



Reaching and Serving the Persecuted Church **IN TOUCH MONTHLY**

1 January 2010

“...like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in **newness of life.**” Romans 6:4 In Luke chapter 2, we are reminded that “...**Jesus grew** in wisdom and stature. We either grow or we regress. January is a great time to commit to the **growth process** of “becoming less (decrease) so He can become more (increase).” **Everything changes**, what direction are you going?

Zulus Need Jesus

“Our goal is to share the love and hope of Jesus...” - Kelly Smith

South Africa

A coffin sized metal box, pad locked and bolted to the ground in our front yard, would not make most of us very happy. However, for a young Zulu boy of nine years old, a few river crossings back in the bush from Durban, South Africa, the metal box is truly a lifesaver. When you’re nine years old and the head of your household it means that you are responsible, completely responsible, to feed, protect and provide for yourself and your younger siblings. In Touch Mission International’s Kelly and



So many funerals that you can get one for \$110 usd.

Cherise Smith realized that missionary work in Zulu land sometimes requires drastic measures.

Kelly knows all too well the realities of spreading the Gospel in a culture such as the Zulus. He and Cherise are faced everyday with the realities that over 700,000 South Africans died of AIDS last year. That is almost 2,000 every day. Visualize El

Paso, Texas being wiped out each year, and it happening over and over again. This loss of well and healthy adults in the Zulu nation contributes to the 1.2 million AIDS orphans left to fend for themselves each year in South Africa.

Kelly shares that as he travels up and down the hilly countryside, fording in his four wheel drive streams that easily become raging rivers in the rainy season, he sees and touches devastation of grand proportions. Kelly realizes that he can only do so much and he really has to continually ground his heart and soul in God’s truth just to be able to continue trying to meet the many needs.

When Kelly was directed to drive back into the hills and visit a particularly run down rondavel, he realized in short order that he could at least make a difference in the lives of one sad and destitute nine year old boy and his siblings. First order of business was to find out, “*where are your parents?*” “*No alive.*” “*Second, where are the grandparents?*” Also, no longer alive. Kelly realized that even though the boy’s parents were



Traditional Zulu Rondavals are used for family living

gone and he was alone in this world, with little hope of any future, his overwhelming sadness was ... not enough food to survive, for himself and what was left of his siblings.

When you are nine years old and you live in an area that is experiencing



Zulu Children needing God’s love

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Romania

Mitrut and Alina Stiopu have been ITMI partners in Romania for many years. You might remember that Mitrut has a passion for youth in a country that doesn't always see the value and potential resources in young people. Mitrut is also an unquenchable entrepreneur who stands in stark contrast to the age old traditional Romanian way of progress.

He drove the communist crazy by his unbending passion in the 80's, during a time when most everything was



Romanian barns enlisted for use as homeless housing

gray and lifeless. He continues to push the envelope in ministry with the youth of Romania through his unique and progressive camping ministry. The Stiopu business, which really is a ministry, is also used to employ the less fortunate and down and out countrymen, who need a job and who need a relationship with Christ.

Alina gladly follows the lead and direction that Mitrut so skillfully crafts. Alina has been forced to depend on God's provision for all her needs in business and at home, as Mitrut's focuses more and more on changing lives through Camp Plopu, and as his health continually struggles due to years of abuse from the communist who punished Mitrut because of his unbending stand for Christ.

One of the added passions on Alina's heart is to care for the poor and destitute in her corner of Romania. Alcohol and the godless communist indoctrination has left a sad and devastating legacy on the lives of many families in this part of Romania. A few years ago ITMI's friends Don Christensen and Mike Moore felt God's tugging on their heart strings to help Alina help the Romanian poor.

Between Don and Mike and ITMI and Alina, the Romania Poor Fund was launched and it has met untold needs for housing, food, clothing, blankets, and jobs.

The end of last month, during the Christmas season, Don called ITMI and said that Alina had contacted him with the acute need for funding and help for the poor that she ministers to through the Romanian Poor Fund. Between the cold



Homeless Romanian Widow

and icy Romanian winter and the world economy that always hurts the poorest of poor the most, Alina needed some immediate and ongoing help. Don responded immediately and ITMI was able to help put warm food and warm clothing, delivered with God's love, on the tables and on the backs of the dear people that Alina graciously serves.

Please pray with Mitrut and Alina that God would grant them health, strength and wisdom so they can continue to impact the southern Romanian countryside full of people who need to see and know what Jesus' love looks like. If you want to partner with Mitrut and Alina, let us know and we will work to resource them together.



Alina always looking for opportunities to love on needy children

South Africa

Ashley Keller writes, "It looks like the container can be opened! In fact, Timothy has gone to Lusaka for a few days, intending to do just that. We are keeping our fingers crossed as we wait to hear if it really is ready. In Africa, you don't just wait to count your chickens until they hatch. You usually wait until they've grown up, laid a few eggs of their own, and survived the summer... then you count them. So... pray with me that he'll find the paperwork in order and the container cleared for opening. Once he can start sorting through the boxes we will be able to ascertain the condition everything has arrived in and decide how to put the materials to good use."

As the pictures show, God has answered Tim and Ashley Keller's prayers. They have opened the container and are now wading through the process of checking for damage or loss and then unloading all the books and supplies that belong to the Kellers.

The Father's hand and provision is being seen over and over by the Kellers. Ashley continues, "We have been so incredibly blessed with the Lord's provision for our family. The container arrived with surprisingly, miraculously little red tape to negotiate (nothing short of God's hand when this happens in Africa!) The items inside were safe and un-molested (although we are now fighting off the African termites). We have a home that is more than I ever could have hoped for and household



Tim Unloading - Zambia style

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Greetings Team,

Last year has been a real “season” of stretching for many of us. We all have found ourselves in uncharted waters on many levels. The great news is that I have seen over and over that our Father, our “Papa” has steadfastly kept His promise to “never leave...nor forsake.”

I hope and pray that each one of you are given the chance to see this coming year, a *season of stretching*, a season of “*newness of life*” so that you can “*know*” how faithful and loving our Father is toward us.

Embrace the new paths, the new directions that God is taking ITMI, the Evers, and each one of you. It will all work out for “His good.”

Blessings,



Small World

I’m at a Jamba Juice in Mesa, Arizona waiting for my Berry Lime Sublime smoothie when I notice a lady staring at my America West Arena name badge. “*Is Swea City, Iowa your home town?*” I tell her it sure is. And how impressed I am that she pronounced it correctly.

Swea City’s a small place. About 700 people, provided everyone’s home. “*I’ve been there. In fact, my aunt used to live there.*” I ask her aunt’s name. “*Gladys Hanson.*” I tell the lady that Gladys was a member of my church for as long as I can remember and one of my Grandparents’ closest friends.

I’m at an outdoor art festival in Scottsdale, Arizona. I strike up a conversation with a young couple who say they are from Seattle. It rains a lot there but it doesn’t snow like it does in the place they grew up. “*Where is that?*”, I ask. “*Iowa. The Sioux City area. Actually, a small town called LeMars.*” LeMars. “*Did you go to LeMars Central High School?*” They did.

“*Do you know Glendon Peterson?*” They said he was their favorite teacher. “*Glendon is my uncle.*”

Of everything I learned in my undergraduate major of psychology, one study has always intrigued me. A group of researchers got together to test the “small world” theory. They gathered phone books from all over the country. Opening one at random they would blindly point to a name. “*John Jones in Tampa, Florida.*” Then they would open another phone book and randomly select another person. “*Marie Morrison in Holbrook, Arizona.*” They would send a letter to Marie Morrison with John Jones’ name and address and these instructions: “*Don’t send this letter directly to John Jones. Just send it to any person you know and have them send it to any person they know until someone says, “Hey, I know John Jones!”*” They repeated this experiment hundreds of times.

Guess how many times, on average, the letter had to be mailed before someone knew “John Jones”?

Five times.

When we go beyond the immediate fascination that only five or six degrees separate us from every person on the planet, we see the incredible impact we can have on our world. As far as I know, Gladys Hanson never left our small town. Yet years later and 1,500 miles removed I was able to tell her niece of her godly example and treasured friendship to my Grandparents. My Uncle Glendon spent his entire teaching career at one school. His passion for excellence in the classroom is an unforgettable example to his students who now live all over the country.

In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, He talks about the positive influence we can have on those around us. He likens us to a lamp that is put on a stand so it gives light to everyone in the house. Jesus goes on to say, “***In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.***” (Matthew 5:16) A lamp doesn’t run about trying to illuminate the entire world. It stays in one place and lights up the room it’s in.

What you do makes a difference.

Your influence extends far beyond your awareness. You may live and die within 100 miles of your birthplace, yet you’re still only five people removed from everyone else on the planet. In that light, there’s really no need to be famous. We need only be faithful.

When we’re faithful to be kind, when we’re faithful to do our best with the talents and abilities God has given us, when we’re faithful to be who we are where we live; the ripples of our life well-lived will roll across the ocean of humanity. Guaranteed.

Because it only takes five postage stamps before someone says, “*Hey, I know you!*”

It really is a small world. In your corner of it, be faithful to make a difference

- Todd Thompson



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devastation on such a grand scale, you soon realize that if you have any food, others will soon find out. When they find out, they will come to see if they can somehow get your food, whether by hook or by crook.

The only solution that Kelly knew would work, was to help secure the maize flour and other staples in a coffin sized metal box, secured to the ground and but-toned up with a man-sized pad lock. The key was put on a string and it now lives, full time, hidden around the neck of a young man that is far too young to live with such responsibilities.

The Smiths do what-ever it takes to build relationships with the many Zulus who seek out the “white people” so that they can share God’s love. Kelly states, “Our goal is to share the love and hope of Jesus by building relationships and meeting practical needs.” They succeeded



Kelly and Cherise with the ever growing Smith family

last month when they served three elementary schools, approximately 200 children

with Christmas celebrations and gifts.

Cherise especially loves on the Zulu children, hoping to reach them for Christ before they lose total hope. Cherise shared the following heart warming story of their annual Christmas service project, “We had 2 wonderful days watching the children of our 3 local primary schools celebrate their end of year Christmas Party. We are so blessed to be a part of these days where we arrive with our load of gifts, and food, and then sit as honored guests as we watch the children perform their songs, dances, skits and readings.... It gives me chills. I feel blessed every year to be able to be with these children. I even sat down with some of the kids during the party, and was almost drowned under all the little ones, trying to sit on my lap. I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.”

The enemy doesn’t like what Kelly and Cherise are doing there among the Zulus. He doesn’t like hope being given to 9 year old head of households, nor to the many marginalized bush children. The Smiths would tell you, if they ever met you, that there is a huge need for

prayer partners. They need those who will stand in the gap and uphold the Smith family and their passion to reach the lost and dying Zulus. They also need partners who will come and love Zulus to Christ. The

Smiths would also share with you that any and all help would go a long way in the path that God is leading them, the path that mandates a continual commitment to resting and trusting in God’s provision that empowers them to reach out to one more, empty and needy Zulu.

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Tim surrounded by tons of “paper gold”

items to fill it with (thanks, friends!!) We have a wonderful supply of Bibles and discipleship materials that will be used to spread the Gospel of His law and grace to the people of Africa. We are healthy and happy, doing the work to which we were called in a land filled with the wonders of His Hand. I can think of little for which to ask; I am overwhelmed by the graciousness and generosity of His hand. He is a good and generous Father, a gracious and loving God.”

“Please also keep me [Ashley] in your prayers as I have been experiencing a great deal of extreme lower back and leg pain due to a pinched nerve. I hear this will go away as soon as the baby is born.” We thank God for your help and for His undeniable blessings.

For Praise . . .

1. ITMI’s new partners from Chennai, India, Paul and Molly Yuvaraj: continual ministry opportunities here in the States.
2. God’s hand of approval on ITMI’s projects in the most challenging economic times.
3. God’s moving in the lives of you, our supporting team members and how much hope, joy and encouragement it brings.

For Prayer . . .

1. Tim and Ashley Keller: safety and provision as they prepare for baby number 2’s delivery this month in South Africa.
2. John Jere requests that we hold him, his migraine like headaches and his much needed cataract surgery up to the Lord.
3. Alina Stiopu: wisdom and provision as she seeks God’s will and direction for the many needs of southern Romania.
4. Wisdom and direction as God continues to make ITMI new and relevant with each bold step of obedience.