

Dear friends:

We received a letter from an American friend asking "whether we are involved in all the hard times in Africa - it sounds horrible". There are certainly "hard times" here in southern Africa, particularly for the poor and unemployed. But by the grace of God our lives this year have been marked by joy, challenge and fulfilment: certainly not horror.

South Africa is finding it harder to win the peace than to win the war. The grand apartheid of racism is theoretically dead, but it is being replaced by many small apartheid of color, class, ethnicity, language, corruption, settling of scores, crime and poverty. The great man Nelson Mandela must work through weaker and lesser men and women, many of whom have only the narrow vision that "Now it is my turn - let me enjoy power and privilege".

Yet there is much to be thankful for in South Africa. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, chaired by our now-retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu, is engaged in one of the boldest and grandest experiments in Christian history, to facilitate the public healing of the wounds incurred over 330 years of racial, political and economic oppression. Please continue to pray for this Commission. It can either set a standard for the world to follow or it can confirm the cynics in their view that nothing can be done to unite a divided people. If Africa is ever to overcome the "hard times" my friend spoke of, a Christian alternative is that being tried in South Africa. Our hearts ache for the agony in our beloved Liberia, and for the equal or even greater agony in Sudan, Somalia, Algeria, Nigeria, Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi. Please pray for them all at this Christmas season, that they may also find the path towards peace, reconciliation and new life.

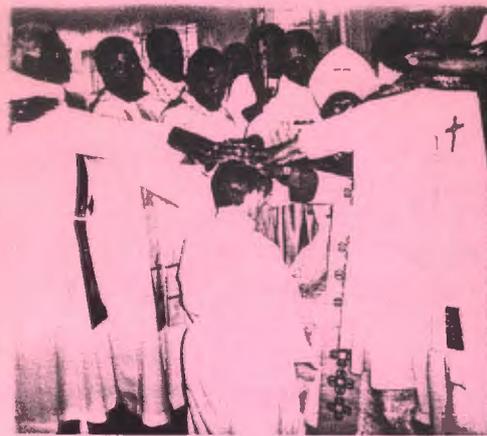
Lesotho is not in agony, for life is quiet, peaceful and good rains are falling. But Lesotho has not yet begun a truth and reconciliation process after years of military rule, political violence and democratic elections. Thus the peace we are experiencing is a peace of stagnation and tension. The civil service sits on its hands, the military is waiting in the wings, the ruling party is torn into fragments, HIV/AIDS is rampant (10-30% of the sexually active population), and unemployment widespread. Here is a Liberia waiting to happen (as in so many other apparently peaceful countries).

But we are well, happy, busy, enjoying growing older, and trying to find ways both to work for Christ's peace and to disengage in favor of younger persons. Judy's big event of the year was her ordination to the priesthood in April. Our eldest son Peter represented the family, and then joined us for a brief holiday in South Africa. Judy's ministry as a priest is now added to her other work as a theological educator and she has not yet learned how to take time off. One fruit of the training work in which we have both shared is that nine of our students were ordained deacon and one ordained priest on December 8. Among the deacons was the first Mosotho woman to be ordained in the Anglican church in Lesotho--the fruit of many years of prayer, work and witness to open doors for women in ministry in this part of the world.

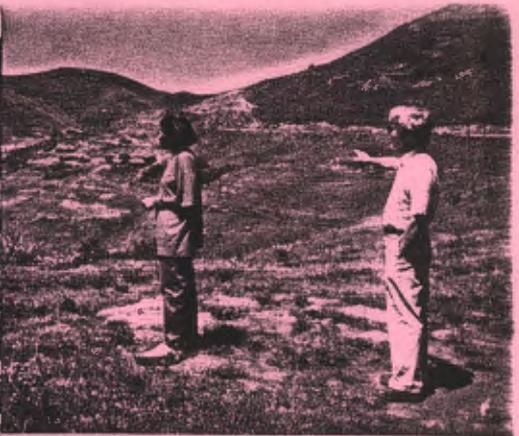
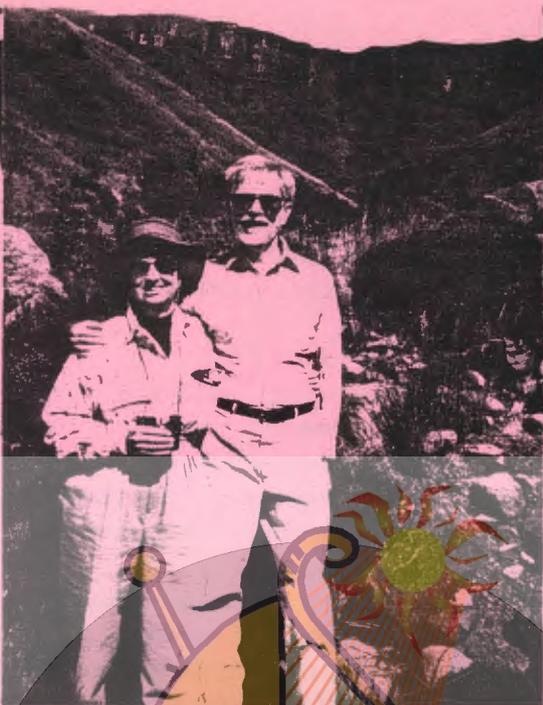
John too is busy, both in doing his consulting work, and in enabling his colleagues at Sechaba Consultants to do the work he has so much enjoyed and which, God willing, can contribute to the well-being of Lesotho and South Africa. His most recent tasks have been surveying water use in Lesotho (the supply of water to a rapidly growing population both here and throughout the world will be one of the critical issues of the next century), estimating population growth in Lesotho up to the year 2025, articulating the opinions of Basotho gold miners about their potential residence in South Africa, and training colleagues in both quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

The other way in which John is attempting to hand over the best parts of his life is through writing what he calls "*A Letter to My Children*". If you think these annual newsletters are heavy, just try wading through the story of his life and opinions! He hopes that at least one grandchild or great-grandchild will want to read it. We both wish we knew more about our ancestors. The longer we are in Africa, the more we understand that we are part of them, and they are part of us. John's letter (330 pages so far, and only up to 1985) may provide that link for those who will one day look to us as ancestors.

God bless you all in 1997. We probably will remain here in southern Africa during the coming year, but we would love to see any of you who can make the journey to this still-peaceful and very beautiful part of Africa. We talk of retirement back to the states by the millenium. Only God knows what will develop. Until then, stay well and stay in touch with us.



Basotho clergy join our bishops in ordaining Judy as a priest to serve the people of Lesotho.



John and a colleague think how to assist mountain people whose land will be inundated by a dam.



Dear Phyllis - Christmas is not over, until the last newsletter is written! I am dreadfully late this year, but at least it isn't Easter yet. It was wonderful to see you late last year. We are sorry we did not make it to Durban from Conyngham, but we were truly exhausted and just needed to rest. Next time!

I keep meeting you as I write my letter to my children. Many thanks for the deep and important contribution you made to our life and our education. I have been moved to realize all you did and all you meant to so many people in Swatara, Zumbabwe and South Africa during the struggle.

We hope deeply that the ANC government will keep the promise that it held out to the world during the fight for freedom. Phyllis, please remember to consecrate!

Blessings,  
Judy + John



The first Mosotho woman to be ordained in the Anglican church, together with others who are training for ministries in Lesotho, witness to the Light which comes into the world at Christmas—the Light of

May the Light of Christ also shine in your eyes and in

