

## The nature and fruit of the ministry

5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.

*II Corinthians 3: 5-6*

What a privilege it is not to serve God and carry His gospel to the corners of the world! Who can remain untouched by it? It does not come from ourselves, and so we learn and grow tremendously by walking the path with each student.

## A VISIT TO BAVIAANSPOORT

It's Saturday...cold... wet...the smell of fresh rain.

We sit tightly against each other on a hard bench, waiting to be searched. Together we feel the anticipation for the unknown have been here several times, but otherwise we are all strange in this little building. After half an hour of making small conversation, we are almost friends, once again bound together by the people inside...

It's visiting time, recognizing time, meeting time.

The prison officials carefully search every item in every package that is to be taken inside; half must return to the car, may not enter: no glass bottle of roll-on deodorant, no hand-knitted caps, no cookies (their tuck shop must also be able to make a living!). Finally the first five are called, we may go into the prison. Half shivering from cold mixed with a little tension or nerves, we giggle among ourselves as the tension rises.

The old buildings are well maintained and the grounds are neat and strikingly clean. Especially the beautiful vegetable gardens are a feast for the eye. I later heard the prison is self-sufficient in all their vegetable needs!

At the maximum section, each item in our (now slimmer) package is written down and flattened and prodded and examined from all sides. All in the midst of friendly chatting, accommodating guards. Soon it is my turn to walk through the (once again) very neat gardens to the grand maximum prison building: naturally high fenced, of course strictly guarded, but friendly in view and reception. Paperwork on paperwork later I may walk into a room where several people are already hanging out with each other around a few tables.

The orange suits stand out brightly, the faces range from hardy to endearing to smiling to endlessly tired to sad-terrified to absent-minded.

Life for these approximately 550 residents begins at 5am when the lights are turned on after nightfall (or the whistle is blown amidst 'loadshedding'...!). Get up and wash, get dressed and tidy up the cell, read the Bible and pray, get ready for the day. At 08:00 breakfast is served, partly prepared by fellow prisoners who had been approved to work in the kitchen.

The morning is spent working: either studying on your own or in a specific area on site. Lunch follows at 13:00, after which the prisoners with permission may go out into the large "courtyard" to socialize with each other, according to their own needs. According to my companion, here you quickly find out who is friend or foe and one can freely associate with anyone. Dinner is served early at 16:30 and after that everyone goes to their cells for the rest of the evening. Apparently there is a television, but not everyone is allowed to watch it.

After a good conversation, we follow the same route back to the gate, searched, checked, searched again and eventually we could go our merry way.

We were deep under the impression of the privilege of free movement, choices and actions, in contrast with the discovered life behind bars... Yes, certainly deserved and inevitable, yet thankfully "open" to adapt and change and live anew... Thank you Lord, that You are present everywhere!

*(Placed anonymously on request)*

## Here are some statistics about Baviaanspoort:

Baviaanspoort Correctional Services Center consists of several subdivisions. There is a Medium and Maximum section, hosted in separate buildings. Baviaanspoort also has a youth section where minor offenders are accommodated.

We currently have 35 students in Baviaans Medium and about 80 students in Baviaans Maximum section. So there are a total of 115 students taking the CPM course! This is also the first prison where Crossroads started Bible study courses!



The Crossroads Team

## *Would you like to make a contribution?*

We are regularly in need of A4 paper reams, NIV Bibles and native language Bibles and other stationery. If you would like to donate any of these items, you are welcome to contact us for arrangements. Or you may make a financial contribution that we could use towards these and other expenses. We would also like to thank each individual who regularly contributes financially to CPM!

Banking details for CPM: FNB Cheque acc 62819516066 Branch: 250655

