

8 October, 2007

Greetings from South Africa!

Just a brief update and some news: As of the end of September we are now serving over 750 children among the 3 Isibindis, with over 400 in Ilinge. We are receiving a very generous donation from NACCW of additions to our 3 Safe Parks this month, including 2 containers for Ilinge for much needed indoor space, shaded sandboxes, soccer goal boxes, swings, joy wheels, outdoor shaded tables to name a few.

Thanks to private donations we were able to buy 2 containers for Alice as they have no building at all to work from. Great news and a special thanks to Zeni, Francisco, Jack and Chrisna, Gary, David, Jackie and all who through their tireless support many, many children are blessed! And now a short story.

When you drive into the Township of Ezibeleni, you have to drive on a long, tarred road before you get to the beginning of the neighborhoods. All along this road on your left appear heaps and heaps of rubbish scattered along for kilometers. Among the piles of garbage, and in between the feeding cows, we always pass groups of small children rummaging through the rubble, most likely seeking lost and buried treasures. Our hearts sink as we imagine all of the potential dangers! One day as we were driving by we caught a glimpse of 3 boys, probably between 8-10 years, in the middle of the garbage trying very hard to pull something along in a crate. On second glance our brains connected what our eyes were seeing. The boys were pulling a very dead, stiff, odorous dog in a crate with a rope. God only knows what their plans were. We were horrified and did our best with our limited isiXhosa and mama authority to get them to abandon this dog and go home. When we arrived to the Isibindi Ezibeleni Safe Park we related the story to the Child and Youth Care Workers and a plan was immediately put into place. Two CYCW's were scheduled to canvas the area daily for children, introduce themselves, and invite them to the Safe Park for other sorts of adventures, followed by a home visit to assess what's happening there. The next day there were 7 boys from the dump playing on the new swings, putting together a puzzle, looking at books, and playing Futbol with Lusanda and Mthetho, CYCW's. A beam of hope indeed! This is just some of what CYCW's do!

The other day sitting outside for our Isibindi Alice meeting, Pumi, one of the supervisors, walked by with 2 boys in her shadow, both looking rather serious. It turns out that they were from the Magistrate's Court after the boys spent the night in lock-up for allegedly throwing rocks at a drunken man with 2 other boys. Naturally THEY were innocent and the other two guilty. When Pumi got word of their being in jail she was there standing beside them in court, vouching for the two in her care. The magistrate let them go with a warning in her custody as a CYCW. And under her supervision they will be, as she focuses on their strengths and helps them to make right decisions in future. You never know where you may be a day in the life of a CYCW.

The past few Saturdays the CYCW's at Ilinge accompanied Bobby, 9, burying his Tatamkulu (grandfather) and the mother of 10 year old Sinalo, now in Makulu's care. In the midst of the extraordinary and very ordinary moments of life the CYCW is there, accompanying the children and families. A beacon of light, hope, love.

Today's Gospel, the encounter and dialogue between Jesus and the lawyer and his question about who is our neighbor, helps us to understand all of this. It is intriguing that Jesus uses again a Samaritan as a main character of His teaching. Certainly a person who Jews would have considered out of the circle, a person who has nothing in common with the Chosen people, on the contrary, plenty of things separated them. We hear that the Samaritan stopped on his way when he discovered a man who was attacked and injured. He tended to him and carried him to a nearby Inn. We tend to believe it is this man, the one who stopped, offered oil and wine and carried a half dead victim, and even left some coins, is the Good Samaritan. Little attention we pay to the keeper of the Inn, who could have been a Samaritan too, and who received both of them. It is the keeper of the Inn who ends up taking care of the injured man, after all the Gospel tells us that the Samaritan promised that if any debt was left he would pay it on his way back. We believe that the Good Samaritan that Jesus and the lawyer meant was this unnamed person who had an Inn and who kept the injured man and cared for him until his recovery. It is very much what happens to us on a daily basis. We are on our way and somehow we discover the people of the edge. We tend to them but it is the CYCW's and the many men and women in these communities who become the keeper of the Inn, who monitor, care and love the injured ones. They are the ones that stay while we go. They are the ones immersed in the ordinary affairs of bringing the people back to life while we busy ourselves trying to get the 2 coins to pay the debt. But certainly nothing will ever pay the commitment, compassion, and tender care of those who remain in our Samaria, in our Townships, Locations, while we continue our journeys.

Thank you Pumi, Sindiswa, Kosi, Lindiwe, Kholiswa, Fezeka, Babalwa, Phumeza, Asanda, Andile... for consoling and caring for those we leave at your doors. We meet the keeper of the Inn daily as we hear the stories of strength and hope of those that were left for dead.

In the heart of God, Heidi and Monica



Nomsa with little Thembi and her granny.



Some of the girls all dressed up for Heritage day



Phumeza and Pumi with little Anelisa, who is very excited with her new outfit to go to the hospital

Note: we have changed the name of the children to protect their privacy