

April 2023

Dear AWR Friend,

In February, my wife Kathy and I traveled to Pretoria, South Africa, for the dedication of a new AWR radio station that will cover a large portion of southern Africa. I wish you could have been there to see the extent of work and preparation that went into this as our AWR staff and local church members and leaders organized the event. The broadcast went live on the same day, and it was thrilling!

**OVER
50
YEARS
OF MINISTRY**

It's a new day for South Africa, and the influence this broadcast will have as it penetrates homes, hearts, and communities will be huge!

From Pretoria we traveled to Livingstone, Zimbabwe, for two weeks of evangelistic meetings. Ours was one of eight preaching sites that would hold simultaneous events throughout the city. We know the area well, having worked in nearby Congo (DRC) for more than 10 years, and have since returned many times. Whenever we do, God surprises us with new and rewarding experiences in soul-winning.

Let me share what happened during this trip. I'll start from the beginning . . .

Duane McKey at the dedication of the new AWR radio station in South Africa.

THE POWER OF AN IMAGE

The story of Daphine began in 1999, when we had returned to Livingstone for a series of meetings with our friend Bob Peck and a medical team. For the first time, we would be using culturized images. This meant that in our slide presentations, we would no longer use images of mostly western people, but instead use local people the audience could relate to. Our graphic designer on this trip, Todd Gessele, worked on the images.

One night, I spoke on the subject of death and the resurrection, when we will be reunited with our loved ones. Todd had prepared a simple image of a young African mother receiving her baby. As soon as the image flashed on the screen, there was an audible gasp from the audience—a great multitude of several thousand that had gathered along the hillside. They broke into a thunderous applause and shouts of joy.

We were thunderstruck! Unbeknownst to us, Daphine, the young local woman in the image, had lost her baby not long before the meetings began, and the community had been in mourning with her. Seeing her on the screen receiving her baby brought great rejoicing to everyone present—and tears to our eyes.



Something amazing happened when Duane shared the artwork featuring Daphine on resurrection morning.



Experience the moment Elder McKey shared Daphine's image with the Zambian audience.

Aim your phone's camera for the video clip.

That image was so real to them, not just because many of them knew Daphine, but because she was one of their own—someone just like them. They eagerly accepted every truth presented, and when the series was over, more than 1,400 people were baptized. This was a huge number back then, in a city that at the time had only three Adventist churches. Today, there are more than 30 congregations and three large schools.

No, I can't claim the picture alone made the difference, but it was certainly a turning point, and it's a lesson we never forgot. It was the moment the audience realized salvation was also for them. A small consideration to the culture where we preach can make a huge difference. Now all the Bible studies we prepare for the different countries around the world reflect this principle.

When we returned to Livingstone this past February, guess who came forward to greet us? You guessed it—Daphine! She's much older, but still with that joyous smile, and still faithful to Jesus, awaiting that wonderful day of reunion at His Second Coming.

THE WOMEN OF THE NIGHT SEE THE LIGHT

Livingstone is a unique city in that it's at the crossroads between Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana and Namibia. It's quite trafficked, as it's also near the famous Victoria Falls, considered to be the greatest waterfall in the world. Unfortunately, it's also a place where young girls are exploited, just like Mary Magdalene was in Jesus' day.

When our meetings began, 22 of these young ladies showed up to listen. They were looking for hope—for someone who cared—and they wanted to learn more about Jesus. Again, the promise was fulfilled when Jesus said, "When I am lifted up . . . I will draw all people to myself." (John 12:32)

Night after night they came. They learned about the Sabbath, the state of the dead, and so many precious truths that touched their hearts. But above all, they learned about Jesus and forgiveness. Yes, they kept hearing that word "forgiveness." But then they became afraid. They were moved to accept Jesus and be baptized, but how would they be able to stay faithful and support themselves?

One night, shortly after they'd made their decision to be baptized, they came to talk to me. "Please tell us," one young lady said, "I have four children and I don't know who their fathers are. I have to provide for them. How do I feed them every morning? Where do I get the money for that?"

The local church was very sympathetic to their plight, and so was AWR. And this was not new to us. We had faced the same problem with the rebels in Mindoro. After baptizing the assassins, how would we help them start a new life? We began 18 foundations to teach them how to garden, raise chickens, sell eggs and become merchants respected in their communities.

That's why, when these 22 girls came to me and said, "Pastor, what will happen to us?" I said, "Nothing will happen to you. By God's grace, we're going to help you, and we'll work out a plan with the local church."



Baptismal candidates in Livingstone raising their hands in commitment.



Duane McKey with a few of the women (and others) who were baptized in Livingstone.

And that's just what we did. We worked with Pastor Harrington, president of the Southern African Division, and also with the union president in Lusaka, Zambia, and of course with several of the local churches that will sponsor these girls to put a plan in place to help them. They will receive training as seamstresses and merchants, and we will help them start a new life.

That last Sabbath, they were all baptized. With tears in their eyes, they expressed a big thank you to AWR for bringing them hope in Jesus. It was an especially solemn occasion as the night before, they had learned that a girl like themselves in nearby Zambia had been killed, her throat slit. They wished she'd had the opportunity to know Jesus and find forgiveness and hope, and now they wanted to share with others the precious truths they had learned.

This experience reminded me of 1999, when Daphne saw herself in the resurrection picture and for the first time felt hope in her heart. She cried tears of joy as God's promise became very real to her. Now these young girls were also feeling this great hope—the same hope you and I know and may often take for granted. They had just heard it for the first time and their joy was palpable.

I always come away from evangelistic meetings feeling I'm the most blessed of all. When we're on the front lines of the battle for souls, God's presence becomes very real as we cooperate with Him in the salvation of others.

UPDATE FROM MINDORO

Last month, I shared the sad news of Willie, one of the military generals who was baptized during GC Session last year. We were saddened at his passing, but also felt a deep sense of gratitude knowing he had accepted Jesus just “in the nick of time.”

Then, a few weeks ago, we were saddened again when we received news that a medical helicopter from the Philippine Adventist Medical Aviation Services (PAMAS) went missing over the ocean and is presumed lost. It hit us hard, as we had flown many times with Daniel Lui, the pilot, and we considered him a good friend. Daniel and his crew dedicated their lives to serving Jesus, and now they, too, await resurrection morning.

We may not understand, but we trust in the words of Jesus when He said, “You have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day, you will no longer ask me anything.” (John 16:22, 23)

But now let me share some good news we just received, because the good news from Mindoro keeps coming despite the fiery darts of the enemy. You may remember Colonel Eric Guevarra, another high-ranking military official who was baptized with Willie during GC Session (see letter from July

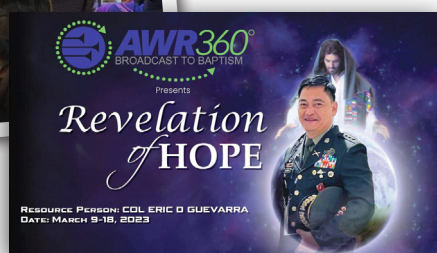
2022). We just received word from Pastor Robert Dulay that Eric is now holding his first evangelistic series—right on the military base! All military personnel are attending, and the messages are being well-received.



AWR VP Kyle Allen (right) and AWR staff, with pilot Daniel Lui (left) on a previous helicopter trip.



Col. Eric Guevarra preaching his first evangelistic series on the military base.



Eric was the first high-ranking military member to accept the Sabbath truth, and his faith and commitment have never wavered. We rejoice in this new triumph of the gospel and commend Eric for having the courage to step out of his comfort zone and share the new truths he only recently learned himself!

THE SHEPHERDS IN THE “STAN” COUNTRIES

I just have to squeeze in one more bit of good news. An incredible opportunity has just opened up in the “Stan” countries, which include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

Recently, we learned there are approximately 18,000 shepherds who tend sheep year-round in the vast steppe grasslands. They live a lonely, nomadic life without modern conveniences, and can be seen sitting patiently for hours on end, day after day. Can you guess where I’m going with this? Yes, you’re right! These men would love to receive solar-powered Godpods!

Right now, we’re working on a plan to get the Godpods into their hands in their own languages. Just imagine—24 hours a day, seven days a week, with nothing to do but watch sheep and listen to life-saving messages on their solar-powered Godpods! I’ll keep you posted as this plan develops.

FORGING AHEAD

God is opening opportunities everywhere if we’re just willing to move forward by faith and share the truths that have been entrusted to us. Yes, there may be setbacks and losses, but we know who wins the battle, and He promised that, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then the end shall come.” (Matthew 24:14)

And what a day that will be! Thank you for supporting this amazing work of sharing the gospel message with others. We know the darker this world’s outlook becomes, the brighter God’s truth will shine until the whole earth is lighted with the glory of His truth.

Thank you for making such a significant difference.

Yours in the Blessed Hope,



Duane McKey
President



This is one of the thousands of shepherds we hope to reach with messages of hope on Godpods.

P.S. Every day we’re amazed anew at what God is doing around the world. The stories of Daphine, the young girls in Livingstone and the rebels of Mindoro are repeated in a million different ways as God works to save humanity from the enemy and eternal death. Yes, there are many signs of Christ’s return, but the greatest of all is the sign of God’s Spirit working in people’s hearts. Thank you for partnering with us to reach the world for Jesus!