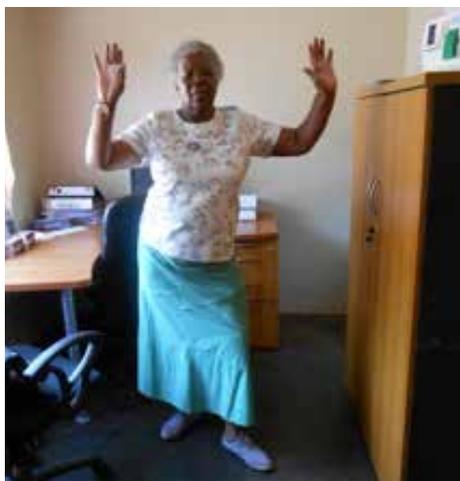


An Orphan's Promise African Adventure



Face Painting



Anna gives thanks to God!



Nataliya Khomyak – Director of Operations/OP

South Africa is a spectacular country. The people are beautiful, exotic plants and animals abound, and its history is both unique and inspiring. We are on a journey to three different areas of South Africa to visit projects supported by Orphan's Promise.

Our first stop is in Mpumalanga at a ministry called Jesus Is the Answer. Pastor Johannes ministers to the residents of a shack community named Waterworks which we have been supporting for several years. Unemployment here is over 70%. We have helped him recently with some construction needs for the school that serves the children here. These children are not able to attend government schools as they do not have proper paperwork. Without Pastor Johannes, these children would be illiterate. Today is a day of great celebration! We have brought 28 OP partners to bless this bleak place. Face painting, coloring books and

crayons, wooden cars to be decorated with markers, and all the teachers and moms get manicures and nail polish! The teachers also get bags filled with special gifts for them. We will leave behind bags of extra school supplies.

The floors are dirt, and the walls have been freshly plastered over with a concrete/mud mixture so the whole place smells like damp earth. This does not, however, dampen the spirits of the patient children inside. Anticipation is in the air! We worship with the children, and then the fun begins. The laughter and joy cannot be contained!

Several hours later, it is time to depart amidst hugs of gratitude. We are all overwhelmed with the magnitude of the need, and yet we see the hope and light this school provides in the midst of extreme poverty. No electricity and no running water in these corrugated metal houses that have newspaper wadded up and stuffed into the cracks and windows to keep out the

cold and rain. Education for these children is one of the keys to breaking the cycle of poverty. Learning of God's great love for them is the other. Today they saw that love in action.

Since our return, we have received word that a whole new roof has been put on this facility. That is a God-send as it means the educational and inspirational programs here can go on no matter what the weather presents.

From Mpumalanga, we traveled to the Ebenezer Center outside Johannesburg, to visit our dear friend Anna Themba. I marvel at this woman who, though without means herself, saw a great need and determined to do something about it. Anna is a force to be reckoned with. As a woman working alone in ministry, she not only runs this Center but must also contend with government approvals and licenses. When she is confronted with government gridlock or refused, she just keeps coming back. She reminds me of the persistent widow in Luke 18 who wore the judge out with her constant requests for justice until he finally gives in.

It's been four or five years since we last saw Anna. Our van pulled up and as our team unloaded the video gear, I looked around wondering how Anna will be, anxious to see her again. Suddenly, there she was, heading toward me with determination and strength in every stride. She greeted me with her booming voice, "My sister!" followed by a bear hug that would have toppled me if I had not been prepared for it. I ask her how she is and she says, "Come you must see what the Lord is doing here!" Anna feeds over a thousand children every day at various centers throughout her area. At this location, she houses a number of orphaned children, elderly widows, and mentally handicapped



adults. She also cares for a number of women who have been abused, some battling HIV. As we walk, I ask Anna how old she is now. She tells me 70, but Nataliya (our OP Director of Operations) reminds me that she said the same

thing five years ago.

Orphan's Promise has supported Anna's Ebenezer Center for a number of years. We have built housing and bathroom facilities for the children, a brand new kitchen, and helped with food supply. The need is great but Anna never gives up. She knows that God is bigger and recognizes that He is the source of all her provision.

The bus with our OP partners is due to arrive at any moment, and the workers here are moving quickly to be sure everything is ready and in place. The older children help the younger children and a group of



high school age young people are practicing the songs they will sing for us – all of them proudly dressed in school uniforms. (I always marvel that in even the very poorest countries, children must have uniforms to attend school.)

Soon our bus arrives and as our OP supporters step off the bus, they move forward into this world of need and hunger

and desperation with an easy, eager sense of assignment. They are not here to stare or observe. They have come to serve and to love. Soon babies are being held, children are being read to, and we are preparing food together, the young people are singing and we all dance in gratitude before the Lord. It doesn't get any better than this!

Each time we visit, Anna's work has grown and we are able to invest in what is needed to touch lives here. On this trip we learn that her greatest need now is for a large passenger van to transport children with medical needs and to visit the various feeding centers she operates. It must be hard to see the needs that Anna sees, be willing to do the work, and then always have to wait for what you need to be provided. We promise her we will pray and do the best we can. Anna is a visionary and a champion of justice. I don't really know how old she is, but I do know she has the heart of a lion. As we say good-bye, I want to give her something to encourage her and remind her that we will not forget her or her children. I remove my necklace and fasten it around her neck. It is inscribed with the verse from Habakkuk 2:3 – "Hold fast to the vision, for though it tarries, it will surely come to pass." I receive another bear hug and it is time to leave.

Another incredible day in Africa with a bird's eye view of how we can all join hands and link hearts to impact lives in need. As we drive away, my heart is sad at leaving but I am so grateful to know Anna. She is a perfect example of the power of one person to make a difference.

This has been a memorable trip so far. Meeting with Pastor Johannes in Mpumalanga and Anna Themba in Johannesburg has inspired all of us. When you see people doing so much with so little it deepens your desire to stand with them – to do more!

But this trip is not over. It's time to leave for Cape Town. I can't wait to tell you about what Orphan's Promise is doing there but that's next month's letter. Till then, please keep us in your prayers.

Finally, I want to thank you for making all these efforts possible. We couldn't do it without your love and support. God is using you to change lives!

Gratefully, Terry