

# HANDS ON DECK



## CONTRIBUTORS

in this issue of Hands on Deck

Kristal Hoff

Cecelia Matibula

Emma Baxter

Loneck Ndlovu

Sandra Tique

Pinky Ngutshane

*“Moses answered the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.” - Exodus 14:13-14*





*“I love how she had the opportunity to see this community in the way that we celebrate people.” – Kristal Hoff*

## VISIT TO SOUTH AFRICA

Kristal Hoff, International Office Coordinator (North America)

In December, Kristal Hoff, from our International Office in North America, travelled with her family to South Africa. There they visited the Hub, nearby Care Points, and made Hands family memories that span generations, countries, and communities.

Kristal shares, “Life at the Hub felt very easy to integrate into, especially in the midst of our first week. Despite sickness and other challenges, our kids loved the lifestyle and the friends that they made there. There was one moment in the beginning when Frances told me how much she loved that we share everything here. She had really just been participating and being a part of the Hands community. She caught such an important aspect of who we are and I’m really grateful for that. It was really special to be a part of many community activities that were happening, like birthday parties and Christmas Eve gatherings and even a retirement celebration. My youngest daughter Gadsby was with me during a celebration and while we were singing and dancing, she looked

up at me and said, “Mama, this is really cool!” I love how she had the opportunity to see this community in the way that we celebrate people.

We spent time visiting friends in Masoyi and reconnecting, and it was really meaningful the way my kids began making friends with the children of my friends.

We spent a day in Sommerset, our very first day. My kids often don’t feel comfortable in those sorts of situations but we felt so welcomed by the Service Centre team that took us out there. Virginia especially was just such a gift to us on that day. She showed so much genuine interest in my kids and made them feel so welcomed and comfortable. It was really amazing to see my oldest daughter, Frances, in the community. She loves meeting people. She’s very social. She loves different cultures and languages, and when we arrived in Sommerset, she was so eager to make a friend. I could tell that she was so nervous about it. She was fidgeting with the bottom of her shorts, and just feeling really nervous about it, but she really pushed herself to get in there, and make a friend. She met a girl in Sommerset who stays

with her Gogo. That was a really special connection and someone who Frances, even now, talks about as being her friend, and wonders about.

Our purpose as a family coming was for my children to really know these people and this place that has shaped us so much as a family and to establish a foundation for continuing to build on that. I feel really confident we succeeded in that goal, mostly because of the way that we were welcomed, received, and allowed to be a part of you for those three weeks. Another sign that we succeeded in that was when, towards the end of our trip, Frances asked me, “Mom, are we Hands at Work?” Thank you so much for having us. We had a really great time. It’s going to be a trip that we will remember for the rest of our lives, and it won’t be the last trip, that’s for sure!”



## FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Cecelia Matibula, African Leader  
(Zambia), Chisamba Service Centre  
Coordinator  
Emma Baxter, International  
Volunteer (Australia), Zambia  
Regional Support Team

In January, the Hands family travels from far and wide to receive the Watchword – a guiding scripture given to unify and focus our attention throughout the year. People travelled to South Africa from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia to hear the good news of our Lord, The Deliverer. Cecilia and Emma share what the Holy Spirit revealed to them in reflection.



Cecilia shares, “The Watchword was powerful and it was a privilege for me to meet a lot of people from different regions as we received it together. This year, I think the Lord is saying something to our lives. The scripture from Exodus 14:13-14 was powerful. For the Israelites, it was very difficult for them to serve their God because they were bound.

It was like they were in chains and it is the same with us. I think we all know the story of the Israelites. It was not easy for them as they were going to the Promised Land. Behind them the Egyptians were coming. In front, there was the Red Sea, but God brought deliverance to them.

In Africa, particularly Zambia, there are a lot of things that are bringing people down, especially from where we are coming from. In Zambia, the moment a woman is pregnant, the relatives, especially the Gogos (grandmothers), will start bringing herbs for her to drink so that the baby can grow strong. It’s part of their beliefs. When a child is born, they’ll give some herbs to give that baby to drink, and even (herbs) to bathe the baby with. When the child, especially if it’s a girl, is ready to be given to marriage, she’ll be given tattoos! They make tattoos so that the bride will be attractive to her husband. They say that these herbs and tattoos will protect you from evil, and those kinds of things are fighting us. We are bound with different things like these, but this year we thank God that we are walking in freedom.”

Emma says, “It’s wonderful just how powerful this scripture is. I like the picture it gives us. We can see it in our minds - the Israelites all together. There is this great Red Sea, and you can’t cross it. They don’t have boats. Most of them probably can’t swim, and you can’t swim that far if you wanted to. There are millions of people. Some of them are elderly and some of them are children. There’s nowhere to go, you can’t go forward.

And then when they turn and they see this whole army coming for them, it must have been frightening. Pharaoh’s army caught up with them quickly with his horses and chariots. The sheer noise and the dust filling up the horizon with this army coming for them. This speaks to how it is when you’re in that hard place. Everyone has been there and many probably are there now. We all have struggles. They might be different, but we have struggles and we can get to that place where we just don’t know what to do and we don’t know the way forward.

I love also in this scripture that there are clear commands. Moses says to the people, “Don’t be afraid.” And you know they’re terrified if you read more of the passage from verse 10, you’ll see they’re complaining like nothing else. And then Moses says to stand firm. Stand firm in what you believe. What do you really believe about Jesus? Do you believe He is Lord and Saviour and He can deliver you from all things? Are you confessing faith? Or are you like the Israelites? They were really confessing unbelief, weren’t they?

Stand firm and then wait. Wait and see that the Lord will deliver you. That’s the hard part, isn’t it? And that’s what grows our faith and challenges us. Are we going to stand firm and wait for God to deliver us? However long it comes? And then that wonderful thing, the Lord is fighting for you. That’s a faith thing, because sometimes we think the Lord is not doing anything. But the Lord will fight for us. We just need to be still. That fills me with a sense of peace.

This is a short section from the Bible, but you can bring so much of the gospel into it. God wants to set us free from all the things that bind us. When we were visiting a house recently, we realised that they didn’t even know this story. We were shocked because normally you introduce Moses and people know the story of the crossing of the Red Sea. But these people go to a church where the Bible isn’t shared, so how important it is to then go deep with people and ask, what are the Egyptians in your life? What can we encourage you with and pray for you that you would trust and believe for deliverance from?”

## GOD OF DELIVERANCE

Loneck Ndlovu, African Leader  
(South Africa), Hazyview  
Service Centre

In December 2023, Hands at Work hosted a youth camp for our youth leaders in Oshoek and Hazyview. Loneck, a member of the Hazyview Service Centre shares how God used the camp to work in mighty ways not just in the lives of the children and their leaders, but in his own life as well.

"We saw the Lord working in such a mighty way at camp. We saw children being delivered. Sometimes we needed to be encouraged in order to be able to share because in preparation (for the camp) all of us were exposed to many things going on in our lives. It was my first time sharing in front of the youth and I felt so inadequate. I felt that God challenged me in so many areas where I need to grow. God spoke to our children to a point where they were willing to be delivered. They were willing to listen to what we wanted to share.



We asked the kids who their role models are. Their answer was that we as Hands people are their role models. This challenged me to think that if young people are watching me, am I doing what God wants me to do? Am I leading them to know Christ? I had to share my story of how I grew up. It challenged me because I have never shared my story in front of people before, but it was such a breakthrough. I have never been able to open up about my past, but God used this opportunity to do something bigger in me. In small group discussions, some things came out. We shared about the two kingdoms and bad things happening in our lives. This is where they shared what the culture expects them to wear and do and asked that we help them to move away from these things. One child from Zwelisha shared that she wears special clothes to protect her, but still has bad dreams at night. We were able to lead her to see that only Christ can help her.

The other hold on their lives is pornography. Through my experience, I could speak truth into their lives and let them know that they don't need it and it is not good. Let's keep praying for them and the seeds that were planted in their lives. We are hopeful to see fruit out of this camp. We saw miracles and God delivered children in front of us. It challenged me to look at my life. We say that we only give what we have. What am I giving back to them?"

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## UPDATE OF THANKSGIVING

Sandra Tique, African Leader (Mozambique), Coordinator of the Chimoio Service Centre

As a Hands at Work community within Africa, we partner with and support the community of Matsinho A. At each Hands on Deck meeting, we receive a small update on our partner community. Here's an excerpt from the last update where Sandra gave thanks for all that God is doing in Matsinho A.

"It's been raining well and the Care Workers and Primary Caregivers are busy planting. Our Relationship Group meetings are happening normally - Care Workers and the pastors are coming weekly to encourage each other so we thank God for that. Even though participation is a bit low, we thank God because they are still coming and God is still doing great things in their lives. We see the lives of Care Workers are changing and God is doing great things in their lives through these Relationship Groups.

We ask God to continue to fortify the Care Workers and the church leaders - for them to see the importance of those Relationship Groups in their lives. For them to continue to participate, for them to continue being strong on those Relationship Groups. We also want God to continue to bless them and bless us with more rain and that they will have the good harvest this year."





## ENCOURAGEMENT FROM ESWATINI

Pinky Ngutshane, African Leader (South Africa), South African Regional Support Team

In January, Pinky and Dan travelled to Eswatini to support the Service Centre teams in Lomahasha and Phophonyane. Pinky shares from her time serving with those teams.

"In Lomahasha people come and go to their houses with problems all the time. On Wednesday morning there were Care Workers at the Service Centre's door asking for help. Our calling is not 8-5, but it is a full-time calling in being available to the community.

Most of the children had failed their grade, and because of this they did not want to go back to school. One of the Care Workers came to a child's home wanting to take her back to school, but the child had an aunt who wanted her to go to South Africa instead of going back to school. Our Care Worker influenced the situation, telling her not to go to South Africa. It is a big challenge when children drop out of school and come to South Africa in the hopes of getting a job, but they do not have the necessary documents.

We have strong Care Workers in Eswatini. Elisa and Gogo Josephine both lost their husbands and I had the opportunity to visit them. There are rules and traditions where they are not allowed to receive visitors, but when Elisa saw us, she did not care what people expected and

she welcomed us. Gogo Josephine struggles after losing her husband and no one is allowed to visit and encourage her. I was so encouraged by Elisa as she promised to reach out to Gogo Josephine.

On Wednesday night we went to Phophonyane. It is so beautiful to see that the Care Point is home to so many children and that the children do not want to go home because of the joy they have there. We have three Care Workers who make an impact at the Care Point: Sibongile, Stembile and Zandile. They are committed even though they have challenges at home. This Care Point looks like a vision of what a Life Centre needs to look like.

There are so many children under age five. This is a challenge because they live so far and need to walk. I wonder how safe they were. The other challenge is that Phophonyane does not receive lots of rain. The people did not plant and therefore do not have a harvest. The children need the food they get at the Care Point. This is the only food the children have."

## PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

We praise the Lord as He brought Josh, Levy, and Daytona safely from Zambia all the way home to their families at the Hub in South Africa.

We praise the Lord that the Reddekopp family has safely arrived in South Africa from Canada. Please pray for them as they apply for their work permits and that those will be approved so they can rejoin the community in Zambia.

Pray for George as he is in Goma and for the Goma Service Centre. Pray for their safety as they travel and encourage the communities in the Goma region. George has especially asked us to pray for them to be able to find and focus on the hope that God shines through amidst such dark circumstances.

Pray also for our volunteers who are conducting health checks on the children in our communities. Pray for their safety in travelling and that God would use this collected information to give the Care Workers and Service Centres a better understanding of the needs and wellbeing of the communities they serve.