

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona M. S., Delfkom P. O.,
May 5, 1940

Dear Highway Friends:

It is a very bleak cold windy day—much like our November days in Nova Scotia. I never heard the wind blow any harder than it did last night. We felt sure that some of the larger trees behind the church would surely fall, but this morning we found that only one small one was blown down by the garden and no other damage was done for which we were thankful.

As I was lying in my bed, secure and warm, and away from the storm that was howling and raging around the house, I thought of God's great love that can so surround us and hold us save even though the storms of life may be raging on every hand.

I thanked God for a safe home against the storm, and I thanked Him far more for his love and blessings to us.

It doesn't seem possible that we have been here a little over a year. It has been a year of varying experiences, some testings and trials but I can truly say that it has been a year of victory. Praise the Lord!

The work here at Altona is encouraging. I am having the best regular attendance to the afternoon services on Sunday that I have ever had. Another encouraging feature is the fact that heathen are beginning to come. For a storm, and I thanked Him far more for His services even though I invited all I saw, to come, but every Sunday now I have one or two or three who attend—not always the same ones, but I do thank the Lord that some are coming.

It is a wonderful thing to preach to those who have had light, a wonderful thing to try to help them to know the Saviour better but I esteem it a blessed privilege indeed to preach to raw heathen. I think Eugene and George have more real heathen in their services than I do and I am sure the greatest desire of our hearts is to help these people in any way that we can. Today a very dirty old heathen woman came with ten ears of corn for oil, salt and matches. I talked with her about her soul but she didn't seem interested; she said she was very hungry and would like a little left over porridge. There was no porridge left, but I made her a large mug of tea and gave her some bread. She seemed very thankful for she had walked miles to come here. She became more friendly after she had eaten. She said that she would like to be a Christian and that she sometimes attended the Cush Church. I hope and pray that the poor old soul will seek and find the Lord.

It is really wonderful how the Lord does provide for His children and He doesn't forget us out here. When breakfast was over this morning, I didn't know what we would have for dinner for our vegetables were gone. I had just started to think about it when there was a knock at the door and a little girl stood there with a little bag of sweet potatoes. She said her mother had sent them to me. I thanked her very much and went in to tell the others. Before I had even asked the Lord for help He had sent it.

To-morrow we are expecting a white man, a friend of George's, to visit us and see the Station here. It is a treat to us to have white visitors, and I remarked how I should like to have some eggs to do a bit of extra cooking.

I got out my cook books and was trying to find something I could make without eggs when again I was called to the door. This time it was a little boy with eggs and asking for slate pencils. Some may say that these things just happened but I like to feel that God knew our needs and supplied them.

They are only small incidents, but the thought of htmē has blessed and helped me all day, for it made me feel more than ever that God is interested in the little things that make up our every day life and I do thank Him for all His blessing.

These are days when I feel like staying very close to Jesus and I find the closer I stay the dearer He becomes to me. May God bless and be near all our dear homeland friends is our daily prayer.

Yours in Him,
GLADYS KEIRSTEAD

Altona Mission,
6-5-40

Dear Highway Friends:

The 1938 Alliance and Mission Board sessions decided that our African field was to be divided. The Pongola river was to be the line of demarkation. Hartland, our pioneer centre, was to be the centre of the Natal work; while Altona, built up by the Sterritt Sisters in the last ten or twelve years, was to be the centre of the Transvaal work.

Some of you may be interested to know what that division did and what part of the mission work went to each section.

For some years Brother MacDonald has been responsible for all the African work; he was the only ordained missionary on the field and therefore was kept travelling from one outpost to another, guiding the native workers, disciplining back-sliders, baptizing, holding communion services, and so on. The division of the work relieved Brother MacDonald from many of his longest and hardest trips as the Transvaal outposts were 40 to 75 miles from Hartland; it also, with my coming, has made possible more frequent visits to the outposts as each of us now has only half the area to cover that Brother MacDonald formerly had.

Each mission station now has about twenty outposts or preaching places. About twelve or fourteen of these on each side are well enough established and defined to be thought of as the bases of possible organized churches of the future.

The Hartland outposts are less scattered than ours as the near-by Transvaal farms are five or six times as large as those around Hartland. Our work is therefore more scattered and necessitates longer trips but we have the advantage of more and better roads leading from the Altona to the outposts. Hartland is in the midst of a thousand hills; Altona is on a plateau as are most of our outposts.

In the matter of native workers Hartland should have the advantage as its workers are better trained and have more experience. So far this area has produced fewer workers and has had to depend on the Natal work for most of its workers. If being paid counts for anything the Hartland workers as a whole receive twice as much money as our workers.

Under ordinary circumstances the number of schools in each section is about equal although just now the Hartland area has two or three more. Each mission station has a government-aided school on it; the Hartland

school is the larger by about fifteen scholars. The outside schools are supported by the missionaries or as on the Hartland side from farm rents.

The Hartland mission has two responsibilities that we do not have, namely, Balmoral farm and the hospital. Besides making it possible for several of the Hartland workers to live near the mission, the farm provides fruit, labour and hut, garden and grazing rents which help to support various phases of the work, such as schools and native workers. The hospital has become practically self-supporting as the result of substantial government grants and fees paid by patients.

We now have two Quarterly meeting districts instead of one. It is better this way as the Pongola river prevents much easy travelling from one side to the other. Two of our quarterlies will probably be more in the nature of Conventions: one to be held at Hartland in June and the other to be held at Altona in August or September.

Hartland has four resident missionaries, Brother and Sister MacDonald and Brother Charles and Sister Grace Sanders; Altona has three: Brother George Sanders, Gladys and I.

I should not overlook to mention the fact that this division is the natural result of growth and expansion, and the continued blessing of the Lord. We probably would have had two mission fields years ago if father and mother had been able to continue working here. They came over to this area with the intention of working and living here, but mother's health forced a retirement. It seems rather strange that Gladys and I should be sent to this very field on the point of its being given a separate existence. It seems as if I were taking up and putting on father's mantle just beyond where he put it down. I pray that I may be worthy to carry on according to his practice and vision.

Pray that God's blessing may be upon both of your mission fields and may the Lord of the harvest call forth more prayer and financial supporters in the homeland and thrust more native workers into His vineyard. Pray also that the harvest may be great.

Yours in Christian love,
EUGENE A. M. KIERSTEAD

South Africa,

Dear Folk: May 11, 1940

Time speeds by, and another Highway letter is due, to let you know how things are going here with us and the work. We want to report victory. We have much to be thankful for. It is good to take stock once in a while, and see where we stand.

Eleven years ago we came to this place, just after a backslidden preacher had split off and taken one hundred souls with him, leaving us less than three hundred in our whole work. This enemy remained right along side of us, doing all he could to take the entire church, and to cause trouble within the camp. But he failed and many of those who went out with him have come back to us. In these years over five hundred have been added to the church by baptism and conversion. Our membership today is about three times what it was eleven years ago.

During these years a great number have died, leaving a good testimony behind them. Many more have moved so far away that we could not follow them and have transferred

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