

SOUTH AFRICA

The lectures and Bible studies at our home over the Easter holiday long weekend went very well. About 100 slept at our house and we estimate 150-175 attended. The speakers all did an exceptional job. The brethren from the congregations where I normally work expressed that the lessons were of an unusually high standard and extremely helpful. One new thing we tried was that we asked Robin Bauer to use the 10 minutes in between lessons to present 17 periods of Bible history and some simple Bible geography. He did this in such an interesting and enthusiastic way that even the children paid good attention and were able to learn the 17 periods.

If you have been contributing to the drought, please take the time to read what I have written below under "DROUGHT" as it contains very important information. Thank you!

Paul Williams teaches a men's class on authority in worship.



As usual, the brethren from Nigel, east of Johannesburg, attended, bringing their tents to sleep in. Brother Hendrik Morris has preached for this group for decades, being now in his early 80s. He was widowed some years ago, and a few years after that remarried one of the widowed sisters in the congregation. We were all so touched by their happiness, and so were especially saddened to hear about his wife's unexpected death a few days ago. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her, although we rejoice that she is now with the Lord. In the picture (right) sister Morris is standing behind the lady in green, waiting to welcome one of two women who were added to the Lord during our meeting.



Stuck in the Mbembesi River bed. It took an hour and 15 people to get us out.

ZIMBABWE

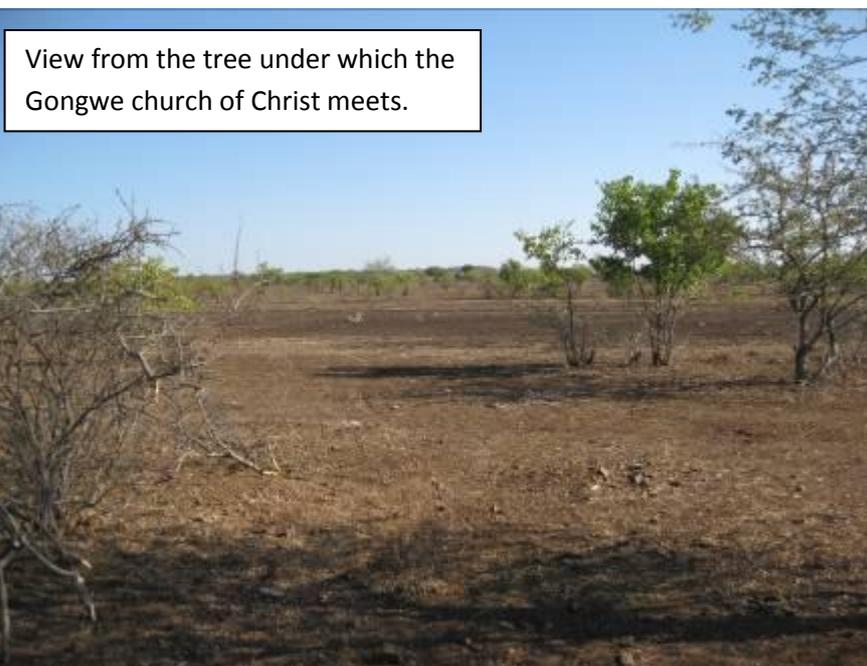
Prior to our up-coming visit to the USA, we are trying to squeeze in 3 trips to Zimbabwe. We have just returned from two weeks in Zimbabwe where we had four two-day meetings, and a one-day meeting, and I also preached for two congregations in Bulawayo. Four women obeyed the gospel. I also spent 15 minutes here and there during each meeting, teaching the 17 periods of Bible history and simple Bible geography. The focus of both Linda and I was on getting the brethren to see the value of God's word (2 Tim.3:15- 4:2) and to understand what they read in the Scriptures. As one brother expressed it, "He said it with his own mouth." He was referring to a brother who was able to get the



message directly from the Scriptures and find the answer to the question I asked. There is definite growth in the ability of the brethren to do this, but many still have a very long way to go. We are always seeking different ways of teaching this topic that might be more effective, and we feel we also still have a long way to go! (On the left the brethren who meet at Tongwe Primary School are learning “Conquering Canaan.”)

DROUGHT

During our last trip to Zimbabwe I received replies to about ¼ of the letters I had written, asking the brethren to consider cutting back on the amount of drought relief they are requesting. (At the end of this newsletter I will include the letter I sent plus three of their replies.) In general, what the brethren are saying is that the drought is more severe this year than any year in the past 6 years we have been doing this. Not only was absolutely no food reaped, but there is also no grazing. Already the rivers are dry and some brethren are worried about even having enough water to drink. It will be 6-8 months before the next rainy season begins. In the past (going back for decades), it was generally felt that each Christian was entitled an equal portion of drought relief, although some few individuals did give up “their” share to other needier families. Nonetheless, the good hearts of the brethren are evident in that some have agreed that they are able to cope without the 10kg of maize meal, at least at the present time. Also, virtually all letters began by expressing sincere thanks for what they have received in the past, sympathy for the economic hardships faced by those of you who have been giving, and a willingness to trust God and be content with whatever they receive in the future. To see this expression of spiritual maturity is truly something to rejoice about.



View from the tree under which the Gongwe church of Christ meets.

On the other hand, some congregations still said, “We are ALL needy,” when I actually know that at least some of them have children with good jobs who can help them. Others just sent a list of all their widows and orphans. (By orphans they mean children who are Christians but have one or no parents.) I had an opportunity to speak to a group of preachers who had written letters on behalf of their congregations in the Gwanda South area. I asked them how many of those orphans on their lists were fornicating and how many of those widows on their lists only attend once a month when the maize meal arrives. (I have seen an attendance register where the drought list was twice the average Sunday attendance.) This is an issue that they find it very difficult to address because in their culture it is not good to “point fingers.” Their solution was to give everyone an equal share, be it half or whatever, rather than choose who should get and who should not get. I asked if it was right for a fornicating orphan to receive 5 kg, and a truly needy widow get 5kg instead of 10kg. They agreed that a fornicating orphan was not a “saint” (literally, in their Bible translations, a “holy” one), and so I asked them to consider rewriting their letters. I also emphasized that the MAIN thing I am trying to do is to do things in the right way so that they can be blessed by God. I am also informing you brethren of all these things so that you can seriously think about this and make a judgment as to whether or not you feel that relief for these brethren can come from the churches’ regular Sunday collections or only from individuals.



Finally, in view of the fact that I do not know how long the Lord will give me to continue my work, nor do any of us know what will happen in the world economy, I discussed with the group in Gwanda South that they need to think of long-term solutions. They actually were able to come up with some ideas, and I will report on that later after they have done their research.

This baobab tree, near several congregations in Gwanda South, is most likely well over 1000 years old and has roots that radiate out from the trunk for kilometres. It is a testimony to the fact that this area has always been dry and that brethren cannot expect to rely on rainfall for farming. If they want to survive in the same environment as this tree does, they will have to come up with a way to do so; and they cannot expect to rely on outside help forever.

I pray that all of us, like the baobab, will endure through adversity – by being rooted in the Lord. Thank you for reading, and please read the letters from the brethren below.

Your fellow-worker in the kingdom, Les Maydell

DROUGHT REPORT – APRIL 2012

Please make checks out to me (Les Maydell) and send to: Mrs Melody Harbig, 9876 Morris Glen Way, Temple Terrace FL 33637. WE SINCERELY THANK ALL OF YOU, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO REGULARLY CONTRIBUTE.

I am happy to say that all the deliveries are now up to date, and we will try to get the receipts out as soon as possible. Unfortunately things have not gone too well with the trucks lately, which accounts for the higher-than-usual maintenance costs.

Money reported last time as being available: \$22,096

Money received since last time: \$50(Mar) + \$50(Apr) – Chelsea FL church of Christ; \$50(Mar) + \$50(Apr) – Anon. AL; \$100(Mar) + \$100(Apr) – T family, AL; \$125(Mar)+\$125(Apr) – Kemper Heights Church of Christ,TN; \$150 – LG, PA; \$50(Mar) + \$50(Apr) – B, NM; \$506 – D family, TX; \$100 – F, MO; \$100 – J family, TX; \$25(Mar) + \$25(Apr) – Anon,GA; \$50 – G family, AL; \$500 – P family, AL; \$50 – C family, MO; \$1000 – V family, TX; \$18,000 – Christians at Cahaba Heights church of Christ, Bhm, AL; \$400 – Riverview church of Christ; \$100 – M family, FL; \$50 – W family, TN; \$300 – K, AL; \$15(Jan) + \$15(Dec) + \$20(Apr) – H, TX; \$3000 – Church of Christ, Chelsea, AL; \$200 – A family, AL; \$600 – J family, TN; \$100 – D family, FL; \$250 – H family, TN; \$203(mar) + \$203(Apr) – A family, FL. TOTAL received: \$26,712 + available from last time = \$48,808

Money spent:

March (actual): Maize meal: 14.20MT @\$454= \$6447 + 24.89MT @\$472MT = \$18,196 + \$225 bank fees + \$2584 petrol + \$1639 maintenance = \$22,644.

April (estimate): 14.20 MT maize meal @ \$454/MT + 24.89MT maize meal @ \$472/MT = \$18,196 + \$225 bank fees +\$2584 petrol + \$3953 maintenance = \$24,958

Money left over to be used the end of May: \$1206.

We are very thankful that by God’s grace there was just enough. By the end of May we will need approximately another \$21,000. The letters we have received so far have been from the worst affected areas. I am still hoping that brethren in other areas, and especially in city congregations, will be able to reduce their drought relief by a greater percentage so that from June onwards, the need will be considerably less.

Dear Les Maydell

We say greetings to you brother Les Maydell with your family and all the brethren you work with. We have received your letter and understood almost every word in it. Each and every one of us has a thank you message, considering the hard work you have done and the other still to be done on drought relief.

As the whole brethren at Gomtutu we do agree to your words that we had moved from a worse to a better situation of living. From 2007 to the first of 2009 there was totally nothing to eat, companies closed, that meant no job, no currency in the country. But with God who created mountains, rivers and us, the situation changed. By the end of 2009 until end of 2011 some of us are able to get daily needs even if not enough but half bread is better than nothing.

delivering maize meal to you. It is also wonderful to see your hard work in converting the lost, and you are to be greatly praised for this. The growth of the congregations, among other things, has caused the monthly drought relief needs to go from \$3000 per month when brother Short was doing it, to \$14000 in 2009 to over \$22,000 in 2012.

Not only is the money increasing, but the workload is increasing. Because the drought relief has become so very big, the vehicles are having a hard time coping, and the depots are having a hard time coping. Even this old man who is writing to you is having a hard time coping, and I need to be careful that I do not get sick again. Then I will be of no help to anyone.

American churches are also struggling because of the world-wide recession. Besides this, they are being asked to send help to brethren even more needy than you are, such as in Ethiopia. They also need to send preachers to places where the gospel has not yet gone. Therefore, some brethren are asking me what the Zimbabwe brethren are doing to be able to stand on their own feet when it is obvious that they will seldom reap a sufficient harvest. What I have noticed is that indeed, you *have* done many things to help yourselves, and I have told them this.

I have observed that in these past years when you did not receive crops, you did not just sit down and solely depend on American churches to help you. You used your talents and resourcefulness to get money to survive by doing other things besides growing maize. You worked hard to educate your children and taught them to take care of you when they grow up and get jobs, even when they find work outside Zimbabwe, 1 Tim.5:4,8,16.

When we first started with the drought relief, there was virtually nothing in your shops, but now the shops are full of anything you would need. You may lack some things that would be good to have, but you are surviving. This all is because of the amazing resourcefulness and hard work of you brethren and the Zimbabwean people in general.

Because of all these things, and regardless of whether there are good crops this year or not, I feel it is now time to seriously consider stopping the drought relief, except for the very needy.

So, my brethren, I am sending this letter to each autonomous congregation, and asking the men of each congregation to seriously assess who among you is truly needy – those who have no means of getting **food**; for example, those faithful widows with orphans or elderly faithful Christians who have no family who can help them. In the meantime I will do my best to see to it that the drought relief continues as is until the delivery that will take place in June, 2012. I pray that God will bless you with harvests sufficient that you can even, among yourselves, take care of your own needy aged and widows, at least for some few months. City congregations surely have enough members who have jobs so that this can be done. However, if not, please send me a list of names and mealie meal needs of those in need, and I will convey to the brethren the needs of those such as faithful aged and widows who have no family to help them. You can send the letters in English (preferably) or even in Ndebele to Dube, Gumpo, or Mashoko the same way you do the receipts. I have included a blank sheet of paper with your name on it that you may use to answer my letter. Please do not write one letter that speaks on behalf of two or more congregations. I really need to hear from each congregation individually since each congregation is autonomous and knows their own members' needs.

Your spiritually mature response at this time will result in many good things:

- 1) The Lord will bless you because you are standing on your feet, being good stewards of the ability He has given you to provide for yourselves.
- 2) If you cut your lists down to about the neediest fourth of your members, everyone will be able to cope, and help will be able to continue to those who really need help.
- 3) Brethren will be willing to help if a greater need arises in the future because they can see you do not want to become dependent on outside help; you only ask for help when it is really needed.
- 4) Money will be freed to help those who are even in greater need than you are, and to spread the gospel so many will be saved from eternal destruction.
- 5) Most importantly, God will be glorified.

I know from past experience that you have good hearts and will seriously consider the need and the benefits of reducing drought relief to a manageable amount. I humbly thank you.

Les Maydell