

Monday, October 31, 2005

Its early Monday morning and we are sadly on our way to the airport. Tandy shows up at our home right on schedule at 6:30 a.m. with Denise & Sarah. He gets a phone call that Percy is on the way and soon will be there to pick us up. As we wait we say a tearful farewell to our host and housekeeper. We had taken a group shot last night after everyone had departed.

Percy arrives and we load the bags in the trailer and the back of the van we started our journey to Mthatha a week ago in the Durban airport. I should mention we talked about what if any reimbursement our partners would need for all the accommodations, travel and banquets we've eaten low these many days. Their reply is that the Presbytery met on this discussion and unlike in the past they want to cover most of these costs. The one exception is a tip to the person who provided the van. We double check to make sure this is really ok. But we take it as truly a sign that of hospitality and further that our partnership has matured. This is truly something they want to do and it makes us feel good that it makes them feel good doing it.



After a brief plane ride we arrive in the Joburg airport. We are to be met by Janet Guyer and Doug Tilton, both PCUSA personnel working in Southern African. Janet is the HIV/AIDS expert for Southern Africa and Doug is newly transferred from Cape Town. He is the PCUSA's liaison for Southern Africa and also works for the South African Council of Churches. There are some traffic problems in the Joburg area today which slows Doug's meeting us. But by 11 a.m. Aaron & I join Doug plus a lot of our luggage (believe it or not we have is only the carry on), and the rest pile in Janet's car. Aaron, Doug and I engage in a wide ranging discussion from our

presbytery's partnership, Doug's work in SA and how it has recently changed, the country of South Africa, where it came from and where it is going, AIDS, crime, inequality, etc., etc., etc. Seems, Doug is in the middle of a mini-disaster, that doesn't just include the traffic jam. He came to work at SACC building in downtown Joburg to find a transformer had blown up leaving all unable to connect to the internet. He had managed to do some rigging before coming to pick us up, that got about half the folks online, but needed somehow to get the others up and running.

Janet lives very close to the airport and suggests a nearby Greek Restaurant but unfortunately it is closed. In a nearby outdoor mall there is a nice coffee shop that makes for a pleasant alternative. There we have a nice lunch and our conversation, now including everyone, continues. After lunch we decide to just chill out for a few hours at Janet's house and chat while Doug goes back to the office for more damage control with the internet problem.



We discuss ways to get churches back home energized on HIV/AIDS causes. Health Kits have been popular, hands on activity for churches and individuals but the mailing costs make them not practical. Sending money and assembling kits here are much more cost effective but less hands on for churches back home. Janet discusses with Barb about quilting fund-raiser as a possible alternative. Meanwhile Denise pours offer a book of Janet's she sees on educating youth about AIDS.

After about a couple of hours it is time to head to the airport for the rest of the gang's flight back to the states. I am staying on for a week and have already called Dores to meet me at the airport. Doug has returned and reports he has gotten everyone online at the office. We make the 15 minute drive to the airport, and as everyone waits, I go and find Dores. I return one last time to the gang. We say our goodbyes and the rest of the gang heads for the gate.... I am glad I don't have to make that 19 hour flight home for another week.

Dores and I head for her car as my adventures in South Africa are only half over. Catch my week two travel logs for more adventures, probably in much more abbreviated format.

