

Marc and Nancy Blackwell -- Serving in Southern Africa – 2023 Review



Here is an overview of 2023 with some additional details to help you pray better for us and the ministry.

In South Africa, Andre Janse van Rensburg was installed as pastor of Swartland Baptiste in October 2023. That was a very exciting moment for the people, and they are working well with their new pastor and his wife.

Now our primary focus in 2024 and beyond can shift to church planting and pastoral training in Zimbabwe.

House of Stone Ministry *Village church planting and pastoral training program in Zimbabwe*

The ministry opportunities in Zimbabwe are so many that we can barely keep up. This is in spite of the very sad discovery that Mike

Sarireni, one of the two pastors we were partnering with, had disqualified himself from ministry due to immorality. He has abandoned his family and is unrepentant. God's grace is evident in the lives of everyone affected, and the pastoral students at the Rock Baptist have been given the responsibility of leading the church under the mentoring and supervision of Pastor Shadreck who lives 2 hours away.



There are now three village church plants in three different areas, about 60 to 85 miles from each other. The newest is called Rutendo Baptist which means Faith Baptist and was started by pastoral student Huverenga. They held their first service under a mango tree with only his family, a few interested friends, and us as visitors.

Each week he visits people in their homes to teach God's Word and share the gospel, and 9 people have accepted Christ this past year. Huverenga and his family lived on the outskirts of his village and wanted to move closer to the center of the village so he could have a greater ministry impact. Villages are often



spread out over 3 to 5 miles. He inherited land from his father and we helped him build a house there with a living area big enough for this small congregation to meet in. A well was drilled and the pump is powered by solar panels. The well provides fresh water for the family and will also assist in their farming if there is a dry spell.



In addition to the church plants, there are three “preaching points” in other areas. Next year we expect that one or two of these preaching points will be upgraded to church plants. Please pray for pastoral students Godfrey and Solomon in this regard.

Godfrey has been teaching the Bible to friends and neighbors, and last month he held his first regular Sunday Bible study.



Solomon, Pastor Shadreck and I met with the headman of Solomon’s village. During our discussion he enthusiastically asked us to plant a church in their village!

Solomon had been leading individual Bible studies and now he has started a mid-week group Bible study.

Similar to Huverenga’s situation, Solomon needs to move to a more central location in the village. We helped get a well drilled on land that he purchased, and in the future we hope to help him build a house there.



The pastoral students are diligent with their studies, ask good questions, and generally keep me on my toes with their enthusiasm for ministry.

We've added another student, Takuranashe (50 years old), to the group, bringing us to seven plus Pastor Shadreck. In this next year, while I work with the men teaching and mentoring, Nancy will be teaching and discipling the student's wives.

In 2022, Alan and Deanna Heathcote, a veteran missionary couple from South Africa, committed to joining us twice a year to teach at Bible conferences in Zimbabwe. Throughout the year, Alan and I meet via Zoom video to prepare the lessons, and then team teach at the Bible conferences in April and August. During these conferences, Deanna works alongside Nancy encouraging and teaching the women.



Our Toyota 4x4 truck has been a major help to ministry in these rural areas. Fully loaded for self-sufficient living, we drive down rough dirt roads, and primitive tracks, and cross the occasional stream, with this rugged and capable vehicle.

We are able to carry food, water, and fuel for extended trips into the bush, with the nearest town sometimes up to 2

hours away. We installed a solar-powered battery system so we can operate a portable fridge/freezer and provide electricity to charge everything from flashlights to a laptop, and various 18V power tools used during construction projects.



We also bought a new offroad camper trailer but during the first rainy season it had multiple roof leaks, ruining much of the interior. We are using an industry arbitrator to mediate between us and the supposedly reputable manufacturer; please pray for a successful outcome.

We want to thank everyone for the financial gifts, either one time or monthly, that have enabled the ministry in Zimbabwe to expand and reach more people with the gospel. God has blessed each gift, both large and small, and multiplied it's impact spiritually as the lives of so many people are being touched for eternity. Thank you for upholding us in prayer!

In Christ,

Marc & Nancy Blackwell

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