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June 9, 2026

Dear Ladies of the American Baptist Women's Ministries of Michigan,

Hello and we pray this finds you well. In April we started our first weekly health builder groups combined with a blood pressure skills training course. We now have almost 40 participants at Izulu Orphan Projects at Zululand, Etete and Grace Family Church Cornubia. Our trainers recruit the participants who are largely from Zulu and Xhosa backgrounds. All group members are encouraged to choose something that they have learned that week and make commitments towards healthy change in their life. Each weekly session is divided into four parts - social, spiritual, physical and mind. We start the social part of the session by following up on the progress of the commitments that people made in earlier sessions. We then ask people to share prayer requests and spend some time praying for each other. Then we discuss topics from the Spiritual Powers Bible Study or other Bible readings relevant to the session. People are invited to study the materials at home and fill out questions regarding the readings. We encourage people to think about how they can apply what they have read in the Bible to their daily lives. For the physical topic of the session we teach exercises and show videos on healthy eating and gardening. We end the mind part of the session by teaching people about the brain and stress management. All group members are invited to work towards a certificate in blood pressure skills which requires weekly homework and quizzes. This usually requires the health builder trainer to hold a session in addition to the weekly health builder lifestyle group

Thank you for your gift of \$308.05 in March 2026 towards our mission support. We remain involved with poultry, trees, mushrooms and vegetable gardens along with our medical ministry and disciple making. We are working closely to advance the skills of new mushroom farmers; this is a good season with the cooler winter weather here. If you would like to be included in our Prayer Updates sent by e-mail, please write to us at bethelhealthbuilders@yahoo.com. We pray the joy of Christ be with you.

Blessings,

Rick & Anita

Rick and Anita

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? But how are they to preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!" Romans 10:11-15 (NASB)

Bethel Health Builders

Prayer Update

June 15, 2026

Note: This newsletter is not intended for posting on a public webpage. Please go to www.internationalministries.org/author/ar-gutierrez/ for articles that can be publicly posted.

We had a difficult start to the year as Anita's 89-year-old father Gyula Ficsor required hospitalization in Hungary twice and passed away in March. Please pray for our family especially for Anita's mom as we adjust to the loss of Papa.

We give thanks for our brothers and sisters in Christ. We thank you our supporters who allow us to serve here in this capacity. We thank God for the people we are allowed to be with here. We ask for continued focus and health to carry forward this work.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Gratefully, all seasons are profitable for growing food in South Africa. Gardens, mushrooms and fruit trees thrive in this season. Outdoor temperatures are more pleasant for gathering by day. We are called to be fruitful, praying with one another and encouraging people to grow in faith with Jesus. In April we started our first weekly health builder groups combined with a blood pressure skills training course. We now have almost 40 participants at Izlu Orphan Projects at Zululand, Etete and Grace Family Church Cornubia. Our trainers recruit the participants who are largely from Zulu and Xhosa backgrounds. Each weekly session is divided into four parts - social, spiritual, physical and mind. We show videos we



Spiritual Powers Bible study in Etete

have made in English and Zulu that provide information on topics of nutrition, the importance of exercise, gardening and coping with stress. All group members are encouraged to choose something that they have learned that week and make commitments towards healthy change in their life. The group reads and discusses the Bible. We encourage people to think about how they can apply what they have read in the Bible to their daily lives. All group members are invited to work towards a certificate in blood pressure skills which requires weekly homework and quizzes. This usually requires the health builder trainer to hold a session in addition to the weekly health builder lifestyle group. In this newsletter we will share in more detail about each of the three groups. The Christian life is never easy, and from the prayers of our brothers and sisters we see just how difficult daily life is for them. Violence, crime, unemployment, debt and disease make life harrowing. And yet our people gather, learning new skills and learning to trust in God and His Word. We honor our South African brothers and sisters, who live boldly and show up for training despite the enormous difficulty of their daily lives. It is a continual honor to live and work amongst them, who show us what living with grace in adversity looks like.

Yours in Christ, Rick and Anita

For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? But how are they to preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!" Romans 10:11-15 (NASB)

Health Builder Group in Etete



Jabulile has felt called by God to be a missionary since she was a teenager. She been involved in health builder training for the past 15 years. She is currently leading a group of 10 people in Etete near the town of Shaka's Kraal. Instead of paying our facilitators, we try to give them the training and equipment they need to set up small business ventures. Jabulile was one of the first people we set up with a dome, incubator and chickens and she has been operating her own small scale chicken business for about 12 years. With our encouragement and training she took up gardening. Her husband has been involved in fruit tree air layering. Years ago we gave her an old printer to use to print health builder training materials and for income generation. People in Etete lack local print-

ing services but they need to make copies for school, resumes or other documents. Her printer gave out about two years ago. Last month we were able to supply Jabulile with a new printer. Their free government house is too small to host a group inside so we set up a geodesic learning dome for her. We furnished the dome with tables and chairs and gave Jabulile a small used laptop to show training videos. We set Jabulile up with cups, saucers and plates and tea, coffee and snacks. We hold the groups with Jabulile on Saturday mornings. Sometimes we hear the drums of ancestral worship in the background while we are holding our Saturday sessions. After the Bible study, we teach some light calisthenics and stretching which people can do at home. We also have exercise bands and mats that we use. We realized how few of the participants have ever done basic calisthenics like a push-up. The holistic nature of the classes keeps students engaged. We show animated videos that we produce on the health topics that we have translated into Zulu. Because flat drawings of the anatomy can be difficult for people to understand who have no background in biology, 3-D physical models of the body are helpful. We created a map of the circulatory, respiratory, digestive and urinary systems which is printed on PVC and which we roll out on the table. People stand around the table and move components of the blood around the body. Anita's father was a genetics professor in bio-medical sciences and was an enthusiastic advocate of group learning methods. It must run in the genes! Jabulile opens the learning center for group members taking the Blood Pressure Skills Training course for an additional session that she holds during the week. A woman Nzama (not her real name) admitted that she has not liked reading the Bible in the past. The Holy Spirit worked through the group Bible studies and discussions so that she began to attend church with Jabulile and study the Bible every day. Another woman who is a witchdoctor and employed by the government as a visiting home health aide is completing the optional home study portion of the Spiritual Powers Bible Study.

Prayer Requests:

- Continued stamina for Jabulile as new groups are started with the strong community interest
- That the openness of the group and earnestness in prayer continues over the coming months
- Praise God that we have the resources to able to equip Jabulile to respond to her calling to serve as a local missionary.



Health Builder Group at I.O.P.

Last year, we started our lifestyle promotion Health Builder course with long-time partner Izulu Orphan Projects (I.O.P.) in rural Zululand outside of Empangeni with a small group of leaders. One of the Health Builders in the group was Pilisiwe. She moved up to the area from a city called Stanger to live with her father to attend high school. She met her husband there as a teenager and has lived there at her husband's family's complex of small buildings called a kraal for the past 40 years. The family owns cattle and goats. We have worked with Pilisiwe on and off for about 10 years. She is the only Christian on both sides of her family. The rest of her family worships their ancestors. She teaches Sunday School at her church and we have provided a children's Bible and other study materials. When she started attending last year, Pilisiwe expressed her frustration about her diabetes. She felt that no matter what she tried, nothing was working. After she participated in our weekly healthy lifestyle promotion meetings for almost a year, she was off her diabetes medications for the past three months. We checked her HbA1c which is a test that reveals the average blood sugar for the past three months. It was just within the range of normal. Pilisiwe attributed this to all the gardening she was doing along with a lot of walking. She started a health builder group with 14 people in the area in May. Pilisiwe says that two of the women have told her that they have such a feeling of peace after joining the group. One of them is attending church with Pilisiwe every Sunday. An 18 year old woman confessed to the group that she was drinking a lot and felt that she needed to stop. The following week she said that although it was difficult she managed not to drink all week. Another group member said that he realized that he had a quick temper that wasn't good and so did his mother. He committed to share with his mom what he had learned about the brain and the Bible on fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer Requests:

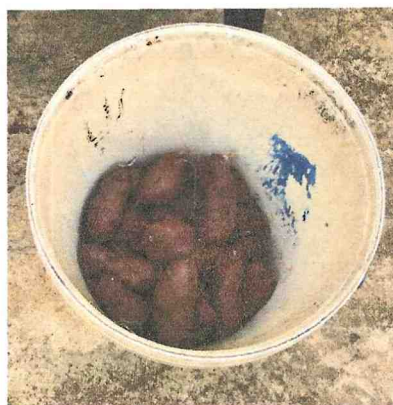
- Pray for Pilisiwe as she shares her faith in her community.
- Pray for the students as they make healthy changes in their mind, body, spirit, families and community.
- Pray for Izulu Orphan Projects as they continue their ministry in a challenging context.



IOP Health Builders learn about circulation. Pilisiwe is on the right.



One of two groups of IOP Health Builders in Prayer



Pilisiwe harvests that the purple sweet potato that were planted at Izulu Orphan Projects last year. Like blueberries, this potato has antioxidants called anthocyanins. Pilisiwe grows them in her garden and has shared them with family members who are also cultivating it. She says that they are very tasty. This is one of the plants that we distribute members of the Health Builder lifestyle groups.

Health Builder Group Grace Aid

We are blessed to be able to partner in mission with Grace Family Church (GFC). This church has four campuses in the Durban metro area and has a 3 full-time mission staff serving at their missions department called Grace Aid. Silindile is in charge of the educational programs that are offered as an outreach to the community. She said that she always wanted to provide some health education through the church but that it is hard to find that people with the time to teach it. Usually, after their sewing course in the morning they offer an Alpha course in the afternoon. She asked us if we could replace the Alpha with our Blood Pressure Training Course and Health Builder Lifestyle Education group. Last week, someone asked for prayer for a kidney transplant from her sister to her child, another woman in the class is in hiding due to domestic violence, a woman asked for prayer for family in a witness protection program. Another woman asked for prayer to help her get out of debt. One woman had been worried about her father's health and the group had prayed for him a few weeks ago. She was happy to report that he was much better and taking his medicines. The number of participants are growing each week and even into the fifth session new people want to join. The class is very excited to be using pedometers which help them make measurable walking step goals each day. After a busy Saturday doing ministry in Durban one lady walked over 25,000 steps.



Silindile is the director of educational ministries at Grace Family Church

Prayer Requests:

- That people will realize the true costs of ancestral worship through the Spiritual Powers Bible Study and turn to the Lord with their whole heart.
- That they will pass on to their families and close friends what they learn.
- That Silindile who is an excellent leader will find success with this ministry.



Sangomas (Zulu witchdoctor) use animal and even sometimes human body parts for rituals. Blood is viewed as a magical substance. Learning about how the body functions is important.



Anita teaches exercises that can be done at home.



The group fellowships over a cup of coffee and snacks.

Avocado Breakthrough and Tree Production

If there is a fruit tree which represents the Holy Grail, for me (Rick) it's the avocado. About one year ago I was searching YouTube to find any success with avocado tree air layering. I came across this video from Japan which ultimately rocked my world:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OM4fGVLHLLU>

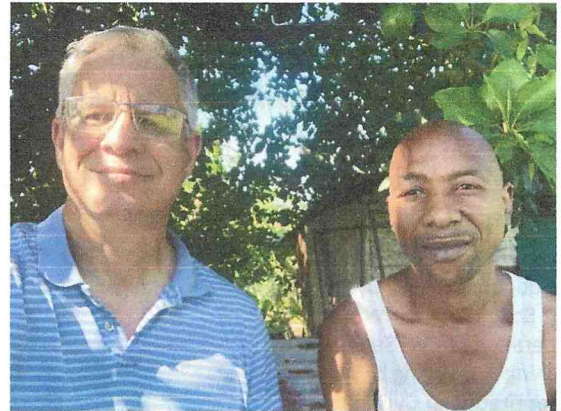
Prior to employing the techniques, it would take two years to create an avocado air layer, with less than 15% success. Now from the Okinawan farmer on YouTube, Kenyo showed us totally different materials and methods from anything we've ever tried. The result is after three months we have better than 60% success! Now those trees have been in bags for two months and are ready to plant out. We might have just gotten lucky with the tree that we used as a mother tree, our local climate is very similar to Okinawa. But the coming season we will try many different avocado trees to see how generalizable this is. Success on the very first tree suggests that this is going to be revolutionary.

I can't tell you how excited I was when we saw the first success. When we opened the first bag it was as exciting as opening King Tut's chamber. And all this in just two to three months! That was a moment that we've lived for 20 years. From the success, it will be possible for families with land to have orchards of successful avocado trees. This will be a large ambition for work in the South African spring. I think we can begin as early as August to use this technique, but we will extend it over some months to see how successful we can be this coming year.

The nutritional value of avocados, as well as their on-street-proven sales potential make this a huge advance for our ministry. The technique is also simple compared to our usual way of air layering. After seeing this success, I'm confident that our partners will see more rapid benefits to the tree venture in their own hands. I would like to thank those who have supported this ministry over the years, particularly the West Virginians who got us started. You know who you are, and you have made us fruitful!

Prayer Requests:

- That this coming Spring season will see the creation of 300 plus avocado air-layers.
- That we will be able to establish at least three new sites for local tree nurseries.
- That two or three partners will have avocado orchards planted and thriving a year from now.



Rick and Mlu worked together to air layer some of Mlu's avocado trees.



Amazing avocado roots after three months Kenyo method

Mushroom School with Grace Aid

We were invited to run a 2-day mushroom training course in March for 16 local African missionaries with their own ministries who are partnered with Grace Aid. This was an ambitious course, requiring extensive material preparation. It was successful beyond our expectations. The items covered are shown below as Day One and Day Two:

Day One

Introduction to Grey Oyster Mushroom (GOMs) and their cultivation
 Start Boiling H2O for WBS and CVG
 Preparation of CVG Substrate
 Washing and Drying of WBS
 Pasteurization of CVG Substrate
 Preparation and Sterilization of WBS 1L Jars using Pressure Cooker
 Bucket Tec and Preparation of 10L Buckets
 Dome Tec and How to Care for GOMs
 Ideal Harvesting and Storage of GOMs post-harvest
 Meal Preparation Ideas with GOMs
 Evidence of Health Benefits of GOMs
 Introduction to Health Builder Community groups

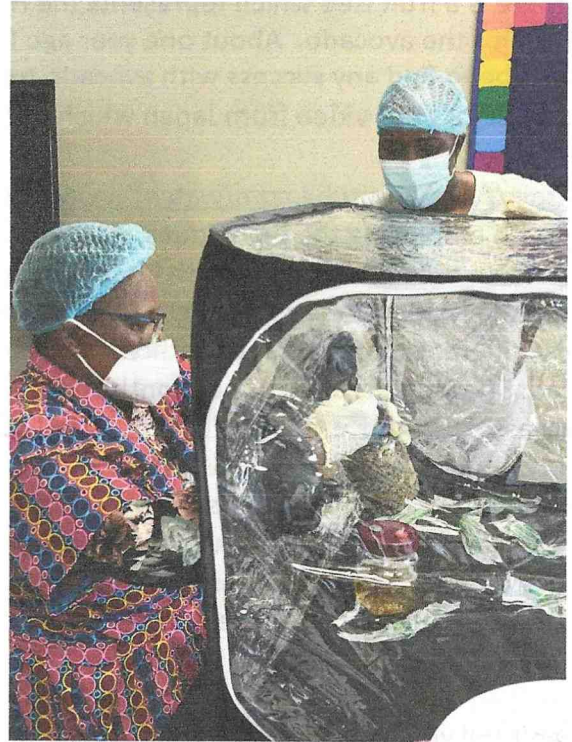
Day Two

Introduction to Sterile Technique using both Still Air Tents and Laminar Flow Hood
 Preparation of LC Medium for sterilization
 Intro to Jar Tec for LC and Spawn
 Tissue Culture of Mushroom using Liquid Culture (LC), also GOM LC Syringe to LC transfer
 Inoculation of 10L Buckets with Wild Bird Seed Grey Oyster Mushroom Spawn
 Inoculation of Sterilized Wild Bird Seed 1L Consul Jars with GOM Liquid Culture (LC)
 Discussion: Different services you could offer in the mushroom production pipeline (easiest GOMs -> more difficult Spawn Production, LC syringes)
 Introduction to Home Health Groups Session 2: Blood Pressure and Gardening
 Summary Discussion, Contact Details and Next Directions.

Our participants were successful in creating their own mushroom grain spawn, as well as inoculating substrate buckets and producing mushrooms over the subsequent 2 months in their homes. Even today, I was called about a new flush of mushrooms from one participant. Our follow up plan is to offer a secondary course for those who want to continue moving forward. I am also bartering with a skilled seamstress and prospective mushroom farmer to create covers for mushroom domes in return for cultivation materials. She said "I would like to grow mushrooms full time." It is exciting to see people learning new skills together and developing dreams for their own businesses. Purchasing materials and making investments on their own. Our mission challenges us to transfer skills and communicate Biblical truths across cultures as we work together with new friends. These students as fellow local missionaries are more likely than us to make disciples for Jesus Christ amongst the Zulu people. As we pour our skills into them, we are fulfilling the mandate to be fruitful in mission.

Prayer Requests:

- Pray for our eager mushroom farming students who are excited about continuing their learning.
- Pray for Thembeke who is trading sewing covers for the domes in return for glass culture jars.
- Pray for new partners who help advance our techniques and improve yields.



Mission leaders learning Still Air Tent inoculation.



Thembeke attended the mushroom school and purchased her own substrate. She serves as a sewing instructor and has joined our Health Builder group and BP Skills Course in the afternoon. She will be sewing some covers in exchange for glass culture jars.

Photos from Mushroom School



Grace Aid Missionaries washing grain on Day One



Filling mushroom buckets with CVG substrate



Liquid Culture of Grey Oyster mycelium ready for grain transfer



Holding up the completed mushroom silo dome frame



Mushroom farmers learning about liquid culture technique



Anita demonstrates oyster mushroom cooking methods



Grace Aid Missionary viewing clean mycelium via microscope.



Best way to contact us:

bethelhealthbuilders@yahoo.com

Tel: 734-345-6126

Drs. Rick and Anita Gutierrez serve Jesus in Durban, South Africa. They develop ways to partner with people in Southern Africa and beyond for the Gospel of Jesus Christ while ministering to their health, nutritional, economic and spiritual needs. Training people in health work, home gardening, poultry and tree production techniques are ways to say "we love you" while challenging people to solve problems locally and creatively. The themes of life promotion and using Scripture to understand our place in God's family and order make their mission variegated. Support from skilled, praying, faithful, generous people enable these merciful activities to continue by the grace of God.

HOW TO DONATE

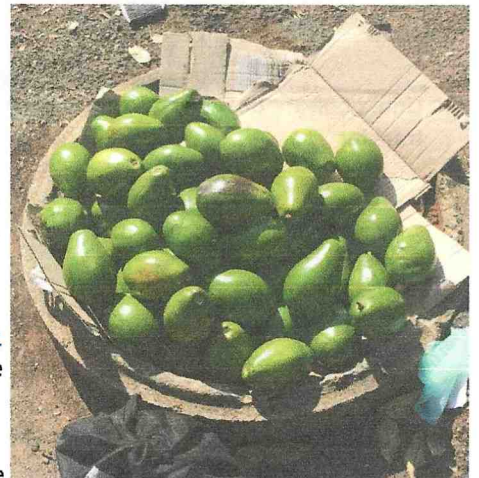
Your personal donations make our work possible. To direct your contribution towards the support of our family, write "Targeted giving to R & A Gutierrez" on the memo line of the check and mail to:

International Ministries
American Baptist Foreign Mission Society
1003 W 9th Ave. STE A
King of Prussia, PA 19406
610-768-2168



How to Get Involved

1. To receive our regular prayer update by email, let us know at: bethelhealthbuilders@yahoo.com
2. Give via Targeted Giving through your American Baptist Church - directed to the general support of Rick and Anita Gutierrez.
3. You can give towards our on-going mission support online by clicking on the following link: <https://www.internationalministries.org/author/ar-gutierrez/>
4. To learn more about our combined Poultry, Fruit Tree and Gardening Project, click on the following link: <https://internationalministries.org/south-africa-poultry-permaculture-and-produce-promoting-prosperity/>
5. Consider sponsoring [White Cross - South Africa Health Kits for Health Builders](#) on the International Ministries projects page. Kits include blood pressure cuffs, glucometer, sugar test strips, HIV tests, scale and other health screening supplies. Click on the following link: <https://portal.internationalministries.org/project-support> and then use the drop down menu to select "White Cross - South Africa Health Kits for Health Builders"



And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You,
O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You. Psalm 9:10