

OCTOBER NEWSLETTER FROM MARIA KATKUS—SOUTH AFRICA

Greetings Valley Church of Christ I hope that this letter finds you in good spirits. I am sorry for not being able to write you a letter sooner. My computer has been having trouble so I've been having to wait until I could borrow one. I love keeping up with the Facebook book group that you created. The congregation has had a lot of things happen, pregnancies, births, baptisms and how can I forget the continuous work of preparation for this new church building. It is good to see that the church still has its strength from the Lord and that you all continue to pray for each other and encouraging one another. I love seeing people asking for prayer requests and members saying that they will add that to their prayer list. It's amazing and very encouraging to for me.

If I'm not mistaken last time I wrote to you was over a month ago. I have been blessed to see God's hand at work here in this big city. He has been reaching people's hearts and rebuilding people's fire with the people that I have the opportunity to be around. I will do my usual list and tell you what all has been happening in each ministry.

The church: The church here has been going through a lot of struggles in the past few years, if you could please continue to pray for their growth and love. We had a church meeting a few weeks back and the elders were expressing that they really want a preacher; they found a young man that is twenty seven years old and a young wife to come work for the church. They will start next year. I am involved with specific ladies from the congregation throughout the week, and meet for coffee or supper. I am getting very close to a few of the older ladies and I can tell that they have a small liking to me because they get offended when I don't sit by them every Sunday morning. It's such a blessing that God opened doors with them. These ladies look like models; they are so fun and funky with their clothing style. For example there is a seventy year old lady that loves converse all-star shoes (for you younger people you know what these are) she wore high top converse with a cute black dress and her hair in long blond curls. She always makes me smile and brings a smile to anyone she speaks too.

Informal Settlement: This ministry is still reaching out to a lot of people. The lady that is in charge of it has over thirty children that she feeds every day. For some children this is the only time that they get to eat. Some don't eat over the weekend and have to wait until Monday when they come to the day care. The Lord is taking a care of this lady and her big hearts to serve Him. With the busy week I can only go there once a week to help her. However I'm hoping that with this new project we are doing there I can make it twice a week. This new project we are doing is a vegetable garden. We have a big nice piece of property right by the shack that she lives in that we will plant vegetables for the children. This will save her money from buying them. Please continue to pray that God gives us the spiritual and physical strength to keep this outreach program going.

Bible study for age 12-15 it's been one year now since this study was started and it is still very active. The younger girls really love this time of the week. They love being able to find a book of the bible, to

learn a new song play new games and get a piece of candy at the end. I can tell that they are growing from the bible lessons they are taught. My prayer is that someone would take this ministry over before I'm gone.

Women's Shelter: Women from all over Africa come to this place. Their stay limit is three months or until they find a job. I still go this shelter once a week and keep in touch with the ladies over the week. My newest friend there is a girl my age who is a fantastic artist and who loves to cook. I love sitting next to her and hearing her life stories. And she likes watching me cook whenever I am able for all of them there. My goal with her is reminding her to make a good use of the gifts that God is giving her. She believes in God and reads her Bible so it's an easy open door. We hope that her art work will go to the market to be sold soon. The sewing projects are still taking place and they are going very well. Our recent project is making hand bags for the ladies to sell. It's a ministry that I really enjoy and it's an open door to speak to them about Christ since we get to spend so many hours together.

Saturday Bible studies with 16-20 year olds: My heart is in awe when I think of this wonderful work that God is doing. I am amazed each time that I sit with these women. I am happy to say that this study is going very good not because of the lessons that we have or anything but because how open to learning about God these teen girls are. The older girls are sort of put on the last page at the orphanage because people assume that they don't need as much attention as the younger ones. My personal feeling is that it's these older girls and boys that need the most attention. They are all about to leave the orphanage, go to college, get jobs etc. they need to have a firm foundation before they go on their own. These girls are aware that the firm foundation they need is God. Through the year that I got to spend with them, some were afraid of me and I admit I was afraid of some of them. We all have different personalities, with God's help through prayer and reading He guided me to be able to speak and have a relationship with each girl in this age group. I don't know how He did it and it's hard to wrap my mind around moments where a girl that has had such a hard past with rape, abuse and rejection come to me and asks to go with me somewhere private so she can talk. Through the months that I thought I had no effect on this age group that I was focusing so much of my time on, I realize that it took them one year to trust me. Even though it was a long time I am happy that God listened to my desire. What we do at these Bible studies is simple: I make them an American supper, we play some games, we sing (I try to teach them songs that we sang at TNT's) we take prayer requests, and I do an in depth bible lesson that I prepare throughout the week. After the Bible lesson is open to questions and discussion. Like I said before these girls are eager so their questions are tough. A lot of which I don't have answers too, but I tell them that I'll write them down and go search for the answer throughout the week and get back to them. That also helps them to open up. There is a church college group that came to visit the orphanage once and are highly interested in coming to this study. My prayer is that they take over the group within the next few months 😊

Finances: I want to thank each one of you for the financial support you are giving. Your prayers and money make you a big part of the work here. I am just hands here, you all are the other body parts that complete it. Because I don't have two team mates to share the cost of things with like I used too a few months back and because the country's economy is doing terrible. The price in gas and food is extremely high. The price in books and study material is highly priced. I have tried my best to do everything that I

can with one thousand dollars a month but I realized that after two months that I was running short. I have had to cut few things with some ministries out that required finances. I am aware that America is also not in the best place with finances and with the construction of the new building things is tight. But any small extra support would be of great help.

Thank you for reading this update and I apologize for the late update. I hope and pray that this computer problem will get solved in order for me to send home more updates with photos and videos. I will continue to pray for you all and if you do the same for me it would be greatly appreciated.