



Under the Southern Cross

July 2008

Catching Up

How time flies when.... How often we say that! For me, these past months have been chock-a-block full, both with exciting happenings and with personal shock. The exciting things will come a bit later but the shock.... In April, April Fools Day actually, I was diagnosed with both diabetes and with Hyper-parathyroid Disease. People ask 'how did you know you had these, what were the symptoms?' and in truth, there were none that would have led me to the doctors office. The process of discovering and confirming both happened as a part of my regular annual physical exam. There is good news and bad news at this point. The good news being that the diabetes is really very mild and now under control with diet and medication. The bad news is that surgery on the parathyroid is lurking in August when I go back to the US.

Zambia Visit

My original plans were to go to Zambia about the second week of April. However, that did not seem to be a good idea as I was newly diagnosed at that time and needed to get my diet under control and find out if I was going to need to make a quick trip to the US for parathyroid surgery. The surgeon here recommended that I could wait until I was going back to the US anyway for the surgery. So after another 2 or 3 weeks working with the 'diabetes nurse' we decided that it would be fine to travel again.

In the end, I spent two weeks in Zambia. The first week was with the home-based-care volunteers and the second was with visitors from the US.

Workshop for HBC Volunteers

The home-based-care (HBC) program in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) churches in Zambia has been growing both rapidly and steadily. After some discussions we decided to train a core group of volunteers to be trainers for the new recruits. However, we still had a backlog of

volunteers needing training so we decided to, kill two birds with one stone, so to speak.

A day before the new volunteers came we had a briefing day for the volunteers who were going to be trainers. The next few days were training events with professional trainers. The new volunteers focused on the content and the trainers-to-be looked at both the content and the process. The workshop ended with a day in which only the trainers-to-be stayed and we reviewed everything. It is hoped that the outcome of this will be trainers who have put together their own training manual doing all the training for new volunteers. In that way any funds that might be available for training can be used for updating the trainers on new techniques or ideas and they can then take the information back to their home areas.

Both groups of trainees were thrilled by the workshop and cannot wait for the next one to take place.

Malawi Visit

The last two weeks of June found me back in Malawi. The impetus of this trip was to meet with the public health and AIDS teams at Embangweni hospital, Livingstonia Synod as they planned to expand their community home-based care program. It looks like it will be an exciting program, a collaboration between the hospital and the pastors in the communities. I don't know how the meeting between the hospital and the pastors went so am still looking forward to hearing what they decided.

In Blantyre Synod I had a good meeting with Dr. Sue Makin and a couple of people from the Mulanje Mission Church about what they are interested in doing to address the AIDS issue in their area. The hospital already has a good program going so I hope that they will work together.

NetACT AIDS Curriculum Development Workshop

Last evening I returned home from Stellenbosch, a university town about a half hours drive from Cape Town. It is in the wine growing part of the country... beautiful, even in the cold and damp of winter! The Faculty of Theology hosts the central office of the Network for African Congregational Theology – NetACT. I may have mentioned this organization in the past having attended some of their Annual General Meetings (AGM) and a special program they had on HIV and AIDS last year. At the last AGM it was clear that more needed to be done to help these relatively small Reformed/ Presbyterian institutions up-grade their curriculum on HIV and AIDS.

With thanks to the Office on Theology of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the World Council of Churches funding was made available for the people responsible for teaching about HIV and AIDS at each NetACT institution to attend a 5-day workshop. During this week we looked at what is currently being taught, thought together about what should be covered in their institutions and put together outlines for seven modules on the seven broad topics around HIV and AIDS that we felt were most critical to the training of pastors.

In looking over the evaluations it seems the participants were unanimously pleased with the outcome, taking into account that five days is nowhere near enough time to come up with any kind of finished product. The participants are committed to continuing the process when they get back to their institutions, and hope that we can have another workshop next year to further polish up the work that they have done and will be doing.

Footprints Training Evangelical Presbyterian Church of South Africa

This coming weekend will be the last of five sessions for the Footprints Training course. Why 'Footprints'? Because we hope that through this course congregations in one presbytery will be able to better see the

footprints of where Jesus walks in this HIV and AIDS crisis and be able to follow along.

Interpretation Assignment

Monday the 28th of July, a week from tomorrow as I write this, I will be taking off for the US. The first week or so I will attend the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City. After returning to my parents' home in California it will be time to get this parathyroid problem looked at and taken care of. After that I will start traveling to speak in churches.

Earlier I had promised to respond to your invitations to let you know by May or June when I could visit. However, I kept putting it off because I didn't know when I would be able to get an appointment for the surgery and how long recovery would be. I still do not know but cannot keep putting this off so perhaps with this letter or perhaps in a day or so you will receive an eMail with suggested dates. Most of my Sundays have been booked but there are still some weekdays available if you would like a visit. While in the US, my cell phone number will be **626 824-7035**. I will be in the country for two days, the 29th and 30th of July and then from the 12th of August.

In closing, I would like to share with you something that the participant from Zimbabwe said. As you know, Zimbabwe is now a country in great turmoil with a lot of politically related violence going on. He said, "We cannot return evil for evil, the only way to overcome evil is with love. A tooth for a tooth will never work. Please ask our Christian brothers and sisters in the United States to pray for us." And so I do, ask you to please remember Zimbabwe in your prayers and especially those who, like my friend, have a deep-rooted conviction that the only way out of an evil situation is through love and he himself is praying that the Christians will be strong in returning love for violence.

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