

Dear brethren, we greet you from a cool but Sunny South Africa.

To start with, we are extremely pleased to inform you that we had a peaceful national election on the 8th May. Unfortunately the ANC, did again take the majority of the votes, although their support has diminished some. Things are still tough for many people in this country. Unemployment has risen to its highest level ever to 27,5%. And that, of course, leads to a high crime rate. Murders, Rapes, Hijacking and other violent crimes are a daily occurrence. Two weeks ago, a young couple was gunned down on an off ramp to a main national road (N12). (*Near the Southern Africa Bible College in Benoni*). Their vehicle ran out of fuel and while they waited for someone to bring them fuel, they were shot dead, it seems, for no reason other than being white. Please continue to keep our beautiful country in your prayers.

Of great concern for many of us today, is the all out attack on the farmers. From the 1st January to 31st May there have been 184 farm attacks and twenty (20) murders on farms in South Africa. These attacks do affect everybody, especially the economy. It is not only the farmers being attacked, out of the 184 attacks, 113 attacks were on the farm workers. Most of these attacks have been very well planned and orchestrated. Although many of the attacks are because of the socio-economic situation in the country, in almost half the attacks no money was stolen. So it seems that some of the farm attacks may be connected to the ongoing land grab without compensation issue. We pray daily for sanity to prevail.

DOWNTOWN

On the church front, we have been worshipping at our home since the beginning of the year. The building we used was being renovated. After the building was renovated, the Fort Hare University gave us notification that they are not allowing any church groups to meet on campus or in the buildings any more. That was at the beginning of March. We continued to meet at our home in Summerpride. So we were at a cross road as a congregation, regarding what was best for the church to do.

Therefore, for the last number of months we have been exploring the options in order for the church to move forward. There are basically three options: We can continue to worship at our home, or we can try and find a place to rent in town, that we can afford, or we can merge with the local church that meets at Keam Road.

DOWNTOWN AND KEAM RD. (KR)

We have had in-depth discussions and prayers regarding the future of the church at Downtown and the area. From the beginning we decided that it is important that we have **100% consensus** to do what is best for everybody in the congregation. After doing an intense SWAT analysis, exploring all possible options, regarding making a decision that will be beneficial the church as a whole, we came to a decision.

First we committed our choices to God in prayer. And then, we discussed the fact that, We need to understand that **sometimes God might make things difficult for us to carry out what we decided to do**. *For example: We discussed that at one time the possibility existed to raise funds to build a church building on the **FARM**, however we were not successful in raising the money for a building. Then we discussed the possibility to rent a place in town..... we soon found **more negatives than positives in doing so**.*

We also understand that **God will Show Us What is His Will for Us**. For example, the possibility to *merge with Keam Rd church* of Christ in Baysville became an overwhelming choice for us.

At Keam Road, there is a building, this certainly will be advantageous for various ministries, especially the class rooms for the Sunday school. Some of the members at Keam Road have suggested that we should merge, before it even became a reality. The membership numbers are down at Keam Road and they are struggling at the moment and also need our help. The fact that we are familiar with most of the members at KR, since *teaching there regularly on Wednesday nights and preaching once a month* for the last two years or more, in my opinion, will help make the transition easier.

So, we came to a point where the congregation was asked to decide....

And now after months of discussions and prayer the church members at Downtown did unanimously agree to go ahead with the merger with Keam Rd. From informal discussions with the leadership at Keam Rd., over the last number of months, this proposal was met in a tremendously positive way. Especially in view to grow the local church in East London. Encouraging comments were also made regarding the pooling of our resources and man power and how it will be a priceless positive injection for the local church at Keam Rd.

Since Keam Road, have about 40 in attendance on a Sunday morning, with the 20 of us from Downtown it will have a positive impact for all. Another positive factor is that, Downtown has a predominantly international membership (*Malawi, Ghana, Nigeria, Mozambique*). This will greatly help to reflect the local demographics..

In the meeting we had with the leadership at Keam Road, on Monday the 3d June, it was unanimously decided for the merger to go ahead. A date has been set for the **7th July 2019** when the Downtown church and Keam Rd will become one congregation. We believe that exciting times lie ahead as we, in unity, advance the cause for Christ in this city. Please pray for this merger to be pleasing to God, and that many souls may be reached.

On a *bittersweet* note, we had to say farewell to **Sydney Mishi** and his family who have moved to Port Elizabeth. It is a great loss for the church in this area, since he formed part of the leadership at Downtown. For the last five years we have shared most of the preaching and teaching in the congregation. However, we are also immensely proud of Sydney, since he has completed his doctorate at Fort Hare University and was offered a better position at the bigger Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in Port Elizabeth. So career-wise he had no option but to accept. Sydney, **Lilly** and their two kids, **Anno** and **Mathipa** are greatly missed.

EVANGELISM SEMINAR

In January we had a very informative Evangelism Seminar at Keam Road. Brother **Chester Woodhall** presented a very useful talk regarding the use of the Papyrus player. It is a hand held, solar powered, audio player with lessons on, *How to Become a Christian, World Bible School lessons, New Life Behavior Lessons, 40 Sunset Bible Institute lessons* and more. Several members from nine area churches attended to seminar and each one left with a player to use in order to present lessons in their areas. In the March edition of the **Action Newsletter** for **World Bible School**, on page 2, is a short article about this, written by Brother Chester.

PREACHING AND TEACHING

Lessons preached at Downtown the last couple of months had a lot to do with making changes and making wise decisions. We have had lessons regarding unity and working together for the Lord. We also had several lessons about having faith regardless of what is happening in this world and in our own lives. Attention was given to the fact that we should remain a well balanced church, looking at the early church in Acts two as an example.

Last week a lesson was preached about the fact that we are “*Christians Only*” and on the basic essential requirements for Christian living.

It is great to once again this year be able to teach the Wednesday night Bible classes at Keam Road. After completing the series of lessons on the Pentateuch in January, we had a short series of lessons on Christian Communication in February. In March we had a series of studies regarding human suffering and prayer. Last month we started an exciting new series of lessons on the book of Psalms.

FUTURE PLANS

From next year Gill and I, are planning to visit some the churches that we have planted over the years and spend time to encourage them. If it is the Lord’s will we will be able to continue to do some workshops and seminars throughout the Eastern Cape, as well as other parts of the country. We will also continue helping out at the Keam Rd church with preaching, teaching and outreach.

Financially we are struggling, especially after having lost more than half our support over the last two years. The time has also come to replace our 13 year old Hyundai Accent. Gill has been stuck several times on the side of the road with it. Fortunately each time it was not too far for me to come and sort it or to get a tow truck. If it is the Lord’s will we are preparing for a fund raising and report back trip sometime after the middle of next year.

FAMILY

During march this year it was absolutely fantastic to have **Chantelle** and our three grand children (Hannah, Joel and Reuben) from Kokstad visit with us for two weeks.

Josh also managed to come for a visit during part of that time. He is finishing his masters degree in Sports Science at NMMU, and is involved with the Sports Centre, where they regularly test several of the university sports teams. The good news is that **Stephen** found a job! He started his apprenticeship with Fusion (a printer repair company in town). Last week he also passed his drivers licence test.

Amy is still studying teaching through correspondence with the University of South Africa (UNISA). She loves her job as an assistant teacher at “*Little Beacons Pre- Primary School*”. **Jess** is still working at the Pharmacy in Cambridge. She and Elizabeth are currently staying with us. Please pray for them, since they are facing some serious personal challenges.

We want to thank you for your continuous prayer and support that we get from all of you. Especially the cards of encouragement that comes just at the right time to help us make it through the rough times. Please keep on praying for the work that we are involved in daily, as well as our personal family struggles.

We are comforted by the fact that God is our refuge and protector and our help and guide at all times. To Him be the glory, for ever and ever.

May God continue to bless all of us as we strive to serve Him to the best of our abilities.

Fellow servants in Christ.

Chris and Gill du Preez