

11 February 2011

Greetings in the wonderful name of Jesus! I trust you are finding 2011 a wonderful opportunity to trust and serve Jesus.

I am writing to you because you were either one of the donors or one on behalf of whom a donation was made in December during our advent services when we invited donations to a "Send a child to School Fund" as part of our "Advent Conspiracy" focus.

What I envisaged was quite simple – that at a Primary School in Walmer township where the annual school fee last year was R50 a child - we get to sponsor children whose parents could not afford the school fees (and there are a significant number because of an unemployment scenario in excess of 50%) to go to school. I expected to know the names of the children and be able to inform each of you of the name of the child(ren) you sponsored and ask you to continue to pray for them, their family, the School and our country in the light of the challenges that life and choices bring in our context.

Well, it is not that simple, it now turns out. The Principal is concerned that if we help those who have not paid, or cannot pay, there may be a reaction from those who have paid not to pay in future because they might expect that they, too, would be sponsored next time around. That would not be a desired outcome. It also may not be wise to make the money available to the school staff or administration without any way of being part of the allocation process or receive feedback on its use.

I am left with a number of options:

1. To provide stationery for the children who have none. The principal sees this as manageable in their context.
2. To commit to an ongoing process for **specific projects** which can be quoted for, monitored and seen to completion. For example, repair and replacement of classroom doors, windows and other equipment that is broken. These would ordinarily be funded out of school fees paid if there was adequate funding.
3. To return the money to donors on the basis that we cannot do exactly what we undertook to do. I am quite prepared to do that.

The intention of making schooling for disadvantaged children more accessible and valuable remains right and good. The need is undeniable, but how to do it in a way that will not create more difficulties is the challenge. Fortunately there is a partnership in place between our congregation, our sister congregation in the township and the Primary School which is working at trying to meet some of the many challenges in that context. We are currently exploring ways of trying to improve learners' proficiency in English, ensuring some food for every child, and offering extra-mural interaction in sport among peers.

Since this money was donated within specific parameters, I wish to have your permission to proceed as in 1 and 2 above. I do not feel it right to go ahead with using the money in a different way without your consent. Should you choose rather to have the money returned, I will need to know how we can return it to you. I need to assure you that whatever your choice it will be confidential and your choice will be respected.

Blessings

JONATHAN HOBSON
SENIOR MINISTER