couldn't renew our visas. Our plans to come home in June were going to be changed to the end of March. I soon realized that we needed to continue fighting to get to the visa offices. This fact now became our mission for the day. We prepared ourselves to do whatever was in our power to get to those offices, even if it meant walking the hour it would have taken. I asked God to be with us, to protect

us, and guide us. About a half hour later we arrived in the city on a train and were allowed to go to our appointments. We were told that as long as we made it that day, they would have helped us. We still had problems with our applications, but after re-applying, we were finished and out the door ready to deal with the van. We were really just hoping to be able to leave the city or sleep in a hotel. Anything other than the street would be better. At about 2:00 we got back to the van and began searching for help. No official mechanics were nearby, but people who said they could help began to show up. In the end, the van needed a repair that would take longer than we could wait, so we phoned our friend Gary in Robertson and he picked us up from the city. After 10:00PM we arrived back at home and had successfully submitted our visa applications and completed the interviews. Thanks be to God! The stress of the day completely exhausted us, but knowing and seeing God's presence with us was enough. We went the next day to get our fixed van. Now we patiently wait for the response of our applications.

I talked about the drought in our area a bit last time, and noted that much of the concern has been for the city of Cape Town. The situation has not improved much and our area now faces water shortages as well. Some dams are full, but unfortunately, they provide water for irrigation not for drinking. The reservoir we draw water from is currently just under 14% and is expected to be dry by the end of April if nothing changes. Continue praying for rain for this region.

OUTREACH, FAMILY, DISCIPLESHIP

We are still waiting to hear a response from the municipality regarding the plans for a community center.

I have talked about Me-Ann and the bakery at our house many times. Since the last letter, the bakery has closed and Me-Ann has gotten a job at a different local bakery. The closure was a difficult decision to make and we miss the daily interaction with Me-Ann, however, we can see that the decision was best for her. She is now receiving a regular paycheck and is expanding her baking skills. She says she uses a lot of what she learned here and is grateful for the opportunity she was given. Being a part of her story gives us great joy. We know she is spiritually strong and growing. She is running the race well.

The weather is becoming less hot as we move into autumn. The new school year started in January and each child is rising to the challenges each season brings. James is particularly enjoying big kid school. Lucas is in grade 6; Amelia grade 1, James pre-school, and Titus is in Mommy school. Lucas has been very involved with sports, and I've had the privilege of helping to coach from time to time. He participated in two triathlons, doing very well in each. We also regularly practice throwing events in track and field.



Bible Distribution

I have been welcomed by a group of guys that distribute Bibles through Gideon's International. In the past month, we have given Bibles to all the local grade 8 children as well as the prison. The total is around 800 Bibles. My favorite is the prison because the inmates are truly hungry for God. They have many good questions, and have responded particularly well to the life of Paul.



Pastor Mngwcengi

I have known Pastor Mngwcengi for more than two years. In that time, we have become good friends and I have been invited to teach often. His church is a thriving but smaller church in Nqkubela. He has proven to be a faithful and honoring friend, a great soldier in a difficult place. His church is in the process of expanding their building and applying for an official non-profit status that would open the doors to more significant donations from the community. Gary Miedema and I have been working with the church to implement accounting practices and explore building ideas. Please pray for this pastor and church as they continue to grow in the love and knowledge of God.

Carolynn's School

Carolynn has been teaching playschool three mornings a week out of our repurposed guest room. The kids are all from Me-Ann's community. It has been a great joy to see Carolynn operating in her gifting and passion.

Based on the understanding we have after three years of living here, the place we see God leading us is investing in young people. Carolynn has definitely taken the initiative and the results are already present.

Me-Ann told me that the kids are already different in the way that they play. Prior to attending school with Carolynn, they would never play together. They would only fight and yell. Now she says she often has to look for them to be sure they are ok, because they just play together quietly.

We do have hopes to continue making a difference in the lives of children. Please pray with us about how to do that.

The title of this newsletter was going to be "Layers". One person told me that South Africa is a third world country with first world wallpaper. At the time, I didn't understand, but now I do. This image is particularly enhanced when we have visitors who have ideas about how to address the multitude of problems that are quickly noticed. When each issue is talked about another surfaces as a result. Solutions seemingly create other problems. The sum result is that we are left shaking our heads about what would be an effective approach to addressing the problems. There just aren't any easy answers. So, do we throw our hands up in defeat? No! We continue doing what we can do, relying on the Holy Spirit's guidance. God is able!



As mentioned above, we plan to visit home in the summer. We hope to see you all and will communicate about projects, as we get closer.

March is a particularly difficult month for our finances for many reasons. We must pay our health insurance, plane tickets, visa fees, and pre-pay for the months we will be gone. Another factor is the currency exchange rate that has diminished our buying power by more than 15%.

We hope to present long term plans during our visit, but until then, please pray about the financial needs mentioned.

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