



Our Work for the Lord in Southern Africa -- December 2016

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THANKSGIVING AND BEST WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR

We sincerely appreciate each one of you and are thankful that God has blessed us with your love and prayers during the past year. We wish you all a blessed new year with spiritual growth and peace in your families and congregations. We have been truly blessed with many opportunities to serve the Lord and with so many good brethren here in southern Africa who have been an encouragement to us. Many of them sent us new year's greetings that really touched our hearts. We cannot thank God enough for them and for you and for so many things. If we think of physical things, our good health truly tops the list. Without these many blessings from the Lord and from you, we could do nothing. Our support remains as it was and we lack nothing we need.

We also give special thanks to our physical family, and for the love and warm hospitality they show us. We are so thankful to see the love between them and their mates and the way they are raising their children to love the Lord. This enables us to give ourselves to the work here with a mind free of worry and grief. We decided not to subject the grandchildren to a photoshoot this time. The only family shot we got this year: the Maydell "chorus and orchestra."



DURBAN AREA: We have been home now about a month and are enjoying being busy with the Lord's work here again, although December has actually been a relatively quiet month. Many brethren are away, so some of the extra classes we were having have not yet resumed. Because I have only 3-4 lessons/sermons to prepare each week, and since many businesses in South Africa close down in December and brethren are at home, we have been able to spend more time being hospitable or visiting brethren who are ill or who need encouragement, or even just to catch up on their lives so we can better know how to love and serve each other. This is an area of the work I feel we have been neglecting because I simply could not keep up with studying for classes and visiting. So we are very thankful for

this time. Physically, we also very much needed to slow down a bit. We rejoice greatly with the brethren at the Phoenix congregation: four of their young people have put on Christ in baptism in the past two weeks. And we weep greatly with the brethren in Soshanguwe (Pretoria) who lost one of their young Christian men in a very tragic death.

ZIMBABWE: Brethren are working for the Lord, congregations are growing, but from a physical standpoint, things are not going well. Although I certainly do not think continual drought relief is a good thing, this seems to be an especially difficult year, and brethren from most of the country are asking for help, especially until March or April when they will hopefully begin eating from their fields. The rains were late: brethren are only now beginning to plough, and prayers need to be offered diligently that rains will continue so that they can harvest. You can look at USAID's website FEWS (Famine Early Warning Systems): www.fews.net/southern-africa/zimbabwe in order to see what is going on. The food situation for the past 7 or so years has been mainly "Stressed," and at times, "Crisis." However, now much of the country is in "Crisis," and certain areas near Masvingo, Gwanda and Lower Gweru (where there are several congregations) are expected to reach the "Emergency" stage in February – May 2017. For the Gwanda area, I can recommend that you contact Bigboy who can give you a full list of needy congregations and how to get help to them. (bigboydube@yahoo.co.uk) We have been sending a bit of help personally and so far Bigboy has given a very good accounting of all costs and feedback from the brethren who received the help. He now has a computer and a digital camera which enables him to photograph receipts and letters from the brethren and communicate all these things directly to those who give. (It is no longer necessary for me to be a messenger.) Things are bad in Zimbabwe, but to make matters even worse, there is a currency crisis in Zimbabwe, If it does not get sorted out, there may soon be no food in the country to buy – even if you had the money. Although it is not possible in many places, I certainly wish that more brethren could be as innovative as the brother I mentioned in my September newsletter: he dug a well and consequently has all he needs. Please pray for these brethren!

EXCITING NEWS IN THE MAYDELL FAMILY

Our son Joseph and his wife Kristen are expecting their first bundle of joy mid-February! They have chosen not to find out whether it is a boy or a girl: they want to find out the old-fashioned way. Long ago I promised each of our children that we would make every effort to be there for the birth of their first baby and possibly the second. So we do not plan to come to the USA at the end of 2017 as we had originally planned, but instead from the first week of February through the second week of March.

"Baby May" very conveniently has afforded us an opportunity to attend the annual lectures given at Florida College, so we are looking forward to blessed in three ways: 1) a new addition to our family (10 grandchildren!) and time to be with them. 2) Much good learning about the family from the lectures that we can come back and share with our "family" in South Africa. 3) An opportunity at the lectures to see dear friends and brethren we have not seen for many years. When we arrive in the USA we plan to get a pay-as-you-go plan from "Straight Talk" and will send you all a short email to let you know our number. Then, if you will also be in Tampa during the first week of February, you can give us a call and we can hopefully get together.

PRAYERS

I would like to close this newsletter by asking for a few specific prayers: a good growing season in Zimbabwe, the safe arrival of "Baby May," that the seed being sown (eg. the new tracts we had printed) will bear fruit, that our new young people in Christ will keep strong in the faith throughout their lives, and that Colin and Aretha Nemuzhivhadi and their family will be comforted after the loss of their son. One of the young people who was baptized is the granddaughter of our beloved brother Tumba, who is battling stage 4 cancer and also needs prayers. He has now seen all six of his grandchildren obey the Lord in baptism. That is certainly a wonderful blessing!

Your fellow-servant in Christ,
Les Maydell

