



Reaching and Serving the Persecuted Church

IN TOUCH MONTHLY

1 June 2008

Fano Sibisi – a prince among the Zulu and my friend of over 20 years has suffered from Motor Neuron Disease since 2000. He's unable to speak, is bed-ridden and cannot move, yet he blesses our hearts with daily communication via his computer. He laboriously types by moving his eye from one letter to another and winking. "From my personal experience," he wrote last month "I have come to believe that the acid test of the tenacity of our faith is not as much during the exuberant 'hallelujah-moments' as it is during the tearful '*Thy-will-be-done-moments*.'" Perhaps it is *because* God knew He could trust Fano, that He chose him to be a living example and encouragement to us all.

5-City Mission Trip to Africa

Director's Trip

Jeff Black reports:

ITMI's Director **Steve Evers** and **Mark Gumm** (our most recent addition to the ITMI Staff) made the 40-hour journey by jet from Phoenix, AZ to their first stop – Durban, South Africa. Someone likened the discomfort of sitting cramped-up in an economy-class seat, covering 10,000 miles across 9 time zones and into another hemisphere, to a new mom going into labor. You're exhausted by the ordeal and say to yourself, "When will this end?" Then you finally land at your destination—and the joy that comes from being on the ground again and headed toward a bed is like the joy of holding one's first-born child before drifting off into a nervous sort of sleep.

The purpose of this laborious trek to Africa via British Airways was to meet and encourage our Project Partners there. The initial destination was Durban, a coastal city on the Indian Ocean and capital of KwaZulu, Natal. It was their first and long-awaited field visit with ITMI's **Kelly & Cherise Smith** who live in a rural bush village about an hour west of Durban.

The Smiths minister among the

Zulu people, many of whom are infected with HIV/AIDS. Their work was featured in our April '08 ITM newsletter. As Steve and Mark toured the area, where this virus has snatched away a family member from every household, there was much sorrow in the air – an entire generation of Zulus is being systematically wiped out by this debilitating and silent killer.

Because they are one of the only families in the area to own a vehicle, Kelly and Cherise have had endless knocks on their door over the past several months to attend to the sick and transport the dying to the local medical clinic. At this point in their ministry, Kelly can look into the eyes of the person he is transporting and tell if he or she will make it to the clinic or not.

This is one of the underlying reasons why he began the housing addition on their property nine months ago. Kelly often built coffins for the dead as an act of grace and show of respect to the community. But he grew tired of building 'houses' for the dead and put all his energy into building a house for the living. This is how Gogo's house came into being. Steve and Mark spent time

encouraging the Smiths in their work and looking for solutions to more effectively share the love and message of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to this ravaged community.



Steve, Mark & Cherise greet Principal

Next stop, Cape Town. **Bill Bathman** met them at the airport and shortly after their arrival in the Mother City they were in an inter-Mission Rally at the Pinelands Town Hall. This was convened primarily to plan ways and means to aid Zimbabwe in its present crisis. Teams are being organized now to go in at the earliest possible moment. It was very providential that the ITMI Director and Founder/President were both in attendance to be a part of this momentous outreach.

During the Rally, the lights

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Update: Martyrs in Malatya, Turkey remembered

One year ago, ITM covered in this space the terrible murder-martyrdom of three Christians, brutally killed at the publishing house where they served the Lord in a literature ministry to Muslims. This is an update on that tragedy compiled from several sources including WorldNetDaily.

There are five suspects on trial in Turkey for the murder on April 18, 2007 of **Necati Aydin** (35) Pastor of the local Protestant church in Malatya; **Ugur Yuksel** (32), an adult convert – single, but engaged to a Christian girl and **Tilmann Geske** (46), a German missionary serving Christ in Turkey with his family.

The accused are: Emre **Gunaydin**, the alleged ring-leader, Hamit **Ceker**, Cuma **Ozdemir**, Abuzer **Yildirim** and Salih **Gurler**. The latter four now finger Gunaydin as the master-mind who planned the attack and they just “went along unaware of his intentions of murder.” For his part, Gunaydin says, “I remember very clearly Salih slanting his knife, stabbing and twisting it into Ugur’s back.”

Gunaydin stated in a letter to the court, “Our purpose was just to gather information and give it to the press.” The knives they carried with them were “only to protect ourselves,” he said.

Compass Direct, which has been following and documenting the case, said court testimonies by the five suspects were completed this week [mid-May] during a sixth hearing before Malatya’s 3rd Criminal

Court. “All have insisted that they had not planned to murder anyone and that no individual or group instigated their raid on the Zirve Publishing Company on April 18, 2007,” the report said.

Gunaydin repeated previous explanations that the attack erupted when Necati “slandered” Islam by stating that Jesus is God. Later, in police custody, he stated that he planned to kill Aydin’s brother-in-law, also a Christian pastor. Remember Gunaydin was taken into custody after he fell from the third-floor balcony to the street in a failed endeavor to escape the scene of the massacre. Now he claims the trauma he suffered invalidated his previous statements.

Due to conflicting testimonies of the five suspects, Judge Eray Gurtekin has postponed cross-examination until a hearing later this month. Also to be considered is new evidence from a prison inmate who alleges that he was offered \$300,000 in 2005 to “kill anyone he found at the Zirve Publishing office in Malatya.” He wound up in prison for another murder and Gunaydin “was given this job.”

Christians make up less than 1% of the population in Turkey, yet they have been subjected to numerous

attacks in recent years. A Turkish teen shot to death a Roman Catholic priest as he prayed in his church in 2006. Two other priests were attacked the same year. Last year, Armenian Christian editor Hrant Dink was martyred.

Still remembered in Turkey are the words of Tilmann’s widow, **Susanne**, in a TV interview following the massacre last April she said, “O God, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Blood for blood revenge is the norm in Turkey, but her forgiving spirit has earned nationwide respect.

Voice of the Martyrs notes that 2,000 years earlier, Christians in this location [Smyrna] were addressed in Revelation 2:10 “*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested...be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.*”

It’s been just over a year now since that fateful morning when three Christian missionaries wanted to share their faith with young Muslims who’d expressed an interest in

reading the Bible. Shortly after they opened the Word the long knives emerged and the blood began to flow.

This was not a sudden burst of passionate hatred, but rather a long-planned and well-organized assault. The ritualistic and torturous manner of the murder (particularly the slicing of fingers) is straight out of the Qur’an: Surah 8:12 under the *Spoils of War*, “I will strike terror into the hearts of Unbelievers. Flay their necks (with a sword) and strike every finger.” Later, an autopsy by Dr. Murat Ugras revealed that, “Their fingers were repeatedly sliced to the bone lengthwise.” The long, slow torture lasted over 3 hours until final relief came when their throats were slit from ear to ear.

With militant Islam posing a much greater threat than Communism ever did – not only to our freedoms, but to our very lives – I am convinced that we must understand what motivates the Jihadists and learn what the Qur’an tells them to do and why. We’ll focus on those questions in future issues.

Watch this space!

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Dear Team,

I was discussing the current crisis here with my next-door neighbor and he made an interesting observation: "South Africa, as it has been through its 300-year history, is like a new type of Wild West: always beautiful, sometimes dangerous and only for the bold." We laughed together at the truth in that statement. It is certainly a beautiful country – and without doubt it is getting more dangerous. But we don't feel "bold" for living here; it comes with the package called "obedience" and it's wrapped in His grace and kept safe in the cleft of the Rock.

The latest xenophobic unrest centers on the refugees and displaced persons (now estimated at 5 million) pouring into SA from Zimbabwe, our neighbor to the north. They are black of course, but from different tribal backgrounds and do not mix with the more than ten Black nations here. As a result townships are burning; "foreigners" are beaten, robbed and raped while their meager belongings are stolen. It's very sad. It's also very racial – and frustrating because this time they can't blame it on the Whites. March elections in Zim gave a sweeping victory to the MDC, repudiating the brutal and thuggish 28-year rule of communist dictator Robert Mugabe, who refuses to hand over power.

Right now we're getting teams ready to go into Zim at the earliest opportunity. This will involve truckloads of vital supplies, plus evangelists. I'm holding myself in readiness to go.

On the "health front," we'll appreciate your prayers for **Harriett's** eye surgery this month. She needs to have cataracts removed and lens implants in both eyes. The operations will be at the Vincent Pallotti Hospital on June 12 and 19.

Our grandson, **Christopher Hammond** is moving steadily on track for a kidney transplant sometime later this year or next year. We've been ruled out as donors because we're "too old!" **Lenora**, his mother, is not considered due to her near-death bout with hepatitis in 2005. At the moment, there are two possible donors: his Aunt **Deborah** from Salzburg, Austria was here at Easter-time to volunteer as a donor. She took a battery of tests at the Groote Schuur hospital in Cape Town (where the first human heart transplant took place) and is a "good match." His father, **Peter**, has taken the same tests and is also eligible. Keep praying for the medically correct time that the harvest and transplant should take place.



Bill preaching at the BWS in East London

This picture was taken at the April Biblical Worldview Seminar in East London. I'm participating in another BWS later this month near Cape Town which will have young people from all over South Africa in attendance. I'm also preaching at our local Church this month. We are so grateful for your continued prayers and practical support.

Yours in His grip,

Bill Bathman

(Continued from page 1)

suddenly went off as power was cut. These rolling blackouts have become routine under South Africa's communist regime. Candles had been lit in anticipation of such an event and the mission team had a generator in place ready to go. Literally within seconds, the lights were back on and the PowerPoint presentation continued without a hitch.



Steve sharing candies with MCH kids

The majority of time in the Cape was spent at Moreson Children's Haven with Gerhard and Elmane Le Roux. MCH is growing. In addition to the children, their ministry reaches out to drug addicts and the homeless. Steve asked specifically if there was

some special need. Gerhard was hesitant, but finally admitted that they needed a computer for the office to keep up with all the growth. Steve and Mark were able to set them up with a new computer for the major work and to put some 'new life' into an old laptop they had.

[As I was writing this article, Bill sent an update on Steve and Mark's visit. Gerhard said. "The most memorable aspect of my time with them was the fellowship with these two men. We were of one Spirit and were like one 'family.'"]

From Cape Town they jetted to Johannesburg and then on to Lusaka. Their flight into the Zambian capital was the last one of the evening. "We shut the airport down," Steve noted in an email update from Zambia. No one was there to meet them. Lights were going out and employees going home. Steve didn't have a Zambian SIM card for his cell phone and there were no public pay phones. Eventually he borrowed a policeman's cell phone and got through to ITMI's John Jere. They had a good opportunity to witness to the police-

men while they waited for Pastor Jere to pick them up.

After meetings in Lusaka, they drove over rough terrain to Kabwe where ITMI's Reverend Eugene Kalunga had arranged for them to teach a portion of the Seven Areas of Life Training discipleship series to some 40 church leaders. They also visited with staff and students at Excellence Christian Academy.



Mark teaching S.A.L.T. to leaders

Kampala, Uganda was their final goal...but we'll have to end here for the sake of space and fill you in on the finale of Director's Trip in the July ITM Newsletter.

Jeff Black - Tempe

How'd You Hurt Your Hand? by Bill Bathman

101 Bible studies in Matthew's Gospel. This 205-page book by Bill celebrates ITMI's 25th Anniversary. It is a current commentary considering the question, "What if Matthew took a look at us? Would he recognize 21st Century Christianity?" We are encouraged by the positive response to its launch. This is a great gift for someone you love.

\$10 + S&H

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For Praise . . .

1. Safe, blessed and successful African trip by Steve Evers and Mark Gumm!
2. Nadine Peterson is training new ITMI Financial Officer Betsy Huston!
3. Sarah Evers graduated from Liberty University on May 10!

For Prayer . . .

1. Harriett Bathman's cataract surgeries: June 12 & 19.
2. Christopher Hammond's kidney transplant - details plus donor compatibility.
3. Church leaders ministering to those suffering in nearby Zimbabwe.
4. Speaking opportunities for Tomek Jezyk from Poland & the Smiths from SA while here in the States.

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