

MARCH 2019 NEWS UPDATE

By the Lord's grace, the work of Southern Africa Literature Trust (SALT) continues to grow.

During February, Jim (McMaster) and Stephen (Harper) visited Malawi for the dual purposes of further strengthening ties with the Malawi Prison Service, and of moving forward with plans to purchase a development site for our future operational base.

The discussions with the prison authorities went exceptionally well. Jim brought the official greetings of the senior management at HMP Durham, and made a presentation of an official seal on behalf of the Governor at Durham to the Chief Commissioner of Prisons, as a token of goodwill and their commitment to assist with prisoner welfare, where possible.



The Chief Commissioner had assembled her senior management team – three Commissioners, one Deputy Commissioner, plus the National Chaplain – and all were very receptive to the plans we outlined.



We were at pains to stress that, while we are genuinely interested in prisoners' physical and emotional welfare, it is their spiritual well-being which is our primary concern, and we were very encouraged by their positive response.

This particular harvest field is great, but the labourers, sadly, are few. We are thrilled to be able to draw alongside Brother Ananda Pulla

(India), who together with his wife, Grace, have been visiting prisons in Malawi for some time. They have been trying to advance Emmaus Bible study courses, but have been hampered by lack of materials. SALT has already made available sufficient courses to reintroduce Emmaus to four prisons, and we are committed to continue to advance this work further, as we are able.

We plan to facilitate the development of Emmaus and other gospel work with inmates in tandem with development of the Prison Reformatory schools. Many inmates are uneducated, even illiterate, but the prison schools are desperately under-resourced. In most cases, the teaching is provided by inmates who are incentivised by privileges such as soap, or a blanket, and teaching and learning materials are very scarce. We have undertaken to work with a selection of prisons to try to help them with resources such as text-books and writing materials. This in itself presents a wonderful opportunity, as we can provide pens branded with Gospel verses, and exercise books with a Gospel message printed on the cover. We will also target our Hygiene Relief packs on these prisons.

Apart from this, the other aspects of the work, which will in future be undertaken by SALT, continue to grow apace. In August, we produced 1 million Gospel tracts, but with our country-wide network

of distributors who receive these completely free of charge now exceeding 300, these will soon be finished. In fact, the only reason any remain is that for the past couple of months we have been concentrating on distributing the 350,000 Gospel calendars we produced.

This increased activity has put a strain on our logistical capabilities. Over the past year we have been improving our regional storage abilities, and now have several strategically placed shipping containers which act as regional depots. We were able to buy a small, second-hand estate car for



brother Harold, which helps enormously with moving smallish loads of literature on a local basis. For the meantime, we are relying upon local hauliers to move larger quantities, and this brings its own challenges. The logistical challenges were further complicated toward the end of the latest trip when Stephen's pickup finally succumbed to a long-running mechanical problem. The vehicle's engine is presently stripped for a major overhaul, which

we trust will be successful, in which case it also needs further mechanical work to the steering and suspension. Please pray that these repairs will be completed well, as the vehicle is an essential part of the work.

During 2018, the Harpers received notice from their landlord, and had to vacate their home of 12+ years. This exacerbated the logistical problems as their home had doubled as the base for the literature work, so finding a suitable replacement is a major priority. We believe the Lord is leading us to find a more permanent solution, tailored to the future needs of the work, and so we have been searching for a piece of ground which would lend itself to such development. We need storage and administration space, plus accommodation for visiting volunteers. We would also like to have the capability to lay-on residential Bible-teaching conferences, as the cost of doing this in lodges and restaurants is very expensive.

We have located a site which we believe will be very suitable. It's part of a larger estate not too far from our former home in Thondwe. We have agreed terms in principle with the sellers, and subject to legal formalities, and our satisfying ourselves that we can find water there, we hope to proceed with the purchase, God willing. Please pray that the purchase will proceed smoothly. Experience tells us that there are many potential pitfalls.

Thank you again for your prayerful and practical support.

SOUTHERN AFRICA LITERATURE TRUST