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South Africa

April 2012

Dear Friends

It has been such a long time since I wrote to you. I suppose part of that is busyness and partly that the newness of the country has worn off a bit. That isn't to say that there are never new and exciting things to report.

### **Our family**

Our family continues to grow! Alistair and I are now grandparents. I had the marvelous privilege of being at the birth of our first grandchild – Daniel Aaron Herbst. Juan, Rachel's boyfriend was also there. It was a very easy and quick delivery and we are grateful to God for the gift of this little life. Rachel and Juan plan to marry towards the end of the year although no date has been set yet. We are very grateful for the love and support of our families and Christian friends. Rachel and Juan have experienced forgiveness and acceptance and Daniel has been surrounded by love and admirers since he made his appearance. Daniel means 'God is my judge'.

Daniel was recently in hospital having contracted Pneumonia. He still has a bit of a cough but it is improving. He is still on medication but seems much better now.

Bethany continues to have ups and downs in her health. She is undergoing tests for Lupus and the first batch of tests, indicate that this is a possibility. We are waiting for the results of the next lot. She is in her final year at school and we would ask you to pray for guidance as to her future. We are not sure of what or where she should study. We are in the difficult position of not having full residence rights in any country and not being able to benefit from the financial perks of permanent residence in either the UK or SA. This puts many avenues of study out of her reach. Her health is also an issue and we would prefer her to be close to us or a close family friend or relative. We are investigating distance learning courses but would value your prayers as to her future.

Stephen continues to love life although he does still struggle academically at school. He enjoys sport and his size (bigger now than dad) is a benefit when playing water polo and rugby etc. Pinning him down to his books isn't always easy.

### **Teleios**

Jenny's new venture, Teleios Christian School, is now one year old. It was set up in the grounds of Bethany Emmanuel Baptist Church here in King William's Town for children who need to be built up socially, emotionally and academically. We started with one pupil and now have 73 – all with barriers to learning of one sort or another. Our children range from five years to seventeen years old.

Our school runs completely on school fees and donations. We get no government funding and although most government schools also charge fees, many of our families struggle to pay our fees

but desperately need to be with us as no other school will accept their children. We have around fourteen children who have come to us from no school at all. They have for a variety of reasons had to leave their school and no other school has been able to offer them a place.

We have one boy in a wheel chair; four others who are physically handicapped; three with cochlea implants; another three who are deaf; two who are on the autistic spectrum; many who are hyperactive; dyslexic; others who have experienced great traumas in their lives ranging from the death of their parents to being present when people were killed in a bank robbery; injuries through car accidents or abuse or bullying. What a wonderful and happy motley crew we are. Each one bears the image of God and is precious in his sight!

Each time a new child starts, we brace ourselves for the behavior that comes with a child who, for a variety of reasons, may feel neglected, ignored, despised, hated, resented. As the weeks pass, we see the child relax, smiles replacing the tense faces and the hidden butterfly of a child emerge.

So many of our parents and guardians pay tribute to this. One mother recently told us that since her fourteen year old son had come to us, she had fallen in love with her son all over again and his true self shone once more.

Another mother told us that for years she hadn't slept for worry and her son could not get up in the morning. Now she sleeps so soundly that her sixteen year old son wakes her every morning eager to get to school.

Many parents tell us how their children had been exposed to prolonged bullying because of their learning barriers and for the first time they feel loved and cherished and are learning and growing in confidence.

As a staff team (all whom are Christians) we have often talked about how the missing element in most of our children's education has been the God-shaped part. We have seen many of our children changing as they realize that only God gives direction to life, has a purpose for our lives and can change our lives through his saving grace.

We meet as a staff daily for bible study and prayer and seek to teach our children about God's love for them and how even though they have suffered, they were known even before the dawn of time. For many of our children this has been such a marvelous revelation.

We now have a super staff. We have Mr Tembani Zani who teaches the senior primary class. He is a qualified pastor and school teacher who works four days a week with us and then does outreach work into the local schools. On a Sunday I teach a Sunday School class of 40-50 teens aged between 13 and 19. Many of these are boys from the local boys' school who live in the school hostel. This year they have just soaked up God's word. Many of them are struggling between some of their cultural issues and Christianity and Tembani has started going into the school hostel on Tuesday nights to help them to tease out the cultural verses Biblical issues. Last week 32 of these boys gave their lives to Christ. What a wonderful and exciting time it is. We look forward to watching them grow and develop in their walk with Christ and see this as a significant development in the progress of our country which is just 16 years into democracy. Please pray with us for these boys. God knows them all by name.

Our next staff member works with the secondary school pupils. Her name is Mrs Majola. She has experience in working with children who are at risk of offending and it is a treat to watch her enthuse and inspire these young adults.

Then we have Yemurai Masibango who is from Zimbabwe. She has such a love for our problem children and somehow manages to get into the hearts of even the most disruptive child. She has some very difficult children in her class, children with psychological barriers and yet whenever you enter her classroom it is like dipping your toe into a cool fresh oasis.

In our Grade R class we have Carol Phillips. She is the wife of Greg Philips, one of the new Dumisani Lecturers. She is such a Godly woman and sees every problem as a prayer opportunity. She too sees the way to helping these children is to spread God's love to not only the child but his family.

Mihlali is a young girl whom you may remember me talking of for many years now. Her mother is a cleaner at Dumisani and she herself has significant learning barriers and yet she makes a great carer for our young children. She is always happy and the children love her.

Candice helps out in the Grade R class and is starting her teacher training next year. She is a great help for Carol. Many of you would have met Candice two years ago when she accompanied us on our visit in 2009 to the UK.

Then last but certainly not least we have Nobuhle. She helps with a variety of things: the disabled children, after care, administration and supply teaching.

Each day when I see our staff bowing in prayer, I often sneak a look at their bowed heads and feel this amazing sense of gratitude and honour of working with such a godly group and I whisper my own prayer of protection on them as I know that I cannot ever take for granted the gift of a supportive team whom work well together.

I marvel at how God brought us all together. I often wondered where we would get staff who would work for the small amount that we could pay them on the fees that we get. But nothing is impossible for God. I look at a team which is not a second best team but a first class team who bring with them just what we need.

We have many difficult days as we struggle to work out what is the best plan of action for each individual child, but every day is a blessing and even though we reach bed at night exhausted, we know that we have been used by God to affect change in the lives of our students and their families.

## **Dumisani**

There are several new faces at Dumisani. Alistair (as principal) and Deon Lombard (Vice-principal) were recently joined by Greg Phillips and Wayne Gratz in the academic team. We are also excited that Hombakazi, the Dumisani receptionist, is expecting a baby later in the year. Please pray that we can make suitable arrangements when Hombakazi has to be off work.

If you get the Dumisani news, then you will have learnt all about these two new men already. If you don't get the Dumisani news then you can access it at [www.freechurch.org](http://www.freechurch.org). Also, if you use Facebook, please follow the latest Dumisani news on the Dumisani Theological Institute group page.

Dumisani continues to work under significant financial constraints which limit the range of activities we can be engaged in, but we are grateful to the Lord for his provision for the college through these difficult times and for support from many people and churches in South Africa and overseas.

There have still been many exciting developments and we see daily God's hand at work and are convinced that we are involved in a strategic ministry within this country.

Dumisani isn't just a book based ministry but a heart and life changing ministry not just for those who attend Dumisani but those who are then taught by those equipped to teach in a Godly way, the very words of life to a dying generation.

Recently, Dumisani hosted the African Pastors' Conference. It was a worthwhile conference with a good number attending from our area. The speakers were interesting and the friendships that were made were invaluable. It is hoped that the conference will be at Dumisani again next year.

Wayne and Tembani both help Susanne and me to teach the Sunday School teachers. This continues to be such an exciting and rewarding ministry. Around fifty people are doing our Sunday School teacher's Correspondence Course and the thirst for materials and help is massive. Our classes average around sixty participants although it can be upwards of one hundred. One thing that we are delighted about is the number of pastors that have begun to attend the training too as they realize the need to reach out to the youth. Please continue to pray for the Sunday School teachers as they bring light to a dark world.

The Bible Women are still an amazing group of women. I have found it increasingly hard to be with them. For the last five years, I taught these women each month but now find it increasingly difficult to leave the school. At first this distressed me, but I can see God's hand in this too. The women are more than capable of learning together through the scriptures and each other. This is an opportunity for the women to learn to rely on God and the abilities that he has given them, and not depend so much on missionaries. Please remember them as they continue to meet each month and work through the Bible materials that seek to open God's word to them. Please pray for them as they work tirelessly leading bible studies and doing the pastoral work in their churches which often involves dealing with issues that we can't even imagine but are also seeing people brought into God's family.

Many thanks for your prayers, your interest, your commitment and your love.

Alistair and Jenny Wilson