

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

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THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Dear Faithful Ones,

We finally have the satellite phone up and running again so that we can do email from Mtshabezi. It is a fact of life that nothing good comes easily, regardless of where one may be, but especially in Zimbabwe. The last piece of the puzzle was to get a new SIM card and phone number mailed from the U.S. Now, that may not sound so difficult but how do you make that happen in a country with an unreliable postal system? The solution is that the SIM card gets mailed to a South African post office box and when someone trustworthy is going out of the country you send the mailbox key and ask that the mail be collected. Once they are returning from South Africa, with your mail, you drive over 14 km of bad dirt road to wait along the main tar road from Beitbridge with no idea when they will be passing by. Communications are a challenge because cell phones don't work at Mtshabezi (no towers nearby) and no one ever knows if the computers at the border will be working or not so it may take 30 minutes to 8 hours to re-enter the country. So at 8:30 pm on Friday night, under a gorgeous starlit sky, we got the SIM card and are now back in business. We sincerely thank all of you for your support and understanding over the past two months. What would have taken less than a week in the US was very speedily accomplished in eight weeks in Zim. In case you haven't figured it out life is different here.

This past Sunday the Acting Overseer (Rev. N. Sibanda), one of the lecturers from EBI (Rev. N. Dladla), and myself made a housecall for an elderly man who had become a new believer and wanted to be baptized. Since transportation is so difficult we took the opportunity to do Sunday School and Church at the closest rural church to the man's village. Ten minutes before the church service I found out that I was speaking. Can anyone identify three actions that we as believers can do here on earth that we will not be able to do in eternity? (There are probably more than three). After church we went with a few of the local church members to the village. Baptism took place with a cup of water and was followed by communion in the cooking hut. How is it possible to thank the generous supporters at Five Forks that made it possible to have lovely communion utensils to utilize? It was another wonderful blessing and reminder of how each one of you are assisting us in all that we do here.

I don't remember how much I may have written about the plan to generate support for EBI from the rural churches? It is futile to ask for financial donations since no one has any money. Therefore we identified one commodity people could give is corn since the rainy season was good and most people harvested well. After the baptism, communion, and the second fellowship meal we stopped at the local deacon's village. Five small, rural churches had collected 9 bags of maize for EBI. There was also some contributed for the General Conference that will be here at Mtshabezi next month. Once again the Toyota was overloaded and I cringed as I thought about what was happening to the springs and shocks as we traveled these wonderful dirt roads, but that is transportation in Africa. Another recent accomplishment was the progress on the new library facility. H. Nyathi, a good friend who is employed by the secondary school to do electrical and plumbing work, took a week of leave and came to EBI to work on the library. I now have a crew of 10 casual laborers. They dug ditches for pipes and a septic tank, were instructed on how to cut and thread galvanized pipe, assisted with fitting lights and wiring, and even did some painting. In five days the plumbing and electrical work is 95% furnished and we only have one leaking pipe to fix. I still need to get some special light fixtures from South Africa. All that will remain to be completed will be the ceilings, painting, and finish flooring in the main room. New shelving has been assembled, books are being unpacked and catalogued, six computers have been purchased and there is great progress. We are on track to be finished for a dedication/opening at conference the last week of August.

Some of you may be aware of the Family to Family (F2F), Village to Village program that was born when we were in the U.S. for December of last year. The idea has been nurtured by Rebekah Basinger and is receiving truly amazing support. This week Jake Shenk made the first delivery of food supplies for some families in the Mtshabezi District. I wanted to get the food to the selected families as quickly as possible. It is impossible to describe the astonishment, amazement, and heartfelt gratitude that I received from the recipients. I have received my blessing now. Those of you who have donated the funds that make it possible are banking your rewards eternally (Matthew 6:19). The program is directed towards those families that are absolutely unable to care for themselves, through no fault of their own, especially the sick, the handicapped, the elderly, the orphans, etc. Does God have a special place in His heart for those in such circumstances? I hesitate to build a theology on the basis of a single verse but consider the definition for “pure religion” from James 1:27. Let that be food for thought.

Make it count,
Steve and Chris Newcomer

We serve under the auspices of Brethren in Christ World Missions. Contributions towards our ministry may be sent to Brethren in Christ world Missions, PO Box 390, Grantham PA 17027-0390 or in Canada, 2700 Bristol Circle, Oakville, ON L6H 6E1.