

Dear friends,

How are you? I hope this newsletter finds you well.

And Happy New Year! I know it's nearly the end of February, but I would argue that it didn't seem like January existed this year. Does anyone else feel that as you get older, or maybe more kids, that time goes quicker?

Anyway, it's been a good start to the year for us here at Our Neighbours Ministry. Personally and as a ministry, we've put time aside to spend with God and seek Him for this year, and we are excited by what is happening and what will happen this year. And I'd love to share a little of that with you now.

Lighthouse Christian Academy has started very well this year. A group of our new students last year started with learning English as a second language, and then a follow-up English course. This group sat their tests at the end of these courses in January, and excepting 1 student who has significant learning challenges, and another who is still to sit this test due to illness, all students passed the test the first time, and passing required 100% in the test!

Then, this group, and all of the other new students who joined us last year, who'd also completed their first year courses, sat for re-diagnosis tests. These tests assessed students exact knowledge levels in the various subjects, and any 'learning gaps' that appeared to have not been mastered. And, there was excitement (and some other emotions) when these results were announced at Assembly recently, and students 'jumped' to their new levels.

In November last year, the Minister of Education announced that in Zimbabwe there "could be as high as another one million children" who are "out of school". This is scary to consider hey, and the consequences for these kids in the future. But, in the midst of this terrible news, I found myself feeling good, as I had a realisation that the vision God led us to, of assisting with home-schooling for kids in terribly vulnerable circumstances who have missed significant amounts of their schooling, was so needed!

Onto other news, Esandleni Sothando – Luveve (which means in the hand of love), which my wife Mercy has been leading for a number of years, moved to become part of Our Neighbours Ministry this year, which we are really excited about. Esandleni assists vulnerable girls, particularly orphans, living in one of the poorer suburbs of Bulawayo, with education, life skills, support and discipleship (where desired). Here's a story to help you get a feel for it and what God is doing:

- Vimbayi (not her real name), is a young girl who has lost both her parents, and was living in the rural areas with her aunty and uncle until a couple of years ago. She then moved to Luveve, Bulawayo, to stay in one room with her only surviving sibling, her brother (yes, that's one room that is the bedroom/ kitchen/ lounge/ dining room). He buys and sells fruits to attempt to make a living.
- Vimbayi did very well at school in her O levels (or Grade 10) in the rural areas, and wanted to study further but didn't have the resources to do this. Then Esandleni started assisting her to go to school at the local government school, where she continued to excel. She received prizes "every term". Esandleni has been able to assist her in some small other ways as well over the last two years.



Vimbayi receiving 'one' of her awards

- Given her hard work, she completed her A levels (or Grade 12) last year, gaining two A's and a B. She is currently doing temporary teaching, and Esandleni plans to assist her to go to university later this year in Bulawayo.
- Esandleni's vision is to show God's love to these girls, help them to overcome their barriers, and help them to reach their fullest potential and 'fly'.

The other areas of Our Neighbours Ministry are going well, and as much as I'd love to share more, I'll do this another time.

Thank you for your love, support and partnership with us. And please receive our greetings to you individually, even in this group email!

Love and God bless,
Martin

Our Neighbours Ministry is proud to be a partner for Project J301 Our Neighbours Community Project - Zimbabwe with Global Development Group (ABN 57 102 400 993), the Australian AusAID approved Non Government Organisation responsible for the project, providing a governance role and assist in the areas of planning, monitoring, evaluating and auditing to ensure the project is carried out to AusAID requirements. No evangelistic activities are a part of or funded by Project J301. Refer: www.gdg.org.au

