



NEWSLETTER No. 23. MARCH 2011

Dear All

We have a lot of 'breaking news'. So here goes!

Following the granting of charity status and the consequential reorganisation described below this newsletter is being sent to bring all our supporters up-to-date with the present situation and to launch the new UK Udobo School support endeavour in 2011.

The main news is that, as Patrick indicated in the last newsletter, we now have full charitable status with a new name **ACTION UDOBO** and our charity registration number is 1138863. Although the new charity is now in being, it is not yet up and running requiring the completion of a few remaining actions still in hand and which are dealt with under the appropriate headings.

After piloting the charity registration application through from start to a successful conclusion in November 2010, Susan and Patrick Hughes have submitted their resignations as General Secretary. This has resulted in a reorganisation of the Trustees duties as detailed on Page 2

Then, of course, the work of the school continues and, with the departure of Kathy and Graeme Mercer to Pretoria at the end of 2010, the new School Director, the Rev Ansie Liebenberg is swimming fast in order to catch up and get on board. This newsletter includes an edited version of the January issue of the School Newsletter 'The Fisherman's Tale' and in it is an introduction to Ansie – by Ansie!

The new Action Udobo charity requires that we open a new bank account and it is our intention to close down the old Friends of Udobo account during 2011. This will be done as soon as we have ceased taking donations paid to the Friends of Udobo. Later in this newsletter, our plans and intentions are described.

As always, we are delighted to hear from any of you with comments and if any have information on anything appropriate to the school – notes on fund-raising efforts for instance, please do let us know so that we can include the reports in the Action Udobo newsletters for the encouragement of everyone.

Many thanks indeed for your continued and unwavering support of the school. Remember that your efforts and generosity really do make a difference – a massive difference – to upwards of one hundred children each year. Without your money and support and with no Udobo School, those children would have no opportunity to progress and would have stayed on the scrap-heap. At the age of six, they would almost all have had little hope for any better conditions for the remainder of their lives. .

One of the major difficulties is the inability of the school to provide a place for all who deserve to be admitted and Anne Snyders describes some of the problems the School has in trying to accommodate as many as possible.

For those children that do get a place, remember that it is you that has given hope and opportunity to a child for something better. We can't resolve all the world's problems but, by focussing our efforts, we do MAKE A DIFFERENCE – a life changing and enhancing difference to some.

The New Trust

During 2010, it was necessary, in support of the charity registration application, to determine who should become Trustees and the ten or so folk then involved agreed that a large body of Trustees was unnecessary. Accordingly, six of the original officers accepted the responsibility of becoming Trustees and these, with the agreed duties, are listed under the next heading.

There was much discussion with the Charity Commissioners and one of the difficulties that had to be resolved was that charitable status could not be granted to any UK body that simply supported another charity with donations – as we have been doing from the start. The UK charity has to have a management input on the activities supported and has to accept responsibility for the payment of the costs of those agreed activities. This, of course, requires considerable discussion with the Trustees of the Udobo Ed-U Foundation and the actual working out of procedures is on-going to ensure that Action Udobo takes on the responsibility for specific aspect of the work of the school.

This makes the personal commitment to regular giving much more important so that the Action Udobo Trustees can give commitments to the school with confidence and in the sure knowledge that they have the financial support to honour those commitments.

After patiently shepherding the charity application through the tortuous procedures of the Charity Commissioners, which took the best part of last year, and after managing and supporting the summer visit of Kathy and Graham Mercer – and keeping the news flowing for the whole year, Susan and Patrick decided that they needed to reduce their commitment somewhat and the Trust very regretfully had to accept their resignation at the 1st November Trust meeting. In offering their resignation, Patrick and Susan confirmed their continuing full support of the on-going work of Action Udobo and I would wish to add my personal thanks to those of the trustees at the meeting to both of them for their monumental efforts during the year and for their re-assurance that they will continue to work for the new Action Udobo Trust.

The Re-organised Trust

This resignation resulted in the need for a wholesale reorganisation of duties to make maximum use of the talents and inclinations of the trustees in creating the new Trust. After considerable discussion both before and at the meeting, the titles and duties of certain officers were agreed and (after some arm twisting!) we were able to put names to all the duties as follows

Chairman	David Latter	Normal chairman's duties plus responsibility for the maintenance of the database in conjunction with all Trustees and despatch of electronic newsletter distribution.
General Secretary	Peter Cannell	Normal secretarial duties including the preparation and distribution of promotional materials.
Treasurer	John Sharman	Normal treasurer's duties including gift aid administration and despatch of funds to South Africa.
Trustee and Editor	Rev. Paul Weary	Newsletter editor responsible for the compilation, and preparation of the newsletter for printing, and production and mailing of all hard copy newsletters. Also for co-ordinating Archway Charity Shop material despatches to the school.
Trustee	Patrick Hughes	In conjunction with Susan, responsible for the creation and encouragement of centres of support and for the initiation, promotion, and co-ordination of all Udobo events in the UK
Trustee	Susan Hughes	In conjunction with Patrick, responsible for the promotion in the UK of the work of the Udobo School.

In starting to read this letter, you may have been puzzled why I, known as your treasurer for some time, suddenly revert to my previously held job as secretary! You now have the explanation!!

Some of the changes in the duties have been implemented immediately but the move to all these duties will take some time. For instance, John Sharman has been busy since the last Trustees meeting setting up the new Action Udobo bank account and is, with immediate effect, now the treasurer of Action Udobo. However, I shall continue to run in the background as treasurer of the old Friends of Udobo account until it can be closed.

With the departure of Kathy and Graeme Mercer from the Udobo School in Durban to Pretoria, we are all also creating a new relationship with Kathy and Graeme's successors Ansie and Willie Liebenberg.

The New Action Udobo Financial Arrangements.

It should be noted that the Action Udobo financial year will be the calendar year. The Action Udobo Treasurer, John Sharman has some outstanding matters to resolve with The Charity Commission and HM Revenue & Customs to facilitate a complete transfer of activities from 'The Friends' to 'Action Udobo'. We anticipate writing to all regular donors to advise the changes required to standing orders and Gift Aid Declarations just as soon as we are able. In the meantime, please continue with the present arrangements until you hear from us.

U.K. Friends of Udobo News

The first bit of news is that the Friends of Udobo has, so far since September, been able to contribute a total of £12,000 to the School.

Our regular contributions now amount to about £850 per month and the gift aid tax refund on those contributions takes that to a little over £1,000 per month. We continue, of course, to receive generous single donations – the income from Christmas gifts this year amounted to about £1,900.

One big problem we face now is the decline in the exchange rate. In the middle of the last decade, we were getting over fifteen Rand for each £, now it is about eleven so, although we are gradually increasing our monthly income in £'s, by the time it reaches the School, each £ produces fewer Rand.

It is intended that we issue at least two newsletters each year and the next issue will emerge under the editorship of Trustee Paul Weary. To save on costs, it is hoped that as many as possible of our Udobo supporters will be willing to receive electronic copies via the internet. We shall continue to publish hard copy for those who want the newsletter in that form and also for general use for publicity purposes – church magazine racks and for sending copies to friends – for the purpose of encouraging more donors, of course!

Action Udobo Trust

The first AGM of the newly formed Trust was held on Monday March 14th, with all members present, and most of the discussions and agreements are recorded above.

It was agreed that the Trust would conduct most of its business by email and phone and the Chairman, Treasurer and secretary were delegated to either make day-to day decisions as they occurred and so advise the remaining Trustees or to contact all Trustees by email or phone if the matter in hand was felt to be of sufficient substance to warrant a decision by all Trustees.

Peter

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the fisherman's tale

From the Principal's Desk



We began 2011 with the usual influx of parents looking to place their children so we hit the ground running. For the first two weeks I have nothing but interviews and eventually have to explain that people had left it rather late and the school was full. I had many parents of toddlers coming in and begging me to make an exception and take their two-year-old! (There are many day care facilities in the area so I could redirect these parents – but had a secret smile to think how my teachers would react if I tried to slip a toddler into their class!)

I greet everyone reading this newsletter in the precious name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ and trust that you will have a blessed year ahead. We have welcomed our new pastoral couple, Willie and Ansie Liebenberg, to our church. Willie and Ansie are both ordained ministers and have brought many gifts and talents with them in the service of our local church (Montclair Methodist) as well as a wealth of knowledge of overseeing schools such as Udobo. I am very excited to be travelling on this path with them.

As most reading this letter know Graeme and Kathy Mercer relocated to Willows Methodist Church in December, they seem to be very happy and are finding their feet in Pretoria. We thank God for all the work that they did in establishing the Udobo School and look forward to growing the work about which Kathy especially was so passionate.

We began the New Year with many challenges on the staffing front. Teacher Nokuvela's mother, who also looks after Nokuvela's small daughter, had a stroke and Nokuvela has not returned to school yet as she is training a caregiver to look after her mom and little Lisa. Nokuvela's assistant, Colleen, is not yet back from America so that class has been very ably run by a volunteer, Penina, who is a qualified teacher, so our little ones have been able to start their year without a hitch. Thank you so much Penina, you are such a gracious servant of God and we are so grateful for your help.

On a happier note Teacher Daria will be married on Friday 28th January and will come back to us as Mrs Hugo Hayes. The staff will be attending the wedding which promises to be a joyous occasion where Hugo's daughter will also renew her vows! My husband Pierre is the photographer so I will make sure a photograph is placed in our next newsletter!

Just in closing, while interviewing our parents I am often struck by just what great people they are. Their stories are often very interesting, the Zimbabwean people are generally highly educated people who have fled their country to obtain a safe haven for their families but now have to take whatever job they can get. They are generally a very hard working people and are willing to do very menial work despite their abilities in order to feed their families. The heart-breaking situations for me are those that involve young girls who were full of dreams for their lives but fell pregnant at a very young age and had to take responsibility for a baby when other teenagers are getting an education. We still live in an extremely patriarchal society where woman are not always afforded the dignity they deserve and are literally left holding the baby and these are the little ones that largely come to Udobo School looking for hope and a future!

I will get down from my soapbox now. Thank you so much to everyone who contributes anything at all to the smooth running of the school, I know that God will bless those who care for "the least" amongst us.

Anne Snyders



Introducing Pastor Ansie Liebenberg

To introduce myself to the school and supporters of the school:

Personal.

I have been happily married to Willie for the past 22 years and he, like me, is an ordained minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

We have four children of which the youngest two - Lesego (9) who is of Tswana origin and Berenice (5) Khoi San/Xhosa - are adopted and our two older children are Kenny (Afrikaans) and Tanya (English lady) so we have a multi-racial family. Our ministry has always involved the care and education of children, in particular the abandoned, the orphaned and the poor - in Wesley's tradition to go where the need is the greatest.

Experience.

I have served for the last six years in two of the poorest areas in the city of George in the Western Cape Province. In South Africa we have three colour classifications - white, coloured (brown) and black (thanks to our apartheid heritage). In a coloured township, Pacaltsdorp, I have planted a church and in a black (Xhosa speaking) area, Rosemoor. I have built a new church building (with donations and partnerships), which was opened in December 2009.

From the start of 2011, I have been stationed as the second minister of the Montclair Methodist Church together with my husband Willie as the first minister, with particular responsibility for the Udobo School. In my previous appointment, I served as a management member of the Trustees of the George Child and Family Welfare Society and my portfolio included the care and direction of six pre-schools with a total of 1500 children in the George Western Cape area. I did that for eight years, together with my duties as a full time Methodist Minister with two Societies under my care.

What is particularly relevant to my Montclair appointment is that I have been involved with little children up to grade R classes and all of the schools under my care were situated in the poorest of poor communities within the George area - totally relying on fundraisers with donations coming from both individual donors and from corporate, government and international funding. So, in the middle of an African summer, Willie and I have moved into a VERY HOT and HUMID Durban. We are, of course, still trying to find our feet in all the newness of the situation at Montclair and with some of the surprises that we have discovered here. We therefore need to ask for patience and grace as we try to find ways of meeting the new challenges. At the moment I am working through files and piles and piles of paperwork to get the full history and to get on-board with this project.

Conclusion.

Acknowledging the work of Kathy and Graeme Mercer and the foundations that have been laid for the school I am humbled at their dedication and determination to start up the school from nothing and to build it up to where it is today. I believe that God has called me into my ministry for a purpose and I will endeavour to do all in my power to serve the people of this area to the best of my ability with the gifts and talents that I have been given and, in conjunction with all those involved, both at home and overseas, to build up the work of the Udobo School. I would like to use this opportunity to thank all our friends locally and internationally for their on-going support for this project. Looking at some of the information and listening to people here, it is clear that without this long-term and increasing support, the Udobo project would not be possible. It is my prayer that the partnership that has been established will continue and grow for many years to come.

For the love of Christ and His Children

Rev Ansie Liebenberg

Stories from parents by Anne Snyders

As I stated earlier it is a joy to chat to new parents and find out a little about their life journeys. They are generally very appreciative of what is being done for their children and are often people who rely totally on God. One father shared the story of how it was very expensive to manage without a fridge as he had to buy food daily and anything perishable had to be finished immediately. He and his partner had been trying to save for a fridge but his child took ill and various other calamities befell the family. He decided to leave the matter in God's hands and manage without. A week later the neighbour called him and asked him if he would like a fridge as he had a spare one that was not being used! So he was given a fully functioning fridge and he was giving all the glory to God!

I spoke to a mother who is highly qualified in the nursing profession and was actually lecturing in Zimbabwe. She is unable to continue here and all her work options would mean she would have to be away from her husband and two young daughters. She told me that she and her husband had decided that they would rather cope on his wages (he drives a truck) than split the family. She said "my family is too precious to split up; I do not believe that God brought us together for us to separate because of money"

I had a grandmother sobbing brokenheartedly over her daughter who is involved with all sorts of wrong living and has had two children whom she abandoned and granny took in. The mother receives the child grant and beats the grandmother when she asks about money so she no longer asks but supports them all on her pension. She cried even more when she realised we could help her grandchild with schooling and that she would be fed here. She also went away with deep gratitude for what God has done in this place.

Cute Quips

At this time of the year the children are still settling in and in some cases hearing English for the first time as language of choice. We do allow the children a period of adjustment which is why each class has a teacher and an assistant so that there is always someone who understands the child.

One of our little girls from last year who has gone into Grade 1 this year has been taken into the home of Teacher Roxanne from Monday to Friday and at first she had great difficulty in knowing what to call her erstwhile teacher – so Roxanne has been called Teacher/ Auntie/ Roxy. The little one is also experiencing difficulty in adapting to the food Roxanne provides and refuses things such as pizza when it is bought as a treat! I really commend my young teacher for taking on this responsibility in order for the child's mother to seek work. Roxanne lost her own mother approximately 18 months ago and is already taking care of her younger sister. She feels that God has called her to do this and is fully dependent on Him.

Our special needs child has returned this year and it is such a joy to see progress in her little life albeit very slow progress. I asked her about her newly pierced ears and pretty earrings and she said 'mummy bought Christmas' and I became really excited as she was now able to answer me.

The teachers always ask the children questions about themselves at the beginning of the year. Teacher Mirriam asked Lisa; "where do you come from?" to which Lisa replied: "the swimming pool".

The children were having a tour of the school. Teacher Edinah's group are all new and still coming to terms with a new language. They were brought to my office and asked to repeat that it was 'the office'. "*The office*" they all said. "Now say good morning to teacher" - so they said "*good morning, teacher*" so Edinah said "Teacher who?" to which the whole class replied "*good morning Teacher Who.*" I am now greeted with great delight as **Teacher Who** by many of the little ones! Got to love them!



..... Urgent opening prayer

Hamba kahle Kathy

Go well and may God be with you in all your endeavours

The **end of year function** with concert and graduation ceremony in early December was dedicated to Kathy and all she had done as founder of our school. We had a collection of skits which highlighted Udobo's beginnings – she first three children that arrived 6 years ago – the first teacher, the first volunteer in the kitchen and the secretary – all of whom are still with us! All our songs had their words changed so we could sing about happenings of the past 6 years. Looking back like this makes us realise just how far the Lord has brought us – our first 'intake' will be going into high school next year!

The legacy that Kathy has left us at Udobo will keep going into the future as God leads us and it was a very sad day for many of the staff as we said goodbye – especially for those who had been involved in the work from the beginning! There were many letters of farewell from the staff as they said their goodbyes. We had a lovely graduation morning and it was unfortunate that none of our plans to video the morning worked out for us. None the less it was a great day of making memories and all present will hold the day in our hearts.

The Lions blessed us with stationery for all our graduates and for that we are extremely grateful, the parents have also expressed their gratitude for the work of the Lions. Yellowwood Park made up sweet parcels for all of the children and what child is not delighted with a whole pack of sweets just for them? Unfortunately the promised school shoes did not materialise this year but the parents were very understanding as it really was out of our hands. Capri Bags gave us blouses for all of our little girls and I bought T-shirts for the boys so each child received a gift from the school

The letters from the staff can be summed up by these extracts

We gonna miss you Kathy and you have a good heart.

You brought hope to those who needed it most.

You will always have a special place in our hearts as a family.

Kathy, may all your dreams come true.

Some views of the 2010 end of year graduation concert



... Entertaining the audience with song ...



Dancing the Waka-Waka



.... one of the many group skits.....



One of the Graduates



Kathy's farewell speech



Amos & Thomas carrying in the food laid on for all attending parents and guests



Rev Willie & Rev Ansie Liebenberg and daughters Lesego & Berenice.