Dear Friends of the IMM

Perhaps you have heard the Leonard Cohen song that says, "There’s a crack in everything; that’s how the light gets in". The Safety Lamp, invented by Sir Humphry Davy, was introduced into coal mines in 1816. Not only does it produce light, but the Safety Lamp has been the means of saving untold numbers of men’s lives as they work in dangerous places underground. This is the 300th edition of 'The Safety Lamp' magazine, so I wanted to do something special to illustrate how the International Miners’ Mission facilitates bringing God’s light of the Good News of Jesus Christ to miners and their families around the globe. I hope you will be excited and challenged as you read the stories and reports we receive. Thank you for your continued support and prayers.

David Shillitoe

ROMANIA - EX-MINER BECOMES EVANGELIST

Daniel Gheroghitian, the latest evangelist working with IMM in Romania, is shown here with his wife (centre of back row) Pastor Cornel Hudulin and his wife Sanda (back row) and Daniel’s 8 children, standing on the steps of the Maranata Baptist Church in Targu Jiu. He is an ex-coal miner and now works part time in the Power Station in Rovinari, a mining town south of Targu Jiu. He has already been helping with the mission work for some 2 years and has now decided to make a commitment to act as an evangelist with IMM. He will lead worship in the mining villages of Prigoria, Floresteni, Rovinari, etc. We praise God for this encouragement.

Not all miners work underground these days. Here we see a monster truck of the kind used in open cast copper mines in Chile. We remember Victor and Ana Varas, IMM missionaries for nearly 40 years, who visit the men working in the copper mines.
Pastor Pardon Chingovo and a team of 8 pastors and evangelists have been supported by the Swiss Committee of the IMM for a good number of years. This team are meeting some of the tremendous needs of people living in the mining areas of Zimbabwe, including Gweru, Mbizo, Torwood, Shurugwi, Bindura, Masvingo and Zvishavane.

On two recent occasions, IMM Switzerland have organised the sending of a container-load of emergency materials to Zimbabwe including blankets, clothing, bicycles and even wheelchairs. In many places the miners are poorly paid or out of work altogether.

Zimbabwe has some remarkable mineral inventories, including coal, diamonds, gold, nickel, chrome and platinum, some of which are truly world class. The country has a long mining history, but unfortunately the political past and social unrest has made the country a pariah to the mining sector. As a result many mines are closed or on ‘care and maintenance’ waiting for better days.

But the people are still there and need food and clothing! Pastor Pardon has a project called “Help the hungry.” There are people in the mining areas who have hardly eaten anything for weeks. Thanks to the support of the International Miners’ Mission, food has been provided, also soap for washing and cleaning clothes.

Pastor Pardon tells us however that, not only are people in need of food and clothing, but they are hungry for the Good News of Jesus Christ! In the last few months there has been a harvest of souls, as an amazing 206 people in the mining areas have accepted Christ as Saviour and Lord!

Now there is a great demand for Bibles. With finance from Switzerland, Pastor Pardon has been able to purchase 45 Bibles in the local language, but many more are required.

In spite of many difficulties, Pastor Pardon can say ‘God is good to us in ALL ways. He keeps His promises to us. God is continuing to strengthen us. I would like to thank you for praying for us.’

The Reverend Pardon Chingovo opens the Word of God to blind people in the Gweru mining area of Zimbabwe.

After the service Reverend Chingovo and his wife serve a simple meal to the blind people. He thanks God for this ministry. These people really love the Lord and they are grateful for the help they receive from IMM.
THE ENTRANCE OF YOUR WORDS GIVES LIGHT
A diary of the visit to South Africa by David Shillitoe, Dorothy and Michael Jarvis (IMM UK)

In September 2009, Dorothy and Michael Jarvis and David Shillitoe had the joy of visiting South Africa to meet the IMM Committee to bring themselves up to date with developments. They talked with Rev. Faki Bodibe (Chairman), Rev. Vusi Ndisina (Hon. Secretary), Rev. Elijah Dube, Rev. Seelan Govender (Treasurer) and Pastors Patrick Langa, Mohau Mafokeng and Andrew Mayathula about their vision for the ministry to miners and their families in this vast mining area. Here is a diary of their encouraging visit:

Saturday, 12 September 2009
Elijah picked us up and we took the minibus for a day-long trip for visits to Jabavu (Soweto), Dobsonville & the gold mines of the West Rand.

At Jabavu we visited the first Africa Evangelical Church (AEC) built in Soweto in 1962. [Faki Bodibe’s church was the second to be built in Soweto]. Here a Quarterly Women’s Meeting was about to start. No organ needed in this church – or in any other native African churches we visited. The ladies sang with conviction and swayed in wonderful rhythm!

We drove by the large Church pastored by Philip Dungulu in Dobsonville. This is in the Assemblies of God denomination and is only partially completed.

We visited Pastor Dungulu’s home and met Mrs. Hlengiwe Dungulu briefly. Regrettably Philip was not well with a bad cough, but he had gone to a funeral. (By tradition funerals, and there are many because of HIV AIDS, and weddings too, take place on Saturdays).

We took the freeway to the south west towards the mining area. We passed Cooke No. 1, part of Harmony Gold Mine Group.

We visited a shanty town called Zenzele, homes of mainly Mozambican miners, working the Cooke 1, 2 and 3 shafts. The only permanent building in this place was the Clinic. The rest were rows of shacks, built from any material available. However the place was quite clean and there is clearly a sense of community and a wide variety of churches. Elijah said the lack of time and resources means that he cannot visit this place.

Cooke No. 3 shaft.
Here Elijah meets a group of 8 pastors every Thursday. These are the leaders of cell groups in the Cooke No. 3 hostel. Elijah disciples this group using ‘Fundamentals of the Faith’ material published by Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California. Unfortunately Elijah could not find any of these men for us to meet when we visited the hostel.

We drove on to Driefontein. We visited a house where Philip Dungulu meets every Thursday with up to 20 people. This area is a quite smart residential quarter and the houses were once occupied exclusively by white professional & management staff. We met with the home occupier Mazuba, his wife and small children.

Mazuba (left with David) works as an electrician in the mine. He told David that he descends 3-4 kilometres to reach the underground mining workings. This is done in 2 stages, each of 5 minutes! There are also very long distances for miners to travel underground but much of this is done in small trains.
There is one Reformed Church on the estate, which caters for the Afrikaans speakers only. There is no evangelical witness in the area apart from the group led by Philip Dungulu.

After lunch/pizza in the town of Carletonville we drove by the Kloof Mine which we visited on our last trip, to South Deep Mine. Here, we met some Christian miners who greeted us warmly. Clearly, they all knew Elijah well. They told David that some 15,000 miners currently work in the South Deep Mine complex. Owned by Gold Fields, this mine is being extended and deeper shafts are being made. There is talk of going down to a depth of some 5 kilometres! These Christian miners had come to a Conference, but this was not to commence until the evening, so we joined a woman’s meeting going on in one of the school classrooms belonging to the mine. A Swazi lady was speaking on the subject of marriage to a group of 15 young women, some with babies. Quoting from Genesis Chapter 3, she spoke about man being created first and woman afterwards. So God’s order is for women to be under the leadership of men.

As we drove back to Krugersdorp, Elijah told us that now in 2009, most of the migrant workers came from within South Africa (Eastern Cape, Limpopo) as well as Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland with some from Botswana. He estimated that the number of such workers in the Johannesburg area including all the suburbs, squatter camps, etc. now totals around 6 million.

The South African government are putting up many prefabricated buildings in place of the squatter camps – David saw a large billboard boasting that 2.3 million homes had been built in recent years – but there is still a long way to go. There is a big road-building programme going on ahead of the World Cup competition in 2010. This is not before time, as many roads, particularly around Johannesburg, are at saturation point.

It is estimated that gold miners earn approx. £450 per month, which may seem to be a reasonable wage. However statistics show that, with that income, the miner is often supporting on average of between 8 and 11 dependants, in many cases including family members back home in countries like Mozambique, Lesotho and Botswana. The world price of gold has risen to around $1000 an ounce, but with the drop in the value of the dollar, the amount of money earned by the mining companies for the gold has stayed about the same seen in South African Rand. There have been some unrest and strikes recently but little has changed.

We had our evening meal at the Porterhouse, a carvery/steak house at the West Gate Shopping Centre in Roodepoort. We took leave of Elijah and fell into bed tired but happy by 9.00 pm.

Sunday, 13 September 2009

Following a delayed breakfast, Elijah came to drive us to the church in Chiawelo, where he is the senior pastor. The church meets in a large tent.

Today the morning service was led by the young people. Before this Michael and Dorothy sat in on part of the Sunday School, meeting in the tent - about 25 kids getting some Bible teaching, starting at 08.30.

At 09.30 Bible study was led by assistant Pastor Tebogo Mkhwanazi held in the unfinished church building, which consists of just a roof, with no walls! As there are 2 main roads on 2 sides of the plot of land with traffic lights at the intersection, the noise of the cars made for an interesting Bible Study of the subject ‘How do we identify Divine Inspiration?’

The main service began at 10.00 am led by one of Elijah’s sons. We do not think it is necessary to report on this service which lasted some
2½ hours, in detail! Simply to say that part way through the service, David, Michael and Dorothy were invited up to the front following an impromptu introduction by Elijah. He introduced us and David talked briefly about IMM, speaking from Matthew Ch. 5, verse 13, “You are the salt of the earth”. As there was no amplification, David was glad he has a good strong voice.

After the service, drinks and snacks were available and were served to the visitors - very much in the African tradition. David was able to talk informally to one or two of the young people about IMM’s work in South Africa.

One young man asked, “How can I join IMM?” David referred him to Elijah, who knew him well. He thought that he could possibly use him in the ministry.

We left with Elijah and drove to Westgate for lunch, a repeat of yesterday evening. After lunch we drove to Elijah’s house in Kagiso and had a quick look round. This house was purchased for Elijah and his family by IMM UK in about 1989. We saw an ancient small bus in the yard, which has been used by the church. It looked to us to be near the end of its useful life! We then returned to the Guest House for a good rest.

Monday, 14 September 2009
We drove to Rustenburg with Elijah – a journey of about 1½ hours.

The first visit was to Patrick Langa and his wife Julia in Boitekong. This AEC church has been built (with funds from South Korean Christians) in a fairly tough suburb with poor housing. Drunkenness is a problem.

Julia runs a pre-school playgroup for 67 children aged 0 - 6 years. There are 2 rooms - one with the little ones and the other with the older ones. Conditions were very cramped and they would like to expand. The children attend from 7am to 4pm and are provided with a meal. The parents are employed in the mines - many of the mothers have domestic service jobs in the wealthy parts of Rustenburg. Dorothy remarked on the lack of toys or other stimulating activities.

The children were very well behaved, smiled a lot and sang for us. Julia confirmed that some of them would be HIV-positive.

The church is large and has a baptismal pool in the corner. However, recently had all the electronic equipment was stolen! The robbers used a saw to cut through the bars protecting the main door.

Currently some 48 - 54 people attend. The Langa’s house on the site is now occupied by security people, but the Langas stay there at the week-ends. Their new house is in another place, some little distance from Boitekong and in a safe area but does not have any electricity or running water yet! Patrick told David that he has a vision to start another AEC church in the plot next to this house.

The second visit was to Mohau and Bulelwa Mofokeng in Ikageng. Their well-built church was also funded by the Koreans and currently has 45 - 70 people attending, depending on the time of year. It gets quite cold in winter and this cold comes up through the concrete floor. The believers are then less inclined to show up for services! Carpets would help.

The baptistry leaks - on the last occasion it was used, water went all over the floor. They could not fill it so some large people were persuaded to stand in the pool to raise the level while the candidates were quickly baptised!

We saw the playgroup in operation. The children were sitting quietly on the floor having their midday meal.
The third visit was to Andrew Mayathula’s church in Freedom Park. The area has improved greatly since we were last there 2½ years ago.

There are new tarmac roads and a big school is being built. We also saw a large new detention centre mainly for young offenders.

The church building has expanded too - it is now twice the size and there is a new office for Andrew. A playgroup was in operation. The children were supposed to be having a rest, but the arrival of three white people caused a lot of excitement! There were simple toilet facilities outside for the children. This is required by the authorities before a licence can be issued to run a crèche.

Andrew has a congregation of approx. 145. They have just had to buy more chairs. There are many folk unemployed as the mine companies have made many thousands redundant and the church runs a food programme for those out of work. (David has also read that it is estimated that some 50% of the population of Freedom Park are HIV positive).

We all then repaired to Rustenburg for lunch. On the way we saw a lot of the contrast in housing between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’. At one point Patrick pointed out a small stream where they held some baptisms in the past. There are new mine shafts going up in various places in this vast area - some to replace exhausted mines.

The Rustenburg mining industry still supplies some 70% of all the world’s platinum requirements. Recently there was a 2 week long strike by some of the miners for more pay. The mine company did not budge and miners have returned to work.

After lunch we returned to the mines and Patrick and Mohau drove to the Jabula mine hostel. This location was frankly disgusting! The squalor was palpable - smelly with rubbish lying about, pigs, goats and chickens running around, children playing in the muck. Ugh! But it is a busy place with stalls set up, some selling food, a hairdresser, etc.

A rather antiquated loudhailer was perched on the top of the car and, in turn, Patrick, Mohau, Andrew and Elijah spoke. They did it in pairs, with two languages alternately, one echoing the other - Tswana and Xhosa and also Zulu. They spoke non-stop with great passion for half an hour.

Copies of ‘The Challenge’ paper in English were handed out and always accepted. Scattered around the place people were listening - David counted about 60. A few miners were going on duty. 2 people came forward for prayer at the end. Elijah says that they will be followed up.

It was time to take our leave of these hard-working, dedicated men. Their task is huge. The challenge is great. It is estimated that only 1% of this mass of humanity have been reached with the Gospel message. There are plenty of opportunities, but the labourers are few. We drove back to Krugersdorp at the end of our visit praising God for all we had seen and experienced. Will you join us in praying for this ministry? Thank you for your support.
In late September, Peter Robertson and Bob Boska from the International Miners Mission (Australia) went to the southern Philippines to run a missions/evangelism training conference. IMM’s method of ministry is to train and support nationals to reach their countrymen with the gospel.

Peter and Bob were there primarily to train the 6 IMM supported evangelists, but ended up providing training for over 60 pastors who run churches in remote mining areas. Some pastors had boated in from the surrounding islands of Palawan, Mindanao and the Visayas.

The aim for the week? To conduct a workshop on evangelism, to encourage these local based soul winners, and to preach the Gospel as the opportunity presented.

The conference was held at the premises of GSGM (God’s Sufficient Grace Ministries), led by Bishop Dr Joy Bendoy.

Bishop Bendoy has worked to establish an extensive network of evangelical pastors and churches throughout the Philippines. This network makes it easier to bring evangelism training and support to these remotely located pastors- some pastors had been on rickety boats on swollen seas of 12-15 hours to come to this event! And because Bishop Bendoy’s church is active in the local community, it has gained favour with the local village chiefs and civil leadership - even the local police have called Bishop Bendoy to organise weekly Bible studies for the officers. One of his current projects is constructing a new church.

The pastor gets a warm welcome by miners in the Philippines. Some of the mines are in very remote places making it difficult to reach the miners and their families with the Gospel message. Please pray for all the pastors and evangelists as they travel - often on unmade roads and tracks to reach these men and women for Christ.

Under his leadership, an orphanage and a Christian school are now opening. Praise God for his generosity, and the way that God is opening hearts and minds in the Philippines through Bishop Bendoy’s work.
Stuart Burns, General Secretary of IMM (USA), has provided us with this remarkable testimony of Roberto Masca, IMM sponsored missionary in Southern Peru. Stuart writes, ‘I was truly moved by Roberto’s transparent testimony.’ Here it is, written just as it was received:

"After my short greeting I give my testimony about the work of the Lord that I am doing. I awake at 03:30 a.m., and after speaking to the Lord 04:00 a.m., and getting ready I leave at 05:00 a.m. I leave from my house by bus to the Mine Huayllacucho at Imata, I sometimes wait for the buses for two hours to three hours. After the bus ride of several hours, I walk an hour on foot to Huayllacucho.

I sometimes suffer due to lack of lodging. I many times am left without breakfast, without eating lunch, without food and of thirst, but the Lord God doesn’t make me lack when I go to the white fields. When my wife stays there in the house there are times she also suffers due to lack of feeding, but we rely on the Lord alone and He always provides.

I endure persecutions from the people who are not believers, but God alone protects me. A believer in my congregation persecutes me without reason, but God alone will do me justice. When I have material and other necessities, we kneel down to God alone. I give thanks to my God - He never makes me lack from nothing, when we get sick and are alone, also the Lord gives us the sanity.

I have felt the called from the Lord since my conversion and for that reason continue in the missionary work until today, in spite all kinds of afflictions until now.

Twice almost they kill me with revolvers and knives, but God protected me from all this danger, and for that reason I say thanks to my God.

My wife and family are a part of my testimony. Thank you for praying for me and my family as we can continue to serve Christ."

Alan Turner and Tom Gilliam (Chairman, IMM USA) meet with the team of local pastors and evangelists in Peru, who travel many miles, often with great difficulty, to the many mining areas in the Andes mountains of Peru. Peru is rich with many deposits of copper, bismuth, gold, molybdenum, tin and lead and mining activity is very extended.

Please pray for these men as they seek to 'Introduce Miners to the Master'.

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For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT (Ephesians Chapter 5, verse 8)

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