

December 19, 2008

Mission Glimpses



News from the Rodewalds serving through LCMS World Mission in Africa

Merry CHRISTmas!

Dear Friends in Christ,

CHRISTmas greetings to you from sunny South Africa where we are experiencing beautiful summer weather. In this part of the world, Christmas usually consists of bathing suits and ice cream! Yet we still get to hear those familiar Christmasy songs that talk about snowflakes and chestnuts roasting on an open fire. Our open fires on Christmas are outdoor braais (the Afrikaans word for barbecue) and lots of ice cold drinks instead of hot chocolate. Being in the big city we even have the over-the-top Christmas materialism and yes they even had Christmas decorations up the end of October!!! I went to the mall today (yes we have malls here) and guess what... there was a line of children waiting to get their pictures taken with Santa (but here he is called Father Christmas). I felt like I was back in the US (the crowds of people also helped with that feeling except that here you walk on the left side of the aisle instead of the right).



In some ways we are missing our more simple Christmas in Botswana. But no matter how much the world tries to change it or when or where we celebrate it, the meaning of CHRISTmas stays the same... and we reflect on the awesome gift God gave us through His Son who began in the most humble circumstances. He was the picture of humility and love His whole life so that we may have a glimpse of who our heavenly Father is and have hope of eternal life with Him. The greatest gift of all.

The boys are into their second week of summer break (of 5 weeks) and enjoying life without school and homework. December is the end of their school year and all three will begin in their new grades in January. Caleb will be in grade 11, Jacob in grade 9 and Seth in grade 6. We thank God for His

provision for them of friends, good schools and a feeling of this new big city as home.

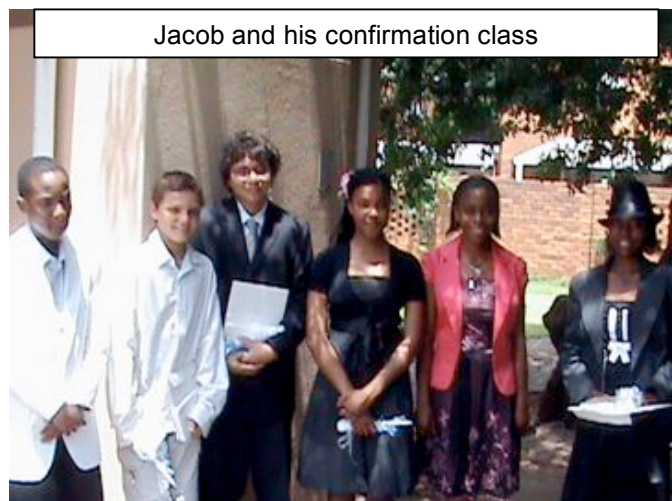


Jacob and Pastor Wittenberg

On November 30th Jacob was confirmed in his faith in Jesus as his Lord and Savior at the local church which we attend here. We thank God for his growing faith and his commitment to understanding his faith walk with his Lord through his confirmation studies this year. We are also thankful for Pastor Wittenberg who did a good job of teaching

Jake and his classmates.

Mike made a trip to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, at the end of October for an African Management Team meeting to form the next year's budgets. It was Mike's first trip to Ethiopia. While working on budgets wasn't exactly his favorite thing to do, a highlight of the trip was introductions to the President of the Ethiopian Lutheran Church Mekane Yesu. This church is very missional growing from 20,000 members in 1959 to over five million today. He also met other church leaders in the area on a quick swing



Jacob and his confirmation class

through Nairobi in Kenya.



Mike and fellow LCMS missionary Claude Houge with representatives of the Lutheran Church in East Africa.

Mike was gone again for half the month of November to the States. He was in California for a Mission Partners conference where again he met many people who are involved in home and international missions within the LCMS. As he has been appointed as the interim Regional Director for Africa

beginning in January, it was important that he meet and get to talk face to face with many of the people with whom he will partner in mission. It took him a week to get over the jet lag but he was glad for the conversations on mission with so many people passionate about being a part of it. Mike's niece was getting married the weekend before he was to be in California so it was a wonderful chance for Mike to attend this wedding since he has missed many family events over the years. The fun part was that we did not tell anyone but his two brothers that he was coming so he was able to surprise the rest of the family with his attendance.

December became a bit less hectic when Mike's trip to Sudan was canceled because of the ill health of the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sudan. It has been a blessing to have more family time together (when we can get him off the computer and email :)) and also getting some pictures and shelves hung in our new home before travel starts up again in January.



Cindy with Seth at one of his cricket games. He is waiting to bat.

Cindy has gotten half way through entering support information into her new computer program and looks forward to being a bit more organized in 2009. She was blessed this year to be involved with a group of 15 ladies at Caleb's high school that commit to pray every Tuesday morning for the students and staff of the school. She also has worked on making the house feel like home and only has a few more things on her to do list. Most of all she is thankful for this year of fewer commitments giving her time to be more available for the boys.

Prayer Requests

- ❖ Pray for our neighboring country Zimbabwe where a cholera epidemic has broken out due to the poor living conditions. Pray also for the northern part of South Africa that borders Zimbabwe as the epidemic has spread to this area in the Limpopo province.
- ❖ Please pray for the health of the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sudan as he seems quite sick.

- ❖ Please continue to pray for wisdom, guidance and endurance for Mike in his new job position as interim Africa Regional Director which he will begin on January 1st.
- ❖ The family who were our best friends in Botswana between 1993 - 2004 are coming for Christmas! We are excited. They arrive Dec. 23rd and leave the 30th. We will be spending Christmas at Kruger National Park. Please pray for safe travels and a wonderful visit with these friends.

You all have been a gift and blessing to us through your friendship, support and prayers. Thank you. Because of you we are able to share with others here about the greatest gift to all the world and also help others to share that good news. May CHRISTmas never lose it's meaning to you and your family and may God's hope and peace be your CHRISTmas gift this year.

Wishing you a blessed **Christmas**,

Mike, Cindy, Caleb, Jacob and Seth Rodewald

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