



AN OVERSEAS APPRENTICESHIP

Overseas Apprenticeships are a recent addition to the Smile Programme, and offer the opportunity to spend a year abroad working within a local church.

 Nerena Neathercoat has just returned to South Africa to spend a second year working for 'The Bible Talks' church in Durban. Here she gives a glimpse of her experiences of life and church ministry in a different country and culture.

LEARNER PLATES

"What about combining the opportunity to work in a church with the opportunity to work in another country? Does this require extra airbags, tighter seatbelts and bigger 'L' plates?!"

Well, yes and no! In each and every situation we need our 'L' plates firmly strapped to our backs - there is an inexhaustible wealth to learn of God, of people (and our sin) and of the Lord Jesus' grace. Another culture however, whether the one down the road, or the one down several latitudes, presents the opportunity to see things said, done, thought and reacted to in ways that may be quite different from what we are used to from our past experience.

These differences open up a chance to do quite a bit of learning and in the process, often see what really is biblical and what is just a cultural-cling-on! For example, is the method/process we use for this or that really the biblical bit - or is it that we just saw it previously work well? Is it, therefore, wise to impose that method on the new situation? It certainly makes you think more! It helps you to think about and see things in your own culture that you've previously missed too - useful for if and when you return to it, and



for future ministry wherever you are!

TEST DRIVE

"Shall I give it a try?"

Having spotted the advert for a couple of overseas placements on the 9:38 and Crosslinks websites, I was able to ask friends and those involved about one particular opportunity in Durban, South Africa (SA). With that help, I discovered what seemed to be a great chance to be involved with student work, but this time, outside the UK.

On arrival in SA, I was thankful that things did live up to the expectations I had been given! I am very grateful to

"To gear up the year with the students at The Bible Talks (TBT) we had a weekend get-away. Students made a real effort to return early to come along. After a lack of Bible teaching at home they were keen to be able to look at the Bible together again. This term we will be doing a Bible Overview together. **Please give thanks to God for sustaining us and students across the holidays and giving us good times together as teams in the gospel.**"

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"This year, one of my main responsibilities will be to co-ordinate TBT on one campus called Westville. Our main meeting there will be the Friday lunchtime meeting - a 20 minute talk and time for questions (a novelty here for people to be able to question teachers and see what the Bible says for themselves). In the past couple of weeks, I have been able to meet members of the Student Union and hope we can get varsity society status (on another campus they were refused because there were too many 'Christian' societies). After hearing me promote TBT at a first year faculty meeting, the Head of Faculty, a Hindu, told us that he wanted us to be involved in taking care of the students spiritually! I gave him some of our flyers and pray some will come our way as a result! **Please pray that our Lord God will draw many to the meetings this term. There are many Muslims and Hindus on Westville and so you could pray for us being effective evangelists.**"

have come to a church where people are keen to work out what the Bible says and how to work it out in practice, where there are gracious people helping me learn, forgiving my sinful mistakes and cultural 'stuck-my-foot-in-that's. So, in general, I'm thankful for a church that is shaped by the grace the Lord Jesus lavishes on us.

Throughout, I'm also indebted to friends and churches in the UK, who generously give of their salary to pay mine - quite an amazing thing to have this enabling you to carry on working!

I spend a good part of my week on campus with the students, teaching 1-2-1s, supporting Bible studies, training leaders, chatting with individuals, meeting others, organising weekly Bible talks, joining in with the music, learning the Zulu language, (and when I get a chance, hanging out at the jazz department!). Alongside all of this there is good support in place, not only personally, but also formally in a weekly ministry training programme. This aims to teach us how to teach, live and share the Bible in our own lives, with others and with our churches: invaluable for the day, the week and even years ahead!

"Last week, Mathandi (the other girl with me on the TBT staff) and I had a great time in the Res chatting to people. On another campus, we were caught up in a small student protest which turned over all the tables of societies present - ours included! **Give thanks for open doors to meet lots these two weeks! Please pray for many students to commit to coming along to TBT with a great hunger to hear God's truth of the gospel.**

GEAR-CHANGE

"And for all of those 'feeling-the -gear-change' moments...?"

I won't forget my first month learning to drive around a new city - it was quite a challenge and I had a new appreciation for daunted newcomers in London! Yet, though I'm far from all that I was used to (and embracing so many new experiences), I've found that ongoing chats with people nearby are a real help, and a phone call home isn't too hard (especially if you can get some good deals from the UK organised by your friends and family!). Yes, there are tensions to live with, but thankfully we do have a very faithful God to trust in.



Your prayers for Narena are highly valued and if you would like to help support her salary please send your gift to Crosslinks and mark it with her fund code (NN6 042).

If you are interested in taking part in an overseas apprenticeship, please contact smile@crosslinks.org

We hope you enjoyed reading this issue of *In Depth*! If you would like extra copies to pass on, or if you would prefer not to receive future copies please contact Lynda on 020 8691 6111, or email lblake@crosslinks.org

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