

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona Mission Station,
October 27th, 11940

Dear Highway Friends:

Once more we send Christmas greetings from this far away land of mystery (Africa). We trust that God will bestow special blessings, both temporal and spiritual, upon you all this year.

Today I thought you might be interested to know exactly what Altona Mission Station really is.

If you are interested in location, Altona is one acre of land situated on the northern border of the farm "Altona," which in turn extends to the northern bank of the Pongola river. To the south and west one can look across into the province of Natal and Zululand; while to the north-east you may see the hills of Swaziland. Altona is at the western end of a large native reserve that extends for forty miles to the east between Zululand and Swaziland. The Mozane river, about three miles to the east, and running more or less from north to south, cuts us off from the greater part of the native area. Our end of the native reserve would probably measure nine miles by twelve miles in extent.

Altona is the centre of our Transvaal work of twelve or more outposts. It is here that your white missionaries, the Kiersteads and George Sanders, live.

We, the Kiersteads, live in the Mission house, which has two bedrooms, a large living-room, a small kitchen, and a pantry and store-room; the walls are of unburned brick, plastered with clay and sand inside, and with cement, lime and sand outside; the floors are all made of cement; we now have ceilings in the bedrooms and living-room; the roof is of corrugated iron; there is also a narrow verandah on one side of the living room.

The church is constructed much the same as the house except it has a mud floor and a tower on one end of it. It will seat about 200 people.

Brother George Sanders has a room in the building that was originally built for a hospital and store-house. This building has walls of stone and brick, mud floors and a grass roof.

Two rondavals (round huts with walls), one built of stone and the other of brick, are quarters for native help, teachers, and native visitors.

I have recently written you about building two other additional buildings to shelter quarterly meeting visitors. The larger of the two is now being used as a school room for the beginners' class; the church is our other school room.

Other buildings or shelters are the toilets, garage and hen house.

A well that was dug by hand and stoned up last year and two water tanks provide us with most of our water for house, school and garden. You may be interested to know that our predecessors, the Sterritt Sisters, made it possible for us to buy and install a new 1,000 gallon galvanized iron tank to collect rain water (our drinking water) from the roof. Our second tank is small and is starting to leak; this should be replaced by a larger tank in the near future.

We have a good all-year round garden and the beginning of a nice little fruit orchard of peaches, quince, lemons, prickly pears, bananas and so on.

Just outside the mission-acre lives our

native evangelist, Johanisi Nkosi. He has three huts and a rondaval. He is now building a second rondaval. He has a stone-walled enclosure for his cattle, and the use of about five acres of land for gardens.

All these things make up what we call "Altona Mission Station." Here we have day school, Sunday school and church services, pull teeth and do first aid, and so on, and so on.

Those who are interested in the financial costs of these mission buildings would find that the mission house has cost about \$750, the church and equipment \$600, the rondavals \$85, the toilets \$50, George's room and store-room \$100, and the new native quarters \$125. Considering the accommodations and facilities, these buildings provide, your mission station has been built very reasonably indeed. In Canada, \$1700 or so would not go very far towards new buildings such as these.

The Lord bless you all is my continual prayer.

Yours in Him,
EUGENE A. M. KIERSTEAD

A. M. S., Oct. 14, 1940

Dear Highway Friends:

I am sorry that I have not been able to write you recently but our three little boys have all had whooping cough and that seems to keep one on twenty-four hour duty each day. However, I feel now that the hardest part is over and we do thank the dear Lord that it is the beginning of summer, for in warm weather the cough will be better that much sooner.

Our summer rains have started and the fields are getting green. Our early corn is up about 2 feet high now and so lovely and green. We are having our first beet greens today.

We were to Hartland last week to the Quarterly Meeting. On account of sick children, etc., I was not able to attend the services as I wished to do, but I believe they were all good. The attendance was not large owing partly to wet rainy weather but the Spirit of God was near, and many people told me how much they had enjoyed the services. We thank God for these seasons of refreshing.

Everyone was busy between services. Sister Grace Sanders was kept very busy with the hospital work, etc. Then besides those staying at the hospital she has many coming for medicine, treatments, etc., nearly every day.

The work on this side is going along as usual. One of the heathen women from Altona has recently spent some time at the hospital at Hartland so that Grace could help her sick little baby. While there she got hungry for salvation and gave herself to the Lord as a seeker. We met her the other day and she seemed very happy. Her little baby is much better now too.

Our school at Altona has nearly doubled the attendance, so now we have about sixty children and two teachers. The head teacher is a man and paid by the Government and we have a girl for the lower grades. The girl has just recently arrived and we are praying that she will be a blessing to us and that we may also be able to help her. Our worker was very pleased yesterday when this girl attended the girls' class and gave such a good testimony.

A few nights ago some natives were having grass fires and were careless enough to let the fire burn the roof off of one of our small near-by churches. The roof had just recently been put on so we felt badly about it. But as

Eugene says, it may be a blessing in disguise for the farm owner was not happy about us using the building for services on his farm, and may, at any time, have turned us out. In fact, the house that this man now lives in was once a native church, but he turned the congregation out and took possession of it as his dwelling house. Then too the services will now have to be held in kraals and in that way we may be able to reach more people. Anyway we just leave it all with Him who knows best and pray that He will undertake for every situation.

The Entungwini church is finished all but the floor and plastering the inside and the Mozaan church has been started this week. We do pray that these churches, scattered here and there, will prove to be a great blessing to these people.

There are many reasons for us to rejoice over the work here, and then too there are some reasons to feel that we must pray more and get a greater grip on God in behalf of souls that are perishing. A week ago Sunday our good worker Losaya came in from her girls' class with tears in her eyes and she told me that one of the girls had talked very bad words and had said that she wanted to become a heathen. She is a baptized church member but it seems that she hasn't had a very successful Christian life. Oh dear ones, these things do make our hearts ache and we are praying that God will put a greater burden upon our hearts for those who especially need help at this time.

One of our young preachers on trial was married last week. As far as we have been able to learn he has always been a good boy and has lived a steady Christian life. We are praying that his married life will be a happy one and that he will continue on with the Lord and be a real soul-winner. His name is Absolum Sibuja.

Continue to remember your work and workers here as we do always remember our dear homeland friends in our prayers each day.

Yours in His service,
G. M. KEIRSTEAD

Hartland M. S.,
Oct. 30, 1940

Dear Friends:

Since last writing to you, through "The King's Highway," much of interest has taken place.

There have been many mothers come with babies sick with pneumonia and it has been such a blessing to have ready-made little warm shirts to put on these little, often naked infants. It is, as a rule, only to the very poor ones that I give these to—for some can easily afford to buy. So along with the medicine I prescribe a portion of a yard of flannel-ette which they buy right away for the baby and I cut out a little shirt and give a little thread for them to sew it with. It pleases the mothers very much to have a little garment given to their little babies—and they look quite touched when I explain to them that they have been made and sent out to them by you dear people.

Since the box came I have given to each baby, born in our hospital, a shirt and dress. In two weeks we had three babies born here this month. At the same time there seemed to be an extra run of out-patients (those who come for medicine and to be examined but do not stay for treatment). Then while these were sick here, we brought another woman in