

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona Mission,
July 20th, 1940

Dear Highway Friends:

Some time ago I wrote about the need of building churches out here. I believe I also told about starting a church at Mbucu. The church is now practically finished and last Sunday we held our first service in the new church.

The natives seem very proud of their new church and like the blue coloured stone from which it is built and its nicely thatched grass roof. One native, referring to its size, said that "it filled the country" It is about 18 ft x 27 ft. outside and will accommodate about 100 natives. It has four small four-paned windows and a good sized door all new. The inside walls are plastered with mud and it will have a nice shiny mud floor.

Brother MacDonald, Sister Grace, Brother George and I arrived at Mbucu Saturday about noon. The plaster was still wet inside and the builder-preacher, Johanne Maseko, was putting the finishing touches to the grass roof and cleaning up. I also noticed that the people had sunk two posts in the ground and from a cross bar fastened to each they had hung the half of an old wagon axle. This was to be their bell and was to be struck with a hammer or an iron bar. I was very much pleased with the way the people had helped and with the work of the builder and his helpers.

Saturday we had a nice little preaching service held out of doors near the new church. Brother MacDonald and Sister Grace preached. Visiting native workers from the Hartland area voiced their appreciation of the new church and thanked for the church with gifts of money (about \$2.00). After the service Brother MacDonald, Sister Grace and the visiting workers left for home and their Sunday appointments.

We enjoyed a nice prayer meeting in the evening. Each and every one had a chance to speak of all that was in his or her heart. Naturally it was a long service.

At the close of that service the men workers and George and I proceeded to make up our beds on the grass that had been laid down for a temporary floor. We all slept very comfortably in spite of it being quite cold with frost.

Sunday, of course, was the big day. The church was full with many outside. While I was preaching who should arrive but Brothers MacDonald and Charles Sanders, a Brother Miller, Pilgrim Holiness, and a "goods" traveller, a Catholic. In due course all the white people had a few words to say; also about five or six of the native workers. A special table offering was taken which amounted to over \$25. Besides this, a Miss Moe, a Swedish missionary of Swaziland, who had had a special blessing in a previous service in the old church, sent \$5; the Catholic "goods" traveller also promised \$5.25 and a new 'real' church bell to call the people together. We certainly praised the Lord for supplying for the building costs. This offering and gifts, together with the voluntary work and other gifts of the natives and about \$15 of mission funds, completely paid for a church which is worth nearly \$100. The Lord's hand was in the building. Praise His name!

At the close of the service the visitors from far and near enjoyed the meat of two goats and one or two chickens before breaking up and returning home. George and I and four workers arrived home by car just after dusk.

We are now in the throes of building two small buildings at Altona to house our Quarterly meeting visitors. The work is going along splendidly and the brick walls may be finished sometime next week or the week following. Will write you more of them later.

Yours in Christian love,
EUGENE A. M. KIERSTEAD

Hartland M. S.,

Dear Highway Friends, July 18, 1940.

Some of you dear people, shortly before I sailed, made up a good number of dresses for the Sunday School and Hospital children. I was very saving of these, just giving when necessity demanded. It seemed that most of the children attending Hartland Sunday School were quite well dressed. Only a few were required for patients, so I just waited and wondered who they were all for. I knew it was for some special purpose.

One day God showed me just what I was to do with all those pretty little frocks. Now I will tell you the story leading up to it.

One of our "helper" worker women was not well and unable to come so far for me to see her, so sent asking if I could possibly arrange to call on her. She lives about 8 miles away over the hills. Just a stony narrow foot path to follow. Quite recently Mata Zikalala had gone there as a teacher. This is the first attempt to have a school at that place. From the very first Satan has tried to hinder. The people are desperately poor and only a few Christians. But these few got together and begged us to get a teacher for them. An educated Native girl was sent for. She went there and stayed only a short time. Then came with alarming tales—which were lies about the family with whom she was staying. We sent her home and got another from away. She stayed one night only and came back. She said she could not stay though we had written to her what the place was like. She was terrified of the heathen men. Had never seen men clad in skins. She came from a more civilized place. No, she would not stay. In the meantime we had sent Gracie Mkonza (Aloni's daughter) to hold the post till the second girl came. I was quite stirred over the situation. Mata was working for us at the time. She had trouble with her hip joints and has been lame ever since and walks with difficulty. She had also taught school several terms. I happened to mention the subject to her. Said how very sorry I was for those poor people. At last they saw the advantage of an education and were putting forth a real effort to give their children a little by scraping their few pennies together and then to have those girls treat them like that. I said I heard there were many children there. That I would count it a privilege to go there myself and live with those people and teach their children their lessons—and what a beautiful opportunity to lead them to Jesus. But—my place was at home! She seemed quite moved but did not say much. In a day or so I left for my holiday and later Faith wrote me that Martha had gone to take that school. I was happily surprised because she had been refused permission by her widowed mother when we had asked her to go, so sent Gracie instead.

When she heard that I had returned she wrote me a little note—that she had started a Sunday School too and that there were 30 enrolled—but only six or seven to day school. Later she wrote Faith that 36 were coming to Sunday school and that all had chosen the Lord. In the first place Charlie had encouraged her to start Sunday School and said he would visit them some time. We sent her some Sunday School cards and a Scripture Calendar with pictures.

So when I received the plea from the sick woman, we borrowed two of our neighbor's fine horses, and early Sunday morning Charlie started out for the Kraal. Oh, how our hearts were thrilled! Our first trip on horseback together—and we were on business for our King. We had some difficulty to get the horses to cross a marshy place and up the steep bank of a tiny stream. But God cared for us as the horses jumped and backed and made me just tremble. The husband of the woman met us and when he recognized me his face broke into such a happy smile. He came right up to the horse and shook hands, and expressed his joy. Mata and her Sunday School children awaited our arrival at the kraal. They were also very happy to see us. The woman crawled out of the hut to welcome us.

I took the Sunday School. Two crude wooden benches and a home-made bedstead had been hewed from trees and was the only furniture in the school-room-hut. The men seated themselves on one bench—but some had to sit on the floor. The woman, Lizzie, sat on the other. Mata and I sat on the bedstead. Thirty-one little boys and girls were present. Many more would have come had they known in time that we would be there.

When I asked how many had given themselves to the Lord, 30 out of 31 hands were raised. I carefully explained how to get saved, then asked how many wanted to get saved and were willing to open their hearts and let Jesus in, 30 hands were put up again. There was no time to deal with each one so we all prayed together, after I told them how to pray and believe. All the older children and some of the younger again raised their hands to testify that they had received the witness. Some ten or more present were tiny tots not more than two or three years old.

What impressed me was their extreme nakedness. It was a cold day. Many had but a cotton "ibai" and the boys tiny squares of skin in front and behind for pants. It was pitiful.

Oh, yes, we quizzed them on the lessons Martha had taught them and they answered quite well, so for those who did the best we sent some of the little bags that were sent out in the last box. These were to carry their lunches in.

I asked Martha why they came so naked—she said they really were "dressed" today. That she has felt so ashamed Sundays when the girls came naked, but they had no money to buy clothing. That was why so few came to day school. At once I thought of those pretty dresses. Martha came over the next week and I gave her 20 for the girls. For the boys, as dresses would not do, Charles and I got some yard goods and allowed each a yard and a half for a shirt. Martha sewed all of these for the 10 boys. We did this hoping it would remove their excuse for not going to school.

Martha got so interested in the children that I feel quite certain she will return there. She has a good experience of salvation, but I do not think that she has been sanctified. Let us pray for her that she will go on unto Sanctification and that God will continue to use her there. I believe her life and teaching made those dear little brown Zulu children hungry for salvation and all we had to do was to lead them to Jesus. She may not have known how to do this.

As I was visiting the mother in her hut later, the father came in and said to his girl, "I hear you have chosen the Lord today? How is it you did so without first asking my permission?" She gave no reply, and we wondered what was coming! There were several of his children present. Then he said with emotion, "That is right my children! Just go ahead and choose the Lord and believe when you feel God calling you to do so."