



Reaching a Generation

Updates from Susan Schmid

Soon to be in Emalahleni, South Africa

If you've gotten this far, you've heard I'm moving to South Africa for two years. I will be leaving August 2, 2009 and will return to the States for a few weeks during May 2010. This will be the site to read about my activities and to get prayer requests. You can contact me at any of the addresses at the bottom of this newsletter.

The following is some information I obtained from the US Department of State website. This will help you understand a bit of the need for me to go to South Africa and my need for prayer while I'm there.

Until 1991, South African law divided the population of South Africa into four major racial categories: Africans (black), whites, coloreds, and Asians. Although this law has been abolished, many South Africans still view themselves and each other according to these categories. Black Africans comprise about 80% of the population and are divided into a number of different ethnic groups. Whites comprise just over 9% of the population. They are primarily descendants of Dutch, French, English, and German settlers who began arriving at the Cape of Good Hope in the late 17th century. Coloreds are mixed-race people primarily descending from the earliest settlers and the indigenous peoples. They comprise about 9% of the total population. Asians are descended from Indian workers brought to South Africa in the mid-19th century to work on the sugar estates in Natal. They constitute about 2.2% of the population.

Education is in transition. Under the apartheid system schools were segregated, and the quantity and quality of education varied significantly across racial groups. The laws governing this segregation have been abolished. The long and arduous process of restructuring the country's educational system is ongoing. The challenge is to create a single, nondiscriminatory, nonracial system that offers the same standards of education to all people.

When apartheid ended in 1994, there was a great need for African pastors to be trained and encouraged as they reached across racial and economic barriers to minister. It is common in South Africa for there to be mega-churches with white staff and a mixed congregation; but, it is rare for there to be a large church staffed by Africans. This is mostly due to the results of apartheid which denied non-whites managerial positions and training for leadership in addition to poor education. For the last 10 years, Reconciliation! Ministries International (the group of churches and ministries of which my church in Tennessee is part and which Bishop Joseph Garlington leads) has held conferences in South Africa to do just that. My pastor, Sanford Cooper, has been instrumental in these conferences and in the training of national leadership. Through the relationships built over the years, my church in Tennessee and Gateway Church International (GWCI) in Witbank, South Africa, have become sister churches.

GWCI is one of those rare large churches led by Africans. They have a congregation of about 1000 (three Sunday services) in addition to 3 church plants outside of the city of Witbank. The Sunday I visited a few months ago, there were 20 people who came forward for salvation. The pastors say that is typical. Because of lack of managerial training, the staff is having a difficult time with this rapid growth. It's not just lack of training, though, because people are now free to attend college and be trained/educated. There is also a fear of taking initiative and a lack of knowing how to put that education to use. This is where I come in.

I have been asked by the pastors of GWCI, Eddie and Stella Phetla, to move there and help them for two years mentoring their staff and "systematizing" the work there. Pastor Stella is an excellent administrator, but she has become a national conference speaker and pastor of the church in Witbank. Pastor Eddie is a church planter and has established 2 congregations and is working on a third. In addition to working with the staff in the area of administration, I will also teach some classes at the Bible School which is located at the church.



The US Dept of State listed the life expectancy in South Africa to be 52 yrs for women and 49 yrs for men. This makes for a very young population which results in a young congregation. Witbank is located in the province of Mpumalanga (don't pronounce the "m") in an area called Emalahleni about an hour east of Pretoria. It is a large city (about the population of Knoxville) with several colleges and universities. The city is mostly professionals due to the institutes of higher learning and its being the industrial capital of the province. There are 7 official languages (English being one of them). Church services are conducted in English with worship songs being sung in a variety of languages.

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If you would like to participate financially in my ministry in South Africa (GWCI is providing an apartment and a car for me), you can send a tax-deductible gift payable to Handmaiden Ministries, PO Box 1737, Morristown, TN 37814. All monies will be available for my use in Africa. Please do NOT write my name on the check.