

**MASITISE TIMES**

Torrential downpours have been a frequent occurrence. There is a small stream that tumbles down a rocky crevice in the plateau behind the school. When it rains heavily there is a steady roar from this little “Victoria Falls” which I can hear several hundred yards away. The roar has been nearly constant since the beginning of the year. The heavy rains have washed away much topsoil, damaged roads and caused boulders to tumble down on homes.



Masitise High School continues to grow in size with well over 900 students this year. A portion of them can be seen here during morning assembly. My three math classes have 74, 71 and 59 students. I am also teaching a class on Luke & Acts which has a mere 27. This is an elective for Form D students and will continue next year in Form E. The growing number of students is creating problems for the limited facilities of the school. In return for taking more students and having more classes we have been told by the government that a new

classroom block will be built...some time! Meanwhile, students have to eat in shifts at the dining hall and the church is overflowing.

Once again I am coaching boys basketball. We have a couple of starters back from last year’s team and as you can see, there isn’t a lot of height which has usually been the case. I am standing next to our tallest player in the back row, who might be 6’ or 6’1”. He’s just a couple inches, at most, taller than me. Our first games will be in late March. Besides these older boys there are about as many younger ones in Forms A and B who are still learning the game. The sport continues to grow in popularity throughout the country and more schools will be competing this year. 2006 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our school.



That makes me just about as old as the school. It started as a secondary school, which covered the first two or three years after primary school, and eventually evolved into a high school. An anniversary committee is planning a celebration later in the year. I first arrived at Masitise just a few days before they marked their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in October 1996. The motto of the school doesn’t show up very well at the bottom of this picture. In Sesotho it is “ka boitelo ka boikokobetso”, which translates into “with determination and humility”.

2006 also marks the introduction of completely free primary school education in Lesotho. Six years ago Standard 1, the first year of primary school, was free and every year since then the government has been adding one additional year. The only expense for parents is providing school uniforms. This means many more students will be completing Standard 7 this year so there will be even more students wanting to attend high school. While the government has been building additional primary schools to cope with the increasing demand at that level, they have not kept pace in constructing new high schools. I don't expect the size of our classes to be going down any time soon!

At the high school level, where school fees are still used to fund education, a textbook rental system has been initiated so that parents do not have to buy all the books for their children. A flat annual fee covers the rental of books for most of the subjects. This program has now reached Form C, the third year of high school. No word yet on whether this will continue to Forms D and E over the next two years.

On Sunday afternoons I am found in the library meeting with our youth group, Friends of God. We have many new faces this year with lots of Form A students. Since I don't teach Form A, I am struggling to learn all the names of these young ones. Our theme this year is "Making All Things New".

**Prayer requests:** Please pray for the Friends of God group that we will all grow in our faith and knowledge about God and Jesus. Many of the group leaders finished school last year, so we need others to step forward. Pray for our staff that we will cope well with the abundance of students and cramped facilities. Your prayerful support is appreciated!



Yours in Christ,

Mark Behle

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