

Bahá'í Journal UK

Journal of the Bahá'í Community of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
May 2001 / 158BE

Year of Service Desk

Beyond Words

From Matthew McGrath – on tour with the Beyond Words Dance Group in South Africa.

OK here we go, the latest in the line of what's been happening! I have left Madidi and Jerecho, the two most remote parts of the world and am now in Howick. (*On the border of Natal and Transvaal. Ed*)

The segregation here is really bad, most of the blacks shop at one shop and the whites at another. The service we provide as a mostly white group who are willing to live and share the lives of the black community has massive effects 'cause it is mostly unheard of!

We are running children's classes for kids in a village called Umpopomani. Two days ago we had 60 kids turn up!! We all played games like tag and ring a ring a roses, they all had a wicked time! The children here have no barriers and accept you straight away, they always want to hold your hand and they are fascinated at how white they are compared to their own. We are all having such fun and I really feel that because of the time we spent with them it will have a lasting impression on how things are with them in the future.

There is such heartfeltness around here, people are really willing to listen to you and if you are friendly to them they accept you as your true brother, I can feel the tension in the air because of the white/black stuff but it is so different in every town: here, it is really bad, there it is as if all are equal again.

We are now in Zulu area, people here can dance really well!!! You don't expect it cause they are often very humble and shy but as soon as you put on any form of music they just go crazy!!!

If you get a taxi you have to be prepared to have more and more people come in until you can barely breathe, and seeing a white person in a taxi is really rare. However it is really really cheap - it cost me 25p for an half an hour journey!! and in other places it is even cheaper!

I am in the most dodgy of internet cafes in the world. There is only one computer and it is as if the guy has just opened up his lounge to the public. Last time I got a whole hour for 50p, but this was really rare and you just have to pay what he wants!!

It is a tropical climate here, we have storms practically every day and there are loads of amazing plants!! I am going to the woods later today to see if I can spot some monkeys. They are apparently very cheeky.

Many things happen here that are really extreme: for instance I heard one time that the family we are staying with rang the police in an emergency and an hour later the police rang back asking for a lift to their house!!

Everyone has an alarm with an alarmed response and basically this means that four or so guys come round and arrest everyone but the owner on the property!! So don't set it off by mistake!!

We took the van to the garage so now it doesn't work!!, it stalls every time we stop, every time!! I sometimes wonder if they did this deliberately so that you would go back there again to get it fixed!!!

Anyway, we went round an Indian's house and they cooked us the most divine curry!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

We are leaving Howik soon and will be going to Eastern Cape; this, again will probably have a different climate!

Aids is such a problem here. So many people I have met

Contents Page

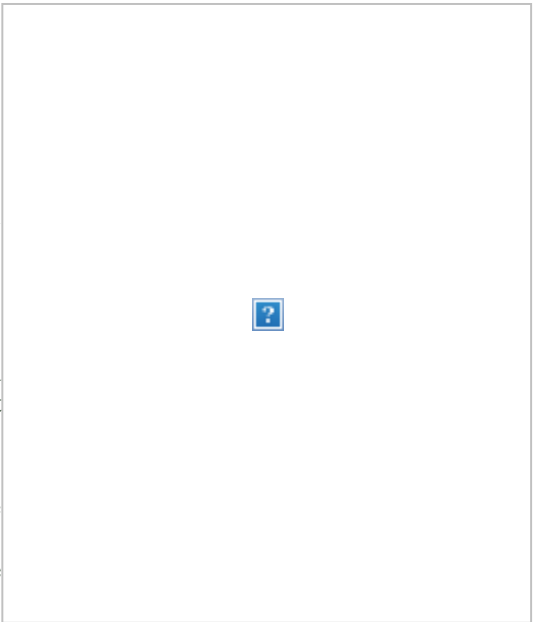
Regular Features

- Bahá'í World Centre
- National Assembly
- Regional Councils
- BOREA
- International Travel Teaching & Pioneering
- Travel Teaching and Homefront Pioneering and Advice for travellers
- Youth Space
- International News
- Letters
- UK Community News

Highlights

- Social Transformation
- Island Hopping
- Beyond Words
- UK Community History
- How I became a Bahá'í

Archives Index



Aids is such a problem here. So many people I have met have lost someone dear to them -so we must pray and pray with all our hearts that a cure is found soon. Here condoms are preached about but the real solution is in abstinence and faithfulness, which is what the Bahá'ís here are trying to promote.

Anyway things are good here, different but good and I am really starting to feel at home here in South Africa!!!!

Write to me, write to me, thinking of you all with positive and loving love

Matthew

Year of Service Desk

Secretary: Sylvia Miley
E-mail yosd@cix.co.uk

Esmyr Koomen, email coordinator
E-mail: yosdesk@koomen.demon.co.uk

Jonneke Koomen, youth advisor
E-mail: jonneke@koomen.demon.co.uk