

## *Fowey Fables – No.19*

*July 2008*

Poverty is big news in 2008 despite the fact that we live in a world with a degree of affluence unimaginable even a generation or two ago. The price of staple foods and oil have risen steeply in just a few months pushing the poorest billion people on Earth closer to starvation and the richest billion closer to being unable to satisfy the thirst of their SUVs. Political oppression in Zimbabwe and the consequent desperate hunger has been on the news every day but it has become apparent that similar conditions have existed unreported in much of the rest of Africa for a long time.

Jesus said 'For the poor you always have with you...' (Jn.12:8) so do we just resign ourselves to poverty and suffering and look forward to heaven? I have recently been studying the book of Exodus again. Squeezed in between the Great Escape story of the first 17 chapters and the Great Visual Aid, the tabernacle, in the last 17 chapters is a brief introduction to the Law in chapters 18-23. We know, or think we know, the 10 Commandments but what surrounds them is a bit of a mystery. In chapter 18, Moses' father-in-law reminds him of the importance of training and trusting leaders, a strategy often forgotten as we try unsuccessfully to micromanage and so burn out in the process. In chapter 19, verses 3-6, God reveals His longing, for a relationship with His people. He loves us but we cannot immediately rush into His arms as if we were in a Hollywood movie until we have understood that we are different. Sin and rebellion separate us and need to be removed before we can know Him for ourselves. Once that has happened through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross we can experience and share His love. In chapter 20 God is not telling us, as most people suppose, that these are the rules to be kept so that we can be accepted by Him. They simply outline what knowing Him will look like in practice. As Jesus explained in Matt.22:36-40, the commandments describe loving Him totally, numbers 1-4, and loving our neighbour unreservedly, numbers 5-10. Love cannot be commanded but it springs from a wonderful relationship expressed.

Chapters 21-23 are usually assumed to take God's rules for Israel deeper into detail but they have just one theme, love for the needy. Who are the needy in our society? The poor, widows, orphans, the sick, the disabled, the very young, the aged, the hungry, the homeless, victims of violence and theft, and new immigrants are all to be protected and cared for according to these three chapters. Those who are strong physically, mentally, socially and economically can protect themselves. The weak are helpless to help themselves. The love of God in us compels us to love the weak in every way they need. That is what Jesus did when He came into a world of spiritually weak people.(II Cor.5:14)

Christine is the latest member of the Hanne family to visit Uganda where she will be until the end of this month to see where we can help particularly the HIV/AIDS orphans and widows with whom we have been involved through John and Jessica Wandera. Her opportunity to go came from a lovely gift from a friend. Though we are missing her greatly, the rest of the family are delighted because Christine has put her heart into organising sponsorship of around 50 orphans and we know she will come back even more fired up to see support for them grow.

At the beginning of May our first pastors' training week was held in Uganda for about 25 pastors and apparently went well. The next one will be in August. The idea is being taken up in several other countries. The CD and study book are available free to anyone who believes they would benefit. The course covers 4 Bible books and two topics.

Nick, Pete and I head off on 13<sup>th</sup> July to run our annual ski camp down at Ruapehu. The snow is the best for nearly 20 years. At this point numbers are down on previous years probably, because

parents are anxious about the economy, but we still believe God is in this. Our great hope as always is that those kids who would never normally be able to afford to go will have the opportunity to experience a magnificent part of God's creation and to learn of Jesus. If you know any young people between 11 and 18 who would benefit from coming, put them in touch with us as soon as possible on 09-535-9095 or [jahanne@clear.net.nz](mailto:jahanne@clear.net.nz).

Nick and Pete are moving ahead with their project just out of Opotiki in the Bay of Plenty. They are acquiring a large log cabin in 55 acres on the river at the entrance to the Waioeka Gorge as the base for a programme for young people (of any age!). The priority will be the needy and those who could help them. It is currently owned by a lovely Christian lady who is 200% supportive of their dream because it has also been her and her late husband's dream for many years. Step one is to move into another log cabin on adjoining land and to start the major task of cleaning up the land and house. They are eager to host small teams of willing helpers and to hear from those with young people who may be future campers. You can reach Nick on [nickjhanne1982@hotmail.com](mailto:nickjhanne1982@hotmail.com) or 027-635-9095.

At the beginning of June I had another weekend in Suva speaking in the Godly Servant Leaders (GSL) seminar organised by our old friend Rig Reddy. Again they drew together leaders from different walks of life to explore the revolutionary Christian concept of leadership so much needed in Fiji after the troubled last few years. Out of the weekend came the invitation to present a similar programme to students at their conference at the end of August, with a third GSL weekend to be held a week later. An indication of the growing poverty in Fiji was in the number of beggars on the streets of Suva. At the end of June, Nick went back to Muanicula near Savu Savu in Fiji to encourage those we know there and to progress the development of the centre where, as we have shared before, we have many hopes and plans. After more than 30 years there we realise God is not in a hurry but that building relationships with people comes first.

Bible School has grown substantially this year so that about 60 students are now involved regularly, though mostly part time. What is exciting is their hunger to know Jesus better. After all these years, teaching the same old Bible could have become boring but nothing could be further from the truth. I still have the same eager buzz of anticipation as I head over to take another lecture!

My medical practice continues to be immensely fulfilling. The needy come in many forms, some rich and some poor. Patients have so often become great friends especially those I have known a long time. Last month my 4 years of running a weekly clinic for the homeless at the Auckland City Mission came to an end as the Mission decided to re-organise their service towards a full time clinic. I will miss them greatly though a steady trickle continue to find their way out to Howick. I feel so much at home among the homeless! It probably has something to do with being in temporary accommodation on our way to heaven, as Christians.(II Cor.5:1-5)

Keep in touch. We always enjoy news of you.

Our love in Christ

Tony, Chris, Nick and Pete

PS If you did not receive Fowey Fables 18 in March because our administration was overwhelmed you may have been relieved! But if you do want to catch up it is on our website [www.foweylodge.com](http://www.foweylodge.com)

