

The Swazi Voice

The Sheasby family in the Kingdom of Swaziland.

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue N° 1, January 2009

Mbekelweni

A detailed report about our recent visit to a family who is truly destitute. While no plans are in place at the moment to help the community on a permanent basis, we are looking at how we can serve some of the needs of this family.

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Family News

News about our first weeks settling in and waiting for our rent house to be ready, Chloe

starts school in Swaziland, the telephone service and internet cafés, culture shock.

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Coming Up

A brief listing of what has been planned for next month.

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Blog

We try to provide an updated blog once a week on the Mission Providence website. We encourage you to log on to www.missionprovidence.org and click on the

“Blog” tab for up to date information on our work in Swaziland.

Thank You

We want to thank all our donors for your interest and support in the work in Swaziland. Without your continued support we would not be here. We also want to recognize the prayer warriors praying for this cause. We ask that you will always lift us up before the Father from whom we draw our strength.

The Journey Begins

In February 2006, Stephen and Esmé realized God’s call for them to return to Africa.

It is hard to believe that 3 years have passed since God planted this dream in our hearts to return to Africa and build or rebuild self sustaining communities.

The beginning of Mission Providence

In August 2008 we officially formed Mission Providence as a non-profit organization with the express purpose of fulfilling the mission we feel God had placed in our hearts. Shortly after our formation Ira Hill, of African Christian College in Manzini, Swaziland, contacted us to consider pouring our efforts into Swaziland. After discussion with the board and faculty of ACC and the board of Mission Providence we decided to make an exploratory trip in September 2008. It was evident then that this was where God was directing the paths of Mission Providence and we then



Helping a family in need in Mbekelweni. The grandmother and great grandparents are caring for 10 orphans. We know for certain that 2 are HIV positive.

committed to move to Swaziland at the end of 2008. Through many trials and faith lessons we now find ourselves living out the calling we received 3 years ago.

Getting Here

Due to various circumstances we had to pack up to leave our home in Houston, Texas, at the end of October 2008 and spent our remaining months

living with friends and family. During this time we began to deepen our relationship and trust in God seeing over and over again how God blesses and takes care of His children. When money seemed low, an “anonymous” gift would appear or an unexpected refund from an overpaid account. Over and over again God provided, and still does, provide for our needs.

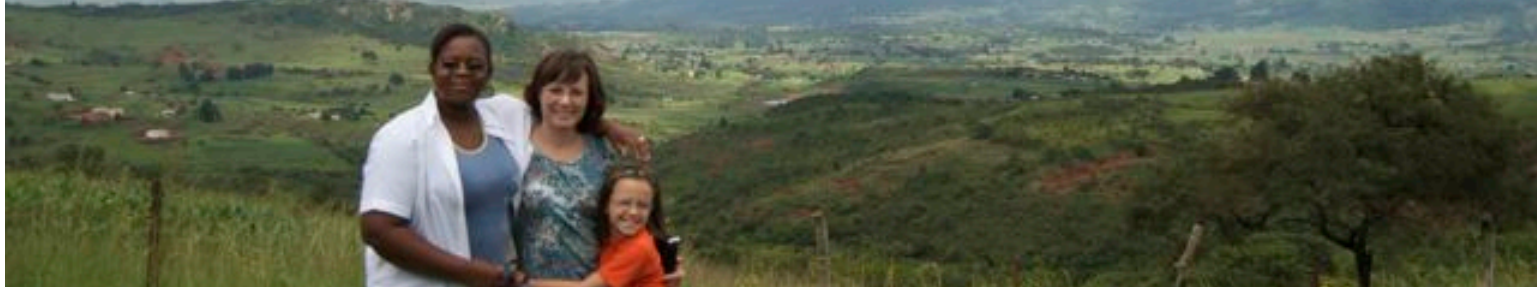
We arrived in Cape Town, South Africa, in the middle of December and began reconnecting to friends and colleagues spreading the news of our upcoming work, including a few speaking engagements at several congregations. We also began the work of purchasing a vehicle for the work in Swaziland. Even though the purchase of this vehicle was at times trying we safely arrived in Swaziland in January 2009 and immediately jumped in alongside ACC with the orphan feeding program.

What’s next?

The next months will be filled with feeding and helping these families in need. With God’s help we want to expand what is being done to help the widows and orphans in this area. God is the only One who can help us and we solicit your prayers.

— The Sheasby family

Mbekelweni



Nonthlanthla, Esmé & Chloe on the Mabuza's property in Mbekelweni

Last week we met a lovely couple here at African Christian College: Promise and Nonthlanthla Mabuza. Promise graduated from ACC in 2006 and is now a part time lecturer. Nonthlanthla is the cafeteria chef. They recently bought some land (by



giving a cow to the chief of that area) in Mbekelweni (about 30 minutes from campus). Their neighbors are a very needy family: great grandparents,

grandmother and 10 orphans, aged 7 and under. Promise and Nonthlanthla decided, before they even knew we were coming or what we were planning on doing here, that they want to build a house on their property and let these orphans live there during the week. They also want to employ a good teacher to stay with them and homeschool them. At the moment there are 2 men clearing the property preparing it for building and a road should be cleared by the end of this week. Promise and Nonthlanthla have done all this with what they earn on campus and food to this family as they are able to. They asked us to go see their property and meet the family.

On Saturday, Jan 31 2009, we all drove to Mbekelweni together. Joseph had to sit on my lap (I know, I know, this is not allowed in the States, but here in Swaziland, on unpaved rural roads, it is ok, trust me) and was laughing at himself in the side mirror. Promise noticed this and said "Oh, he loves his image. Maybe that is how God feels about us when He looks at us, since we are made in His image". How sweet is that? Promise often preaches at the Siteki church of Christ and I told him, there is a whole sermon in that statement.

First we went to their property and to meet the family. At this very moment I want to insert a picture or a video of what we saw and experienced right here, because words are simply inadequate, but I will try my best. There were about 3 houses

close together, one faucet with running water, lots of trees, especially avocados, heavy with fruit as well as an outhouse

right next to a small maize garden. We met all 10 children and felt frustrated that we are not fluent in their language yet



to ease their shyness, but realizing that smiles and touch go a long way to communicate that we care. All of them were wearing very old, torn, filthy clothes, most of them had no underwear. One little boy was wearing a broken, unmatched pair of shoes, both for left feet.

We all sat under the avocado trees while they sang a song for us, something about God is big and can save us from demons. They had laid out a table with



a lace tablecloth and chairs for us to sit, but we knelt by them on the grass. Then a dish with water was brought to wash hands (no soap).

We dished out bread (just bread, nothing on it) that Nonthlanthla had brought, as well as enamel cups with flavored water, apples and mangos. The children immediately dipped their bread in the water and ate it, which I found odd, but then noticed Joseph, who said he was hungry too, follow suit!! I guess when in Rome . . .

The grandmother is most concerned about the 4 school aged children, since they cannot afford the school fees. For Grade 1 it is about E 300 per child per year (Emelangeni is the Swazi currency, always the same value as the South African Rand, at the moment about E10 = \$1). We want to go ahead and

pay for these children to go to school. We also want to get them some clothes, soap, toothbrushes and of course more food.

Stephen spoke at length with the great grandfather about the raised gardening. We hope to go help them plant a garden soon. We also encouraged them to pick the avos so we can take it to the local market for them. Of course they have no transport and no way to get to the market. Nonthlanthla and I would love to have a little pre-school there eventually, until a full time teacher can be found.

Promise had made an appointment with the local chief runner for 11:30. By the time we left this family, it was after 12. I exclaimed that we were late, but Promise and Nonthlanthla just laughed and said "It's ok, they will still be there". Seems in Swaziland, an appointment time is at best a loose indication of when a meeting will take place, give or take an hour or two. The chief runner is the man in the community who handles matters when the acting chief is not available. So we met with Mr Simelane, the chief runner, and 2 other council



members to tell them we want to help them help their community. They told us (through Promise)

that they do have a feeding station in their area, which serves 3 meals a day, Monday to Friday, to about 250 orphans, but Mbekelweni is large, so not all the orphans can manage to walk to this feeding station. They told us it was started by Children's Cup. There is another feeding station further up the road, but it is not operating any more, due to lack of food. Mr Simelane wanted us to meet with the acting chief. While we were talking, one of the other men, Mr Ngwena (crocodile), received a phone call from none other than the chief himself!! So a meeting was

scheduled for Thursday, Feb 5 at 11 am, give or take an hour or two.

Then Mr Simelane took us to the other deserted feeding point. At this time our vehicle was filling up, so some of us had to stand on the back, which Chloe thought was great fun. We came upon a little temporary structure made with sticks and it just so happened that 3 of the very same women who used



to cook there for the orphans, came along the way (they told Nonthlanthla they were just at home relaxing and decided to take a walk to the

nearby store, and saw us there! Thank you God!) and we got to meet them and tell them we want to help. They were so happy to hear that. Now we need to figure out what is needed for food and equipment. Nonthlanthla says she would love to help with the cooking and figuring out quantities etc. There is just so much needed, we feel overwhelmed already, but trust God will provide.

Family News

After delays with our vehicle we finally arrived on the campus of ACC late one Monday afternoon, Jan 19, 2009. We settled in to a small 2 bedroom "flat" (apartment), ate a meal with some of the faculty members. Even though it looks like we will only be able to move into our own place sometime in February we can stay on campus until that time.

With school starting the day after we arrived we decided to have an early night. Once dinner was finished we retired to the flat, had our family devotional together, got the kids bathed and in bed and sighed a big sigh of relief; we were here. At around 11:00PM after enjoying some alone time talking about the future and reminiscing the past we decided to call it a night ourselves. As we were getting ready to brush teeth and so on Chloe had gotten up to go to the bathroom and we saw her return to the room she and Joseph were sharing. No sooner had we put our weary bones in bed and were about to turn out the lights, we find Chloe standing just inside our bedroom door fully dressed in her school uniform ready to go. In her excitement she assumed that it was time for her to get ready when she saw the lights on. The next morning she reported that she had woken up every hour, disappointed that it was not yet school time. She has adjusted well and simply loves school.

Stepping Stones Christian Academy, the school Chloe attends, also has a pre-school program and Joseph is enrolled 3 times a week. He is still taking some time to adjust but everyday seems a little easier for him.

Life in Swaziland does take some getting used to. Of particular note is the telephone service. We have needed to make some long distance calls which would be too cost prohibitive with a cell phone and have therefore made use of the phone in the flat. On average it seems that we can keep a good connection going for about 10 minutes before the service will cut out. It then takes 2 - 5 minutes before you have dial tone again. We have now chosen to accept that this is the norm and to live within this system. The same applies to internet service. The local internet cafés charge about \$1 per 15 minutes of internet time which is maybe twice as fast as a dial up connection. Many times the connection is so slow you are barely logged in to your email to find that you have 2 minutes left on your login time. However, if you are willing to drive 30 minutes or so you can find some cafés that use satellite which is marginally faster and allows the use of your own computer.

Driving in Swaziland is in a league of its own. Taxis, the main form of public transport here, often stop on the highway to pick up passengers. I am amazed that there isn't a high occurrence of accidents, in fact I don't believe I have seen one yet. The other road hazards include cattle and goats that will often wander onto the roads. The next adventure in driving comes on the vast dirt roads which become badly pot-holed after the rains and needless to say slick.

Having being born in Africa and having lived in South Africa most of my life, I never expected to experience so much culture shock. The main hurdle for us is the language and how to pronounce names and words. Do you use a click? Is the click in the front of your mouth just behind your front teeth or at the back next to your cheek? Am I hearing the "sh" sound or is that forcing air around your tongue at the back of the throat? How do you say words with "ngc" in them or words with "xhu?" Not only is the language so different to what we are used to it is hard to remember faces. Thankfully the people are very forgiving.

When shopping there is very little that is familiar at all. Milk comes boxed in long life packaging, most items come in damaged packages, when you use your credit card you are asked if it is "straight" or "budget" and US Debit cards don't always work. Lines are long and you are not always guaranteed to find what you need but then again there is always tomorrow, which could end up being weeks.

Time here seems to work on a different clock. Life is much slower in pace compared to the US which has its advantages and frustrations.

In spite of it all we feel blessed to get to do this mission in a beautiful and peaceful land called The Kingdom of Swaziland.

Blessings,

The Sheasby Family

Coming Up in February

M.O.M. Project Meeting

Future plans for the expansion of this project and the involvement of Mission Providence.

Mbekelweni

Outcome of the meeting with the acting Chief for the area. We will also meet with Children's Cup who are currently feeding in this area and look at ways to consolidate the efforts in this region.

Kasheli

Meeting with the community leaders of this area and future plans to help this area. This community borders Masundvini, where we are currently feeding, and many orphans from this area are currently being fed here.

Donated Land

Begin planning and preparing the land donated by a Queen for the purpose of feeding the orphans. This land is a few kilometers from the pre-school in Masundvini and has the potential to feed more than just the orphans.

Moving

Lord willing we will move into our rent house. It looks like it will be in the middle of February before the house will be ready for us. The house is situated in Tubungu Estates which is about 5 minutes from the campus and centrally located to work being done with the orphans.

Residency

We are currently pursuing our permanent residency which is required for us to be able to open a bank account, apply for a telephone to name a few. A member of the church at the US Embassy has instructed us on what to do.

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