



The Men of the 2018 Africa Summit in Polokwane

Dear Friends and Ministry Partners,

August 7, 2018

As I pen this update there is a gentle rain falling on the drought-parched land of Cape Town! While we haven't had an overly rainy winter so far, we have had enough precipitation to bring the dam levels up to about 60% of capacity. This is 35% above last year's levels at the same time. Thus, we praise the Lord for the showers of blessing we've enjoyed to date, and we pray for more rain before the rainy season ends in two months.

It has been a very busy winter for Debbie and me. It included a quick trip to Los Angeles for a required theological German course for the PhD program in which I am enrolled at The Master's Seminary. Thanks to the generosity of one of our supporting churches Debbie was able to join me. While I was busy trying to learn academic German and translating German theological works into English, Debbie spent time with both of our kids and helped them out where she could.

After returning to Cape Town in early July, I unpacked and quickly repacked to fly to Polokwane at the other end of South Africa — 1100 miles away. This was to attend the first Africa Summit for Grace Community Church supported missionaries in Africa and those in close association with The Master's Academy International and its associated

seminaries in Africa. As well, men from Africa who trained at Master's Seminary were invited. In all some fifty men from about seven different African countries were in attendance. It was a wonderful time of fellowshiping and networking with like-minded men and ministries scattered all around sub-Saharan Africa. I was privileged to preach the final address of the conference before departing for the airport.

While at the summit, I was able to meet with the key leaders of Christ Seminary Polokwane to further discuss the plans for Christ Seminary Cape Town. This has resulted in our beginning the formal application process to be an on-site delivery mechanism for Christ Seminary Polokwane in Cape Town. This application will eventually be submitted to the appropriate governmental department — the Council for Higher Education — and will need to be approved by them if any form of accreditation is to ever be granted. Given that time never really seems to be of the essence in Africa, I have no idea how long this process will take.

Upon returning to Cape Town from Polokwane, two elders from Grace Community Church accompanied me to spend a few days seeing the ministry here and visited the various South African men we partner with in ministry. It was encouraging to host these two men and share our vision for the ministry God has given us here.

Now that the proverbial dust has just settled on all the aforementioned, we are putting our hand to the ministerial plow and seeking to plow as much of the field as we can before the dusk of 2018 cast a shadow over us at the end of the year. To this end, next week I am beginning an intensive two-year discipleship program with nine men I have handpicked, with the pastor's help, at Everglen Baptist. From this crop of men, we hope to see Everglen's future Bible study leaders, deacons, and elders developed. Some of these men may even go on to attend Christ Seminary in the future.

In our last communique I discussed the fragile political situation here regarding land reform. Well, last week South African president Cyril Ramaphosa announced that his ruling party, the African National Congress, is going ahead with plans to amend the constitution to replace the existing land reform policy of willing buyer/willing seller with land expropriation without compensation. So, we are in for some very interesting and trying days ahead as this all unfolds. Considering that the ruling party has mismanaged every single government related entity from the power utility Eskom to the post office, it would take nothing less than a miracle of biblical proportions for them to effectively and efficiently manage such a mammoth undertaking without completely destroying the economy and creating an atmosphere for violence worse than already exists.

For this reason, we are urging much prayer on behalf of South Africa, the people to whom we minister, and for the government to reconsider this disastrous plan from which no good can come. All these things weigh heavy on the hearts and minds of those we shepherd. So, we need a heaping helping of God's grace, wisdom, and strength as we endeavor to minister to our flock and others who are bothered by these political distractions, as we seek to help them to keep on looking to Jesus!

We will keep you apprised of these recent developments as they unfold over the course of the next several months and years. In the meantime, we pray for an abundance of spiritual fruit.

Yours for the Master's Use

Mark & Debbie Christopher

Prayer Requests:

- On personal note, please pray for me as I continue to work on all the requirements for the PhD in Old Testament. Bit-by-bit I try to keep picking away at it. Unfortunately, I failed the German exam and have started studying again for the retake exam, which will be taken here in Cape Town. Please pray that God will give me the mental facility to scale the wall of this imposing language, which has been the downfall of a many a PhD student at TMS.
- For the start of Leadership Training Development and the nine men who will be a part of this intensive discipleship and leadership development program.
- For the application process of Christ Seminary Cape Town and the proposed plans to renovate an existing building at Everglen Baptist for more classroom space and a library.
- For South Africa and the politics of land reform and all the unintended consequences of such an ill-fated policy.
- For both our kids, Janelle and Micaiah, in Santa Clarita, California as Janelle works and studies for her master's in library science and Micaiah as he begins his junior year at Master's University. Micaiah has struggled to decide on a major. I think he is finally settled in Information Systems as a major, which includes computer science and business courses. Pray he would have a settled peace about this.