

# MORIJA TIMES

## ADVENT 2012

*“I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the LORD more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.” (Psalm 130: 5-6)*

Dear Friends,

Waiting. In Lesotho there are many opportunities for doing a lot of waiting. One of them occurs at the often busy Maseru border crossing between Lesotho and South Africa. Standing in a queue for well over an hour to have your passport stamped is nothing unusual. Experience has taught me to always carry some reading material. The same thing applies at government offices, whether it is renewing your driving license, paying for your annual car registration fee, checking on a residence or work permit or some other piece of paper you need. But in all of the above things that I find myself waiting for, the waiting does not end with joy and wonder. The anticipation isn't something that makes your heart go aflutter! When the deed is finally accomplished, there's just a sigh of relief and words like, "I'm sure glad that's over!"

Lately, though, I've had something to do where the waiting, I hope and pray, will pay off with more than a sigh of relief. It is the school building project that I've been working on with the Education Office of the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC). My April newsletter of this year shared about the Bolahla LEC Primary School using one old small stone structure for seven grades and over 100 students. Here is a photo from the *pitso* (community meeting) we held at the school in September. Speaking of waiting, the people of Bolahla have been waiting years for a new school.



Besides being challenging enough in that it is my first real project on behalf of the church, the location of the school and the condition of the road and rough track to get there has caused me to wonder all along if anything will ever get done. To say I've had a few doubts would be an understatement. There have been many meetings with people at the village, the school, the contractor, suppliers, etc. There was always something necessary to wait for before moving on to the next step. I've tried (at times) not to just wait idly. I did attempt (at times) to make sure the next steps were in order so that when one period of waiting ended, we were ready to move on.

Praise be to God, we are now no longer waiting for the project to start! The foundations were dug in November and materials were scheduled to have started moving to the site then, too.

But the 4x4 lorry (truck) for hauling materials broke down on the first attempt to get to the site. The owner had repeatedly assured us his vehicle could get there. No one else wanted to venture there. "The road is too bad", was always the response. So there was more waiting for the differential to be repaired. Two weeks of perfect weather for hauling materials lost. Once the vehicle was repaired it then made daily trips up there for a week. And then torrential rains came, and so we find ourselves waiting once again.

Fortunately, I think I've learned to deal with the waiting. I recently was blessed to read an article about Paul's "thorn" (see II Corinthians 12:1-10). Instead of speculating about the nature of his "thorn", the author focused on the purpose of it, which was to make Paul see that the power in his ministry came from God, not him. That hit home with me. I've now taken all the waiting in this project as a welcomed "thorn" to help me understand that this is not my project or even that of the LEC. It is God's project and when that day comes to celebrate the opening of the new school (in 2013, God willing), all glory and praise will be God's.

Now in early December we are waiting for Christmas. While the secular world has been shouting, “It’s Christmas!” since Thanksgiving (or even before), the church leads us through Advent. I’m thinking that Advent is a welcomed “thorn” to remind us that the power of Christmas is not our own. The power of Christmas is certainly not found in the shopping malls or the hustle and bustle of seasonal activities. Without proper reflection and preparation, Christmas loses its real power. It simply becomes an event where on the 26<sup>th</sup> we sigh with relief and say, “Well, that’s over for another year!”

Actually, Christmas marks a beginning, not an end. Advent, if practiced with care and reflection, helps us to see that Christmas is not something we need to get to quickly and then move on as before. It is God’s act of coming into our world and becoming Immanuel, “God with us.” Not with us for Christmas Day only, but for every day! God needs our attention, so through the “thorn” of Advent, God calls to us, saying, in effect, “Do you see what I’m doing?” Advent tries to cut through all the party planning, pageant practice, gift buying, gift wrapping, baking this and baking that. The church uses Advent to slow us down and allow God’s love for us to be revealed with wonder, power and mystery.

The true joy of Christmas comes in having taken time to prepare for it, to consider the fullness of God’s plan which begins with the birth of the Savior Jesus. Give Advent its due: wait, prepare, reflect, be wonder-filled and dare to be changed, for God, indeed, is with us!

*“O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.”* (Psalm 130:7-8)

May the joy of Jesus’ presence fill your heart this Advent and Christmas!

Yours in Christ,

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