

1 October 2023

Mission partner prayer and update from Paula and Dean Finnie

Paula and Dean Finnie write from South Africa...

The last few months have been extremely challenging for several reasons, not least that our winter has been extremely cold and very wet and does not seem to want to end! This morning we woke up from the most ferocious storm we have known here in 19 years to find the whole area, once again, under water and many informal and formal dwellings having to be evacuated. This, added to the intense pressure of a minimum of 6 hours a day of loadshedding (planned electricity cuts), makes life extremely difficult for everyone. Those who can have busily bought very expensive invertors to cope with this, but most, especially the people we work amongst in Firgrove, survive with gas and candles. It is hard to plan daily meals; businesses are on their knees and many school children have missed far too many days as unrest in various communities has reached pressure point, making leaving the house far too dangerous. Then add in the global economy crisis, and life is tough for most. Our fuel recently spiralled by 20% in one hike three weeks ago, and this cost is inevitably added on to public transport and food prices in the shops.

One could get very downhearted, but we are encouraging The Gathering to lift their focus to Jesus and to continue to be His hands and feet wherever they are and whenever they can. We are so proud of our church family, they truly are growing and maturing enormously. Many are reaching out daily, providing extra food and help, and more than three quarters of our church have taken on the responsibility of at least one extra child/young adult in the past few months. We are so glad to have been able to keep reaching out to the ever-growing group of people coming to the Soup Kitchen, as well as providing a large amount of food to two other local kitchens. Our soup is inevitably gone in under half an hour nowadays and we are really enjoying being able to chat and pray with people again as they come in to a warm room to eat. Our Maths Homework Club has been very steady this year - smaller in terms of numbers of children, but the quality of what we are able to offer has really increased. We were recently thanked by both a parent and a teacher of one young boy who had been written off as a hopeless case. Thanks to the persistence of our Facilitator and the love that was shown, this boy's grades improved exponentially and, at last, he has an air of self-confidence again!

Please pray that we would continue to bring the hope and light of Jesus to everyone we meet. **Pray** for families who are truly desperate, who have lost work, lost hope and cannot afford to put bread on the table. **Pray** against the massive pull of drugs in Firgrove. Tik (crystal meth) is very available and very affordable, and extremely addictive. **Pray** for The Gathering to continue to grow in depth, in maturity and to continue to have the good name that it has in our community.

on behalf of the Mission Partnering Committee