

# Alun and Debbie Burt

September 2024



*Preschool Sunday School*

Dear Family and Friends,

*'But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us'. 2 Corinthians 4:7-9.*

Have you ever experienced a season where you wonder what more is coming your way, only to look back on that season a few months later and see God's faithfulness? 2024 has been that sort of season for us. We returned from the UK to a massive break in at St Thomas as well as the news that our dear staff member Nadene was needing to move on. Heavy pastoral loads, health challenges and the constant demands of parenting four children left us wondering if this was tolerable in the long term. We concluded that it wouldn't be if there weren't such wonderful gospel opportunities here. When you live close to evil, you get to see remarkable stories of redemption too. The trials, whilst not nice, are worth it.

At times when we have been feeling anxious, saddened and deflated by recent events and circumstances, we are reminded of the truth of 2 Corinthians 4:7-9 – that we hold the gospel in fragile 'jars'. The power of the gospel that will change lives in Heideveld is not dependent on great buildings or good staff, although they are a great blessing. The gospel is going out and people are experiencing true conversion – this won't stop when buildings are damaged, and staff have to leave the team. This encourages us despite the setbacks.

Alun's has just returned from leading the first St Thomas Men's Camp in Villiersdorp. He was massively encouraged by the depth of fellowship amongst the guys, their willingness to engage with God's word and their openness to share deeply from their own lives. With six sessions studying Biblical Manhood,

the lived experience of this group is beyond what we would often expect to find in just a handful of men. Battles with addiction, gangsterism, bereavement, rebellious children and work challenges have touched these men and their families profoundly, so bringing the Bible to bear on these issues was hugely beneficial. The men all loved the weekend and we pray it continues to bring much gospel fruit. On a lighter note, Alun took part in some 'next level' dominoes games on both evenings and quickly realised he has lots to learn to meet the standard of play on display!



*Men's Camp in Villiersdorp*



*Denominational One Day Women's Convention*

Debbie is now working with a team of ladies in preparation for the third Women's Camp on 4-6 October. We are indebted to Bruce and Heather Barrow who generously allow our church to use their beautiful farm for these weekend retreats. One lady aged 54 who is attending in October has never ever been away from home before – the chance to leave the Cape Flats and drive two hours outside the city will provide her a chance to experience God's creation in a way that it totally new.

Many of you will be actively involved in a Bible study group yourself. Maybe you have been meeting together with the same group of people for years. As

you look back over the years, can you testify to concrete ways that God has been at work in the group changing the way the group live and act? Debbie has been very encouraged this year by the tangible difference that studying the Bible has made to those in her Thursday night group. The leader himself is testimony to God's power to change lives. R can perhaps be described as **a reluctant believer**. In his early 50s, R will tell you himself, he was a naughty boy who grow into an angry adult. R used to make every excuse not to attend Bible study when his wife invited him. His wife used to sign him up to clean the church, which he did and thought this would keep the peace at home and would be doing enough to earn heaven. R came to understand the gospel and his heart has been changed. He still struggles with anger at times, but he seeks to parent his now adult sons with increased patience and grace, he regularly shares Jesus with the teens in his taxi to school, he serves at church on the church council not out of obligation but because his heart bursts with excitement for St Thomas and a desire for others to experience the life changing message of the gospel. He seeks to treat his young employees with kinder words and will ask for forgiveness if he messes up – an action that takes his employees by surprise. After a recent break-in at church, several men turned up at his house hoping for cash in exchange for information. Previously R would have gone out with a hammer, literally taking justice into his own hands. This time he refused the information, kept the cash and told them calmly to report it at the police station. God is at work here and we count it a privilege to witness it up close.

Life at home is busy. Malachi is happiest with a soccer ball, Timothy is preparing for a school oral about the Vikings, Ilana takes her Grade 5 piano exam this month and Likhona is making steady progress on his bookkeeping course. We were all thrilled to see Dillon Solomons, our previous apprentice, back for a visit from Johannesburg. Dillon shared how reading the Bible in the college cafeteria where he is studying HR, has led to him now leading twice weekly Bible studies with an average of 20 students! We miss Dillon at St Thomas, but we are thrilled that his gospel heart is making a kingdom difference in another city!

Thank you for partnering with us, for your words of encouragement, prayers and generous giving. Every blessing,

Alun, Debbie, Likhona (19), Ilana (16), Malachi (12) and Timothy (8) xx

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