

Monday, October 24, 2005



Another early morning gets us first to the airport on time and then to our final destination of Durban in Kwa Zulu Natal Province. Percy has trouble with the trailer we need to carry our massive amount of luggage, so he arrives a little late. But we are on the road by 11 a.m. with the trailer crammed full of bags, and the back seat partially packed to ceiling with yet more bags (and Aaron & I wedged in beside). Aaron's and my view is partially obstructed on the Indian Ocean side, so we decide to take turn putting one of the bags on our lap. This enables us to see at least a little.

We're off, leaving the heat, humidity and rain of Durban behind. As we drive we see that the vegetation is very different here. It is almost tropical, as we pass by sugar cane and banana crops. It is because of the sugar cane that there are so many folks of Indian descent in this area of South Africa. They were recruited to work in the sugar cane fields. In fact was here in his early 20s that Ghandi worked and developed his non violent resistant techniques used against the Brits in India.



We stop briefly at Port Elizabeth where we snap some pictures of the beautiful coast line, which includes a light house. Afterwards, we stop for lunch at KFC yes that's Kentucky Fried Chicken. The colonel is very big in South Africa.

Soon after we leave Kwa Zulu Natal Province behind and enter Eastern Cape Province, the home of Umtata (the new Xhosa spelling is Mthatha will be used from here on in. Almost as quickly the terrain changes from a tropical one, to one filled with rolling grass covered hills sparsely grazed by sheep, cattle and goats, with a smattering of garden plots dotted around. There are also dotted in the landscape a few trees. It is a completely open grazing land, so watch where you drive! I should also mention dotted about are the homes, which are very basic and include the round huts often accompanied by small rectangular structures. The colors of the structures are bright, with pinks and lime green the most popular.



Percy has arranged for us to meet several people on the very scenic route we take. Our first stop is in the town of Lusikisiki. Here we meet Rev. Musikinga of the Ethiopian Church. He is the local chapter of the South African Council of Churches HIV / Aids project, which includes a wide area including Mthatha. The project aims to train folks to go out and work on getting the word out using a seven step plan. The steps include the ABC's, providing health kits, education, counseling, and others I can't remember.

Our second stop, also in Lusikisiki is to meet the wife of Rev. Phindy of the Sommerville church, who we will see tomorrow (home of our garden project). She must live very far from her husband and their son as a result of her school teaching job being here, some 120 kilos (~75 miles) from Sommerville. She commutes on weekends the 75 miles to Sommerville and I might point out that they do not own a car.



Dusk is already falling upon us as we leave Lusikisiki. We make a quick stop at Port St. John which is a lovely little town right on the Indian Ocean coast. Percy tells us he attended an HIV / Aids conference here last week, which was attended by the Prime Minister.

As we leave Port St. John darkness is complete and we must make the final 100 kilo (~62 mile) drive in the darkness, which includes intermittent drizzle and fog, and the occasional cow on the road.



We arrive safely in Mthatha with our destination, the St. Andrew church where the women of the church have prepared us a meal. I see the familiar faces of Rev. Melikahya of the Khulani Congregation (who visited us in the USA in 2004), Prof. Zuma Gabayda (we attended his daughter's wedding in 2002), Rev. Tandy of the Erskine Congregation and others of the St. Andrews church. The women of the church have prepared us a feast (a pattern we come to see often in the days to come). The meal starts with fish and follows with beef, chicken, salad, vegys, potato, rice, pudding We are not in danger of losing weight during our stay in Mthatha. The meal and fellowship of

old friends (in my case) and new (in the case of most of my fellow travelers) is wonderful!

We split up for our sleeping arrangements with Sarah & Denise going one way, and Larry, Barb, Aaron & I going another way. So ends another grand day, if tiring on our adventures in South Africa. Tomorrow I am excited as we return to one of my favorite places in the world, the people and setting found at the Sommerville Congregation.