

15 March 2006

Dearest Friends,

Tomorrow we are leaving for South Africa. Please hold us in your prayers.

South Africa is an enormous nation with great blessings and great problems. Children there are often very receptive to the Gospel, but many live very difficult lives. Tribal religions teach that if a man is sick, he can give his sickness away and cure himself. In other words, he must rape a virgin. Little girls are attacked as young as eight, and then the age dropped to two. Now new borns are attacked. It is a wonderful privilege to share with these children that when you have been forgiven, you can forgive anyone anything.

This time we will be working in a new area of South Africa with Zulu children, some French speaking congregations, and in schools in the Johannesburg and Durban areas. Please pray for us to be wise as we go into these new areas of ministry. Ask God to pour His Spirit on this effort. Nothing happens unless we pray. Please stay on your knees.

Love in Jesus, Linda for the team

18 March 2006

Dearest friends,

We are in South Africa. Though we left on Wednesday we did not arrive in South Africa until Friday morning. Hadia and I enjoyed a wonderful thirteen hour layover in the Frankfurt airport. Praise God that all of our baggage arrives safely with us in South Africa and we were not charged any extra fees for bringing so much luggage into the country. Between the two of us we had eight checked suitcases and four carry-ons. It takes a lot of luggage to get so much equipment into a country.

Friday and Saturday, we participated in a large childrens ministry conference. Last night and today we had several opportunities to share and teach, but all of us feel that we received more than we gave. Over six-hundred people gathered from over one-hundred churches to learn how to better share Christ with their children. Hadia taught one lady how to tie balloons who had been teaching for ten years, and was beginning to get tired and discouraged. She was overwhelmed with gratitude for the lesson that she received and couldn't wait to try out her new skills. Another lady came up to me and said, "I love you for the blessing." She was so happy at what she was learning but we were the ones who received the bigger blessing.

In addition to sharing we also had an opportunity to attend some of the seminars. Roy Lessor traveled from England and taught us many new things that we can't wait to share with our friends around the world. It was a special joy to see our partners in ministry, James and Lynne Grant, teaching a seminar on story telling and puppets. It was very well attended and the crowd was so excited about what they were learning that they didn't want to leave. They even sat through tea time so they could learn more.

Tomorrow we will be doing ministry in a multi-cultural church, Rosettenville Baptist, in Johannesburg that has African, French, and English services. The neighborhood the church is located in began to change, but they did not bar their doors. Instead they began an EE program and began to go door to door, reaching out to the people in their community. There have been many cultural differences that they have had to deal with in order to be effective in ministry. The Africans said that the white people kiss all women, where they only kiss their wife.

Johannesburg is a very high crime area. Everyone has security systems, high fences, many locks, and burglar bars on every window. There is even a security gate that closes off the bedroom area at night. Security is a major concern; every pastor in the church has been car jacked. Please pray for us to be wise as we deal with these different situations.

On Monday we will be working in Soweto, the largest black township in the world. More than a million people call this place home. Christians have a strong presence in this place and there are many churches there. However, Soweto has enormous problems. It is common for young girls, small children to be raped in this place by men who think they are curing themselves of AIDS. Please pray for us as we try to share with these children who have been so terribly hurt, that there is a Father who loves them. Please ask God to help us show them his forgiveness and peace so that they will not live lives full of bitterness and pain.

Please stay on your knees.

In Jesus, Linda for the team Sam, Anna, James, Lynne, Hadia

20 March 2006

Dearest Friends,

After a puppet show in Soweto today, a lady came up to me and asked me to pray for her. She is HIV positive and has an 8 year old daughter. I held her hands and prayed for her.

Many, many children came forward after a second show in Soweto asking only for prayer. Some had broken arms, assorted smaller aches, but many had AIDS and wanted prayer.

The health minister of South Africa has publicly announced that the proper treatment for AIDS is a special diet. She tells people as the official position of the government that if they have AIDS, they must eat lemon, garlic, beet root, and African potato. The people die. Medicines that might truly help these children are not available.

Posters are everywhere in Soweto promoting "safe sex" not abstinence. Large billboards read "AIDS loves skin on skin." Children are daily raped by men who believe that they can cure themselves of AIDS by raping a virgin. In this atmosphere of ignorance and darkness, the greatest need is Jesus. Only when a child experiences true forgiveness, can she forgive the people who hurt her.

Families don't exist for many children. Many people do not marry but choose to live together. Men often have more than one common law wife. The grandmothers raise the children. Children do now know what a family looks like. It is only the Gospel that can address these problems.

One million children have no parents. On the weekends, people line up at the black cemeteries to bury their dead. Our friend works in a place where every second corner has a funeral parlor and 8 to 10 people are inside waiting to be served!

There is so much death here, but today at 3 puppet shows in Soweto, we were blessed to tell hundreds and hundreds of children, teens, men, and women about the life that Jesus gives. In such a dark place, His hope shines as a bright light. There is no other light.

Lawn Street

Lawn Street is the worst place for drugs in South Africa, with over 31 drug houses. All kinds of people live here, crossing all racial lines. After sharing at a church Sunday night, we drove through the neighborhood so that we could better understand the area that the church is serving. Teenage

prostitutes were on every corner. Most of these girls choose this lifestyle for economic reasons. Please pray for Rosettenville Baptist church for wisdom to know how to address this problem. Please pray for all the churches in this area who regularly gather for prayer walks that they will know how to best impact this place for Jesus.

When a bride marries in the black community, the lobola must be paid. This is the bride price and it is usually prayed in cows. When a family member dies a cow must be bought and cooked for all who want to come. With so many funerals, this becomes a big financial burden for the families who have so little.

Imagine how strange we must have looked to the people in Soweto today. Some of us climbed in the back of a pick up truck to go and gather the children for a show. This is an entirely black community and I am sure they never expected to see what they saw today. The pastor from the local church came with us, along with one of his church members. In Zulu, he used our speaker to invite the children. Sam, wearing his cowboy hat, held the speaker. A wonderful clown named Lisa joined us. She and her husband, Collin, arranged these shows and the children's conference that we shared at on Friday and Saturday. They asked me to come with them and bang my gong. We had so much fun, doubled the size of our show, and made many people smile.

Please stay on your knees! Tomorrow we have a training session and on Wednesday we have 3 school shows.

In Jesus, Linda for the team Sam, Hadia, Anna, James, and Lynne

22 March 2006

Dearest Friends,

Pictures can be viewed at <http://www.smugmug.com/gallery/1277502>

NKOSI Sikelel Africa! This is Zulu for "God bless Africa." God is certainly blessing our time here. Today we were blessed to share at 3 schools, with more than 1,600 students and teachers. At the first school, the teachers were not very happy with our program. We asked and discovered that many of the teachers were not believers.

James and Lynne told the story at the second school. They did an awesome job! The school had many teachers who loved God and even felt different. So many children asked Jesus to be their Savior! Praise the Lord! Prys die Here! (Afrikaans)

Many children asked Jesus to be their Savior at the third show, but the best part of this story happened after the show. A little boy about 11 came up to me and said "Please ma'am. Can I help you?" Then he said that he had prayed with me and asked Jesus to be his Savior. His offer of help was how he said thank you. So many of the children came up and hugged us!

Even more amazing was the response of one of the teachers. She glared at me during the show and seemed very angry. Later she admitted she could not forgive people on her own and Mary told her about Jesus. When Mary saw her later in the office, she said she was happy and seemed to struggle to find words to explain how she felt. Finally, she turned to a fellow worker and said, "I forgive you now because you have always been ugly to me." Ask God to grow the faith of all of those who prayed at these 3 schools.

Skaapskinkel

Last night we had a wonderful treat of skaapskinkel (lamb shank) when our friend David took us out

for dinner. He also took us to Mandela Square and a market where I bought a pillow from Cameron. However, if you saw what I bought you would think it was a wooden stool. It did not look like a pillow to me. Please ask the Lord to encourage our friend David as his mother went to be with Jesus just 6 weeks ago. Only one and a half years ago, his father died. For years and years, David has been their primary caregiver, so this is a difficult time of loss and adjustment. He takes comfort in his parents' faith. his faith.

Many refugees from the Sudan live here and worship at the church that we shared at 4 times on Sunday in 2 English services, 1 French service, and an African, Indian, English Sunday School. Most have seen and experienced horrors that cannot be properly understood with mere words. They have seen their families and friends ripped from them by war, hunger, torture, and rape. Anna translated into French and as soon as they heard her speak, big smiles covered everyone's faces. They cling fiercely to the hope that Jesus offers. He really is all they have.

#### Door of Hope

In Johannesburg alone, one baby is dumped every day. In plastic bags, in rubbish bins, in parks at hospitals and police stations and many more dangerous places, these little ones are abandoned. God in his mercy placed Door of Hope in this city to save their lives. Their goal is to rescue any abandoned, aborted, abused, and orphaned baby and provide a home for all these babies and children through adoption into forever families, mothers and fathers who love Jesus, locally and internationally.

Hadia held a little boy named Prayer in her arms and I held a little girl called Mother of all Nations. Sam asked the Lord to bless these children and give them all homes. One little boy always asks people to pray for him a family. He does not know that God has just provided him with parents! A little baby girl of 2 was brought to them who had been raped and was so hurt that she required a colostomy. Ask the Lord to watch over this place and these dear little ones. Their website is [www.holeinthewall.org.za](http://www.holeinthewall.org.za)

Six months ago today, Mike went home to be with Jesus. I can not stop thinking about how the world changed that day when the phone call came! For him, it was the best day of his life, but I will confess that it was not so easy for me. I miss him desperately, but I find my comfort in the faith we shared. I know that the Lord has a plan and each day I ask Jesus to help me. He is so faithful! I love Mike and feel so blessed to have been loved so wonderfully by him! Each day I thank Him for the work He gives us with the children of the world. Please continue to pray for our family and friends as we discover God's plan for us without Mike. Please especially pray for our youngest son Matt and his wife Jill as they await the birth of their first son in late April. Ask God to give this little boy passion for Jesus from the time that he is small!

Please stay on your knees!

In Jesus, Linda for Sam, Hadia, Anna, James and Lynne

25 March 2006

Dearest Friends,

We are in the heart of the Zulu nation, surrounded by lush green hills. The hillsides are dotted with very traditional round huts with thatched roofs. The mist remained for the longest time this morning.

At Nobanda and Mashaka schools, 500-600 hundred school children gathered in the open at each place. They stood for over an hour listening to the entire program. When James started to pray

with them, they immediately began to pray the Lords prayer. Imagine hundreds of children at a public school enthusiastically saying "Our father, who art in heaven ." It was so sweet!

Later, at another school, it was such a joy for all of us to hear the Zulu children calling on Jesus, asking Him to be their Savior. Many were very hungry to hear about Jesus because, most were from broken homes. Some had lost both parents to AIDS though that is never listed as the real cause of death. Many were being raised by their grandmothers. The opportunity to share with all of these Zulu children answers 6 years of prayers for me. Praise God!

Even the principals at these schools were thrilled with our program. They thanked us in front of the students and reviewed for them all the important points. Then, they even helped us carry and pack our equipment. The children shouted, "Siyabonga", this is thank you in Zulu. At one school they sang us a thank you.

We are staying in Pietermaritzburg now with different families and look forward to five great days of ministry before we travel to Durban. Please ask God to bless this time and call many children to Himself.

#### Two very different shows

Not every show has the response that you hope for when you share about Jesus with the children. Sometimes, our hearts break for what we do not see happening at a program. We did a show for children who had many blessings, who were financially blessed. It seemed that their comforts made it hard for them to hear. There were moments when I felt that they were laughing at us instead of with us at a puppet show. Our feelings are unimportant, but they did not seem to hear Jesus. We left the show feeling very sad, frustrated, and determined to pray for wisdom as to how to better share with them over the next few days. Please pray with us. Ask the father to break their hearts and show them that He is their only comfort!

The program that followed was totally different. We worked with an Indian church, that minister's to poorer children. Most struggle in every part of their devotional lives. A lot of them come regularly to the children's program but return to Hindu homes. Some had never been in a car until the church van came. Many prayed out loud, calling on Jesus to save them.

The stories the puppets and the testimonies were all the same but the response was so different. Ask the Lord to grow their faith!

The Indian church we worked with was meeting in a community hall that they themselves had fixed up for the community. Since the hall has become useable again by the community, the council have put many obstacles before them. They do not want a church in the building, though they said differently when the church had offered to fix the building for them.

They have recently put a proposal to the council. The church has offered to build a new community center for the council if the church can have part of the property to build a church on. Please pray that the Lord would provide for the church the building it needs, they have such a heart for the community. Pray that the Lord would change the councillor's hearts and that the church would have the property they need soon. They are planning to build a 500 seat church, they already have 200 people attending church and that is only from 6 people when the church began 2 years ago.

Sam is a constant blessing! He is a good "son" in the truest sense, encouraging me when I miss Mike. I learn from him as I watch him give, not what is convenient, but deeply from his heart. Just the other day, I saw him give away something he treasured. He also reminded me that all of us are

placed by God in the homes that we stay in for a purpose. I see this so clearly in the home that I am in for the next few days as my hostess husband died 15 months ago of complications from diabetes. Please pray for Brenda as she seeks God's new direction for her. She is a great blessing to me!

Please ask God that our eyes will stay focused on Him. That our only glory will be in Jesus! Pray!

In Jesus, Linda for James, Lynne, Sam, Hadia, Anna

26 March 2006

Dearest Friends,

Indian, Zulu, and White Children

Imagine setting up the puppet stage on a very cloudy day on a grassy slope besides a small Indian church. See the enthusiasm of all the children as they laugh, scream, and enjoy every part of the program. Hear their voices as many ask Jesus to be their Savior. This is how we spent Saturday afternoon.

S.O.S Children's Home

Your prayers open doors! When we first arrived at the orphanage it seemed that the matron would not allow us to do the show. We prayed and grudgingly, she allowed us to set up. By the end of the show, she was smiling and said that her heart had been touched. Best of all, we heard many orphans praying out loud asking Jesus to be their Father.

A lady came and spoke to me after we did a puppet show one day. She told me that she wanted to give me a new name, an African name. She called me "Lerato." It means love. Please ask God to deepen our love for the children of Africa. We want them to see Jesus in us.

Union Bible Institute

This is a wonderful place for over 65 years young men and young women from all over Africa have come to study the Bible. It is a non-denominational Bible Institute that offers classes in English and Zulu. Perhaps, you could be a blessing to this place through teaching, office work, or building repairs, or simply sending books. They need lots of help! Can you help them? Contact Tony Gould by e-mail at [ubi@satweb.co.za](mailto:ubi@satweb.co.za) and mention this note. There are many ways to serve pray and seek a place, in Africa, at home, somewhere to share Jesus.

Old people were crying, young people listening, and children laughing as they watched the puppet show. A very kind pastor, Brain Jardine, invited us to share at his Sunday morning service. We did a puppet show, testimonies, I told a story and James preached. The pastor hopes that some of the people in the area will be challenged to work with local children. Many churches that we visit have twice as many children attending as adults. Most come from non-Christian homes. Please ask God to answer his prayer!

Some the comments we received were very funny. Many older people told me that they thought the way the frog puppet and the alligator fought was very cheeky. That means funny with an attitude. One dear lady who was in very failing health and barely able to move said that she had not laughed so much in years. Children thanked us.

The pastor told everyone that I was seventy years old and then James made the same joke. Unfortunately, everyone believed him. So many people who were really 70 spoke to me and said, "you move so fast. You really challenge me." "A woman your age, amazing!" Nothing I said could persuade them otherwise.

Please pray for us as we have only 5 more days of ministry in Africa. The schedule is very full and we have many schools scheduled this week. Pray that our health would remain good. Ask God to pour his spirit on these last days.

In Jesus, Linda for James, Lynne, Sam, Hadia, Anna

### 28 March 2006

Dearest Friends,

More than a hundred voices prayed out loud at a school asking Jesus to be their Savior. The principal had really enjoyed the show and told the children only Jesus could fix their hearts. Amazing! This was a public school!

Very small children delighted in Sam's story of Jonah. They were very young, but they listened intently as Sam told them about God's love for them. Ironically, we were in a place where 10 years ago it would have been very dangerous for us to be. We might have had a tire put around our necks filled with gas and had it lit. South Africa has been blessed by the changes that did not result in civil war. So many people here believe that it is only the prayers of the believers who saved this beautiful country from a terrible fate.

### Answered Prayer

Last night God was very good to me. Some things had distracted me from my prayer life and it had suffered. I was not as focused on praying each evening for the next day's programs as I needed to be. So last night, the Lord showed me my mistakes, and my sin, I spent the best hour with the Lord and asked His forgiveness, and begged Him to do great things today at the shows.

What an amazing day! We all agreed that it was singularly the best 4 shows that we have had in South Africa. At every one of the programs, children prayed out loud, hundreds and hundreds of children, asking Jesus to be their Savior! Praise God for confession, forgiveness and answered prayer.

We were all delighted as over 1000 children at a single show sat in the dirt and listened with complete attention! All 3 principals encouraged the children that they needed to remember the stories and testimonies to trust Jesus! At one school, we even received medals on red ribbons. I felt like an athlete! (This is an especially funny thought.)

### Urgent Prayer

Only three and a half days of ministry remain. Please ask God to be very, very big. We are actually training a team in Durban the morning that we leave for home. Please pray for these last days. We want to see a mighty outpouring of God's spirit!

In Jesus,

Linda for James, Lynne, Sam, Hadia, Anna

### 29 March 2006

Dearest friends,

1400 children gathered outside at a school and sat on the ground and those that would not fit, watched from the windows. They delighted in the puppets, listened so quietly to the story and prayed by the hundreds to accept Jesus as their Savior. If you have been praying for us, you were a part of this amazing morning. When you pray we see God do awesome things!

## No Fathers, No Mothers

Last night, we did a program at a Christian orphanage, but we did not see or feel Jesus love in this place. When we entered, the caretakers were screaming at the children. This seemed to be the rule in this place. The children were clearly afraid of the people who were responsible for telling them about Jesus. I wondered if they even knew Him.

All of us felt the darkness in this place and saw the sadness in the children's eyes. How can I describe to you their fear and pain? We expect to see this in state run facilities around the world and we have been in too many to count. However, this one was run by a well known Christian organization and should have been a safe place for children.

A large group of boys begged me to let them see the show, but the matron in charge refused. Lynn and James begged her to let them come, but she was a very hard woman, unbending to their pleas.

Children in this home are not adopted. They spend their whole lives here; coming as babies. Some were placed there because their homes were bad places. Ironically, it was the only place in this town that had razor wire looped on top of the fence.

Many laughed quickly but some were deeply hurt and slow to smile. Lynn held two little boys in her lap during the show who just wanted to be loved. Both were very wet dirty and soaked Lynn's trousers, but she just loved them. James, Hadia, Lynn and I were quite overcome by what we saw and felt because all of us have adopted family members. Outside the orphanage, all of us gathered for prayer and we wept for the children. We prayed for the children and the staff. We wept. It broke our hearts to think of those we love in a place like this. It broke our hearts to leave so many dear children where they are not loved and cherished. Please pray for all of the children who prayed with us to become strong in their faith! Please pray for their protection! Please pray for His light to flood this place!

We made balloon animals for the children and made sure every child was hugged and loved by us. I spoke to several children, told them that they were special, and encouraged them that they could survive this place. One small boy said, "Please, could I have a balloon for my older brother? He wasn't allowed to come." I wanted to cry, but I didn't. I smiled, hugged him, and he promised to tell his brother everything he had heard.

## Psalm 2: 8

"Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession." This verse was printed on the wall of a hall where we did a puppet show and saw Zulu, English and Indian children pray to receive Christ. This verse is our prayer. All of us want to see children of the world come to faith. Beg the father to open more countries for ministry! This is the opportunity that we see and the only riches we crave. We pray for teams across all of Africa!

Anna told the story of the prodigal son to 3, 4 and 5 year olds and it was absolutely wonderful!

We had the opportunity to tell adults at a home for the mentally handicapped about Jesus. Anyone can understand His love. One dear lady came to me after hearing the story of Zachaeus and how Jesus gave him joy. She said, while patting her heart, "Now, I am jolly. Now, I am jolly." This was her sweet way of telling us that she had listened and understood.

Another lady came to me at this same home and told me all of the details about the crucifixion. She quoted the words of the thieves on either side of Jesus perfectly. I thought of how many well educated people I know who do not possess this much Bible knowledge. Then I wondered who is

mentally handicapped?

In Jesus, Linda for James, Lynne, Sam, Hadia, Anna

31 March 2006

Dearest friends,

We are on our way home this Saturday so please pray for us as we travel. We will arrive home on Sunday, April 2nd. We leave Africa very blessed, having shared with over twelve thousand children, teenagers, and adults. We have heard hundreds and hundreds of them praying out loud asking Jesus to be their savior.

In Jesus, Linda for the team.

2 April 2006

Dearest Friends,

Our last show in Africa was a Friday night outreach at a church. In soft whispers, children put their trust in Jesus. Three of the children who prayed were street children who were now living at a Christian orphanage. One boy looked so old when you looked in his eyes, but he was only 12. Living on the streets, he had seen so much that he seemed older. Tonight, he has a Father.

Durban

We were told that the children would be very unresponsive at the shows but they absolutely loved everything. More, the pastor was surprised when he heard so many children praying out loud. Thank you for praying.

All of us leave Africa amazed at how little it takes to be a blessing to the Zulu children. Such small things made them so happy!

The countryside is so beautiful, but because of sin, it is full of problems. Men rarely are faithful to their wives. Many never marry, but live together and change partners often. There are no jobs, lots of crime, and tremendous alcoholism. It is a hard place to be a child. Please pray for God to pour His Spirit on the Zulu children and call many to faith. Ask the father to raise up leaders from among them to reach their own people for Jesus.

12,000 People

What has God done on this trip? Besides sharing with over 12,000 children, teenagers, and adults, we have had 4 opportunities to train people. Please ask God to raise up more people who want to work with children in South Africa.

Big Thanks

Please ask God to bless James and Lynne Grant as they share with children across South Africa! They organized this entire trip, arranged the food and housing and drove us around in their van. They were awesome! If you want to be part of their ministry, they are also with PEF. Please note that James did all of the things you read about over the last 2 and a half weeks and more. He is 68. How are you spending your retirement, on yourself or in ministry? James and Lynne truly love Jesus! Thank you!

Thank you for praying!

In Jesus, Linda for James, Lynne, Sam, Hadia, Anna