

# Kenosis Newsletter

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We congratulate Monika and Gunther on their 70'th birthdays!

**Dear friends,** I recently visited Zinhle and Nonkululeko's family for the first time. Zinhle is a four-year-old girl, living on one of our neighbouring farms. I had brought with me a box of clothes for the kids which was packed in Kenosis. After spending some time with the family, Zinhle and her seven-year-old sister Nonkululeko accompanied me to the car. As we walked out of the house, both grabbed my hands on each side. As Zinhle was hopping on my side she said, "I am thinking". I stopped and asked her what she was thinking, and she looked at me with a smiling face and asked, "Why did you bring us the clothes, do the people dressed like you give clothes to anyone?" As I was thinking what to say her sister screamed, "No, she brought us because she loves us...!"

As I drove home, I was struggling with this talk with the two kids. This made me to think more about what we do to people around us when we give them help; do we help them because we have compassion and love

for them or only because we feel pity for them. As Christians, we learn from what Jesus taught about love and that Zinhle and Nonkululeko reminded me of. As Jesus says in Matthew 22: 39, **loving your neighbour as yourself**, is one of the two greatest commandments; if we love ourselves, we should love those around us and whatever we do for them should be out of love and care, as **God first loved us** (1Jn 4:19). We can be reminded day after day that we are Christ's ambassadors who shared His life because of love. We ought to share his love with those around us and whatever we do for them should come out of love.

God bless you.

*Sr Happiness Khumalo*

## **WINTER IS COMING TO KENOSIS!**

Dear friends, I have just read the Newsletter we sent to you in December '04. In it I pointed out that the November heat wakened the Christmas Spirit in my heart. Now, as I sit at my computer, I am wrapped in warm clothes because winter has arrived and the November heat is both in the past and the future. 'The past and the future' – this is exactly where Kenosis is at: Looking into the past and walking into the future.

In these past few months I have spent a lot of time reflecting on the development of Kenosis: How it began as a place to train young women in pastoral work, and how it grew and developed over the last 10 years. Today Kenosis offers 18 vulnerable and orphaned children a home and a place where they can grow up in safety. Our creche continues to offer 50 children pre-school education. Sister Happiness has completed her degree at the University and Sr Lindeni is teaching in the creche. The retreat centre is 'up and running'. Yes, much has grown from that first seed that was planted here in Bishopstowe 10 years ago.

But 'what about the future'. This question arose in me during our yearly evaluation in February this year. And the thought was prompted by a comment one of our volunteers made. I had posed the following question to the volunteers: 'What would they say is one of the biggest challenges Kenosis faces.' And the answer I got from Susanne was: 'Kenosis must be careful that it does not become an island that focuses on itself to such an extent that it loses sight of the outside community.' This little seed grew inside of me and embedded itself firmly in my conscience. And then it was

watered by the experiences we have had. More and more people have come knocking on our door for help: a gogo looking after her 8 orphaned grandchildren; a woman living with Aids, desperate to secure the future of her children; a neighbour concerned with the wellbeing of a friend; the police needing help in counselling two children (5 and 6 years old) who had been raped by fellow learners.

*'Do not become an island, looking after yourself and losing sight of those in need around you.'*

So Kenosis has decided that it is time to take on this challenge and to go beyond our borders. And for this purpose we have put into place two new projects:

1. An educational outreach programme for farm workers in the area.
2. Assisting families with vulnerable and orphaned children in the broader community.

Both these new projects have taken off well.

#### **HIV / AIDS Education of Farm Workers**

Linda Knox, a very good friend of Kenosis and a dedicated volunteer, has taken on the organisation of the educational talks on farms. She works together with Thandekile (one of our Foster Mothers), Princess (working at the Retreat) and Sr Happiness. The talks are well received and to date we have reached about 200 people. (See report by Linda)

#### **Care of vulnerable children**

Sr Happiness has begun identifying families in need in the community and assisting them in accessing grants, arranged clinic visits, advising them and been an emotional support. To support her in this valuable work the Kenosis Foster Mothers have drawn along side her and become 'buddies' (friends) to other 'mothers' caring for orphaned children. We hope that in this way the Kenosis Foster Mothers can share their experience with these mothers, support them in the care of the children in their care and be at their side in order to strengthen them and help them out of feelings of isolated and despair'. We are also planning to offer carers of children some skills training later in this year. Sr Happiness has written a short report on her experience with one family where she managed to secure the safe placement of 4 children.

#### **Kenosis Foster Homes**

Our foster homes and children continue to be the life and soul of Kenosis. In March the children were visited by a group of Canadian High School students and their teachers. It was an enriching experience for all parties involved. The students helped build a playground at the retreat (Graham's report) and in the afternoon spent some time with the children in Kenosis. The children loved the activities, the biggest hit being a parachute with which they played lots of different games.



In April, Kenosis was blessed with a new member. Thandekile's daughter, Philasanda was born on the 24 April 2005. We are thankful for her safe arrival and that both mother and child, after a few complications, could come back home after having spent about 2 weeks in hospital. Philasanda's brothers and sister love her dearly, and she has been integrated into the family, as though she has always been there.

Another exciting development is that our HIV+ child has started Anti Retroviral Treatment in May. Even though I feared that she would show terrible side-effects, the kind of things one reads about in books, none of this came true. She has taken well to the medication and the doctors are confident that soon we will see an improvement in her health.

#### **Creche**

The creche continues to flourish. This year we have a physically handicapped child attending - and what a special experience this is. The mother, who lives in Tamboville desperately wished for him to attend a creche. In desperation she approached Rhoda, our teacher, who was prepared to take on the challenge. This brought great relief and joy to the mother. On the first day we were all a bit anxious, because no one knew

how the other children would react to their fellow learner. But they took him into their midst and played with him as if he could run and walk like them. Today he is 100% integrated into the life of the creche, and if one did not know, one would probably not notice that there is a physically handicapped child in the creche.

### **Sisters**

In April this year Sr Happiness graduated in her Bachelour in Theology (Honours) from the Universtiy of KZN. We congratulate her on this achievement. We are also thankful for the friendships to the Selbitz sisters who are presently working in Swati, near Vryheid. It is a real blessing for our sisters to have another Lutheran Community 'close by' to share experiences and concerns with.

### **Messages of sadness**



On a sad note, Kenosis had to again say farewell to two people in the last half year.

On the 27 February 2005, Nonhlanhla, who had assisted Hlengiwe with her children, passed away in a hospital in Inkanhla (her home). We held a memorial service for her here in Kenosis on the 03 March 2005. Many friends came to bid their last farewell and we are thankful for the part Nonhlanhla played in Kenosis and for the friend she was to many.

Just a few days after the message of Nonhlanhla's death had reached us, we got the message that Rosmary (the former teacher in our creche) had also passed away in Durban. We had lost contact with her, after she left us in March 2004, however we heard that she had had a baby but that she too had died a couple of months after birth.

### **In Closing**

Dear friends, it sadens me to share these messages of death with you. However I feel that they tell a story of the realities in which we live and

which we in South Africa have to face. Even though we experience many joys, successes and blessings in Kenosis, sickness and death remains in our midst.

I began by saying: Winter has arrived. The gras has turned brown, the trees have lost their leaves and are standing bare, the air is dusty and the countryside colourless. Maybe this picture to illustrates how the realities of HIV / AIDS make the countryside of life colourless, bare, dry and dead.

**BUT:** Summer has been and summer is coming. Summer with its green gras and lush trees. Summer with its rain that washes away the dust and cleanses the air. Summer with its flowers and colours. HIV / AIDS makes life look bare but I have learned to look for the colour in it. And I find the colour when I hear an orphaned child laugh. I see the lushness of life when children play with oneanother and discover the world together. I see the life in the cheekiness and confidence of a child. These are the things that give me hope and add colour to the bareness and somewhat hopelessness of the AIDS pandemic.

My hope is that we can all see this colour, acknowlage it and believe that even though it sometimes seems as though winter is here to stay, **Summer has been and Summer is coming.** I wish that you all may experience a bit of summer also in your own winters.

May God Bless you all.

*Elke Carrihill*

### **A message from our children**

The homework groups have become an integral part of Kenosis and the children are enjoying it and one can see some progress being made. Susannes group has written a short passage for our Newsletter:

Haleluja, Hallo

We are the Friday children from Susannes group. Our names are Siyabonga, Sihle, Sane and Nelly. We like to go to school. Our school is in Glenwood. We like to live in Kenosis, because we like to play games with the volunteers and because we like to swim.



We like to play at school and we like to write. We learned the clock at school. We go to school in the kombi. Sometimes we play bicycles when we come back from school. We like to go to our homework group. We like to write in our homeworkgroup something. We like to go to Sunday School.

Bye, Bye. This is our letter. (Not edited)

*Siyabonga, Nelly, Sihle and Sane.*

## **Eduational Outreach Progamme on Farms**



Since Febuary this year we have been running HIV/AIDS Education Workshops for farm workers on farms in the Bishopstowe area. These have been well received by farmers and workers alike. The farmers are happy for the HIV awareness, as this will not only help their staff but also ensure that they have

staff for the forthcoming years. The workers too are thankful that someone is taking notice of their plight and is informing them of their obtions, in terms of medication, lifestyle and the assistance they are entitled to by the state.

After an information session there is time for questions. Many meaningful questions are answered. From the questions one can judge that HIV infections are being noticed in the workers own homes and because of the lack of information and resources they are often unaware how to handle the situation. This sometimes fuels stigmatisation and ostracisation of the person with the virus.

During these workshops we also ask for volunteers to come forward to be contact persons between the local Clinic Committee and the workers. In time we hope to train these volunteers as Home Based Carers, in order for them to be able to assist the sick on the farms where they reside.

We are excited to report that so far we have conducted 6 workshops and have reached just over 200 people. We look forward to this project expanding in order to reach another 200 people in the coming months.

*Linda Knocks*

***We have a new Webpage:  
[www.kenosis.org.za](http://www.kenosis.org.za)***

### **“At last we have a home”**

The three children seemed to be saying these words when they arrived at their aunts’ home for the very first time. They showed happy faces although they were a bit shy when they met their cousins. For me it was not a problem to explain to them why I was removing them from the farmhouse to their aunt.

It was in December 2003 when I came to know a lady from the nearby farm. She came to our house, accompanied by another lady and they wanted to speak to me. This lady was in tears and wanted to commit suicide because she was sick and understood that she would never be cured again. After having a talk with her I sent her home and I started to know where she stayed and I had to look after her, especially when she was sick and encouraged her to take her medicines almost everyday. She has three children, a girl (6) and two boys 4 and 2 years old. Several times this lady got so sick that we thought she was dying and during this time we sisters had to keep her children in our house.

During last year 2004, she started working again but strangely, she could not allow the children to go to school and the report from school always came to Kenosis since we had registered the older child at the nearby school. I also got reports from the farm that she was abusing her children.

Some times she would shut them up in the house for some days with nobody to feed or look after them. Later everyone realized that she was mentally disturbed. We had a big problem at Kenosis since we had no more space to keep the kids for some time, but at least I could make sure that they had eaten during the time when the mother was not there.

I started to communicate this problem with the Department of Social Welfare and at the same time trying to find a close relative who would care for the children. At last I found an older sister of the lady who was willing to care for the children. The very following day after speaking with her, I brought the kids to her home. This made it easy for social workers to work with the case. The children's aunt was offered a special grant for keeping children in her home, which she would get until the children are fostered to her. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2005, in front of the magistrate, she became an official foster mother for the three children. And at last the children could call her home their home and they enjoy the schooling there.

*Sr Happiness Khumalo*

## **INTERVIEW WITH GUNTHER AND MONIKA WITTENBERG**

**QUESTION 1:** Together with Kenosis you are celebrating a special birthday. You both are now 70 years of age. Kenosis is existing for 10 years. At the age of 25 would you ever have imagined Kenosis?

**GUNTHER:** No, really not at the age of 25. The first vision of a project like Kenosis came to me in 1982 at a time when I often preached at Machibisa. I noticed that there was a great need for trained lay people who could help in the service of the Church. This led to the first ideas of a training programme for young (black) women, the „students' project“.



**QUESTION 2:** You mentioned what led you to the wish to start such a project. What were the main reasons for wanting to implement such a project and when did you start?

**GUNTHER:** There were of course many factors that played a role, but there were three main reasons which motivated me to act.

Firstly, as I said, there were too few pastors employed by ELCSA, so that trained lay helpers were urgently needed.

Secondly, we wanted to build bridges between the separate Lutheran churches.

Thirdly, we wanted to establish a community of Christians devoted to service. A religious community can often work much more effectively than the „big church“.

In 1987 a possibility of implementation presented itself through the contact with the Bavarian Mission. I met Dr. Becker, the Director of the Bavarian Mission, and explained my vision and he said, „Let us start. You find the women who are prepared to join you, we will give you the starting capital.“ With the help of the Mission we were able to buy the old Bishopstowe manse and a substantial piece of ground with it.

**QUESTION 3:** When you were chaplain of Kenosis, could you realize all your visions or are there projects which are not yet implemented?

**GUNTHER:** Yes, we had problems in finding enough interested women for the training. Kenosis does not train students at the moment. We also would have like to see more growth of the sisterhood. But who knows, perhaps needs in both areas could again arise.

Still, we are quite amazed at all those developments which have taken place over the years.

**QUESTION 4:** Kenosis was founded at the end of 1995. Did the political events of that time have any influence on your work? Would the founding of Kenosis have been possible 10-15 years ago?

**MONIKA:** No, I don't think so. Initially, the farmers in the neighbourhood were not happy with us coming here.

**GUNTHER:** 15 years ago we would not have been able to establish Kenosis without a permit and each farmer in the neighbourhood would have had to give his consent which would have been difficult to obtain. Times have changed. Now, the majority of the farmers in the Bishopstowe area are positively inclined towards Kenosis. **(to be continued ....)**

## The Heusenstamm Support Group

After her first visit to South Africa in 2002 Karin Wachendorf from Frankfurth, Germany, felt the desire to assist people and children less fortunate than herself in South Africa. Together with Rosemarie Hippe, an English teacher in Heusenstamm / Frankfurt, she founded the Heusenstamm Support Group. The aim was to collect money in order to support projects in Kwazulu Natal. Kenosis has received a lot of supported from them. The group has come up with creative ideas to raise money. One of the first ideas was a project to sell 'Gute-Laune-Hähnchen'. These could be used for a number of things, including throwing it against the wall to release built up tensions and frustrations.

Rosemarie writes: *'These are cute little figures in the shape of cockerels mades from bits of pretty material with red felt crests, beady eyes and filled with dry peas. Karin wanted to sell these at a school festival.*

*The Haenchen-fever broke out. One suummer morning the Support Group met for a Hähnchen Sewing Bee. Portable sewing machienes*

*were lugged into our meeting place, and the ladies got cracking immediatelly. A lively exchange of bits of material, eager comparing, cutting these into the right shapes, sewing them up and also laughter and a lot of correcting when the crests ended up on the behind .... In few morning hours more than 50 Hähnchen were completed, more were delivered later and Karin sold them all at the festival of Otto-Hahn-Schule which was held under the motto 'The Children of the World'. What could have been more appropriate.*

In a recent email, Rosemarie informed me that the group was having another 'sewing bee' for Kenosis. This time they are making little bags out of colourful material, and filling these with soaps which a local soap



factory donated. These they will sell at summer events in Heusenstamm. We thank Karin, Rosemarie and the support group for their enthusiasm, creativity, generosity and support.

If anyone would like to share on activities relating to Kenosis, please do not hesitate to send them to us and we can include these into our newsletters.

**THANK YOU AGAIN TO ALL  
WHO HAVE SO GENEROUSLY  
SUPPORTED US!**

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### **Our Account Numbers:**

Kenosis Community – First National Bank – Hayfields

(22-14-25) 5677 111 4919

**OR**

Kenosis AIDS Orphans Project

First National Bank – Hayfields

(22-14-25) 620 4669 5576