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June 2025

We all had experiences that shaped the rest of our lives. What are yours? I have been thinking about mine quite a bit lately.

When Kay and I moved back to South Africa in 2000 we started to work at Beautiful Gate in Crossroads. Back then BG had a home for HIV+ children when there were no meds available yet. Crossroads was a poor township notorious for crime and violence, even though the majority are amazing, peaceful, generous people. Almost every night you could hear gunshots in the community. One afternoon we witnessed a “kangaroo court” in process just outside the Home. A poor young man must have been caught or accused of committing a serious crime and some community members decided he had to die! Some young men were busy killing him in a very gruesome way. When the victim had a chance, he was begging for his life on his knees. To no avail. We did not stick around for the conclusion. It is also very dangerous if you try to intervene. It was shocking to see how many children were watching, like they were used to it. I was never afraid for myself or my family when we lived there for half a year and working there for a few years. I was there for the children in the Home.

About 3 years in, I was on one of my many drives for the Home. I was driving the quiet little street just outside the Home like hundreds of times before. I was driving towards a group of young men walking side by side across the road, nothing unusual. As I got closer, I expected them to make way any moment, except they didn't. I had to slow way down, still not worried. At the last moment they made a gap and I slowly drove through. Suddenly there was a bang and something hit my head and pushed my upper body down. I didn't realize right away what had happened, but when I sensed them trying to open the car door, I just put down the pedal and sped off. That's when I saw all the glass in the car and a brick on the floor. It didn't really hurt, but there was lots of blood as well. I could write a lot more, but let me move toward the conclusion.

God really protected me that day! Just a little bit higher, the brick would have hit my temple. A few centimeters lower, it could have cut the main artery. Either way I could have died. In the following days and weeks, I had supernatural peace and joy, no nightmares at all! But the real lifechanging moment I had a few days later. I had been there for the children, but I didn't care too much about the people in Crossroads. For many there was not much hope. Poor education, poor living conditions, not enough jobs, no end in sight, born with a huge disadvantage that only few manage to overcome. What really hit me was this revelation from God: “If I had grown up in similar circumstances, no hope, no future, and if I did not have Jesus, I might have become someone throwing bricks in people's faces! The difference between me and them is Jesus!” In that moment God gave me His heart for Crossroads and similar communities. It was a breakthrough towards justice, empathy, reconciliation, trying to see the other's perspective. This has influenced everything I did since then.



We had quite a year so far. The ups and downs continued. It was disappointing that Moriah-Jane and family were not able to come at the beginning of the year, but Kay was able to meet our grandson before she did her yearly training in Holland. Her week at the Children At Risk School went very well again.

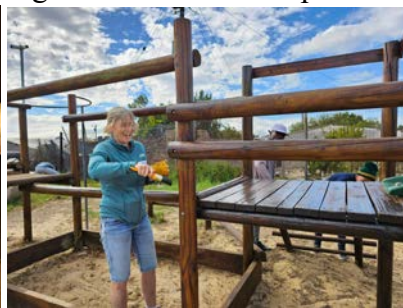


After our car was stolen last year, we were not able to replace it, but we were grateful for the use of a friend's old car as an interim solution. Then we received by far the greatest donation (for a car) we have ever received, and we were able to buy our first brand new car with excellent warranty and service plan, so no extra costs in the coming years!

At the end of February Kay needed surgery to take care of a problem that had the potential to become a really serious problem if not addressed. The surgery was a success, but has a long recovery time, requiring strong pain meds and strong sleeping tablets. Recovery wasn't easy, but manageable with the meds. The real problems started when the meds ran out and there was no aftercare as what to do. This resulted in a lot of unnecessary pain and insomnia. It took a whole week to get Kay back on proper meds and by that time the damage was done. Kay had a serious mental episode that required hospital treatment. We do not have medical aid and all reserves were used to pay for the surgery. Our only option was a government hospital which are nothing like the hospitals most of you are used to. Kay improved quickly, but then we needed help to get her out again which was also traumatic. Kay is still receiving care and making good process, but one side effect was that her energy levels were way down. It is a lot better now, but some of the things that we planned for the first half of the year had to be postponed to the second part of the year. We were very excited to do training with Siya and his team in Mfuleni, now we are looking at September after the winter rains.



Hunger is still a huge problem in many communities, so we continue to support the awesome ladies in Fisantekraal and Siya and his team. We are about a month into the worst part of the year, hunger and wet and cold are never a good combination. Usually crime goes way up this time of year. We are grateful for the support we have to help the kitchens, but many of the basic foods got so much more expensive!



We are continuing to grow the work with a primary school in Fisantekraal. The school now has a repaired jungle gym, more play equipment and a beautiful garden. This project has been a place of growing the relationship between the community kitchen ladies and our church. It has become a beautiful meeting place. We have an open door at the school to openly share about Jesus with the children and their teachers, giving out reading material for families and inviting them to community days. We have been thrilled to see the impact of this.

I was not going to Germany this year until someone gave me the money for a ticket. Now I will be there during the school holidays here. My Mom is steadily getting worse, so it will be good to see her. I am most excited though to finally meet my grandson!

At the end of July Lulu and Emihle go on tour with their choir to Pretoria where they aim to defend their title for the forth time as South Africa's best Primary School choir. If you like choirs and would like to sponsor towards their trip, it would be appreciated. The cost is around 500 Euro.



All in all, we are doing well. Everyone is looking forward to the holidays that are about to start. Most of us making the best of a cold wet winter while I escape to the German summer.



Blessings and greetings from the Cape winter,

Holger and Kay

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