

Isaiah's Babies Home Fire

A testimony shared by Belinda Wilson – Administrator – Our Neighbours Ministry

I started to write this story a few days after the fire and two weeks later I am still in awe of all that has taken place, and a half edited story. So let me finish this testimony I started, though I know it doesn't end here...

It has been an incredible two weeks (2 Cor 12:9) – chaotic in many ways but also numerous days where we have seen amazing provision from God, His hand of grace and even the ongoing support from the Bulawayo Community and friends. It was our intention to assess immediate needs and put a list together, posting it to our facebook page and our website, and also sending it on to those who had requested this. We still haven't got to do that as such mostly because our local community continue to provide above and beyond what we could ever have imagined. There are a few things we have managed to list and this can be found at the end of this document for those interested.

In our first week we were completely focused on getting the children settled into their temporary home in Percy Avenue, which was the Windels and Ebenezer forever family home. We have seen endlessly God's grace and hand in this situation right from the time of the fire, around 5pm on Sunday 13th September, through to this very moment. The staff's reaction to the fire was incredible and this action saved lives, they immediately called the Fire Brigade, evacuated the children and called the matron who then informed other key personnel of Our Neighbours Ministry.

On receiving the text message my husband and I "flew" across town not knowing what to expect. A couple of years back we watched our neighbours house burn to the ground in a matter of minutes and so of course our anxiousness was overwhelming, and yet there was some sense of peace. As we arrived we found the fire brigade already in attendance, our first reaction was to see how we could help and as there was not much we could do we set about getting the children off the property and out of sight of the fire which in itself is traumatic enough for us as adults! We were offered a temporary place of shelter at our next door neighbours' cottage and this became home to the children over the next two nights. They were content, and as the weather was a little cool the first day the television was a great distraction. The tennis court provided a lovely ball play area during the day and the lush green grass was perfect for the babies and toddlers. Our neighbours rallied together to provide food for that evening and the next morning breakfast, this is what being part of a community is all about!

On Monday we set about planning the next steps, and the best option we could come up with was to ask Social Services to fast-track the move of the older children with Mind The Gap to their farmhouse at Harvest Family Village in Montgomery, the main hold up being the committal of the children through the courts. Whilst they (MTG) were sad for our loss this has again been seen as God's hand at work, a move they have been hoping for, for sometime. So, permission granted, we moved the children to Hillside and as you can see in the photos they seem quite happy with the move. The excitement in the Windels home on the first night with all the Mind The Gap and Isaiah's children under one roof was unimaginable. My hat off to all those staff on duty!

Support has come in many ways with numerous prayers and messages, bible study/small home groups forming a catering roster, a couple of ladies assisting with laundry, some helping out with transport to the new home and others providing some of their staff to clean and load furniture. We have received some cash donations and a "gofundme" account has been set up for those living abroad who would like to help in a tangible way. Again we acknowledge God's provision in all of this, and give Him the glory!

There is still much work to be done and we request your continued prayers as we take one step at a time. We have no idea of expected costs of repair but are grateful for the building insurance cover which should cover rebuilding the parts of the home damaged. We understand from the Engineers report that there is no structural wall damage, and most damage is to the roof, ceiling and trusses, and of course the paint-work. The contents were not insured and the counted losses so far are eight single beds, mattresses and bed linen from the girls' room. The babies' room has water damage to the cots mattresses and so would need to replace all 8 of these. A lot of bed linen was destroyed and some clothes. Thankfully there was no loss in the boys' room, lounge, and toy room and we are yet to establish if any of the electrical items have been damaged through the burning of all electrical wires in the roof. Our solar geyser will need to be replaced as this was directly above the main point of fire. Definitely the damage could have been a lot worse had it not been for the pressed steel ceiling boards which kept the fire contained to the roof. We are truly thankful to God for His protection in this way.

I think that is some of the "finer fire details" and sharing of some pics with you. Thank you for your prayerful support in this instance. We have felt the comfort during this difficult season, (Isa 40:31) and love the way that God has provided so many people to show His love and care at this time.

As I said above we were blessed to be able to have another home to temporarily move into, and God surely enabled this win/win situation. The older children, all who have come through Isaiah's and now living under the loving care of our partners Mind The Gap Africa, have been waiting a long while to move to the "farm". A local transport company and a friend connected through the Ministry provided two large trucks, which with the assistance of some yard workers provided by friends, efficiently moved the two households.

As we now begin to live life in our new home we are pleased to share that all the children and the babies are settling well, and the staff have quickly adapted, learning new transportation routes etc, so all round we can share all has gone well for the IUW Team – again God's grace.

The repair of our Suburbs home is in the planning stage and we have been advised to expect that this could take up to 2-3 months to complete. With the prospect of managing two homes we anticipate an increase in our running costs and would appreciate your prayers of provision in this regard. (I'm thinking to leave that sentence out Bee, just as the water, electricity and telephone shouldn't be much at Isaiah's, and given the sentence before also covering that we'll have increased utility costs) The distance from town is about double on our previous travels and where staff would ordinarily walk from town to the Home they now need to catch another lift which is an extra expense. These are some of the additional expected expenses which come to mind, for those who have requested such details.

Again we would like to emphasis our thankfulness to everyone who has played a part in this success story, we are thankful for every prayer which has been offered, every helping hand, every fish and loaf which was given, ever cent contributed, the bed and linen donated as well as the clothes and shoes shared. We have not been able to mention all by name but please know we are truly thankful for your kindness. We hope where people have given we have expressed our appreciation in person, however there could be one or two missed, please do share with us if you are needing a thank you note, email or letter to pass onto someone else and we will arrange this.

In closing, we would like to offer you the opportunity to receive more information about Our Neighbours Ministry and know what you have been a part of helping to support.

Through our bi-monthly newsletters we share progress of the Lord's work here in Bulawayo. If you would like to receive any of our newsletters, by simply sending us an email we can add you to our mailing list. Please know you are not obligated to receive these and at any time you can unsubscribe from the mailing list. For our general newsletter kindly email isaiahs@yoafrica.com. If you would like to receive 6 monthly financial reports kindly email martinbarrow@hotmail.com, or if you would like to support/cover our Ministry in prayer, kindly email ourneighbourszim@gmail.com for the monthly prayer updates.

God bless you all,
Belinda Wilson
Administrator – Our Neighbours Ministry

Babies Home Wish List

10 single bed mattresses (bed bases have been donated)
6 cot bed mattresses (possibly pledged)
Lockable cupboard for children's files
Vacuum Cleaner as Hillside house is carpeted (possibly pledged)
2500Lt Water storage tank (approx cost \$200) (possibly pledged)
4,5m tank stand installed (approx \$800) (possibly pledged)
Regular Borehole Water Deliveries for laundry
Solar Lighting System for regular power outages

Other household needs

Shoes for 2 girls aged 9yrs old
Boys shorts and t.shirts for ages 2/3yr, 4/5yr, 6/7yr 8/9yr
Large Cooking Pots 30-40cm diameter
25 Porridge Plates and 25 Drinking tumblers (prefer plastic)
Bi-Weekly Extra Transport Cost \$250



