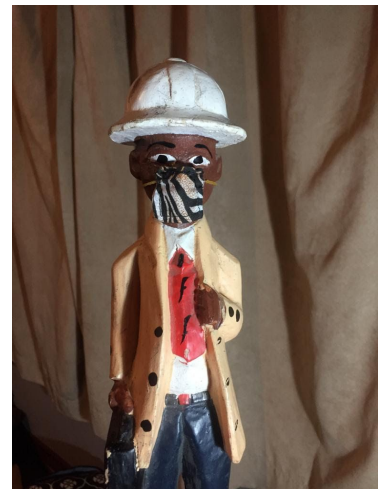




Life Goes On

When I sent my first quarter update in April, South Africa had just entered it's COVID response lockdown. According to the news reports I read, they were some of the strictest in the world. Stage 5 restrictions lasted from the end of March through April. These regulations shut down everything except hospitals, pharmacies, grocery stores, and a small handful of "essential services." Starting May 1 we entered Stage 4, which was only slightly less strict than Stage 5. June 1 brought Stage 3, which is a partial reopening - restaurants were allowed to do takeaways, mines reopened at half capacity, and churches reopened with strict regulations. These include maximum 50 in attendance, temperature monitoring, masks, social distancing, and no singing.



Under Stage 3 the borders remain closed, and interprovincial travel is only allowed with authorized permits. At the moment, we are spiking country-wide. Our local hospitals are full, and the ICU units are maxed out. People we know have been infected, and several in our church are considered "front-lines". But in all this God is sovereign. Just this morning I received this message from a doctor in our congregation:

"Thousands and thousands of illness free, pandemic free days for which we give GOD no glory or thanks...Yet let a few days of pandemic enter our world and the people cry out 'But where is God?? What is he doing?' And they expect to call Him to account. God is sovereign and ordains all things to work together for the good of those who love Him to the praise of the glory of His grace in Jesus. Forever! Oh the depths of His riches, how inscrutable His ways!"

OH THE DEPTHS
OF THE RICHES OF
THE WISDOM
AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD!
FOR FROM HIM
AND THROUGH HIM
AND TO HIM
ARE ALL THINGS.
TO HIM BE THE GLORY
forever!

ROMANS 11

Pastor Joshua is in several of the "at-risk" categories. So at the advice of our elders and medical community he has gone into strict self-isolation. Therefore, much of the church responsibilities have fallen to me. I've been able to start a series on Exodus - a privilege to drink from that firehose of grace! Right now we're in a 3 week miniseries in Exodus 2, looking at the Providence of God - the doctrine that God works in the events of this world, guiding everything to His predetermined end. That includes:

- The uniting of all things under Christ (Ephesians 1:10)
- The forming of Christ in us (Gal 4:19)
- Our being conformed to Christ, so that He would be firstborn among many (Rom 8:29)
- The bowing of every knee and confession of every tongue of the Lordship of Jesus! (Phil 2:11)

Imagine - a global pandemic that is affecting over 7 billion people, yet for His own He is working His exact purposes, differently according to each individual need, to bring about the greatest possible good for each individual! Soli Deo Gloria 🙌🏾! 🙌🏾!

Serving Communion - Social Distancing Style



“...especially to those who are of the household of faith!”

The restrictions have meant economic hardship for many. While the needs of our regular church attenders have been met, we work with several local pastors whose township congregations have been hit particularly hard. Our Mukhanyo class currently has 7 pastors/elders (and 2 pastor's wives). Through the generosity of our supporters we were able to assist with providing food parcels as needed to these 7 congregations.



One of the pastors asked me to pass this message along:

“Greetings to you beloved in Christ our Lord and Savior.

We are deeply humbled by the gracious provision of food packs by God to us as local churches through the O'Tool family. We really thank the Lord and you guys for your tireless work in reaching the nations with the gospel.”





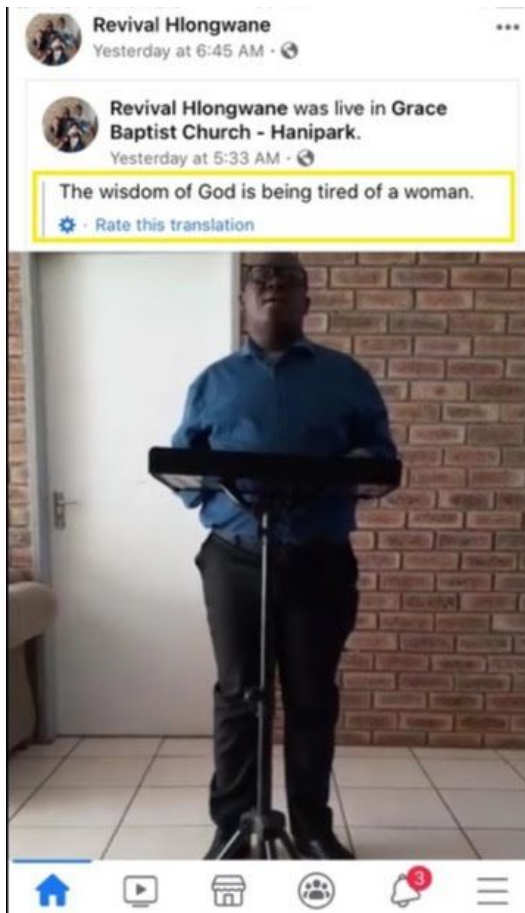
Speaking of the Providence of God, I cannot help but believe He has sovereignly guided our theology studies.

The South African Dept of Higher Education has made some changes in their accreditation of study programs that has added a significant amount of administrative work. We've known this was coming for over two years, but it landed in March - the same time we entered lockdown. While most of our normal ministries ground to a halt, it opened up the time I needed to be able to complete this admin workload. Without the lockdown, I have no idea how I would have been able to get it done!

That said, the increased workload will continue through at least the end of the year. While we used to offer one program, we are essentially offering four temporarily. Three of our students will complete their Diploma in Theology, 11 of our students were transferred into two separate Higher Certificates in Theology, and 2 of our students are taking an unaccredited discipleship certificate in Theology.

But in another act of Providence, our class secretary, Matowane Radebe, graduated with his Diploma in March this year, so I'm training him to oversee the unaccredited students. And he's nailing it!





Lost in Translation:

Look carefully at Facebook caption. Pastor Revival preached a sermon from Proverbs 31 - "The wisdom of God is compared to a woman." is what it should read. I'm guessing that the Sesotho translation rated poorly!

Please keep our African pastors in prayer during these times. Many of them are still unable to meet, since their facilities don't allow them to follow safety procedures. With so much of our population already living with compromised immune systems, these pastors are faced with many additional challenges!

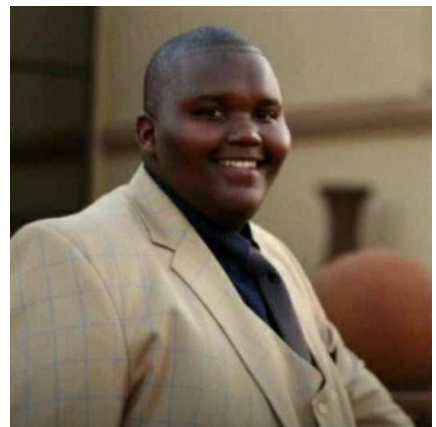
- Pastor Revival
- Pastor Radebe
- Pastor Ramosedi
- Pastor Enoch

Lethabo Goliath

On April 27th, one of our young men, Lethabo, was admitted to hospital with an infection that caused paralysis from the waist down. He was transferred to a university hospital about 2 hours away where he underwent 2 surgeries and spent 3 weeks in the ICU. He was transferred to a rehab hospital, but on June 4th passed to glory.

During those 6 weeks in the hospital the only visitor allowed was his mother, and that for only 1 hour, once per week. His mother was a single mom, and he was an only child. Unfortunately, she is not a believer, although Lethabo had spoken to her of the gospel many times. We were asked to do the funeral, so I had the privilege to share the gospel he believed with the whole family.

Please keep the Goliath family in prayer - especially Lethabo's mother Noma!





Enrico & Melanie Williams

Melanie is a young woman who came to Christ in 2016. She began to grow by leaps and bounds, enrolling in our Mukhanyo group in 2017. But work and a fiancé called her away. Melanie & Enrico celebrated their first wedding anniversary in May.

They continue to be faithful leaders in their local church. And just recently, because of these new Dept of Higher Education changes that are causing me so much headache, Melanie was able to rejoin our studies. So that makes it all worthwhile!

Melanie is currently witnessing to several different people:

- Busisiwe
- Monica
- Roshay

Please keep this young couple in your prayers as they both seek to know Christ more fully, and as they seek to make Him known!

Junior Khepheyii

Junior is one of the young men God has granted us to work with the past couple years. This year he moved to live in our garage flat. He is currently studying boiler-making at a nearby community college. Unfortunately, his home living situation wasn't contributing to his studies or his pursuit of Christ, so he came to live with us when Tolu moved away for school.

Junior's mother is in very poor health, having been hospitalized twice already this year. There are two younger sisters at home - home being a rented shack behind someone else's house in the township. His mom is also an alcoholic, which doesn't serve the tiny budget or the care of the family.

Please pray for this young man as he carries so much weight on his shoulders. He is greatly concerned for his mom's spiritual and physical health, and at such a young age is taking more responsibility than should ever be demanded.





Didn't see this one coming...

The false gospel of prosperity has taken deep roots on the African continent. But if nothing else, this virus has exposed the bankruptcy of such a faith. We pray that God will enlighten the minds of the unbelieving to see the light of the glorious gospel in the person of Jesus Christ!

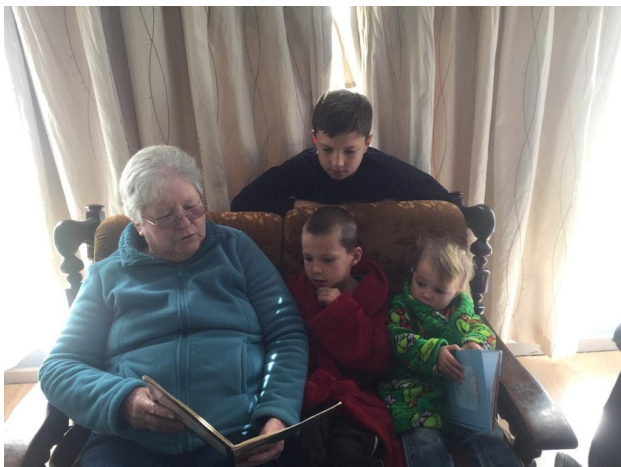
Family Matters

Poor Molly hadn't been out of the house in two months. So when we took her for a chiropractic checkup, it was her first time to see us wearing masks. It gave her a bit of a fright...
I guess that skeleton didn't help!





What fun is a game without some sort of stakes. In this case, an innocuous game of Uno Flip resulted in a teaspoon of cider vinegar for the losers of each hand. We're just staying healthy in this pandemic.



Top Left: Playing in the leaves, since May is autumn!

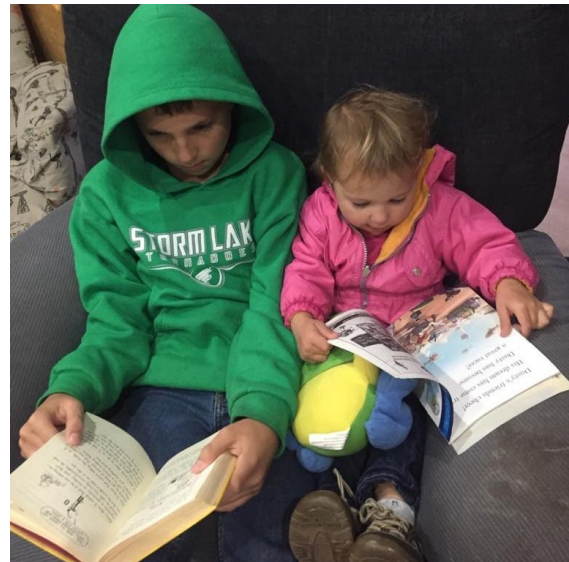
Top Right: And June/July are winter!

Bottom Left: Ma Paddy entertains some hooligans.

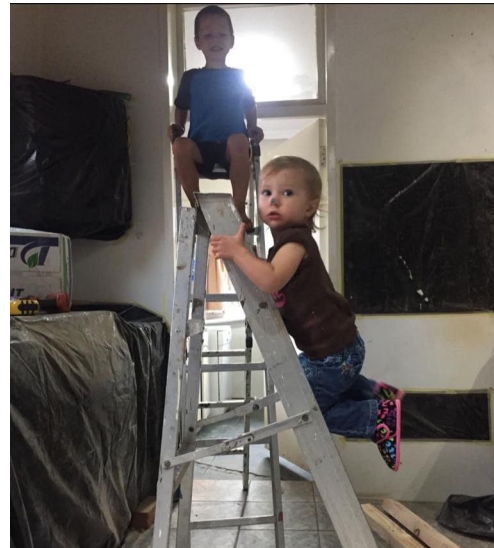
Bottom Right: When you're in lockdown, you've got to get creative with Date Night.



#puzzlemasters - it didn't hurt that one of our church ladies offered chocolate to any young people who would complete a 1000 piece puzzle!



If not the best big brother of all time, Drake is definitely one of the most tolerant!



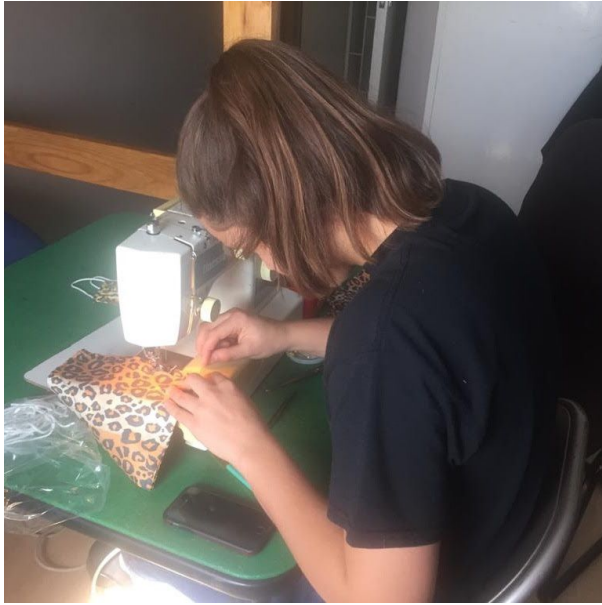
The long-dreaded project is finally done - kitchen ceilings replaced!



Project Girl: Meredith has wanted a loft bed for many, many minutes. And now she knows how to build one. The finished product turned out pretty snazzy!



Sewing masks has turned into big business here. Meredith stayed busy between terms by sewing masks for Morningstar, an HIV+ children's ministry.



This girl gets more books read to her than a librarian's daughter



Top Left: At least one of our students has returned to school. Pray for Dieketseng, as she finishes her hospitality training.

Top Right: The irony is, his dad is a barber. But salons are closed for lockdown. You'll notice we didn't post an "after" picture.

Bottom: In Stage 4 Pastoral Care reopened. So here is pastoral care dinner.

Not Pictured: You'll notice Amber is not in many of these pictures. That's by her design. But it won't stop me from giving her a shout-out for being a caring, hard-working, patient and godly woman! Thank God for this woman, Amen!