

The Agonizomai Striver

*“And we proclaim Him ... And for this purpose also I labor,
striving according to His power, which mightily works
within me.”*

Colossians 1:28-29

Dear Friends,

October 8, 2018

The year is rapidly approaching its terminus, which means it must be spring in the Southern Hemisphere. We had a fairly wet and cool winter here in Cape Town, so the warmer days and balmy breezes off the Indian Ocean are much appreciated!

While there is much I could share by way of ministry news, I will limit this update to a couple of key highlights for your prayer consideration: Three months ago I began an intensive two-year discipleship course called Leadership Development Training (LTD). With the South African colleague's approval, I handpicked 11 men who show promise and potential for future leadership positions at Everglen Baptist Church (EBC). The men have reading and assignments due each time we meet. To both my surprise and delight, the men have faithfully done their reading and assignments! So far, only one man has had to drop out. It is hoped that the ten men who remain will continue toward the finish line in mid-2020, so they can be used as Bible study leaders, deacons, and possibly even eldership. One of the greatest needs in the South African church is godly male leadership. We hope and pray LTD will meet that need here at EBC.

On the Christ Seminary Cape Town front, I have been busy pursuing the possibility of renovating EBC's old sanctuary. Before we can officially begin, we need adequate classroom space, as well as adequate space for a library with computer work stations. To this end, I have been researching various scenarios for converting EBC's former sanctuary to meet the future seminary's needs. This has necessitated numerous meetings with structural engineers, contractors, and an architect to troubleshoot various possible scenarios.

At present, I am awaiting the final plans that will be used to get cost estimates on the proposed project. Then I can begin the necessary fund raising. Accordingly, these plans will also be submitted to the town planner for approval — this will take anywhere from 4 to 6 months, so we want to submit these plans as soon as possible.

After much consideration, it has been decided to cast a concrete or wooden ceiling in the old sanctuary to create a second floor that will be used almost exclusively for the seminary. The old building has a high vaulted ceiling which makes this possibility desirable. What had to be determined was whether the foundation was fortified enough to withstand the extra stress the second floor would place on the existing structure. Fortunately, the foundation is sufficient for what we are now proposing. So, as it stands now, I should have the final plans for our proposed renovations in my hands by the end of this week! From there, the plans will be submitted for a cost estimate on the

construction of the seminary. I can then begin to raise funds while we wait for the city to approve our plans. It is my hope that by this time next year we will be putting the final touches on the renovation and preparing for a February 2020 start date for Christ Seminary Cape Town!

All and all, we are enjoying God's good blessings on our lives and the ministry He has so graciously given us here in the Cape! The political situation surrounding proposed land reforms remains tense and is understandably a cause for great concern among our flock. The ruling party here continues pressing forward with its reckless plans of expropriation of land without financial compensation. Interestingly, President Trump's recent tweet to Mike Pompeo to investigate South Africa's plans, threw the government here into a tailspin. The way many responded, one would have thought the whole of the US Navy was parked just off South Africa's coastline. It was actually quite comical to watch. It certainly got everyone's attention.

Despite the present political distemper, Debbie and I remain committed to the ministry to which God called us many years ago. There is still a job to do, and, as long as God allows, we will press on toward the mark of the high calling in Christ Jesus!

May the Lord richly bless you all!

Yours for the Master's use!

Mark & Debbie Christopher

Prayer Requests:

1. For the 10 men who are currently in LTD training — to remain faithful and to be molded for future use!
2. For the present plans for Christ Seminary Cape Town and the fund-raising endeavor which will need to take place.
3. For the ongoing political tensions related to land reform and the upcoming elections in May of 2019.
4. For a family camp I have been asked to speak at October 19-21 for Stellenbosch Bible Church. I have been asked to address the issue of anxiety because of fears and concerns many South Africans harbor related to the current political and economic uncertainty.