

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona M. S.

Dear Homeland Friends,

Another Christmas is over and the old year nearly finished. As I look back over the year that is so nearly past I find myself asking "What have I accomplished for the Lord?" I am not able to say—only time will tell—but this I do know that the Lord has taught me many valuable lessons, that I probably would not have learned any other way, except through sickness, and I feel that, in many ways, I am better fitted for the new year than I otherwise would have been.

I believe Eugene wrote you that we have another little son. He was a frail little baby but is gaining very nicely and now seems well and healthy for which we are grateful. We do thank the dear Lord very much for His care over us.

Recently we have had a great deal of rain which has made the weather more bearable and has greatly relieved the minds of the people. The ground was so dry they could scarcely plow and they feared a famine but now there is rejoicing and early in the mornings one can look in several directions and see the many oxen hitched to a plow, which is turning the furrows for the gardens of corn, pumpkins, etc.

Today I had a little Christmas celebration for my Sunday School children. It is a few days past Christmas but I was not able to get things ready before. Shortly before I left my mother's home in Nova Scotia I received a parcel from Meductic and among other things in it were some of little Virginia Watson's new Christmas toys for me to take to the black children. One toy was a lovely doll and for awhile I didn't know what to do about it. I couldn't give it to one little girl and not give one just as nice to another. After a while the idea came to me to use it for a S. S. prize. Then as I couldn't afford such expensive prizes for the Quarters I decided to show it to the school the first Sunday in January 1940 and tell every girl who would come every Sunday until the next Christmas that I would give her a doll like it and to all the boys who would come for the same length of time I would give a toy car. These little children rarely have toys and they do enjoy things to play with.

Quite a good number started out but one by one they fell out by the way until today there was only one little girl, Monacia Nkosi, and two little boys, Shadrach and Nata Nkosi who had a perfect record for the year. These are the children of our good workers here at Altona, Johanesi and Frifina Nkosi.

So Monacia got the doll and how her little eyes sparkled as she took it in her arms and held it as if it was a real baby! We bought two little cars for the little boys and they too were very pleased.

To the boys who had been present each Sunday of the last Quarter I gave each a handkerchief and to the girls a "uduku" or kerchief to wear on their heads. Every native Christian woman and older girl wears one of these. Then to every child who had been to S. S. during the year I gave a sucker. A Christmas gift of money from a good friend in Woodstock, New Brunswick, helped me to provide for the Sunday School Christmas and I believe it was profitable. It was the only Christmas that many of these dear little children had and it was so little to what so many of our white children enjoy. I tried to tell them the Christmas story and the real meaning of it.

My S. S. is still small but there are encouraging things to consider. One young girl used to come to the mission often with wood for salt

and I used to try and talk with her a little about coming to S.S., being a Christian, etc., but she would get very cross and once or twice left the house and ran away. This was an unusual thing for a child to do and I became interested in her. She told me, one day, that her people used to be Christians in another church but now were all heathen again. Then I knew at once that they would be hard to reach for here as well as at home, the backslider seems the hardest to win. But now for several months this girl has been coming to S. S. I haven't been able to find out the reason for her coming—something must have touched her heart and changed her mind. God, no doubt, worked the change and we trust that she will go on and give herself to the Lord. Her brother has recently done so and that will be a help to her.

Our congregations, here at Altona, have nearly doubled the past year and now we have from forty to sixty here each Sunday. It is encouraging and we thank God and take courage. Still there is yet much to be done—many heathen yet to reach, backsliders to be reclaimed, the church to be led on, etc. The task is great but we have a great God, one who is greater than all that can be against us. Praise His name. May the Lord help us during the coming year that we may be able to see greater results for Him.

We all join in sending Christian love and Best Wishes to all the dear homeland friends and we wish for all a Blessed New Year, one that will be filled with rich blessings from above. May God richly bless you every one, is our daily prayer.

Yours, in His Service,

G. M. KEIRSTEAD

Altona Mission,

Dec. 30th, 1940

Dear Highway Friends,

It is now about mid-summer here. This means hot weather, severe thunder storms, and quite frequent rains.

The past two weeks have been very rainy so we were not too optimistic about a fine day for the Eutungivini Church opening and dedication.

Yesterday, the 29th, was the appointed opening Sunday. The clouds were thick and heavy as we started off from the mission station. But by the time we got to the new church site the sky held the promise of fine weather.

Bro. George Sanders, who had been spending Christmas at Hartland, with the other Sanders and MacDonalds, came on horseback. On account of the flooded nature of the Pangola river he had to ride away round by the bridge, nearly seventy miles.

The new church building was filled to capacity. We counted about eighty present. Many were visitors. Quite a number were visiting native workers. Among those present were: Triphina Msibi, worker at Kipenyawo, Daniel Sukazi preaching across the Mozane river near Swaziland, Talida Nzima at Monzane, Johanisi Nkosi and his wife from Altona, Belina Myeni from Klipvaal, and Jimson Ngamezulu of Nkokweni.

We listened to a sermon based on the 3rd Chapter of First Corinthians. The theme was "Building a Spiritual House." All were exhorted to be diligent builders. Heathen were to lay foundations; backsliders were to repair their dilapidated structures; Christians were to add to and beautify their houses.

After pledges had been paid and thank offerings had been brought up to "thank" for opening the church, we rejoiced to get an offering of over \$20. This, with what had been contributed before, left a small debt of \$15 on a building that

cost nearly \$80. I later discovered several of our native workers had sacrificed their usual Christmas feast so they might have money to "open the church." The local church members had put down a mud floor and decorated the mud plastered walls in grey and white. They also provided goat meat and "samp" for the visiting native workers.

Testimonies followed the dedicatory exercise and prayer. The service concluded with the Christians gathering around the Lord's table for the Communion Service.

We all continue to be in good health. The Lord bless you all richly during the New Year of 1941.

Yours in Africa,

EUGENE A. M. KIERSTEAD

Altona Mission,

Dec. 15th, 1940

Dear Highway Readers:

When last the Kiersteads greeted you we were five; this time we are six. I want to take this opportunity of thanking the Lord for sparing Gladys to us and for giving us another son, Kenneth. This little chap first saw the light of day in the Johannesburg Queen Victoria Hospital. He arrived there because we felt it was too much of a risk to be at Altona, nearly fifty miles from a doctor.

I took Gladys to Johannesburg in my old car and stayed with Brother Paul Sanders and his wife in Boksburg North, until she was able to return home. We were away from home just over two weeks. Sister Grace and Brother George held the fort and looked after the two younger children while we were gone.

In spite of a certain strain and anxiety during the critical period, I had a nice change and rest. Brother Paul and family were very kind to Harold and I, and we enjoyed our visit very much. Incidentally we enjoyed being in "town," seeing thousands of white people again, and of "window-shopping."

Johannesburg, the Golden City, is a modern city indeed, and was thronged with shoppers, gold workers, soldiers and natives of almost every tribe and race of South Africa.

Brother Essylstein, of the Nazarene, took me to a Mine Compound meeting. Hundreds of natives lived in this particular compound. Probably fifty or so attended the service. I believe all were of the Shangaan tribe which is chiefly found in Portuguese East Africa. My, you should have heard them sing and praise the Lord! Five or six came up to the altar and two or more seemed to get definite help. It is a great work that the Nazarenes are doing in the mines. Here men are saved, sanctified, taught to read, and go back to their heathen homes to spread the good news of salvation. The Portuguese government may ban missionaries from going into their territory and they may forbid the natives studying in their own language at their homes but it is powerless to prevent these educated and spirit-filled mine boys from going back to their homes and preaching to their heathen friends.

Shortly after getting back home I went to visit Alfred Metula's outpost. I was glad to learn that two recent Shangaan converts were making progress in the Christian way; also that three more Shangaans were ready for baptism and four others were making progress as seekers.

While away with Gladys to Johannesburg, a quarterly was held at Altona. Those who attended said it was a time of refreshing.