

Wednesday, October 26, 2005



Today we have a relatively late morning. We leave at 9:30 a.m. for the Ngangelizwe Station of the Erskine Congregation. This on of two urban churches in the Presbytery, the other being the St. Andrew church we ate at upon arriving on Monday night. The event we attending is a special meeting of the Presbytery. Rev. Tandy opens the meeting as the Moderator of Presbytery. He does so with a prayer and then directs everyone to the first focus of the meeting, the extension of the Covenant Agreement.

Rev. Percy, as the Clerk of Presbytery, asks me to present the Donegal perspective. I suggest that perhaps first we share a gift we've brought in the form of a banner made by the pastor of my church in Wrightsville, Rev. Chris Blackford. Percy and Melikhaya remember Chris from the trip to Donegal in the spring of 2004. I also suggest that at my church the women are **very powerful**, as not only do we have a woman pastor, but we also have a woman elder, Elaine Lenyo who is the Moderator of our Presbytery. I go on to say that we at Wrightsville are very proud



of this, as it is the first time in about 40 years that our church has been so honored. I go on to say that our church will be hosting Presbytery in January to honor Elaine as she passes the moderator job on to someone else. Further, state, that it is our intention to have the focus of the day and worship service be on our partnership with Mthatha Presbytery. We also make other presentations to the Presbytery, including Larry & Barb presented clerical stolls to all the pastors present. They leave additional stolls for those not in attendance. It is a truly joyful scene.

Once accomplished, I speak to the covenant agreement. I explain that the document has only been fine tuned, as we see the document very strong. I go on to say we'd like to see the focus especially be on the church-to-church connections. Our partners are in agreement with our changes and suggest some minor changes to the statistics of their Presbytery. There is, however, one item of great concern to them, namely the length of the extension, which is stepped down from five to three years. Muza Gabayda of the St. Andrews Church asks what are thinking is on this, because their preference is to keep it at five years. I explain that it largely is the result of our major revenue source ending at the end of the year and we didn't want to over commit given our inability to guarantee funds like in the past. They reply that they are more than willing to live with this uncertainty and would really like us to go back and push for a five, rather than three year extension. We agree that this we will do. Our partners will take the covenant agreement to their next regular Presbytery Meeting on Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>. We say we will do the same at our next meeting in mid November.

Attention next turns to the church-to-church connection. I explain our perspective, emphasizing that this is not a financial commitment, but rather an exchange of faith, fellowship, letters, culture etc. etc. etc. There is agreement by all that we should get this going.

With that the meeting ends and we break for lunch. Another banquet of course! I have a chat with Pastor Errol of St Andrews. I also talk to Muza Gabayda, who asks me how churches will be matched up, is it sticky random or will there be some process. I reply, to honest we haven't given that much thought. We agree that perhaps some form should be developed where churches indicate where the interest lies in the church and to then match those interests with a church in the other Presbytery.



After the meeting we take a quick drive to visit the Nelson Mandela Museum in downtown Mthatha. For me it is a return visit. It was very, very meaningful to me last time. We walk through a large display in the center of the museum which walks you through Nelson's life and ends with a video of his inauguration as the first democratically elected president (in which ALL South Africans getting to vote). It sends chills up my spine and tears to my eyes just as it did three years ago. Afterwards we make a quick drive to Qunu where Nelson grew up as a boy and where he has home built.

In the evening we return to the Nangelizwe Station of the Erskine Congregation to meet with the church's youth (which in South Africa ranges from 14 – 35 years old). Here we run into our old friend Victor Letuka who visited us in 2004. Victor is not only the leader of the church's youth group but is the President of Youth Group for the whole denomination. Before arriving there we stop off briefly at home, where an here-to-fore unseen dog appears out of nowhere and takes a chunk out of Aaron's leg... OUCH! Tandy is very concerned and arranges for his doctor to take a look at Aaron's leg. Tandy receives a call for this to happen after our arrival to the youth gathering. Before this happens we hear the great news about the youth computer literacy project. It seems that due to overcrowding the local school has commandeered the space originally planned for the computer school here at Nangelizwe. But, another Erskine Station is building a new church in a new much more secure location with much more space. Our partners show us the drawings of the new building and are obviously very excited about the new location. It will take a little longer to get it off the ground but the wait will be well worth it.



With that piece of new in hand Tandy, Aaron and I are off to the doctor. The doctor cleans the wound and gives Aaron some antibiotics and we are drive to Tandy's house where the others are to join us for yet another banquet in our honor. We are easily averaging two huge banquets a day!

We finally arrive back to our home at 9:30 p.m. By the length of this edition I think it is safe to say that this has been another full and successful day. Unfortunately accompanying me back to our home is a scratchy, and sore throat. This can mean only one thing ..... a cold is on the way ....AWGH!