

the OUTCRY!

Jan – Mar 2013



Holidays - We had a great summer holiday camping near the mountains. The children made lots of friends and spent their days charging around on bikes, playing soccer, swimming and enjoying them selves. This gave Alan and Sheena time to chat, read, go for walks or just sit and look out at the mountains. Henhry was asked to be a volunteer at the site. He helped with the children's programme and also did odd jobs. He got on well and it was a good first experience of work.

Health – Alan and Sheena had a good time of rest during our break but we are concerned that we are both still under par. Sheena's health has improved considerably, but recovering from stress takes time and she still has to be careful not to do too much. With 4 children, there is always much to do, so this isn't easy. Alan has a persistent chesty cough and doesn't have his usual energy. The children, however, are all fighting fit. Praise God for the good health we have and pray that Alan and Sheena will return to 100%.

Home – We are now back into the routine of the school year with all that entails – homework, lost socks, sports matches, etc! We are blessed with very good schools, which the children enjoy. There are never any complaints getting ready to go out each morning. Henhry would like to do better in Maths this year so we are going to try and focus on that with him. Sihle is a gifted boy who can be very well behaved, but is also extremely difficult at times. Please pray that he will mature and grow more secure in the knowledge that he is deeply loved by his family and by God, and that his behavior will improve.

Hospital – Thank God that the work in the hospitals is carried on faithfully each day. Security at the hospitals has been tightened up recently, but it is good to report that the work of Zanini Bantwana is recognised and the staff have all been given the new security passes they now need.

Just a few days ago Sethembile began a teaching job in a Government primary school. She had told us last year that she was applying to be a teacher because the pay would be much higher and her family has considerable financial needs. She is the family breadwinner. We are sorry to see her go, but it is good to know that there will be another dedicated Christian teacher influencing many children. Many of the government schools in South Africa are in desperate need of good teachers with as many as 50 or 60 pupils in a class.

Hope – We have been assured that the recommendation for us to adopt Nzuzo will be put forward to the relevant government department in February. We were delighted to hear this as it has taken 2 very frustrating years to get this far. We praise God for this delightful little boy. Indeed, we are so thankful for all our children. We pray that our small children will emulate their older siblings and grow up to love God and walk in His ways. Thank you for all your support and interest in Henhry (15), Sipho (9), Sihle (8), Nzuzo (4) and also in Matthew, Peter and Naomi too.

Bedtime Stories – To give you some idea what is involved in the lives of children in hospital, here are some stories from the last week. *(To protect the privacy of the children, all the names have been changed and none of the photos are of the children in the stories.)*

- Sini was admitted to hospital on Christmas day having been found alone in a house tied to a chair and gagged. She is covered in cuts and bruises and many scars from previous physical abuse. Her face is badly disfigured as a previous injury was allowed to heal without proper treatment. She has not spoken since she was 4 and she has developed epilepsy. She looks about 8, but is actually 11. There is no medical reason for her to remain in hospital, but the staff are looking for a safe home for her to go to. Please pray that we in the church in S Africa will see the God-given privilege and responsibility we have to take children like Sini into our families.
- Themba is about 4, the same age as our little boy Nzuzo. His family was using a petrol generator because of prolonged power cuts in their area. For some reason, the generator blew up and the whole family got burned. Themba's burns are the worst, covering much of his little body. His face and hands are all burnt and he is in great pain as he lies in bed unable to move. He is not able to hold anything because his hands are heavily bandaged. When I visited him, I held up little cars for him to look at and tried to comfort him.
- At first Sethembile did not recognize the little boy who ran up to her in the middle of Pietermaritzburg. "Hello, Auntie!" he shouted. Then she recognised him as a boy she had visited in hospital. It was good to see him fully recovered and know that he remembered the Zanini Bantwana who visited him.
- Pumi (8) has been in hospital since July. She lives in a shanty town with no electricity or water. Her clothes caught fire when she knocked over a candle. With good medical care she is getting better, but it is slow and hospital is boring. She is very bright and loves to learn.

Praise God! In the last **Outcry!** we mentioned a former volunteer, Dorothy, who had had a stroke. We are delighted to report that she has made a wonderful recovery and is now almost back to normal.

OPPORTUNITY of a LIFETIME! With our children and the work in the hospitals we are quite stretched! In trying to maximize our time and resources we feel our biggest need is help with our family and house. One big need is with the children: someone to help with homework, transport, and babysitting so that we could have a break for an evening or a few nights away. We also need someone to do odd jobs and maintenance. This is probably a situation that would suit an active retired couple or perhaps two friends. Ideally this would be for an extended period like a year. We can offer free accommodation in our two-bed cottage and the use of a car. SA is a beautiful country so it wouldn't be all work - there would be plenty of time to travel and relax. If you think you might be able to help in this way, do drop us an email to alanggaston@me.com