

THE AFRICAN COMMISSION

Missionary Family

Joel & Jenna

Cobbs

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Sponsor:

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Report

February 1,

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Packing up our rent house in Botswana

We managed to get all our household packed up and into a shipping container.

Pray for its safe arrival.

Dear friends of God's work here on the "Dark Continent." God has blessed His work here in some wonderful and amazing ways. Even as we continue to transition out of this field, the work continues to grow and expand. Since our last report, there have been 4,629 souls saved- 3,982 Baptized, 14 men surrendered to the ministry and 11 new churches have been organized. For this, WE PRAISE THE LORD! This has not been without its challenges and difficulties, but in spite of them.

Botswana and Southern Africa

The first area for our "phase out" is the southern Africa region that includes our base of operation (for the last few years) in Botswana and the surrounding nations. One of the main things that we needed to accomplish was to get all of the campuses of the Bible Institute functioning independently under the authority of local churches in different geographic and tribal areas. That involved equipping them with all the training materials and equipment to continue to train the "God-called" men indefinitely. This has always been a weak link,

in the indigenous church planting way of doing things. IT JUST COST a lot (on the local economy's terms) to educate the preachers. We have addressed several of the big stumbling blocks and we pray that this will leave this very important aspect of God's work, a sustainable cog in the overall machinery of God's work.

One of the big difficulties and expenses of preacher training has always been the time and cost of transporting men great distances, on poor or non-existent roads to a central school. And while this is practical in the beginning of the work in a new country or region (when you have only one teacher), as the students mature (*II Tim. 2:2*) and

2 Tim 2:2

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also

become teachers themselves, it is more practical to have each area with a training facility under the direction of a local church. This does away with the expense of traveling and allows the God-called men to get a quality Biblical education without outside help.

Another thing that has helped out tremendously is the conversion of our books, audio and video materials to digital format. This allows a teacher to distribute what would cost hundreds or thousands of dollars worth (in printed and transported form) of training materials to a student with the click of a mouse. The student equipped with a digital media player and small solar charger can put 5 years worth of seminary textbooks and materials in his front pocket and walk back home or hundreds of miles across the mountains or desert to teach someone else. Add basic video projectors to the mix for teachers and we have a very flexible system.

While it has been a tremendous amount of work to get all the materials set up- I PRAISE GOD, for the fact that now all the LOCAL Bible Institutes in Southern Africa are equipped and set up to continue their ministries.

Another BIG issue that we have had to deal with is the Governmental registrations of the churches and Bible Institutes in all the different countries.

Unfortunately, most governments do not understand the Biblical principals of self-governing churches and to meet their legal requirements without violating scripture can be a big challenge.

Add to that the rampant corruption of government officials in some African countries (they want bribes to do your paperwork) it can make you pull your hair out (what little is left.)

We have to deal with things the way they are - and not the way they should be, so usually a Missionary's signature is required on behalf of churches that do not have a "BISHOP" or a central governing office. After a lot of prayer and intervention from the hand of God, I believe that we have managed to get around all of this in the southern African countries!!!!!! I still have one more final trip to make back to Southern Africa to finalize everything, but it appears that all is in order legally and Biblically! "Ain't God GOOD!"

Packing up

In addition to all the work with the churches and Bible Institutes we managed to liquidate the unneeded assets of the work in southern Africa and re-invest in that which was useful and necessary for the work to continue

Prayer Requests

* Safety

Training materials

* Governmental Registration

* Shipping funds

• Bibles

• Health Issues

* Bible Institutes

• Churches established

The African Commission—Cobbs

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How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?



A young Kenyan Church Jan 2012

to grow and expand. Also we managed to pack up our personal belongings into a shipping container and they are currently on a ship headed back to the USA. Please pray for a safe journey (insurance cost more than we could afford) and that the clearing process will go smoothly without delay or extra expense. As of late December we officially moved our residency from Botswana.

Jenna had been away from her doctors and treatment longer than we had intended at that point and so we moved her back to the States to continue with her medical treatment. After a couple of weeks setting Jenna setup in the States, I headed back to continue the transition process in the other regions of Africa.

Home and Health

We are very thankful to God for his blessings in our lives, one of which includes directing us to a good Christian doctor for Jenna. Jenna continues to improve, be it ever so slowly, but one thing is for sure- her health issues will not be a quick fix and she will most likely have to continue treatment for the rest of her life. That means spending a good part of the time near proper treatment facilities and in a "little less stressful" environment than the last 20 years has been. We thank you all for your many prayers on her behalf and believe that God hears and answers in wisdom and mercy.

To make matters a little more interesting I have developed some health issues of my own that could be potentially life-altering.

Thankfully the only result thus far has been a complete remake of my diet. Someone asked me what my new diet was and I said: "The short version is, IF IT TASTES GOOD, I CAN'T EAT IT".

East and Central Africa

I landed back in east Africa on Jan 12 and have begun the long task of phasing out of more than half a dozen countries in this region. As in Southern Africa, one of my big jobs will be getting the Bible Institutes totally sustainable through the local churches. This means setting up schools in more areas where we have trained men that can teach. Also there are two countries where we do not have any official preacher training facilities and in the next month I am planning to go and run teacher (seminary teachers) training seminars in these places and set up the equipment and materials under the direction of the local churches. Some of this part of Africa is writhing with insecurity and terrorism - with kidnapping Americans, being a favorite sport, so please pray for God's guidance and protection for this very important endeavor.

In addition to the work with the Bible Institutes and the Churches I will be packing up and selling off things to close out our presence in these countries. Please pray for God's hand in this process- that I might be able to complete the process in a timely and efficient (those words don't even exist in many African languages) manner.

HOW LONG?

I am very thankful for the encouragement and correspondence from many of God's people and try to answer the questions to the best of my ability. The number one question is, "How much longer will you be in Africa?" I wish I had a good answer to that one. I

am just not sure. I have never done this before and to be honest, I do not know of anyone else that has, with this particular kind of ministry. That said, we are hoping to be finalized and out of Africa, (except for one short trip) by this May.

I know people need good information in order to plan and make good decisions and so I will do my best to keep everyone informed as our work draws to a close here in Africa.

This morning I took my



Container on the way

passport out and looked at it to see if there was enough space remaining, for visa stamps, for next week's travels. That passport is not two years old. It sometimes amazes me how many places God's work has taken me. Places where people so desperately needed the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. Places, many of which are now sending their own preachers out to other unreached areas. I am so thankful to each one of you who have had a part in making this ministry possible - to carry out the Great Commission - in this part of the earth. You have helped carry the gospel to all those places and had a part in the salvation of thousands of souls. I would especially like to thank everyone who is continuing to be a part of this ministry - as we come to our final laps in this great race.

May God Bless YOU!

Joel & Jenna Cobbs