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4th Term Newsletter 2020

Dear Udobo Family and Friends,

At the end of a very different year, we continue to praise God for His hand over us. This year began wonderfully and not only was the school full (always the prayer of my heart) we even opened a sixth class to accommodate a third Grade R class. Such joy and then towards the end of the first term Covid19 hit and the country went into lockdown.

Our Grade R teachers especially did all they could to assist the children in their classes over this time. We put out daily work on the whatsapp groups so the parents could instruct the children and then send in photographs of the completed work. Later we put together workbooks for Literacy, Numeracy and Phonics and guided the parents in how to assist their little ones. Altogether we put out nine books – three books three times and the children did a page of each every day.

I was delighted when we could go into school and prepare for the return of our children – the staff came in and together we scrubbed, packed away anything which could not be cleaned every day, prepared a quarantine area and put up posters We supplied the staff with sanitizers and protective masks. We trained for dealing with day to day ‘new normal’. We sent the chef and another staff member on a ‘Food handling in the time of Covid19’ course as well as two other staff members on a course dealing with quarantine regulations in the event of one of the children having a fever or other symptoms. We intended opening in June, but the schools were told to open at the end of August, so we went back into lockdown.

Eventually we opened on the 24th August but had to place the children into A and B groups so that we could ‘social distance’ in the classroom. Every morning we have a team of three at the gate where the children were sanitized, had their temperatures taken, questions asked and finally walked through bleach infused water before they went to class. We were incredibly blessed by the Yellowwood Park Evening Woman’s institute who made us 190 child sized masks in attractive child-friendly designs. We gave them out when children forgot to wear their masks and I suspect some hid their masks in order to be given one of our special ones!!



We had to take pictures of our children, the graduates in cap and gown and the other little ones in uniform. Then there were reports to prepare and graduation certificates to copy and laminate. We have been incredibly blessed by a volunteer, Sharon, who came in to help in the office and she quickly became Pat's right hand as she helped by photocopying work for the staff for next year, dealt with people who needed information about placing their children and sanitizing people who came in for interview. Sharon was our special angel and helped in countless ways – we will miss her as she moves from the area and wish her well in her new home! Wendy Kirstin from the church printed the certificate in colour and they looked beautiful!



I dealt with what seemed like endless families coming to place their children in the school. Schools have closed down, due to the virus and people have lost jobs or have been retrenched and the school is needed now more than ever. People have come in with stories of such loss that I felt emotionally exhausted just listening, but these families have to live the experience every day.. Udobo Pre-Primary is here for such a time as this.

We always have bright spots though. A woman from the Montclair Methodist Church managed to access three grocery vouchers from our local Pick and Pay and three of the most needy families received R1000.00 x 3 vouchers for October, November and December!

We did not plan to have a Graduation Ceremony for our Grade R children, but this is something our families dream of from the time their children begin at the school. So, this year we had three graduations, one per class. Once again, we sanitized the church hall and complied with all regulations, only two people per child were allowed to attend the function. I begged parents not to buy special clothes and once again the children arrived looking like angels in their white dresses and boys in white shirts. I take comfort that they will wear the clothes at Christmas and family events! We had a low-key hour, the children said a poem, we watched a video presentation about the school before the children received their certificate, photograph, school report and a lovely package that we were able to put together for each child. We could not gather to share tea and snacks, but the parents went away happy.



As you can imagine we missed out on months of fees as well as children returning where I had to adjust low fees even lower because of jobs lost or short time payments.



This Christmas time when many are apart from family and friends, reminds me of a couple travelling away from their family and friends as they obeyed the call to register in Bethlehem. They were far from family and friends when their baby arrived in a borrowed room far from home. They had unexpected visitors who spoke of angel chorus who came to worship the baby. Somehow this Christmas is a time of real connection to that first time – we may not have experienced all that they did, but the nativity seemed very close, just a breath away. I know that this year God can speak to us in our homes as we cannot attend church, and in a quieter time open our eyes more fully to the Gift that is Jesus,

However, through all of this, through it all and miraculously, the staff has been fully paid during the whole of 2020 – I give God all the glory. He remains faithful and gracious to His school and those who work in it. I ask that you continue to pray for God's favour and that in the new year we could redouble our efforts to bring these little ones to a deeper understanding of how much God loves them. Please pray for my Governing Body -they have worked hard this year. Prayers for the KZN market who provide us with fruit and vegetables. The Friends of Udobo who help to keep our doors open – thank you – we appreciate what you do for us. To all those who have given and helped and prayed for and loved us – thank you!

As always, I am humbled by God's grace, joyful at His presence and incredibly grateful – God is so good,
May God richly bless each of you,

Anne Snyders

Principal



Mawande, who assists Toinette in our youngest class, safely delivered her little boy, Bandile. The whole staff is delighted at the arrival of 'our' baby. What a joyous event.