

MISSIONARY CORRESPONDENCE

Altona Mission Station,
P. O. Delfkom, via Piet Retief,
January 3rd, 1943

Dear Highway:

Today, the first Sunday of the New Year, we greet you with best wishes for a prosperous and happy New Year in the affairs of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We are glad to report a good Christmas Quarterly and feast for our natives. Six candidates were baptized and received into church membership. Four members were set aside because of their backsliding but four others were restored to the Lord's Table. Two babies were presented to the church. The Christmas offerings exceeded \$30 and were more than sufficient for the Christmas feast, entertaining the Quarterly, etc. God bless these people for their generosity in the midst of their poverty.

If my memory serves me well, this year 1943 is the Fortieth Anniversary of the founding of our African Mission work, as it was forty years ago that Dr. Sanders and family arrived at Balmoral and began evangelizing the natives of this area. It seems befitting that we should give special attention and study to our Foreign Mission work during the year. To review what has been accomplished, to assess our present work, and to look forward to the future.

I should like to ask each of our retired, or older missionaries to write one or more letters to The Highway, giving us a picture of the developments that took place out here when they were active in the work or if they desire reminiscences.

During the last forty years a generation has appeared and for the most part has passed away; there remains only a handful of the first fruits of the mission work. Today's missionaries are of the younger generation; today's members are of comparatively recent order.

The older generation laid foundations and brought into being the work as it is today; they established the Mission Stations (Hartland and Altona) and most of the outposts that exist today; they started the medical work; they nurtured the schools.

We, the new generation, are building on well-established foundations; it is up to us to finish up the existing structures and add to what we have.

Our present organization out here is fairly complete although there remain a few gaps to be filled in. We have faith to believe that the Lord will help us to fill in these gaps in the near future.

As we look to the coming years our eyes look up to the regions beyond. There is a spirit amongst the missionaries and workers that asks where next? After all are we missionaries? If we settle down as pastors, do not we in a sense lay down our role and take up another? A missionary neighbor told me that once a mission work was established and could, for the most part, be left in the hands of the native workers, it was then time to move on.

I believe that the time will soon come when we must decide what we shall do; shall we remain as we are or have we got the faith and means to push out? The answer ought to be: push out.

Yours in Him,
EUGENE A. M. KIERSTEAD

Altona M. S.,
Dec. 31, 1942

Dear Highway Friends:

It is time to begin my last letter to be written to you, in 1942. The New Year begins tomorrow. I trust that you will have a good year with many blessings from our Father in Heaven. I also pray that we may all be more diligent about our Master's work than ever before.

The past few weeks have been very busy and very interesting and enjoyable also.

Shortly after I wrote my November letter to you, we had a short visit from Miss Jean Doyle. It was such a pleasure to see someone from home and to enjoy her company. I expect by now that she is ready to return to Canada and we are wishing her a safe journey.

Sister Grace Sanders came over the 15th of December and it has been such a pleasure to have her in our home and especially for the Christmas season. She has very little time at Hartland for sewing, so she has taken advantage of her time here and has made up several needed uniforms for her hospital work. She has also spent some time attending to the medical work here. Some of her old patients have been so glad to have her here as it saves them the long walk to Hartland, in order to see her.

Yesterday we went kraal visiting to see a sick man—our worker Losaya's husband. He has asthma and possibly lung trouble. He is such a good Christian, we are praying that God will touch his body and restore him to health and strength again, if it is His will.

We had a few white potatoes given us for Christmas so I took up a few of them, with an onion, to make a soup for their supper. They were very grateful and we enjoyed our short visit. We sang and had prayers with them before we left. As we sang "Jesu Mkululi," how my mind went back to the missionary service at Perth when Sisters Helen and Alice Sterritt were there, shortly after their return from this land. They sang that beautiful hymn and it was strange that I got such a blessing from it when I didn't understand a word of it. I guess it was the spirit in which it was sung. Then too I wondered if I would not soon be singing the same way, in the midst of a black congregation. How blessedly God does work to instruct and teach and prepare us for our future work!

On Wednesday, the 23rd, we were all invited to attend a Christmas party given for the children at one of the near-by gold mines. They sent a car for us and brought us home in the early evening. I certainly enjoyed having the privilege of seeing and speaking to other white women and the children had a wonderful time. The children each received a very nice gift and came home feeling very happy.

We had only been home a short while when a knock sounded at the door and we found that six of our Hartland people had arrived. We were so pleased to see them. The river has been very full and we have been praying that the water would go down so that the people could cross, and, sure enough, we learned that they crossed very easily. We had no rain all through the Quarterly. The people went home early Monday morning and the rains started again that evening. We do thank the dear Lord for allowing the Hartland people to be here.

The blessing of God was felt in every service. There was much liberty of the spirit,

both in preaching and praying, and I believe many were refreshed and strengthened.

Thursday was a full day of services. I was especially impressed by an illustration used by Johane Maseko, in the sermon of the afternoon. He was encouraging the people to go to Jesus for refuge and he spoke of the little rock rabbit. When chased by an enemy it will go for a place with many rocks and stones. There it is able to peek out and watch, but the enemy cannot get it. Johane went on to say that it was the same with us. When Jesus is our refuge we can see the enemy but as long as we remain in the strong-hold with Jesus, the enemy cannot touch us. I got blessed as Johane spoke.

Friday morning was given up to the cooking and preparing of the feast. A good sized cow had been killed the night before and the intestines had been cooked and eaten for supper that night. Not much is thrown away when an animal is killed here.

The service went in about one o'clock in the afternoon. Several preached and as the crowds were so great we had an outdoor service too. There was a good altar service and season of prayer at the close.

We had a nice little Christmas tree all ready on our verandah, and as soon as the service was over the people gathered around while Eugene and several of the young men distributed the gifts. I had little gifts ready for my Sunday school children, etc., and I also received a few gifts from some of the natives. I had four nice chickens, and one of our workers brought us 16 ears of new corn. This was the first we had had this season, so we certainly enjoyed it. Then another native, but not one of our people, sent Kenneth seven ears of corn also.

Due to the fact that two other churches were having feasts, fairly near us, our crowd was not as large as it otherwise would have been. Eugene thought there was about four hundred at least present.

The people greatly enjoyed the feast of meat and boiled, coarsely ground corn and I made a large plateful of plain cookies for our workers to eat with their tea. After the food was finished the people gathered in the church and the service didn't finish until after two o'clock the next morning.

Saturday was another full day. Sister Grace had charge of the early prayer service and also the Bible Class at eleven o'clock. In the afternoon several of the workers preached and at night we had another long service.

Sunday was a nice day. We had a short prayer service in the church at eight o'clock followed by Sunday school. Then the people had their breakfast after which we all went to the river for a baptism.

I think it was the nicest baptism we have ever had. There were two young men and two girls — all from one family — who had come from Big Mapondleni to attend the quarterly and be baptized. It was a blessed time to see these young people taking their stand for God. One woman was also baptized. Some years ago, while a seeker in our church, her husband died and she followed the heathen custom and went to her husband's brother as his wife. It seems now that she has taken a decided stand and has given up this man. Her name is Gungwana Tabeta. The sixth to be baptized was a man, Absolum Dlamini. His wife was one of our members but backslid and married this man when he was a heathen so she was set aside. But it seems that she did not forget God and evidently prayed both for herself and for her husband. After a while he