

REFLECTIONS ON THE DURBAN MISSION JOURNEY

Guiding Scriptures:

Matthew 25:36c, 40

"I was in prison and you visited me."...I assure you whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for me.

Matthew 28:19,20

"Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you and remember, I am with you always to the end of the age."

The disciples on this journey:

Chaplain Dr. Brenda Simuel Jackson, Rev. Dr. Daniel Ko, Sister Brenda M. Rudolph, and Sister Nearline Willis, and Sister Connie Wehman.

The journey began in October, 2014, when we contacted Fellowship of South Africa, to assist us in getting clearances to visit the prison, and when we registered for the The World Baptist Alliance Congress, which was holding its 21st session in Durban, South Africa. During the ensuing months we planned the itinerary for our visit, and our participation in the Congress.

We started our prayer for the journey in November, and in June, 2015, fasting and prayer was the agenda.

We left our homes on July 17, 2015, moving toward Africa. One member of the team was already there. She is a resident of Pretoria, South Africa, just outside of Johannesburg. She is the executive Director of Prison Fellowship South Africa including the city of Durban, our destination.

The US team members left the US using different airlines, and we met the unexpected while in Johannesburg, when Sister Willis' luggage did not arrive and she and sister Rudolph missed the connecting flight from Johannesburg to Durban. (This was just a couple of many obstacles that

Tried to thwart the mission.) God is faithful, and provided a way through every hurdle met. By the time we landed in Durban, approximately 20 hours had elapsed since our departure from the US. You are right, it is now late evening on July 18th.

Connie met us in Durban. We rented a car, knowing that all driving including the steering wheel is on the right, opposite from cars in the Us. We thank God that Rev. Daniel had experience, and in a little time was a master at driving and making turns without going in the wrong direction.

During our stay, nine days, the temperature averaged 60 degrees F. needless to say, Dr. Jackson stayed cold. There had been a drought in the area for three years, and on our third day in Durban, prayers were answered and it rained off and on for the following four days.

On July 20th, the team went shopping to purchase toiletries for the inmates and food for the community church where we were to minister.

On July 21st, the team drove to Pietermaritzburg, about an hour's drive time from Durban. We were hosted at a medium A (medium and maximum level inmates), housing youth ages 18 to 25. And adults.

Our host at the prison was Mr. Samuel Moodley, the Spiritual Care Coordinator. We cleared the gate, and were allowed to park in the administrative area. The prison housed over 2000 men and the rooms appeared to be open dorm style. Our first stop was to provide encouragement and witness to the youth. Approximately 75 inmates attended. After our witness, the young men did an Africa version of what we may call "Stepping". Pictures of this are included in the attached photos. Moving on, our journey went to the adult men. We met in a room set aside for worship. Over 70 persons in in attendance including "trustees", one of whom was serving three life sentences. The men provided praise and worship, scripture, and prayer, and with the aid of an interpreter, Dr. Jackson and Rev. Daniel delivered the messages, God's forgiveness, and This place is temporary. When the invitation went forth, 35 men stood to accept Christ. Following service, each man received a bag of toiletries (toilet paper, tooth brush and paste, throw away razor, lotion, deodorant, soap, and a pair of socks). (Pictures of this event are also attached.)

We were surprised when the trustees, and the officers provided us with an enjoyable meal.

After leaving the prison, we visited project "gateway" which is located in the old prison, and is now used to give the needy, the poor, the x-offender a hand up. They provide job training skills, they have a resale shop, and have temporary shelter for the homeless. It is a faith based organization.

From there we took a short trip to the train station where Gandhi was put off the train even though he had a first class ticket. This was the place that Gandhi began his movement for civil rights.

We proceeded the to the community church where, although this was Tuesday, Sunday school was being conducted for youth as an after school program. These children live in what is called a squatters village, where there is no electricity and many houses made with mud bricks. We interacted with the children, and provided fruit (apples, oranges, bananas), and candy along with the sandwich given by the church. We also provided bags of beans, and other items to the church to aid their program.

From the evening of the 22nd through the evening of the 25th, we attended the Baptist World Alliance Congress, where the theme was "Jesus is the Door". Over 105 countries from all over the world were

represented to connect with others who believe in going forth to make disciples, love our enemies, meet needs, foster peace and reconciliation, pray, praise and stand united in our faith.

On July 26th, the team scattered, Connie left driving back to Pretoria, Rev. Daniel, Sisters Rudolph and Willis returned to Pastor Peter's church for ministry, and Dr. Jackson went to Doksa Church to preach the gospel.

July 27th, we started our journey home, and on July 28th we were once again in the US, this part of the journey ended, To God Be The Glory.

Amen