



The Latest News from August and Anita Basson

February 2010

Our New Home

It is so great to be able to report that we finally moved in to our new house at Maphutseng in September.



We are now settling in but are of course still busy finishing off some things internally, like the kitchen, cupboards, etc. We are getting there slowly but surely.

We want to say a big thank you to everyone who has contributed and made it possible for us to build our new home. We are so grateful for all your support.

Agriculture News

The fields at Maphutseng are looking wonderful, with the crops developing well after a good spring.

We will have a great example to show to the rest of Lesotho by March when we are planning to hold a wide variety of field days for different groups of people. This includes a day on 5th March when we plan to get all of our project supporters together. This promises to be a great occasion and will hopefully be the first of many.

Maphutseng Developments

Pastors training

During the past few months we have started the Growing Nations training program and the initial focus of this work is a group of about 20 pastors.

Every month we bring the same group to Maphutseng for a week, during which time we teach them how to farm, leadership skills and equip them spiritually. It is anticipated at this stage that we will help them for a period of 2 years and in July we will take on a new group to run alongside the first one.

The focus of the training is to equip the pastors and help them to be more effective in their churches. John van Tonder is doing this by working through the Million Leaders Mandate Leadership training material.



Lack of leadership is one of the biggest downfalls here in Lesotho and equipping the pastors as leaders will ultimately change the face of their churches, the LEC (Lesotho Evangelical Church) and hopefully the country.

August says, "It has been so encouraging to see how these people are devouring the material that we are feeding them. A large number of them have been very faithful revisiting the material after their training to sharpen their own skills".



The training teaches how to farm effectively using Farming God's Way (Conservation Agriculture) methods and also how to then teach what they are learning in their churches. This is the key to creating exponential growth of the farming activities that Growing Nations are doing.

During the month before the next training we make an effort to visit each one of these pastors. This enables us to mentor them, build relationships with each one, pray with them, etc. They are really encouraged by the fact that someone is taking an interest in them.

The fact that they know we are coming to see them has brought a huge accountability structure into place.

"The group even came to me and said they would like to pray for our families. They are becoming such an encouragement to us"

August Basson

After their initial training, all of the pastors went home and started demo plots in their own gardens and churches. Having visited the sites we have been amazed to see the quality of their work and we are really encouraged.

Something interesting which has come from the training is seeing the women coming in streams to the pastors and asking for advice about how to actually farm without ploughing. The women are the ones who have been struggling the most, because they are culturally not allowed to handle animals.

It is a vicious spiral. They can't plough their own land and are dependent on the men for this work. Most cannot afford the cost of ploughing which either means land lies barren or crops are sold to pay off loans at harvest time. Often this leaves people destitute and relying on food aid.

With Conservation Agriculture (CA) they are able to do all of the land preparation, planting and weeding themselves and get the full benefit of their hard work, becoming self sufficient and restoring their dignity.

August says " I witnessed the pastors gathered around a group of old women in the village who planted their field using CA. They helped to spray weeds and prayed with these women. What a testimony this is becoming, life and faith coming together"



We look forward to reporting back on how many take on board CA come next planting season.

Healing

Many people have been hurt in the church over the years and one such pastor is Ntate Moletsane.

At the last training the 15 people who attended gathered around him and prayed for him. This was a real turning point and has happened on more than one occasion.



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Major changes within the church

The Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC) had their four yearly leadership elections in October and significant changes took place, with a whole new leadership being elected by the church.

The new president is Rev Masemene and the people are really looking forward to welcoming a new era in the church. There are a lot of expectations on him so please remember him in your prayers.

We believe God is really at work in the church and our involvement with the pastors could have a significant impact in the church and country.

Rev Masemene has visited Maphutseng and given his full support to the work we are doing. This was very important that the new leadership trust us and support what we are doing.

Tebellong

We may have physically moved from Tebellong but they are still very much part of the Growing Nations vision.

August received a phone call from Joshua (he took over from August) the other day and he said "We have a problem. The church is constantly getting fuller and every Sunday people are sitting on the floor. We need chairs".

This is such a wonderful problem to have and we have been very encouraged by the growth in the church at Tebellong.



The Agriculture did take a bit of a down turn following our departure with many people stopping CA when we stopped giving inputs. We realised that continued provision of inputs only increased dependency and was never going to be sustainable.

This has resulted in a few, but very committed, farmers doing CA really well. The people in Tebellong have seen the benefits for themselves and we hope this will be the turning point.

Challenging times

The last six months have not been without their challenges.

John McCartney, who joined us a year ago to look after the Growing Nations administration and finances, has unfortunately recently been diagnosed with cancer. He has just returned to Australia to undergo treatment, accompanied by his wife, Gillian and family. Please pray with us for John to make a full recovery.

Please also pray for wisdom on the road ahead as we seek to fill this key position within the organisation, initially for a 6 month period.

We have struggled with leadership during the last year, particularly on the management side. Stefan Boshoff has therefore agreed to mentor August in order to help him lead the team more effectively.

Once the leadership and overall plan are in place we will seek to recruit an admin assistant, maintenance and building expert and Key Trainers.

Family Life

Anita is quietly keeping the family running with most of her time spent on home schooling and creating room for August to do his work.

She has however managed to find time to start working with a group of pre-school teachers and is also busy establishing a new garden and starting to plant some indigenous trees around us.

Our two boys, August and Gustav are now well into their second year at AIM's Rift Valley Academy in Kenya. We have been thrilled to see how they are developing and growing spiritually.

Every term they have a spiritual emphasis week and we would value your prayers for our boys as they continue to develop and learn.

Anne' is also doing very well with her home schooling and started a new curriculum in January.

She took part in an endurance horse ride in November and came first in the 32km section. Not surprisingly she was just one big ball of energy after the ride.

For August, the biggest challenge is learning when to say "No" and also making sure the family have time together especially during the school holidays when the boys are home.

Prayer Requests

We would once again like to take the opportunity to thank you all, organisations, churches and individuals for your continued spiritual and financial support.

We would value your prayers for the work of Growing Nations over the coming weeks and months as the project continues to develop, especially for:

Thanks -

- To the Lord for the amazing opportunities that he has continued to provide to us, over the past few months.
- For the completion of the house which provides us with a family home and our own space after a year spent living out of boxes!
- For the team of people that God has put around us, helping us to further his Kingdom through the work of Growing Nations.
- For providing us with such a committed group of pastors who have been willing to learn, put things into practice and effectively witness within their own communities.
- For the fantastic crops that we have here at Maphutseng again this year. Praise God for the amazing testimony to those around us.
- Praise God for the tangible impact that Growing Nations has had on peoples lives.
- For the physical and emotional strength to cope with the building project on top of the demands of the Project.

The Project -

- John McCartney and family as he receives medical treatment in Australia.
- That people's lives would be touched and changed as a result of Growing Nations. Pray also for perseverance for the farmers to continue with CA methods in times of hardship, particularly in Tebellong and those we have previously trained in Kenya.
- That the Field Days in March will be a success and will encourage people to seek training and tell a wider audience about Growing Nations work.
- For us to be able to identify the key communities within the Maphutseng Valley who are interested in CA and to find the best farmers in them to train over the next 6 months before the next planting season. Pray that some of current trainees will be willing to assist with this project.
- Rain and optimum weather conditions from now until harvest (May/June) to enable the crops to develop fully.
- With so many demands on our time and resources, wisdom to use the opportunities we have in the best way and to focus on the things that are truly important, without being overwhelmed.

- The team as they continue to seek support and funding for the work. Pray that the organisations will be able to see the long term benefits of the work.
- Good relationships within the team and that we continue to gel and work well together.
- Safety as August and the team travel in Lesotho and other parts of Africa continuing to support and train.

Personally for the family -

- For strength during what continues to be a challenging and busy time. Pray that we will have discernment about what we take on so that we won't 'burn out'.
- For the family to enjoy the holidays and to be able to spend time together without a constant influx of visitors.
- For our kids, for protection and a closer walk with God and for Anne' currently at home with us in Lesotho as she starts her new curriculum.
- For Anita and myself for a great relationship between us and for spiritual and emotional growth. These have been stressful times but we continue to do OK.

That's all for now!

Please note our new e-mail address. We would love to hear from you.

God Bless.

August and Anita Basson, Growing Nations

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Images

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