

Newsletter September 2016

Greetings from Swaziland!

Life seems to have speeded up since my return from the UK in July. Swaziland is currently experiencing a severe drought (as is southern Africa in general) so we are praying fervently and waiting expectantly for the summer rains to come. The dam where I live is now completely dry! So for those living in the communities who survive on the crops and the animals they have – life has been challenging to say the least! As a result of failed harvests, the price of food has increased which only adds to their hardships. We have been blessed from a variety of generous sources with donations of money, and so some of this has been used to buy extra foodstuffs which we have been giving out to the very needy to help them. This is done via the compassionate care volunteers and also by ourselves as we do home visits to the sick and vulnerable.



The pictures above show a compassionate care volunteer on one of her home visits with a food parcel, to a young man with AIDS and severe skin cancer. The centre picture shows a highly nutritious porridge with all the essential micronutrients needed for good health. This is given out to really sick and/or malnourished people as a medicine. We are seeing great results. The latter picture is a man caring for about 10 orphaned children. He himself weighs 45kg! He works herding cattle, to provide for the children. He gave his life to Christ at one of our clinics.

Our home visitation has taken off really well and we are finding very sick, lonely people in some very remote and isolated places. People who are confined to their homes – often alone. It seems that elderly people are quite neglected as their families go away – usually to find work. So many are hungry and lonely. Its a real honour to sit with these people and spend some time hearing their stories (often heartbreaking tales). One elderly couple who are caring for many grandchildren, live everyday looking out at about 7 graves at the back of their property – children and grandchildren – all who have died from AIDS.

The elderly (ex) witchdoctor who became a Christian on one of our home visits at the beginning of the year, in the midst of a horrific thunderstorm, is doing really well – both physically and spiritually. He has some issues he's dealing with (as we all have!) but he is dealing with them. And going from being unable to walk to walking into our clinic last month – we are thankful to God for what He is doing in his life. He looked radiant and was in a very mischievous mood to say the least! I got a marriage proposal from him – but I declined as I don't have enough cows to pay him. It's good to laugh!!

We also had the privilege of leading another 90 year old lady witchdoctor to Christ to last month. She asked us to tell her about God (she was a traditional healer/witchdoctor all her life). After telling her about God and Jesus, she said she wanted to know Him for herself. So kneeling up, we prayed with her and she committed her life to Him. It is extremely humbling. God is moving in great ways. This is what its all about!

In August I had the pleasure of hosting the Lane family from Dewsbury. We had a great and varied time. They were fabulous, and joined in enthusiastically with all we did.



David, Jonathon and Timothy at the cultural village soaking up the information. Elaine joining in the traditional Swazi dance.

In August, I also had the privilege of going to Zimbabwe for 3 days for the Elim African Global conference with about 50 national leaders within Elim Global, and some Elim missionaries. It was a great time to hear about what is happening in other countries and some great teaching/fellowship. I also did a short talk on 'Reaching the Broken'. For those who know the story of the 2 young sisters caught up in sexual exploitation, we have been fighting for their removal from their home since May, but the wheels turn slowly, and it is currently with the Deputy Prime Minister's office. Please pray for a resolution to this situation as it is a terrible place to be. Frustrating and distressing!

We came across a 4 year old at our clinic this week who is being raped by a family member too. It is so difficult dealing with these situations because the system of dealing with it is slow and complex. If the mother reports it to the police – often the suspect is let go without charge, and the mother may be cast out of the homestead with nowhere to go. But we are pursuing avenues whilst the local Pastor is also making investigations. Again, much prayer is needed for wisdom.

Good news! – we have got our new mobile clinic-on-wheels. It is a Toyota Quantum converted into a clinic. We will be using this to go into new, unreached areas of Swaziland where new ICBC (In Community By Community) projects – or church plants – are being started. These areas also tend to be in very poor, deprived areas where poverty is high and access to healthcare and other amenities is difficult.

One such area is within the Hhohho region (equivalent to a County). I also am based in this region. On November 12th we will be attending a regional World Aids Day event in the Imkhundla (regional council community gathering place) which happens to be in the same area as our new church plant that is starting in November/December this year. So we are proposing to have our own stand, with our clinic bus (complete with awnings) to undertake basic health checks such as blood pressure, height & weight, lifestyle advice etc. The theme of the event is 'HIV Prevention' – so many other organisations will be there too, offering HIV testing, counselling, advice etc.

I am very excited about showcasing Challenge Ministries using our health care team and taking about 25 of our volunteers, decked out in our uniform T-shirts, so that we can be a presence in the community prior to the church plant. What an opportunity! We are currently working on a media presentation which will be displayed on a portable TV screen in front of the bus, and showing a variety of topics including health education and evangelistic materials, using animation, filmed materials, singing/dance etc. Covering hygiene, making water clean, preventing diarrhoea and vomiting, HIV/AIDS, handwashing, nutrition, etc.



Finally, for those who don't know, I am going to be a grandma! Or Gogo as they are referred to in Swaziland. Fraser and Jo are expecting their first baby in December this year. I am so thrilled for them and for the addition to our family. They will make fabulous parents. Ryan and Sarah are doing well in Scotland and are looking forward to being an uncle and auntie! Sarah has started her first teaching job with 5 year olds who come from very disadvantaged and deprived backgrounds, so she is also making a huge impact on the future lives of children. Mission work is wherever we happen to be, serving the people before us and being the hands and feet of Jesus. We are called to love - anybody and everybody - irrespective of their race, gender, colour, or creed. What an awesome honour and rewarding life it is.

Thankyou for your tireless interest and support in my work here. May God bless you and keep you all in good health and happy hearts.

Love Clair x

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Donations kindly received through Elim Missions, Elim International Centre, De Walden Rd, West Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 4DF