

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona Mission Stations,
Delfkom P. O., Transvaal
Dec. 7th, 1939

Dear Homeland Friends:

It is a very lovely evening here at Altona, and as my thoughts turn to home and loved ones in Canada, I think I shall write a few lines to you.

Summer is well started here but so far the weather has been very nice. A few bad rain and hail storms and a few days that have been very warm but always there has been a good stirring breeze which kept us fairly cool. The nights have all been cool. I do thank the dear Lord every day for bringing on the heat so gradually—I am sure it has been much easier on us all.

We have recently had our second Quarterly Meeting at Altona. The Pongola River was full so none could cross over from the Natal side, but Brother MacDonald came by car with several of the workers. These proved a blessing to the services and to us all.

This is a very busy season of the year as the people are busy with their ploughing, planting, etc., but they left their work and attended well, and we were pleased to see so many. Most of the workers on this side were here, and I believe all the meetings were owned and blessed of God. Two were baptized and joined the church, three who had sinned were restored, six babies were brought and the parents or guardians promised to bring them up in the fear of the Lord, and then four made a start towards God as seekers. We do thank God for these things and for the special blessings that we felt in our own souls during the services.

There is great excitement among the children tonight as school closes tomorrow. We have nine visitors here now, one teacher and eight scholars who live some distance away. Today the children brought chickens and mealies and tomorrow night they will entertain their parents by having chicken and mealie rice to eat. The girls all have dresses alike and the program is very nice. The teacher has taught them hymns in English as well as in Zulu. I think it pleases the parents very much to hear their children sing and recite in English.

Last week a very sad accident occurred near us. A little boy, about the size of our baby, wandered from the kraal and fell into a water hole and was drowned. As soon as we heard of it, Eugene went right up. He found the lungs full of water and cold wet clothes were still on it but the heart was faintly beating, and he worked and tried to revive it but it was too late. My heart ached for them. They had lost two others and have just one little boy left, and they feel the loss of their baby very much. I went up also and took one of the little flannelette dresses that the Saint John ladies made for me to bring here. They seemed pleased to have it to put on their little one for burial.

The mother of the baby was one of our girls, but married a boy from the Independent Church and as is the custom in this land, she left our church and went with her husband. Her preacher came early the following morning and asked Eugene if he would have charge of the service, so as soon as our afternoon class meeting was over we went to the grave. The people had gathered and we had a nice service. I feel very badly for the

poor mother, but she seemed to be resigned and resting upon God. I do pray that God will bless her and be unto her all that she needs during these days of grief and loneliness.

Our little boys are counting the days before Christmas will be here. I thought they might long for a "White Christmas" as most of our Canadian children love to see the snow but so far they are very happy and contented here.

I have always loved the Christmas season; it is indeed a happy time but tonight I am thinking how much happier it makes us as we realize its true meaning, when our mind goes back to the dear little baby in Bethlehem's manger and we realize what a priceless gift was given us so many years ago. It makes me feel very humble and as my heart sings His praises, I pray also that I may each day become more like the One who has done so much for me.

Yours in Christian love,

GLADYS KEIRSTEAD

Natal, So. Africa,

Nov. 23rd, 1939

Dear Homeland Friends:

Greetings to one and all in the name of our wonderful Saviour.

It is a glorious, warm summer morning, promising to be a hot day. The valleys lie in misty shadows at the foot of the distant hills and mountains. The sun is shining brightly, causing the dew-drops on the grass to glitter and sparkle like many a precious jewel. From far and near the air vibrates with the choruses of feather songsters, blending in sweet harmony as they swell their praise to God.

Our hearts also join in the praise song to God for this "so great salvation." Yes, praise God, Jesus is in my heart today! He blesses me; He keeps me, and I mean to go all the way through with Him.

Before the shadows in the valleys can be expelled, the Sun will have to rise much higher. Many a life around us is enveloped in the dark, misty shadows of sin. We must lift up the "Sun of Righteousness" higher if some of these shadow-imprisoned lives are to receive the Light and be set free from sin.

Last night as I was preparing a young mother and baby for the night, and having prayers with them in the Hospital, I spoke to the old heathen mother about her soul's salvation. I found a receptive heart. She opened right up, when I asked her if she had been set free from the chains and fetters of sin. She gave a very graphic account of her fall down a cliff, one dark night, when she was returning home from a beer drink. As she somer-saulted down, wildly clutching at branches of trees and roots to break her fall, her scanty clothing was torn from her and left hanging on the face of the cliff. Only her skin skirt remained. When she finally came to her senses, she was badly cut up and bruised. A voice spoke to her from Heaven saying, "Abide for the night on the rock upon which you are lying." Using her skirt for a blanket she crouched all night, alone and racked with pain, upon that cold rock on the mountain side, while God spoke to her soul. He showed her her folly and sin. She vowed she would never touch beer again. Her brother, Aloni Mkonza, went to see her (when he heard of her return, all cut and bleeding, so that folk ran away when they

saw her coming) and how he did reprove her! "I have told you to leave the stuff alone! Now see what has happened—and you professing to be a follower of God. For shame! Now you just leave it alone or something worse will happen." Turning to me she said, very earnestly, "Oh, you don't know the filth of beer. I cannot begin to relate to you the many times I have escaped death when coming home from beer drinks, nor the awful things which have befallen me! Oh, if God would deliver me how relieved and happy I should be! But I am bound—I cannot escape its power—I cannot help myself." I reminded her of others who were once bound by Satan's chain, "beer," and how God broke every fetter and set them free, and that He was no respecter of persons, and if she would call in faith upon Him He would save and deliver her too. This encouraged her and finally she prayed to God for help. Her faith did not seem to function very well but we encouraged her to keep praying and trusting God. Dear, praying friends, here is a poor, hard sinner, of bad character, who is despised by many, but Jesus shed His precious blood on Calvary for such as she. Won't you put Vangile on your prayer list? Pray that God will change her heart and deliver her and make her a living monument of the power of God.

In the late afternoon another hard, old heathen (a man) brought his wife with an ulcerating tooth. I remembered two of his bright-eyed little boys have lately been coming to Sunday School, so I told him how well they are learning the lessons and verses, and spoke to him about his soul. I had expected hard indifference, and was truly amazed to note a different attitude than ever before! God gave me a message for the occasion and how he listened. Finally he asked me to remember him in prayer. Friends, he is, as I said before, a hard old heathen! But "Is anything too hard for God?" Let us all pray for Mbabala. I did not feel his interest was superficial. I could feel it was real and intense.

I greatly desired to make this a Christmas greeting letter but could not get it written in time. So I hope you did have a very Merry Christmas, and were much blessed as you heard the sweet story of Jesus, and meditated upon God's Love-gift to mankind.

As we stand upon the threshold of the new year, the future veiled from our view, let us not be alarmed at the dark warclouds which hang heavy on the horizon, and draw rapidly nearer. No, just glance backward a bit. Many difficulties have we faced—but Jesus whispers, "My child, as I was with you, caring for, leading, guiding, protecting and helping you all down through the days of the Old Year, so will I be with you through the New Year. Not one of My promises shall fail. Fear not—just look up and trust Me. I will see you through."

Yes. We are about to enter the New Year. We have fought battles in the past year for souls. Let us start anew with fresh courage in this glorious quest. Jesus is the Mighty Conqueror. He has never lost a battle yet. Suppose we get some of these hard, old sinners on our hearts and see what will happen before the end of the year?

Wishing you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year,

Yours in Jesus,

GRACE M. SANDERS