

THE HAND OF GOD IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Art Stinson, President
Acacia Foundation



I have often heard this phrase and wondered what this would feel like. As President of the Acacia Foundation, I can now say that I have been party to an experience that can only be described as "The Hand of God".

It all started when Zomo needed a new pair of eye glasses. Zomo is one of 18 residents of the Acacia Foundation Home for AIDS-orphaned children. Our home is located about 45 minutes outside Durban, South Africa, a major city on the Indian Ocean. Zomo is a senior at the village high school.

This summer, two Acacia board members, CCC parishioners Sandie Griffith and Trish Thompson, traveled to South Africa on a working trip to assess capital

fund use. The uses they investigated included development of a second home in another province. While there, they discovered that Zomo needed new eye glasses. They dispatched Thami, one of our Zulu associates, to pick up Zomo at the high school to go buy a pair. Thami was immediately confronted by the school principal who quizzed him about his business there. Thami told her about Acacia Foundation and its works with some of her students. She peppered him with questions and her excitement grew. As the conversation unfolded, she revealed that she was First Lady to the Zulu Regional Chief.

The First Lady arranged for our board members to have an audience with the Chief. After a stressful introduction where the Chief spoke only Zulu and wielded his power, he proceeded in perfect English. Our board members told Acacia's story. They informed the Chief of the non-performance of our Zulu Christian partner on the ground. Since 2005, this partner had routinely abdicated its responsibilities. The Chief stated his awareness of the group and its dealings. In a surprise move, he officially granted Acacia Foundation the sole right to occupy the orphanage building within his tribal area. By the end of the session, the Chief and our board members were having pictures taken with their arms around each other.

This incredible experience has led us full circle and to greater clarity of mission. Many roadblocks were removed. We are no longer seeking to build a second home in another province. We dissolved the operating agreement with the non-performing partner. We gained the backing of the Zulu Regional Chief. We have taken over full funding and operation of the home. Thanks to the First Lady, our new project will be to build a futbol pitch (soccer field) at the village high school. This will benefit all of the community's children as well as Acacia's. The hand of God steered us where we are supposed to be. All because Zomo needed a new pair of eye glasses. We look forward to serving.

The Acacia Foundation is a non-profit organization that was the brain child of the clergy at Christ Church Cathedral and receives major funding from the church. It supports AIDS-orphaned children in South Africa with loving caregivers, food, clothing, medical care and life's essentials. To learn more about the Acacia Foundation, our home in South Africa and the children there, please visit www.acaciatennessee.org.