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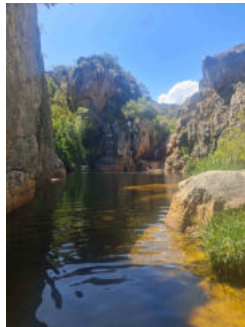
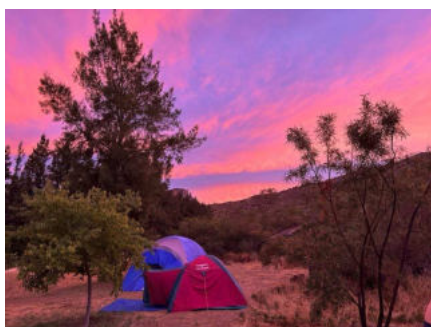


March 2024

Greetings from Cape Town!

It's been quite a year so far! High highs and low lows balance each other.

After a relaxing long break with some nice daytrips and a few days of camping, school started again and for the first time all our school going kids go to the same school, which makes transport easier. For most of them school is not easy and they each have a unique set of challenges! Please pray for wisdom and patience on the way forward.

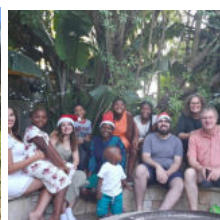
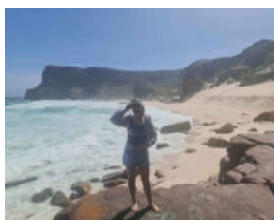


Hard to believe that it's already 4 years since we started to support soup kitchens, first in Fisantekraal, then for a while all over greater Cape Town. It began with Lulu's prayer at the beginning of COVID lockdowns that God would give our family food to feed the hungry! God has been answering that prayer ever since, often in miraculous ways. We are glad that we no longer support 30 kitchens as during the height of the pandemic, but hunger is an ongoing struggle in many communities even in the best of times. As support is lower, we are now down to 5 kitchens in Fisantekraal that we support regularly.



For the first time in a long time we don't have a building in Fisantekraal! In December we had to move out of the building that we used for the last few years and that we had the money to buy. There is no quick way to explain it, but it comes down to community dynamics and politics that are very different from what most of you know. It's not fair, but it's the reality we are dealing with. Fortunately some of the local organisations are very accommodating and let us use their space for our different projects. We still run programmes at schools, train OT students, and are involved with food gardens to improve food security.

It has been a huge blessing to have Lia here with us for 6 months! Lia is the daughter of one of my cousins and she told us last year that she wanted to come work with us. It's wonderful how it all worked out that she could come. She fits perfectly with our family and is willing to do anything around the work. She has a flat down the road, but we spend a lot of time together. Our family, our pets, the team, and lots of people in Fisantekraal will miss her a lot when she leaves next month!



Last November my parents moved in with my brother and his family. Especially my Dad loved his independence, but for age and health reasons it was no longer possible. We were worried for my Mom that the move was maybe a bit late and that she might struggle to adjust to the new life, but we were all positively surprised how quickly everyone adjusted. My parents didn't even miss their old life! This was a big answer to prayer. On the second last Sunday in January Dad took out the local family to eat. They decided to walk to the restaurant. Just before they got there, Dad fell. He got up, seemed fine, but fell again. An ambulance came, but couldn't find anything and left. They had dinner, but he fell again when they left the restaurant! This time he was taken to hospital. They did some tests, but released him after not finding anything. On the way to the car he fell and was readmitted! More tests followed, but they couldn't figure out why he had no strength in the one leg. At this point we were all worried, but not really worried. He was 88, but generally healthy. The doctors just needed to find and solve the problem. By Friday, Dad was fine and really wanted to go home, but they still had no clue why he had no strength in the leg after several more tests. On Saturday things turned. Dad struggled to breathe. Then they discovered a big edema in the back at his neck! Apparently it's quite rare that's why they didn't check before. It had developed without symptoms for a long time and there was nothing that could be done anymore. Most people suddenly just drop dead.



My parents decided long ago that they didn't want life prolonging treatments without chance of healing, so out of the blue (that's what it felt like) we received the message that Dad was dying within hours or maximum 2 days. That was a huge shock. I found a direct flight on Sunday morning, but received the message during the night that Dad had passed away peacefully early that morning surrounded by loved ones! Some family made it in time to say goodbyes, but the far away ones all arrived a few hours too late. But that was ok. By all accounts it was a good death with no pain, a death mixed with hope. Kay and I could say a quick goodbye online before the connection froze, but we got one last smile. We all only wanted to see each other again in June when my parents would have had their 60th anniversary, but here we were, mourning a death and celebrating a life! The family had a few days filled with all kinds of emotions and making arrangements as the funeral was on Thursday already. Many cards came in expressing how much Dad had meant to so many people. The memorial service was a celebration of his life, a life well lived! There was more joy than sorrow. The biggest answer to prayer is how well my Mom is doing! She has not lost her joy and is even coping when she is alone for a few hours. The church has been a big support to her as well. We are very grateful that Mom is doing so well under the circumstances. Grateful to know she is in good hands. Looking forward to seeing her again for her 80th birthday in July.

Let me take you back to the early days of MercyAIDS. In 2005 I started supporting families infected or affected by HIV/AIDS in Fisantekraal before meds were available. Later that year I started to help with camps for another organisation. Through the camp work I got to know Mama Regina in Mfuleni in February 2006. We connected right away. I used to call her Mother Teresa of Mfuleni. She had a heart of gold. She helped everyone she could. She worked with children and youth, visited the old and sick, ran a soup kitchen, she had taken in several children already and put up walls for 3 extra rooms on her property, so she could take in more. All this she did with her own small pension and little other support! I couldn't make any promises other than sharing her story. Very quickly we received donations to support her home and soup kitchen and soon we had enough to finish the rooms, enlarge the kitchen and build extra toilets and a bathroom! Building with a builder from the community was quite the experience, but in August all the work was done, the rooms furnished, and the home dedicated! More kids were added and we supported Regina and all her work well. We also had big dreams together. We wanted to have more programmes with children, youth, and the elderly and we were looking at buildings where we could do it.



The future looked bright! But in the Spring of 2007 Regina died without warning at only 68 years old! Always taking care of others, she didn't care enough about herself. We were all devastated! Her daughter decided to

continue with the home, but the other work ended. She did the best she could, but she also had a full time job. We continued to regularly support the home, and also new sponsors came on board. After 4 years it became too much and she decided to close the home at the end of 2011. It was sad, but we understood. That is also the time when our support ended. Something unfortunate happened soon after, so we lost contact and have not been back in 12 years. We moved on and did many other things since. But Regina's grandson Siya never forgot about us. A while ago he decided to continue in his grandmother's footsteps, not because he had to, but because he wanted to. He resurrected Regina's NPO and started helping in the community. Siya and his team also work with children, youth and seniors and disabled people and have a soup kitchen. They have little support, but do the best they can with what they got.



A few weeks ago Siya found us on Facebook and reached out. Last month we visited Siya and his team at this old familiar place. Many memories came back. It was quite emotional. Siya shared his heart and his dreams. He and his team are worthy of support and the needs are big. We did not make any promises apart from sharing our experience, as we did not have any money to give. But that was no different 18 years ago! Back then we also had nothing. I think God is up to something! Watch this space! After a Facebook post the first donation came in and we started to support the soup kitchen and the home and we bought some office equipment needed to run the organisation better. The home is still full of young adults and children and could really do with some upgrades of furniture, appliances and renovations. Any help towards these needs is very welcome. Our role is to support Siya and his team towards getting self sufficient. We can share our experience and provide some training and help to set up the NPO properly. If they only accomplish half of their dreams, it's well worth supporting. How is this for coming full circle? We are over 3 years in our house now and as kids get older so expenses keep going up. Interest rates are still high which means monthly payments are high. Daniel has started Bible school this year, but only half of that is covered once the child grant kicks in again. Last time I shared that we needed our regular support to increase to ease financial stress. It didn't even cover the fixed expenses. Since then our regular monthly support has actually decreased further which doesn't help the stress level. On the other hand, the house payment only bounced once and everything else gets paid. We had the house payments reduced for a few months, but that time is up. Somehow we always got other donations to cover the shortfall which is a great testimony to the goodness of God and our friends, but it doesn't get easier living this way. Either way, we are really grateful for our monthly and now and then supporters. We are also very thankful for prayers, especially after to loss of our most faithful daily intercessor! Feel free to share with others who might be interested in our letter.

Have a blessed Easter. He is risen!

Holger and Kay

Donations to:



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