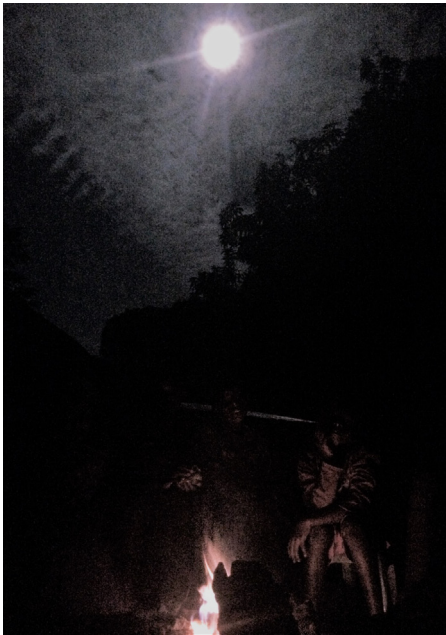


HANDS ON DECK

ISSUE FIFTY THREE



"I was held captive by hope in a new way."

— Hannah Mohajer

PRISONER OF HOPE

Hannah Mohajer, International Volunteer (Canada), Regional Support Team

At the beginning of 2018, Hannah began serving on the Regional Support Team as Project Support for the Chimoio Service Centre (SC) in Mozambique. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the communities and the work that the SC is busy doing, Hannah went to Mozambique for two weeks at the end of February. She shares about her time.

"Alberto* is a little boy living in Chigodole Community, Mozambique. He is seven years old, non-verbal and severely malnourished with poor vision, largely due to hindered cognitive development. Alberto and his siblings were brought to the newly established Care Point where they began receiving a nutritious meal daily. Farai (Regional Support Team Leader in Zimbabwe) and the SC team brought Alberto to the hospital to identify his needs and learn in what capacity they could support him. When he was diagnosed

with epilepsy, he was given an adult size dosage of medication which, of course, was not good for him. Thankfully, the team advocated for him and he is now receiving the child dosage.

Leading up to going to Mozambique, I had been feeling discouraged and was struggling to reconcile God with the suffering around me. I felt unable sit with people in their pain in an authentic, life-giving way. At the beginning of my trip, God gave me the verses in Zechariah 9:11-12 which became a lifeline. What does it mean to be a 'prisoner of hope'? As I asked myself that question, I began to wonder if having hope was a choice and not a feeling. I realised that often I am content to be a prisoner of despair. God showed me that though I am a captive, it is not to despair, but to hope. I choose to believe that God is turning ashes into beauty and making all things new.

One evening, I was able to sit with Alberto and his family under the bright moonlight, and hear their heart. As we shared with his parents about the

new medication, they started to pour their hearts out: 'We've been alone, and we've had a spirit of despair for years. But something is changing. Our child was found. We see Alberto being noticed, being loved, being known. We see people taking delight in him, describing him as a gift and not a curse. For the first time. We feel a community around us telling us that we are not alone, that we are together. He is welcome, he is cared for. He is special. Can it be? We have laid down our spirit of despair, and put on this garment of praise today.' As we walked to our home for the night with the moonlight guiding our steps, it was a beautiful picture of how God lights our way and that His light is greater than the darkness.

After that day, I made a point of trying to be intentional of walking into each day as a prisoner of hope. When the SC team and I found Hector*, he was seven months old, three kilograms, barely breathing and lying limply in his mother's arms. The odds were stacked against him, yet on that day, he was found and being prayed for around the world. As I held him, I sang the words of the hymn 'Because he Lives' over his life. Over the following days, we saw Hector change before our eyes.

During that week, I was held captive by hope in a new way. Zechariah 9:16 says 'on that day the Lord their God will rescue his people, just as a shepherd rescues his sheep. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown.'"



CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

Hannah Mohajer
Jon Mycio
Jo Poulson
Michael Mwila



Jo and Vicky's family

STHOBELA COMMUNITY STAY

In February, a new group of volunteers joined Hands at Work. As part of orientation, they went on their first community stay in Sthobela Community, South Africa. This is always an impactful part of the orientation program – being able to stay with a family and be a part of their lives for a weekend.

Jon Mycio, International Volunteer (Canada)

“Naturally my flesh struggles doing community stays. I enjoy having my weekend and like to relax. Yet if I had allowed those feelings to consume my thoughts, I would’ve missed what God was trying to show me on my community stay. The people I stayed with are incredible human beings who God has created in amazing ways and allowed me the privilege of staying with.

The mother of the family, Sindiwe*, is a Care Worker and is incredible. She has arthritis in her legs but she hasn’t let that prevent her from walking the mountains of Sthobela to visit the most vulnerable children. She has four children and carries the responsibility of raising them. The

absence of men and father figures hit me really hard. This family’s father is alive but lives in Johannesburg with his two other wives. The oldest boy, Siphosho*, has every reason to not be the man that he is because of the lack of men speaking into his life but it is great to see the way that he takes care of the animals, and takes responsibility and ownership for his family.

During this weekend, I was once again reminded of the responsibility that the men of Hands at Work have to walk with these young men and share with them the Jesus that We Know; thereby helping to change the cycle of poverty.”

Jo Poulson, International Volunteer (UK)

“The family that I stayed with, along with another international volunteer, Vicky Volker was headed by grandparents who are caring for seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren. One of the grandchildren Simphwe, is 20 and in school. She has a son but longs to be independent and to be with her friends. I felt the internal struggle that she faced; her desire to be independent but the reality that she is living.

Her cousin Zodwa had dreams of her



Jon's family

own but also she carried the burdens of the home and was often relied on to be a ‘mother’ figure to everyone. At 19 years old, it was evident that she loved and adored her 3-year-old son. After church on Sunday, I asked Zodwa if she enjoyed it and she said yes because she forgot about her life at home. She shared that if she gets married she will go with her husband and her son will stay with her grandmother. It’s hard to hear that this seems the norm, I wanted to ask what happens to him when her grandmother dies?

Where is the hope? It has to be Jesus and since coming home I have been thinking about David in the Old Testament. When David was in the mountains with the animals, it was there that he discovered the depth and joy of his relationship with Jesus. I pray that through the Care Workers and Hands at Work, she can meet Jesus and have joy which will then have a domino effect to the rest of the family.”

MARANATHA WORKSHOP IN KALENDE

Michael Mwila, African Volunteer
(Zambia), Luanshya Service Centre
Coordinator



In March, there was a Maranatha Workshop for the Care Workers in Kalende Community. There was a workshop five years ago but new Care Workers have started serving so the Luanshya Service Centre decided it was a good time to do a refresher workshop.

During the first session Michael shared about the Jesus that we know and then broke the Care Workers into smaller discussion groups. Michael shares "One of the themes that came out of the groups was unforgiveness. Two Care Workers, Grace and Dorothy, had been serving together for a year but had not been speaking to one another. Our highlight on the first day was seeing these two women take a step of reconciliation and began healing their relationship."

"On the second day, the importance of relationships and Holy Home Visits was shared and on the third day, we heard testimonies from the previous days. One of my highlights was seeing the Kalende Community Based Organisation (CBO) coordinator have a heart of repentance and be open and vulnerable. He shared about the change in his own life and his desire to be an example to the other Care Workers."

Pray for the Care Workers in Kalende Community as they grow in their understanding of Jesus Christ and the Biblical mandate to care for the most vulnerable.



KALENDE WATER UPDATE

There was a borehole with a hand pump at the Care Point in the community of Kalende, Zambia but the water contained rust and minerals. It was tested and came back safe for human consumption but over time there can be effects due to the rust.

The Luanshya Service Centre and the Zambian Regional Support Team connected with a non-profit organisation and were able to secure a filter for the water. A representative from the organisation came to install the filter and explain how it works. Thankfully, there is now clean and safe drinking water for the children. Some of the children have started to bring bottles to the Care Point which they use to take water back home.

PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

One of the families that the Care Workers from the Apatuku Care Point, Nigeria, are caring for, were going to be evicted from their home with only a piece of land to claim as their own. The Lagos Service Centre (SC) team knew that they needed to make a plan. Together with the South African Regional Support Team, the SC arranged for a house to be built for the family with the support of people from the community and the father. What an amazing answer to prayer!

In the middle of March, there was a Maranatha Workshop for Care Workers in Chinyausunzi Community, Zimbabwe. Although it was amazing that 10 Care Workers gave their lives to Jesus, the biggest highlight for the Mutare SC was the fruit that they saw come out of the workshop. Barbra

who is the Mutare SC Coordinator was most excited because two of the Care Workers, who hadn't talked in many years, have started the process of restoring and healing their relationship. Praise God!

Rita and Gideon, African Volunteers (Zambia) have committed to spending two months in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supporting the Likasi SC. Ask God to minister into their lives as they take this step of faith. Pray for God to give them courage, peace and protection as they step out of their comfort zones to serve the most vulnerable.

As the 2018 Volunteer Intake finish the placement period of their orientation, ask God to give them energy as they serve the most vulnerable. Pray for open hearts and minds to receive all that He has for them in the next season.