

# Tshepo Ya Bana

Hope for Children

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Dear Friends and Family,

I have always said that no two days are alike at TYB. In fact perhaps it's the unpredictability of life on the farm that keeps us going. I well remember one volunteer some years back complaining that we couldn't tell her exactly what would be happening and when. Nothing has changed – from unexpected new arrivals to road closures due to violent protest to elephant invasions or a snake in the house - there's never a dull moment.

One morning at the end of May, I was rushing to get the boys moving so they wouldn't be late for school, and managed to trip over a school bag with a baby in my arms. The baby was fine, but I hurt my shoulder. We had to make a plan to get the boys to school and then it was off to Pretoria to get the injury assessed. I could feel that something was damaged but was sure it was nothing that a few days of rest wouldn't fix.....but no, a torn tendon in the shoulder and then surgery as soon as the swelling had subsided.

I had the operation a couple of weeks later, and was regarded as something of a curiosity since I hadn't had an anaesthetic since my tonsils were removed at the age of 7. I have been blessed with incredibly good health and a strong body all my life, but now it was time for me to take a break and let everyone run around for me.

In the end I was unable to drive for a full two months, and was grateful to have my daughter Lorna living opposite to drive for me (with the occasional help of others including my grandchildren). The boys, meanwhile, took over a lot more domestic chores, became quite proficient at new skills and were able to do a lot of lifting and carrying for me. Of course the other problem was not being able to pick up the little ones, but we were blessed to have a volunteer pushing her schedule forward so she could come when we needed her most. Fortunately I am back in the driving seat and very thankful that the shoulder is healing well.

Some of you will know that July 18<sup>th</sup> is known as Mandela Day in South Africa. For the last few years we have had a visit from a company south of Pretoria, which was originally Iliso Consulting but has now amalgamated with other companies to be part of the Nako Group. As usual a large crowd of enthusiastic workers descended



on us, not for the mandatory 67 minutes, but for the whole day, ready and willing to work at whatever task we gave them. In addition they brought lunch for everyone and a huge quantity of groceries, some of which are still being used now.

We have decided to drastically reduce the size of our vegetable garden, which has been well maintained by Cass for many years. There are a couple of reasons for this - firstly the shortage of rain, which makes it difficult to water our crop, and secondly the frequent invasion of elephants, who are rather partial to our veggies (and particularly our compost heap!) In addition, the total number of people at TYB has been less over the past year or so and so we don't need to grow quite so much.

Our visitors got stuck in and spent a few hours removing fences and poles and dismantling built up vegetable beds. At the end of the day they were tired and sore, but we were delighted with the good start made on the project. The boys carried on with the job, working a couple of hours each at weekends and then we were blessed by a visit from Dennis, this year bringing a team of young people from his church with him. They divided themselves into two groups and did some painting in one of the cottages and carried on with the clearing of the vegetable garden. The job is now almost done with Papa Lucky and the gardener from the farm opposite doing the final clearing and levelling and we are now planning to get some more trees and grass planted when the rain comes again. We have had a little rain already, but are praying that the Lord will send us much more this summer. Drought is still a problem in many parts of the country.



Meanwhile we have employed a new Mama to replace Mama Grace, who was unable to continue living on site, a necessary component of the job. Mama Elsa started at the end of February and is bringing a new dimension to our set up with her laughter, singing and energy. She is a widow, originally from the Eastern Cape, and has family both there and in the Pretoria area. Her single status makes her ideal for the job.

Our babies are moving on slowly at the moment. We were disappointed recently when a couple who had been selected as adoptive parents for one of our abandoned babies, just didn't show any interest after their initial meeting. However, we know that the Lord has chosen exactly the right parents for each child and it is always so exciting to see the joy on the faces of adoptive parents when their new son or daughter is given to them. Two new little ones have been added to our number in the past couple of weeks, so we are now at capacity until children are moved on.

On a personal note, we have had two new additions to our family this year. In April, Matthew's wife Helen gave birth to a second son, James. They, of course, live in Australia and I am planning, God willing, to pay them a visit in March next year. I can't wait to see them all, as it's now nearly 4 years since they left South Africa. Then just four weeks back my first great grandchild arrived! Dominique (my eldest granddaughter) and her husband Martin now have a beautiful daughter, Liviya Regan, who is already bringing much joy to the whole family.

Meanwhile there is never a dull moment in this beautiful country of ours! At the moment there is the usual political in-fighting and ongoing accusations of corruption, together with some pretty violent student unrest. There is real fear that our tertiary institutions will be forced to close down completely for the year, resulting in students being unable to finish the academic year or write their exams. This would cause chaos all round, not to mention the cost of so many students being forced to repeat a year.

But we know we must give thanks in all circumstances. What a comfort it is to know that our God is in control, no matter how pessimistic we feel about national or international events! We are thankful for the freedom we have in this country, for the beauty that surrounds us, and for all our friends, near and far. Do not underestimate how much we appreciate your support (financial and other), friendship and interest in our project. We are always pleased to hear from you, and even happier when old friends and volunteers return, whether it is just for a holiday visit or to volunteer again.

Please continue to pray for us!

*"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer"* Romans 12 - 12

May the Lord bless you all,

Chris