

Phillips Family Newsletter August 2023

At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken – that is, things that have been made – in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire (Hb 12:26-29)

Dear Friends and Family,

Since the June/July mid-year break I have been trying to create the space in our schedule and in my mind to write another newsletter, but well, this is how long it has taken. So here is an attempt to update you on a jam-packed five months of our lives. Thank you for your patience. We really value your love and support and prayers, and be sure of this – we have not stopped praying for you.

In April, on the Easter weekend, our pastor had a very good idea. On the Friday and Saturday evenings we had one-hour services on the theme “Lest we forget” with three preachers delivering 10-15 minute messages from selected passion week passages, with a prayer and song in between. The variety and theme were a great blessing. On 16th April Ruth and I were officially welcomed into membership at Calvary Baptist. At the end of April, for the Freedom Day long-weekend, Ruth and I were invited to join a few church friends for a fishing camp at Koppies Dam beyond Kroonstad. It was quiet and simple, with space to walk, and time to chat – just what we needed.

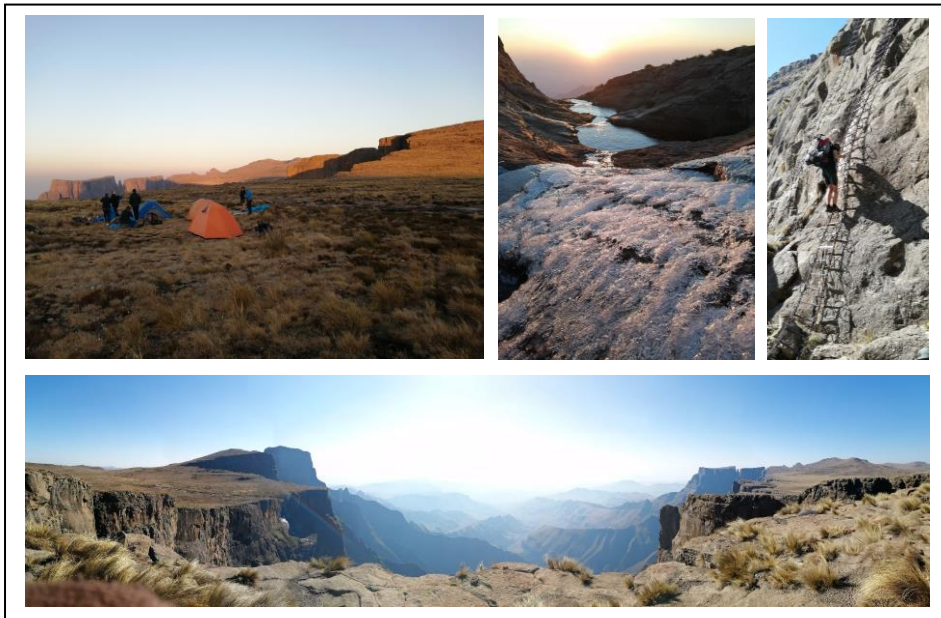
At the beginning of May Ruth participated in another horse-riding show and placed second fastest in the 50 cm jump, got a clear-round in the 30 cm jump, and a first and a second in the dressage tests. In the middle of May, Ruth passed her driver’s license test, so we are very thankful and she is learning to get herself to nearby places on her own, but sensibly, still prefers to have me with her. We then spent a whole Saturday at Hennops Farm hiking and braaiing with our church family. It was a wonderful time together. That weekend I also finished my series of sermons on Jonah with a rather elaborate children’s talk on Jonah and the worm! The following weekend, one of Ruth’s friends from the Bethany Baptist Young Adults celebrated his 21st birthday with a dress-up wild-west murder-mystery theme. Ruth’s three-piece outfit took a lot of effort to put together. Workwise, the second half of May was exam season at Mukhanyo with all the follow up marking, capturing and assessment of results at the beginning of June.



In the middle of June Mukhanyo hosted the annual Theological Education Association of South Africa (TEASA) Bible Colleges consultation for three days. The focus was on faithfulness to the authority of Scripture and the importance of sound hermeneutics. It was well attended with representation from many colleges, and we had excellent speakers bringing valuable input for all levels of academic theological education and mentorship. That weekend, Father’s Day, my birthday, I preached a sermon on the whole of Psalm 119! The following week Mukhanyo hosted Joel and Mary Beeke, with Joel presenting a two-day seminar on Reformed Theology and Experience Preaching. Judging by the numbers that attended and the response of young Reformed ministers signing up for the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) Master of Theology programme, the event was a great success. I certainly benefitted greatly.

By the way, perhaps you are beginning to see why it was hard for me to find a gap in June/July to write a newsletter. Well, immediately after the Joel Beeke seminar, Hannah arrived on Friday 23rd June for a two-week visit.





Not the grandeur of the mountains, nor the splendour of the sea, can excel the ceaseless wonder of my Saviour's love to me:

For his love to me is faithful and his mercy is divine; and his truth is everlasting, and his perfect peace is mine.

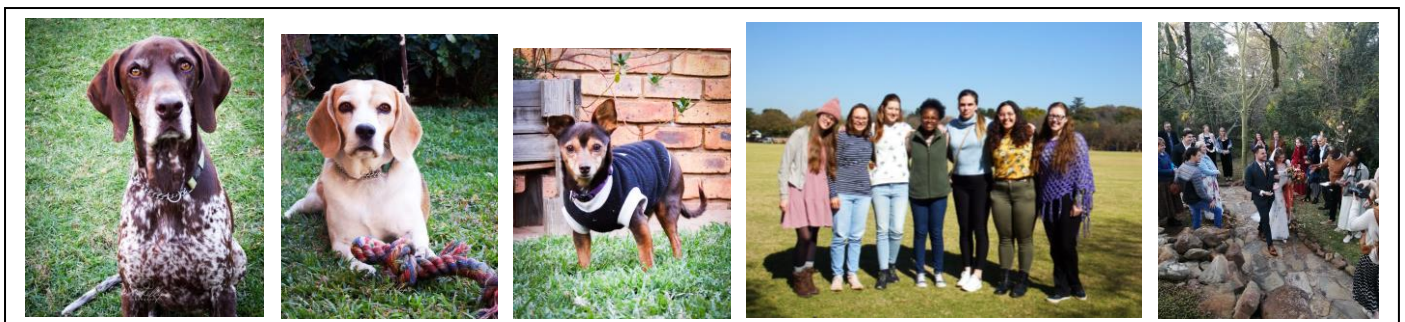
Not the streams that fill the valleys, nor the clouds that drift along, can delight me more than Jesus or replace my grateful song:

Yet these all convey his beauty and proclaim his power and grace – for they are among the tokens of the love upon his face:

Michael Perry 1942-96 (Praise! 323)

The next day, I set off early in the morning for the Drakensburg with my hiking friend Rian, his son, a friend and his three daughters. We parked at Witsieshoek Mountain Lodge, and then were taken in their beat-up 4x4 bakkie to the Sentinel Peak carpark from where we set off at 1 pm. It was 3 pm when we got to the bottom of the chain ladders, and it took about 45 minutes to negotiate getting all seven of us and our backpacks up. From there it only took about an hour to reach our camping spot on the plateau above the Amphitheatre and Tugela Falls (tallest waterfall in the world – 983 m). We had to be quick to pitch our tents before the sun set. It was dark and very cold by 6 pm. We ate quickly and were in our tents and sleeping bags by 6.30.

The first hint of red on the horizon was just before 6 am. By 6.30 we could see the outline of the Eastern Butress and Devil's Tooth, but it was 6.55 before the sun breached the horizon. Needless to say, the sunrise was magnificent and the views we saw as we ambled along the edge of the escarpment above the Amphitheatre south-eastward were absolutely stunning. God's creation is amazing. Rian and I went further to Mount Amery from where we could look all the way to the Mnweni area, where we had climbed to Mponjwane Cave in December in rain and cloud with no views. This time, we had perfect weather – clear skies, almost no wind and no snow – but it was cold enough at night for the river to freeze over with ice about 20 mm thick on the water and about 100 mm thick on some rocks. The youngsters had great fun with the ice! On the Monday we hiked down the way we had come, again it was 1 pm when we reached the Sentinel Peak carpark, and about 9 pm by the time I got home. I can't wait to go again, hopefully in December.



In the meantime, Ruth and Hannah had been to a Youth Rally with Bethany and Central Baptist churches. The next Saturday, 1st July, we met up with a couple who are emigrating soon and we had heard that they were looking for a home for their dogs – a German short-haired pointer (GSP) and a beagle, both about six years old. The two dogs, Jasper and Ella, have been with us ever since, bringing much fun and exercise (with a noticeable impact on our lawn and flowerbeds). They get on well with Bambi and are very lovable. That evening the girls went to the farewell of Kuzi and Shamiso who have been leading the Bethany Young Adults for more than two years, but have now gone to a church plant in Zimbabwe.

Sunday 2nd July was another special day for Ruth and I as we attended the wedding and reception of Reynard and Nika. It was beautiful. Nika is the daughter of my Mukhanyo colleague and friend, Jan, and it was Nika who tutored Ruth in 2021 after Carol passed away, and they became friends. And that led to Nika joining Ruth to go to the Bethany Young Adults group, and that is where Reynard and Nika met. And so goes the story ...

Well, Hannah stayed until the 8th of July, I preached on Zechariah 1:1-6 on 16th July, and second semester classes started on 18th July. I am teaching Old Testament Historical Books, Prophetic Literature and Biblical



Worldview, all at BTh level this semester. On Saturday 22nd of July we finally went to Wolwespruit Bike and Trail Park with some friends and did the 6.5 km walk. That was also when the Bible Institute had their Centenary Thanksgiving Service and Hannah loved seeing some of her special friends from her student days. Earlier in June or July, and on 30th July and 6th August we had three young couples from our church come for Sunday lunch. We really enjoy getting to know people more personally, asking them to share their testimonies and we share ours.



And finally, it was Ruth's 21st birthday on 13th August, so on Friday 11th Hannah flew up from Cape Town and Ruth's friend Cheyenne flew up from King William's Town. On Saturday 12th we had a party for Ruth at Ludwig's Roses with sixteen people altogether, mostly from the Young Adults. Thank you to Aunty Alta for all the catering, Alana for the incredible cake, and Hannah Gross for the photography. It all worked out wonderfully.



In between all this weekend activity, I carry on with work. Since June I have been kept busy handling all things related to the PRTS ThM – enquiries, applications, enrollments and communications. From 14th to 18th August, I took study leave to attend the online ThM Research Methodology classes presented by Dr Adriaan Neele, with an emphasis on historical theology. The reading assignments and classes were a very worthwhile experience of exposure to a field and level of study totally new to me. There were about 15 students attending in person and another 15 online (7 of them facilitated through Mukhanyo), from all over the world. The next ThM modules to be presented in Pretoria will be Theology Proper and Theology of Augustine (Sept 20-22, 25-27). And last of all, we are thankful that we finally successfully completed the migration of historical data to the new student information system on 21 August!



So you see, we have been busy, besides keeping up with Ruth's homeschool work and horse riding, Park Run and Bethany Young Adults nearly every Saturday, and our commitment to be active members of Calvary Baptist Church. Looking ahead, we are excited about our first Calvary Baptist Church Family Camp (15-17 September) on the theme of *Missio Dei*. Then on 21st September Mukhanyo will have an Awards Ceremony for our Focus Certificate (non-accredited) graduates. On 9th October Hannah turns 25! On 2nd November the second semester classes end, and the students will be writing exams for the next three weeks.

We are so thankful for the blessing of family, friends, supporters, resources, ministry opportunities, safety, health, all God's provision, the truth of His word, the power of the gospel, the fellowship of the church, and the work of His Spirit in us.

Please pray for:

- All of us to continue to grow spiritually, to love others more fully, and for wisdom in all our relationships.
- Hannah for God's enabling for her as she works hard to complete assignments and quizzes for her studies.
- Ruth for God's strength as she aims to complete her home-schooling and for guidance for what to do next year.
- Greg for God's grace to keep serving, teaching and preaching with integrity of heart (not just doing).

With much love and appreciation,

Greg, Hannah and Ruth.