

Student News

The number of students currently being sponsored is as follows:

Lesotho OIC	10 students
St.Mary's	15 students
St Elizabeth's	3 students
Technical School of Leribe	8 students.

Public funding arrangements for vocational training in Lesotho are changing again, so in May Sister Jean Mary, one of BET's Trustees, flew to Lesotho on a 6 month fact finding mission on behalf of the Trust. Many things have been changing in the country and we need to have first hand knowledge of how best to use BET's resources and to target students in need. She will be meeting with the Lesotho Committee and our Administrator, Motselisi Hlubi. She will also visit all the schools and colleges where we have sponsored students currently or in the past, preferably twice during her sojourn. Finally she will making contact with government officers and representatives of Manpower which is now supporting an increasing number of students in technical subjects. Please pray for Jean Mary during her arduous trip and that we may have much to discuss and share with you on her return.



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2006 Newsletter

2005 was a very busy year. We have made new friends and contacts, people who are also concerned about the future of Lesotho and concerned to promote our work. Thank you to you all.

Those of you who have visited Leribe and know the work of the Community of the Holy Name, will be saddened, yet rejoice for him, that Fr Brown, died after a difficult few years. Many young men and families have great cause to be grateful to him. He went to Lesotho upon his retirement from Parochial ministry in the UK, for the last years he lived on his pension making provision for many local needs. He also found a role producing Vestments, many young Sesotho priests were given handmade stoles that came direct from his hand. When the original visits were made from which the Basotho Educational Trust stemmed, it was Fr Brown who provided a rough realism for us, in recent visits we have enjoyed conversation and shared concerns. Now may he rest in peace.

In 2006 one of our CHN trustees will spend some time in Lesotho, this is good news. We are aware that most of us do not speak Sesotho, or understand the nuances of the culture and language. Jean Mary will hopefully be able to collect information and ascertain what is happening. I am sure that if you have particular questions, she would be pleased to try and find the answers.

The people of Lesotho are still seeking to raise the increase the independence of their country and their lives, we continue to work with them.

Basotho Educational Trust

Community

Community assumes some sharing, something in common, it may start as something basic like family or neighbours: we work for it to transcend those links and be about global vision and goal and purpose.

I want to share a particular experience that was initially small, yet has changed the lives of ordinary people, both in this country and in Lesotho, a country the size of Wales, in Southern Africa.

Over twenty years ago a group of students from London had an adventure holiday. They were part of the University chaplaincy here in London. Scientists and engineers from Imperial College and a pianist from Royal College of Music and two of us who were chaplains. It all began with lunch: a lunch in a convent in Worcestershire. There were only three of us there, one sister, an elderly lady and myself. The elderly lady had just come back from Lesotho, I didn't know where it was..she had spent six months helping set up work in a craft centre, attempting to get the women pool their skills to produce some income. After about 15 minutes I found myself asking if I took a group of students would there be anything for them to do, anything that they could contribute. It was a sort of vague, but of course, sort of answer.

Nine months later, two groups, totalling about 18 in all, went to Lesotho, it wasn't easy, I sat in a particular airline office when I went to collect the tickets refusing to move without them, they were suddenly demanding two thousand pounds more than the agreed price.

In Southern Africa we experienced the beauty and the confusion: South Africa during apartheid was alien to us; Lesotho was free, but it was poor. We lodged with a group of Basotho nuns; at night doing English country dancing under the winter stars. During the day, we helped to physically build a dwelling for women and girls who had some handicap. All too often such girls were left without education or means of support, they were regarded as non-marriageable and for them to die young would solve the problem they presented. It was fun: holding up a solar heater and wondering how we were supposed to fix it, dealing with plumbing and painting and working in the craft centre. At the same time we saw poverty, we saw how the country lost most of its soil through erosion, poor people gather wood for fuel, cutting down the trees, without trees the soil does not stay. We learned to wear the Basotho blankets and hats and everyone agreed we had a fantastic time.

When the new term began, the students said they had really enjoyed it, but one or two asked why did we do all the work, why didn't the local people, had we deprived someone of a job? The answer was that any education beyond

primary level has to be paid for ..it was beyond the means of many people to pay to learn a skill even as seemingly basic as painting and decorating and there was a total lack of self confidence in any ability to do this work. It was through the experience and vision of those students that the Basotho Educational Trust was set up.



We raise money to help students through a course of primary technical training: motor mechanics, plumbing, brick laying, more recently IT and Home economics. We raise the money in this country and a local committee in Lesotho decides who benefits. £160 sees someone through a year at college.

Last year I visited Lesotho again. It remains a very beautiful country, still very poor, it doesn't figure in lists as a country to have debt cancelled, we don't think anyone has ever given them a loan, they have struggled. The struggle is getting worse. Not only poverty but HIV/Aids is taking its toll. I met a girl of 19 whom we were sponsoring, she was doing a course in motor mechanics, both parents had died. She had to walk 10 km to college each day and 10 km back, there is no hostel accommodation for girls, her hope when she finishes is to work with cars and pay for her younger brothers and sisters to go to school.

All our talk about community is a false and vain confection if it has no place for the poor and deprived, no place for compassion and understanding. Fun, enjoyment, adventure are all part of it, but community is not feel good, nor static, it is living and moving, and each of us has a role to play, it all begins with a daring to say yes when the call with a ring of eternal truth comes. We may not be like Abraham, or even Barnabas or the fishermen, but each of us matters and each of us affects the whole.

Excerpt from sermon given by Jackie Fox in Westminster Abbey to the Greycoats School, on the theme of Community.