



Noah a few hours after surgery – with Naomi's "well done" present

## Our Year

Here are some of our highlights for the next 12 months:

January/ February: Marco's parents are visiting

End of February: a good friend is visiting for the first time

End of March: more friends and 2 teams are visiting

End of May: our son is visiting – and staying forever ☺

July – September: Germany, here we come!

September – October: we might attend a 6 week course for spiritual leadership... we will see.

We have not planned a move yet although that might happen anywhere in between these events. We have decided to stay in our current apartment for now. God has opened a door for us concerning a new place to stay, but we are still waiting patiently for details to come together and for His guidance in this area.

## The New Year

We hope you have all made it safe and sound into the new year and that your new year's resolutions have not been fully abandoned yet? We began the new year as a 'split' family since Marco was gone in Zambia until the 10<sup>th</sup> of January (more info below). After a happy reunion we started full force on the personal side of things. Noah had to have his tonsils and adenoids removed just a few days after Marco's return, because they were most likely the cause of his severe sleep issues (they were gigantic in size and obstructed his breathing). Our little hero – who took the whole procedure super calm and without any protest – was discharged the same afternoon and we could feel every prayer for his recovery. He is already back to normal and we are amazed that we cannot hear his breathing sounds throughout the house at night anymore. He even slept through a few nights in a row already which makes us hopeful that we can rid ourselves of our sleep deprivation in the next few months - until Baby #3 arrives in May and probably makes sleep a luxury commodity again ☺

*Folly delights a man who lacks judgment, but a man of understanding keeps a straight course. Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed. Proverbs 15: 21-22*

## Zambia

Two weeks Zambia, 8 Dutch guys, 1 German... and such interesting things as roasted caterpillars, fried chicken feet, intestines and a

whole lot of Chima (staple Maize dish). It was a very successful trip. Marco was able to serve as a cultural middleman for the team, he helped Judith and Cedrick with their coordination and planning, and obviously helped out practically when the team was working on their projects. The team spent a total of four weeks in Zambia and built a shelter for 50 orphans in a children's home, eight toilets at another project and invested a lot of time praying and ministering to people. The team members were young people from a youth group in the Netherlands so it was a first-time crosscultural mission experience for many of them. And because that wasn't enough fun, Marco, Cedrick and Judtih started a non-profit organization for their future work in Zambia, which will adapt the Sibongile model. The NGO is called ZIKOMO and means "Thank You" in the Nyanja dialect, just like Sibongile in isiXhosa. The vision is to give needy, vulnerable and especially disabled children in and around Lusaka a Christian home and provide for their every need.



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The Dutch Team with Cedrick and Judith and the new shelters that were built



Local gourmet food



Some of the Board Members of Zikomo

Ten influential and motivated members make up the Board of Management in Lusaka. After only two effective board meetings all papers for the founding process and governmental registration have been put together and will be finalized by the local Board. This is the first seed that Sibongile is planting into other African soil and through Marco's representative position as the chairman of Zikomo Sibongile is able to offer the necessary advice and support for the project development.

This type of help – as well as the personal coaching with people like Cedrick – is a huge blessing for us. After so many years on this 'job', the many exciting success stories and the frustrating face plants we have experienced we can now start imparting some of our experience to others.

So many aspects play an important role in this type of ministry: finding your way through the legal chaos of an NGO registration, understanding government institutions and their ticks, creating partnerships with other organisations (so you never have to invent the wheel again), establishing good communication to donors, partners and legal entities, finding donors (and keeping them!), mastering the art of finance and building plans (and monitoring plans, and business plans, and all sorts of other plans), ensuring a transparent governance of the organization and – most importantly – establishing the right kind of care and environment for the children that the NGO is responsible for.

We are looking forward to see how Zikomo will develop and will obviously keep you updated about any news!

*"This is the first seed that Sibongile is planting into other African soil..."*

## Wakkerstroom

The summer break came to an end about two weeks ago and the new school year has begun for our Wakkerstroom students (the academic year runs from January to December here). The students that have already been sponsored by the Friends of Wakkerstroom in the past years have been registered again for this year and school fees and uniforms are paid. 15 new students have just begun their High School career at either Robertson or Bonnievale High School and their fees, hostel charges and uniforms have also been provided by the German NGO.

When the Friends of Wakkerstroom Board visited in November the issue of the students' future beyond High

School was brought up. The Friends of Wakkerstroom want to make sure that these young people have realistic possibilities to succeed and provide for themselves one day. That is a difficult goal for the students who do not have the finances or the necessary connections to pay and arrange for tertiary education or learning a trade.

So the idea is to partner with local educational programs and even companies to ensure a good education beyond High School for these young men and women.

As you can see this newsletter is full of new and exciting things. Our work here is being delegated and multiplied, which is what we always had on our hearts. We will keep you posted as usual!

*God's Blessings, the Spalkes*