

# The Castner Family

## Church Planting Ministry in Botswana and Beyond



### March – May 2020

Psalms 84:10 “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”.

### Unexpected Changes

It took the first 3 weeks in March for us to get all moved in and set up our house after having to move unexpectedly at the end of February. God provided a perfect house in a safe location and gave us the strength to move and get settled in. At the same time, we were monitoring the rise of the Coronavirus and the impact it was having around the world and how it began shaping decisions in our own lives.

We had a trip scheduled back to the States in April of 2020 for a few months to take care of some medical needs and I was scheduled to get TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) certification at a University in New Jersey during the months of April and May. I'll explain the reason for this in the next paragraph. Anyway, we decided it was best to look into changing our tickets to March and as it was, we were forced to leave on March 23 on the last Delta flight out of Johannesburg, South Africa to America. The Lord miraculously arranged so many things for us to be able to get out of Botswana and back to America. Shortly after our arrival in America, the country of Botswana went on a complete lockdown, police and soldiers making sure everyone stayed in their houses. Leaving your house was allowed only if you could secure a permit from the government and only one person could be in the vehicle and there were checkpoints throughout the city. Churches were shut down completely in a short time after we left. We look back and see the hand of the Lord in each and every step and have no doubt that we made the right decision on coming back to America.

### Uncertain Circumstances

As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, I am seeking TESL certification to help with our Visa renewal at the beginning of 2021. The goal is to teach English for free in the villages, using Bible based curriculum, to the elderly and the under educated, in order to help our chances of renewal. Unfortunately, Botswana does not necessarily value a Bible teaching church planter as much as they do someone teaching English and helping better the secular education of their people. There are no guarantees, but I believe the Lord is leading in this direction. Pray for this endeavor. Classes were since canceled but they are opening on July 15<sup>th</sup> and going into the first week of August. I plan on enrolling this month.

Our return date to Botswana is uncertain at the moment. We were scheduled to leave July 15<sup>th</sup> but that for sure will not happen. The only news we have is from Delta Airlines that will start up service to South Africa again in October. We hope and pray that we will make it back before then, but we are unsure when the Airlines will be allowed to travel into South Africa and Botswana. I am sure immigration issues are the big hold up right now; all COVID related.

### Uncompromising Call

#### **Sending Church:**

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Since coming home to the USA I have been forced to use Facebook live video to communicate with the churches back in Botswana. While at our home church the Lord challenged me to do some Facebook Ads targeting the people of Francistown and Palapye, offering our Salvation Bible studies via What's App. The Lord blessed our efforts beyond our imagination. Since the ads have run we have sent out over 450 Bible studies and have about 50 or more active students. The response was so overwhelming I had to shut the ads off after 3 days. There were so many responses I couldn't physically keep up with it. I have been busy every day since April 24<sup>th</sup>. The brethren will be able to follow up on these students since things are just recently starting to open up in Botswana. I just received a testimony today from Paul Dube, one of our students in Palapye and he just repented of his sins and received Christ as his Saviour. Pray for others who are on the verge of getting saved!

Churches in Botswana were allowed to start meeting again May 31<sup>st</sup> as long as they follow certain guidelines laid down by the government. I am very glad to announce that the brethren led the churches to reopen at a great sacrifice to themselves financially. Pray as they begin to move around again, and begin to work, that the Lord will bless the work of their hands and will help them also focus on the work of the Lord at the same time! It will be difficult but with God's help nothing is impossible.

Both Michelle and I have been busy doing Bible studies here in conjunction with our home churches' outreach efforts during the pandemic. Pray for Theresa and her salvation. Also pray for Eduino Feliciano for his salvation. We meet almost daily on Facebook Messenger Video as I am teaching him the Gospel. Both of our students are serious about seeking the Lord and even coming to church. Eduino has agreed to join us this Sunday! Theresa has already come to our parking lot services. I am thankful for the vision of our home church that has generated dozens of Bible studies through the pandemic by doing Facebook Ads. Amazing what God can do!

### **Unchanging Christ**

I think we all agree that this world is in a terrible mess! Though all of us are facing unexpected changes in our lives; though all of us are living in uncertain circumstances; we are assured of the uncompromising call of God upon our lives and upon our churches to go and preach the Gospel to the every creature to the ends of the earth! Are you not thankful that in the midst of all we are living right now we have the Apostle of our Salvation, the Anchor of our Soul, the Alpha and Omega, our Unchanging Christ Who is not taken by surprise by anything we are facing right now! We are not looking for the undertaker, but the Upper-taker! We are not looking at the signs of the times, but we are listening for the sound of the trumpet! Amen! He never changes and His promises never fail! He is our Rock and our Refuge and His Return is soon!

Thank you for your faithful prayers and your faithful giving through all this difficult season! Thank you for your encouragement as you stand for Christ and fulfill His commission where He planted you! Let us be faithful until the end!

Looking Unto Jesus,

*Garry Castner and Family*



Garry and Michelle – May 2020



Josh, Michelle, Hannah, Timothy  
Mother's Day 2020



Paul Dube – May 2020  
Saved Through Salvation Bible Studies

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Garry and Eduino Feliciano – Allentown, PA



Omphile and Neo Kgotla Expecting



Joana Mohau (God's Undeserving Favor) Kgotla – June 10, 2020