



From Bill and Joan

We asked Les and Sheree to write a paragraph for our National Newsletter as many have asked about them – below is what we received. We felt we could not cut any out, so we are sending this news out on its own and we trust you will be blessed, challenged and inspired as you read it and encouraged to pray diligently for the amazing opportunities that Les and Sheree and their family have to reach out to families, children and churches in Zimbabwe.

We have found difficulty over the years in knowing what mission work we can share with the GFA community. So many of you have asked us to advertise your mission interests because you are a part of the GFA community. We would love to do that but believe we must stay with the GFI vision that God has given and mission work that is associated with it. We trust that you will understand. We adopted the GFI National Directors for Zimbabwe Les and Sheree Hobbs in 2002 and also Allan and Gabi Dixon in South Africa at that time. You have been involved in praying the GFZim community through very difficult times which are not over yet.

We do encourage all GFA families to be involved in sharing the parenting vision both overseas and at home and encourage you and your teens to be active to this end. So do keep us posted with specific GFI mission goals you may have. We will share these. And now to Les and Sheree's news:

To our Praying Australian GFI Partners



Introduction

As 2010 unfolds we are so excited about working with families in Zimbabwe. As you know, our focus, by nature of the times we live in, has to include orphans, as well as many unusual family combinations, as more than half of Zimbabwean families have one or both partners in the Diaspora, earning money to send home to keep their families, as our economic climate is so dire, and there is now 80% unemployment here, and still no political solution in sight. This means that we have children being raised by aunts and uncles, grandparents, friends, and some are even being raised by their older siblings. We have 3 million orphans in the country, 5 % of whom are in institutions. We have done a fair amount of GFI teaching with care givers, and this continues to grow. It does seem a never ending journey at times, as the need is so huge and we feel as though we are not even seeing the tip off the iceberg yet.

With my work with Miracle Missions, I enjoy audience at the national level with many government officials and programs, NGO's and embassies, and I feel like the lizard in the Kings palace many times, but know the connections are made for the benefit of the church in Zimbabwe, for this time in our nation's history.



Schools

This year we are scheduled to run our annual GKGW course for Gateway School – the teachers all have to do GKGW once every 3 years, and as there is such a high turnover of teaching staff (many teachers cannot survive on a teacher's salary, and are finding jobs in South Africa, but still living in Zimbabwe, to support their families), we do GKGW to a brand new set of teachers it seems, every year, so we often get frustrated as we feel we are not gaining ground, as the principles are always still new. We do know however, that our part is to faithfully continue soldiering on. Kevin Ricquebourg, the Principal, is a great supporter, and we are often called upon to do teachings in the evenings to parent groups. (Probably 5 times a year). I am involved at Gateway helping coordinate their annual education conference, and more recently, a termly seminar for the Government schools in our area, as an outreach, and to share our skills with them to encourage them. Les and I always do parenting sessions at these, which we find very meaningful. Gateway is becoming known for its heart to reach out in to the community, and to support struggling Govt schools – a very redemptive role.

PRAY: We need strong leader couples to be raised up in the school, capable of running courses for us – our leaders leave once their children leave the school at 12 years of age, and at the moment, all our leaders have left for this reason, or have left the country, so we are back to 1 other couple again, after 10 years of diligent training! We like to have 1 teachers course and 2 parents courses running every year, and for the first time in 10 years, this year we may not be able to do this, due to lack of trained leaders. **There are always at least 50 couples at the school wanting to do GKGW. Les and I want to be more involved in Govt school courses, starting GKGW for the first time, and doing the occasional sessions at Gateway, but keep being drawn back into running the courses. We feel very anxious about this as we are so aware of the harvest field in the schooling world, and I have so much access and influence there, but feel frustrated at the fact that we can't move in there like we want to. (Just to point out, we always do the full GKGW, not the shortened versions – tried, but they always want the full deal, which is GREAT, but....time consuming!)**



Orphanages/Street Kids

Our friendship with the Child Evangelism Fellowship folks heading up Jabulani has given us access to take our orphanage parenting training to a new level, with the use of their fabulous training room. I will be teaching this class weekly in the mornings (the care givers simply cannot move at night), cyclically at this stage. During the day time, the school aged children are at school, so the staff can juggle duties to release some of their staff to attend weekly sessions. We appeal to the churches for money to use to copy manuals for the caregivers, and so far this has worked well. Because of the work with dumped babies, I now start with PFP, then PFT, then GKGW, whereas before I have only done GKGW with them. It is

difficult, as there are so many contradictory customs here that we have to tackle head on, but we plant seeds and trust the Holy Spirit to water them and help them grow. The class I am about to start will have probably over 30 care givers this time, from 5 orphanages and 2 street kids organisations. Over the past 3 years we have taught into some 15 of the orphanages in Harare.

PRAY: again, for women leaders with a lot of wisdom to draw alongside me to help with the special needs of this group. Also, for the manual I would like to ask Anne Marie's permission to start compiling this year with specific orphanage issues. It will be a tool that would enable many more people to be involved in leading and free us up to look at the ministry in the high density areas. Also for wisdom, as there is an opportunity for the start of another baby orphanage in the city.



Churches

Our population is so mobile, that we feel as though we have moved back 10 years, to training brand new folk all over again, as a steady stream of people are leaving the country every year. What a blessing it has been however, to have the donated courses in many of the local churches. We thank God so often for the generous folk in Australia who made it possible for us to place material in their hands, and for the Ezzo's, who make it possible for us to duplicate material.

Last year we facilitated GKGW for a very lovely group at the end of last year, mostly white Pastors. By far most of the folk on our courses are black. It was also probably the smallest group we have ever done (only 7 couples). Our focus this quarter for that group is to get GKGW training going on locally in their congregations. As pastors, they would lead the first course, with our help, and identify couples to train in leadership from this start. Kevin and Patience who were our main facilitators for PFP and PFTY plan to leave Zim this year – they will be sadly missed. We are often invited to speak on parenting at various churches, ladies and men's groups, Moms and toddlers meetings and Bible schools, and wherever we go, there are always plenty of people wanting to do GKGW. It is very well known and loved. We could do GKGW every night of the year and still not get through everyone wanting to do the course. The audio tapes of Moms notes and some sessions done by Carla Link have been so useful as resources for sessions. There is no fancy Christian book store down the road, so we really value any resources we come across!

PRAY: Again, for leadership to be raised up within the local churches, to help shoulder the burden of the number of courses that need to be run.



Outreach

We have been asked to do a 5 day seminar in Pretoria – this will not be under the banner of GFI. We have also been asked to speak for Miracle Missions in Cape Town in March. The 3 topics we have prepared so far have been obedience, family identity and responsibility! We are planning to use Dave and Charissa Scotford's DVDs, and were thinking of doing a split session where Les could do a Fathers mandate talk and I could do a mom's talk, and they have also asked for a teenagers talk.

PRAY: For favour for all the outreach talks we do this year, that God would capture the hearts of the parents in Zimbabwe with a vision for their families, communities and nation.



Visits

It has been a privilege to have some GFA families and teens visit us on mission trips in the past couple of years. There is a steady stream of people who desire to do this, so we are thinking of changing our strategy to align with our calling to parenting. **Strategically, we would welcome** GF Key Couples to consider making a trip out to input specifically into the care givers courses – running sessions of PFP, PFT and GKGW when here and having a closer look in on some of the special problems we have in parenting in orphanages, and doing some ground work in producing specific materials to address these issues. As it seems this type of thing is only going to increase, I need to come up with a strategy and boundaries, to make it useful on the ground here. If others would like to help in other areas of ministry we will refer you to a **Christian** organisation here called “ACTS”, and they do logistics for missions trips, taking care of accommodation, meals, transport, etc, so that the volunteers can be useful where they interface. This does look like it will be a good solution for us to use for folk coming over, as we will still have the value of interaction with them without the logistical constraints .

PRAY: For God’s wisdom in conceptualising this, with the right people and the right timing! There are many times I hear that GF leaders in other parts of the world struggle to host one small class a year. I would love to ship them out here for 18 weeks to simply run a course or two!



Our Family

How privileged we are to have connection with the wider GFI family in Australia, and how grateful we are to you that our Kylie is able to study in Australia to equip herself for ministry for our Lord here in Zimbabwe, her home country. Yes, Kylie has arrived in Perth safely for her final year of study. Kylie did a whole extra credit course last semester (so is well ahead in credits, and has the option of a double major), and also signed up for an arts practicum course, which is basically doing 100 practical hours of work – which she did for Miracle Missions under my fellow trustee’s supervision – and involves write ups of her accomplishments, and an evaluation essay of 2 000 words. She did well over 200 hours of work, as there is always so much going on here, so I am sure she will achieve a decent pass for this too. All this means she is well poised to complete her studies this year in style, with a whole lot of extra credits under her belt. We are so proud of her for her diligence and work ethic.

This year we have also been privileged to be able to send Michael to the University of Cape Town. When I called the other day I could barely hear him, until he took a moment to step out of his room in to the corridor to speak to me. He told me they were about to start a Bible Study/cell group meeting in his room in Residence (this is in the first week there), and there were about 30 guys in his room – he said he invited a whole lot of guys, and didn’t think many were Christians, but they all came, so he was really excited! He lead the Christian Group at High School in his final year, and it went from a membership of 20 to over 200 in the year, so he has a real vision to get stuck in there in his Residence. He has found a lovely Bible based church near campus, and there are a lot of mature Christian students there to mentor the younger guys, which is so wonderful to hear.

Our younger two children continue to study well. It is far more essential for them to have a accredited education and gain credentials here in Zimbabwe than in your country and it is very difficult for most families to be able to do this for their children who are the future of this country.

We continue to praise God for his provision for us and blessing on our lives. We are so blessed to be able to minister his Love and Grace in the land of our birth at this time in history and we do appreciate your support and prayer as we partner together for the Kingdom of God.

Les and Sheree Hobbs
March 2010