

## **The Outcry!** Jan/Feb 2012

Alan and Sheena Gaston work with children in PMB, South Africa.

*Apologies, first of all, as this Prayer letter is late! Sometimes we feel like we are playing catch up all the time - perhaps you know this feeling too. So here you have the no frills Outcry. The content is the same as usual but you will just have to wait until next month to see our smiling faces!*

### **Khayelihle**

All change here as we have added one to our family. This is not a permanent addition as we are simply hosting 'A', a blind boy of 5, so that he can go to Blind School here in PMB. 'A' comes from the same children's home that Siphso and Sihle used to live in. He has been blind from birth with no hope of seeing. 'A' is quite a handful and his behaviour is pretty challenging. Please pray for our stamina and wisdom in dealing with this very damaged little boy.

Our new school year started in January. We are currently basking and boiling in the heat and humidity of summer. Henry has moved to High School and has graduated into long trousers. He looks like a young man now - where did that little boy go? Mr Nzuzo has started his academic career at Hilton Pre-Primary. He is happy and settled now after a few tears in his first few days - but they were mostly from his mum! Siphso and Sihle have reached the giddy heights of Grade 2 and are very pleased with themselves.

Sihle has recently asked Jesus to come into his life. We are very thankful for this and pray that this childlike commitment will become rooted as the years go on. Please also pray that Siphso and Nzuzo come to this place too.

We were very excited to hear that our Peter had got engaged. (Where did that little boy go to as well?) This happy news came before Christmas when we had a lovely time with Naomi staying with us. Peter and Katy are getting married on July 7th this year and we will all be there. Flights are booked and we are summoning up the energy to tackle the paperwork involved. When the children were told that people dress up to go to a wedding, Nzuzo replied that he wanted to go as Batman! We are looking forward to the photographs!

### **Zanini Bantwana**

We have already said goodbye to Valerie and Elaine, our first 2 UK visitors of the year. They volunteered in the hospitals and saw something of our life and work here. We were also really blessed last year to have Muriel Martin and Patricia Drummond volunteer with the Zanini Bantwana team. In the following article Muriel and Patricia reflect on their three week visit with Zanini Bantwana.

"Being with the Zanini Bantwana team was an amazing and inspiring experience. The team members have such a commitment to God, the children in the hospital and one another. We saw this at the weekly team meeting as we sang and prayed together and listened to one of

them share with passion from a Bible passage. We are convinced there will be Zulu singing in heaven!

In hospital we saw the team share the gospel, engage the children in various activities and through this develop loving relationships with them. We had the opportunity to get to know some of the children, play with them and teach them new skills. The delight on a child's face at completing a jigsaw puzzle or beating one of us at a picture-matching game gave us great pleasure. To be greeted by smiles of anticipation when we went into the ward each morning was heart warming.

We formed a particular attachment to an abandoned 10 month-old baby with severe developmental delay. Working with this child we were able to use our professional skills and knowledge and were delighted to see the progress he made even in such a short time. Leaving him to an uncertain future was very difficult.

Reading statistics about HIV/AIDS in no way prepares one for the awful experience of seeing a 12 year old girl dying in a hospital bed - infected after being raped by a relative. We will never forget seeing God's love for this child expressed through Alan as he held her hand and prayed for her.

The experience of working alongside the ZB team brought home to us the reality of the saying *to know and to love is to open oneself to the beautiful possibility of joy and the awful possibility of sorrow*. This is part of the day-to-day experience of the ZB team and those who volunteer with them. Alongside the sorrow of some of our experiences we knew much joy in working with the team, seeing their faith in action and commitment to the vision of ZB."

We are looking forward to a return visit from Muriel. She will come out in March for 10 weeks primarily to work with the team to boost their skills and competence in interacting with the children.

Before then we are also looking forward to a return visit from Mo and Chris Blake who were here last July when they put on a concert with the ZB team as well as playing music and visiting in the wards.

During Chris and Mo's visit we hope to have the whole team round for a meal. Sihle is currently working part-time with us and will leave Zanini Bantwana at the end of March. We will be sorry to see him go but will, of course, remain in contact with him. We do wish him all the best in the work he feels called to undertake in his local area. Please pray for Sihle, his wife, Pumi, and little girl Lindelwa.

Snapshots of some of the team's work - Sethembile teaches longstay patients in the hospitals. She is the new team leader and goes around all 3 hospitals in the week. She sees the children she teaches twice a week. She is currently in the last phase of her teaching degree and hopes to finish in June.

Mpume is based in Grey's. She is a lovely motherly woman who is great fun. Recently a girl opened up to her to tell her how she has been abused. Please thank God for such a great team. They are very godly people who are touching the lives of these children at a critical time.

**Zanini Bantwana - showing God's love through Word and Deed in the children's wards of the government hospitals here in PMB. [www.zaninibantwana.wordpress.com](http://www.zaninibantwana.wordpress.com)**