

IN TOUCH MISSION

international

Monthly

1 January 2017

"...do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?', 'What shall we drink?', 'What shall we wear?' ...For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things." - Matt 6:31,32

Completely now... *In His Grip*

Celebrating a man whose repeated death to self meant life for many.

Missionary Adventures Behind the Iron Curtain

ITMI Founder, William Bathman, or Bill as most know him, has experienced dying for the final time. He graduated to Glory on December 11th, 2016.

Bill's life was a story of dying. Dying to self, dying to safety, dying to his dream of missionary piloting, dying to pastoring in the States, dying to comfort, to finances and security.

"I had to die to flying," Bill said of the way God directed his ministry to Europe.

God directed Bill's ministry away from the unreached in South America to Europe, the seat of the Reformation.

September 2, 2016, Bill and Harriett Bathman observed 65/65: Sixty-

five years since their first overseas missionary journey to Europe, and also their 65th wedding anniversary.

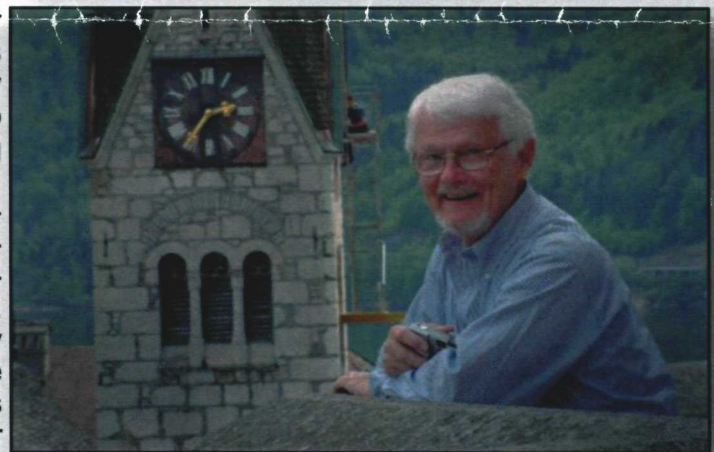
Their life and ministry - solidly characterized by one thing - obedience to God. Even before they were married, the couple sought God's will through prayer and His Word, and they listened for His response, obeying immediately.

"God just loves to be trusted." That's what an old Scottish preacher told Bill when he was a young man. Adhering to that advice blessed his life ever since.

In Touch Mission International

In 1981, after 30 years of ministry in Europe, Bill founded In Touch Mission International (ITMI) in Tempe, Ariz., with the excellent help of his wife, Harriett. Bill was the visionary, Harriett the organizer.

They envisioned an organization that would help national missionaries in restricted-access countries and minister to the persecuted church. Under their leadership, ITMI established a reputation for in-



Bill in his much beloved Austria, 2003

tegrity and effective ministry in scores of countries.

It sounds like an enormous task for anyone. But the Bathmans had something up their sleeves - decades of experience doing that very thing behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War.

First Call: Beginnings

Bill was 21 and fresh out of the Navy. He had dedicated himself to train as a preacher. But something happened during his first night at Bob Jones University in Greenville, S.C., while attending an evangelistic meeting. Bill heard the true Gospel for the very first time, preached powerfully by Dr. Bob Jones.

"Having grown up in a spiritually dead, modernistic church, I had never once heard the Gospel, the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ...That was the moment - 9 pm, September

(Continued on page 2)



Bill and Harriett were tireless prayer warriors for all their family and friends. They prayed for many of you. 2003

8, 1948 – when I realized that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for my sins, and by faith I opened my heart and received Him as my Lord and Savior,” Bill wrote in his third book, *Going On... With a Nod From God*.

Bill wanted to be a bush pilot in South America. He had already gotten his private pilot license. But God had other ideas; bigger and better plans.

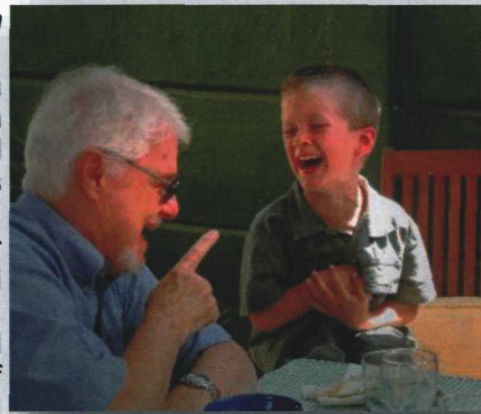
Between his third and fourth years of college, Bill and three friends spent the summer evangelizing through many countries in western Europe and throughout the British Isles. That experience confirmed God's call to him to work full-time in Western Europe. But there was something yet to do before venturing into the mission field. There was the matter of a cute girl from Georgia.

“Harriett and I were married after that summer and following graduation we left for Europe.”

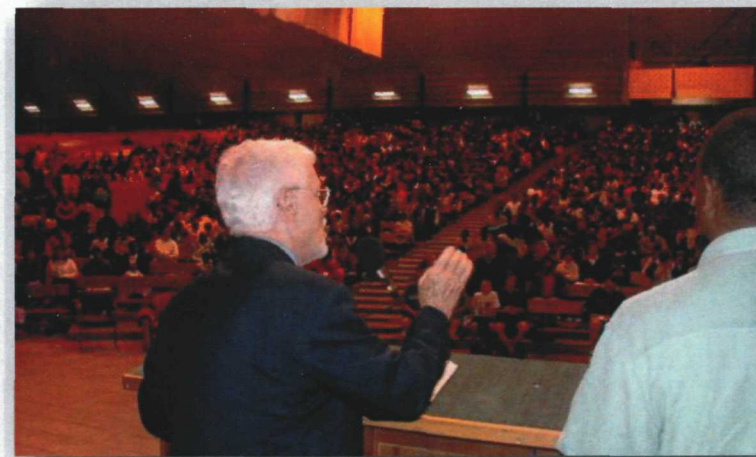
“We lived and ministered in Western Europe for ten years before God opened the door for us to begin a serious ministry in the communist countries of Eastern Europe,” Bill wrote in his first book, *Going Through...Even When the Door is Closed*.

Bill and Harriett spent those first ten years in England and Western Europe learning how to become European. They learned how to dress and gesture and drive. They learned the recipes, habits and customs. Both of them learned to speak German.

As their ministry grew, so did their family. God blessed the couple with three daughters, Deborah, Linda Joy and Lenora, who all grew up to be successful Christians in their own right.



Bill loved his grandchildren. Calvin Hammond shares a special moment with Bill. 2003



Bill doing what he loved best, preaching. Kwasizabantu youth conference, South Africa, 2002

Second Call: Eastern Europe

Bill's first foray into ministry behind the Iron Curtain came while making a delivery for a friend. He retrieved some tape recordings about the treatment of Christians in a communist country.

“My first trip behind the Iron Curtain was to Yugoslavia, in October 1961. On that trip I met a Baptist pastor in Zagreb, who implored, ‘You must come back. Even if the door is closed, try it, to see if it's locked!’ ”

Those words clarified God's call to preach the Gospel and serve persecuted Christians in the communist countries of Eastern Europe.

“Christians living in communist or Muslim lands aren't ‘playing Church’ as many in the West are doing. Their very lives are on the line every day. Everyone I've met, across the past 50 years of ministry in that environment, is a hero to me,” Bill wrote in *Going Through*.

In a recent conversation, Bill explained the sincerity of Christians who have endured privation and persecution.

“They are not ‘playing church.’ Some of the finest Christians I've ever met were ones who took a stand for their faith when their lives were on the line.”

He explained his point with a story.

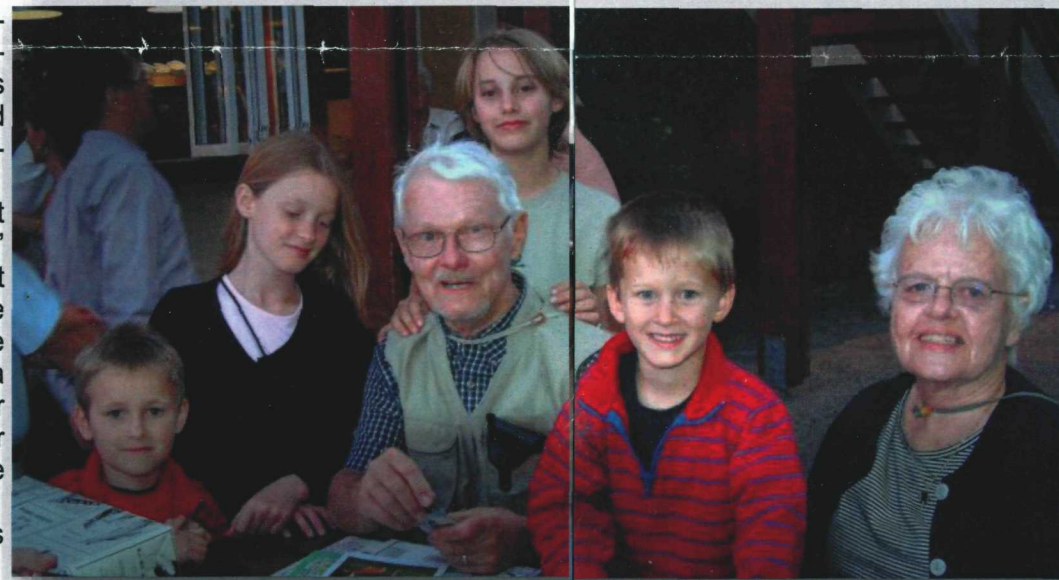
“In the U.S., a man comes home from work and tells his wife, ‘God is blessing me. I got a raise today.’ The man who endures persecution comes home from work and tells his wife, ‘The Lord is blessing me. The communists found out I am a Christian. I got fired.’”

There are many Christians who think this way.

For example, there is **Richard Wurmbrand**, with whom Bill worked closely for 12 years in communist countries of Eastern Europe. Wurmbrand spent 14 years in Romanian prisons where he was brutally tortured for his faith in Christ and is the author of *“Tortured for Christ.”*

Then there was **Andrew van der Bijl**, better known as “Brother Andrew,” with whom Bill evangelized communist soldiers during the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, running up to the tanks and handing out Russian-language Bibles and Gospel tracts. The two men later worked together to develop a three-day training program to prepare other missionaries to work in communist countries. Brother Andrew is co-author of *“God's Smuggler.”*

Other faithful Christians included **Dr. Josif Tson**, the Baptist reformer of Romania, who asked Bill to write a



Bill and Harriett with Christopher, Daniella, Andrea and Calvin, 2003

book about the Reformation in Romania (which has not yet been published for security reasons); and the unforgettable **Dr. Nick Gheorghita**, Romania's leading endocrinologist, an outspoken Christian witness, and later the pastor of 2nd Baptist Church in Oradea (the largest Baptist Church in Europe – East or West) and his co-pastor colleague, **Dr. Paul Negrut**. These two men were constantly under persecution and threats of death from the atheist authorities.

Finally, a man God used to challenge and inspire Bill to greater dedication to Christ, **George Verwer**, was the founder of Operation Mobilization (OM). Bill and Harriett worked in an OM team in Austria in 1963.

From these men, and others, Bill and Harriett learned to live by faith even more than they had been already doing. And the more they trusted God, the more adventurous their lives became, and the more God showed His wonders before their very eyes.

“Living by faith is a constant experience of God answering prayer. He does not always answer ‘yes,’ but He always answers,” Bill is quick to say.

“In the years we worked behind the Iron Curtain, during the Cold War, there were many occasions when we received a letter from someone in America telling us that at a certain hour on such and such a day the Lord awak-

ened them to pray for us. When we compared the date and time it coincided with a very critical hour when we were facing certain danger or extreme need. God answered prayer in ‘real time’ across 9 time-zones. This happened many times.”

“On one trip we had a large monetary gift from Pastor Wurmbrand to deliver to a pastor friend of his who had been in prison with him. The family lived in a small Romanian town for exiles we'd never been to. It was evening when we arrived. The streets were dark and we had no idea how to find their house. We prayed.”

“Afterwards, I looked down a side street and saw a light on in the house at the end. We enquired there. The family were Christians and they knew where the pastor lived! Their daughter came with us to show us the way across town to the man we sought. When we arrived, the entire family were standing in front of their house all dressed in their Sunday best to greet us. How did they know we were coming? The night before the Lord had told the wife in a dream, that ‘Tomorrow night you will receive a great gift.’ By faith, they were waiting for our arrival.”

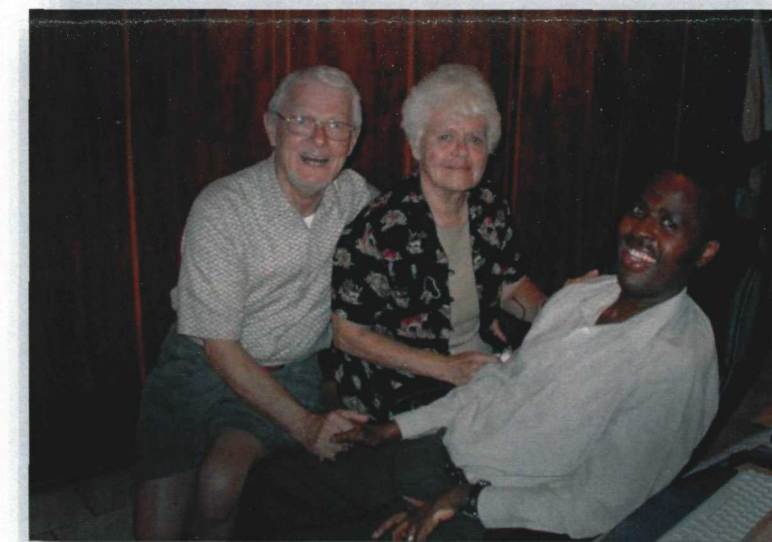


Bill making sure that his “adopted” Zulu granddaughter knows he loves her. 2002

The Bathman's ministry expanded into many restricted-access countries behind the Iron Curtain. So much so that they moved from the United Kingdom to Salzburg, Austria, and established a mission base where they worked for the next 11 years in more than a dozen countries of communist Eastern Europe.

Their base was located at the Rosenhof, a favorite hotel of theirs in Salzburg, which God miraculously allowed them to purchase. There they provided food and lodging for fellow missionaries, rest for weary friends and training (with their friend Brother Andrew) for missionaries planning to work in communist countries. Because of its strategic location, the Rosenhof was also a staging area for Bibles and other materials for the Bathmans and other mission organizations.

Bill began recording sermons for Trans-World Mission radio, reporting on the sufferings of Christians in communist countries. This radio ministry would come in handy for many years to come. As a radio presenter, Bill eventually produced literally thousands of radio programs for



Bill and Harriett love on Kwasizabantu's Fano Sibise who had been diagnosed with an incurable disease. 2002



Bill was very proud of what the young man, ITMI's Piotr Zaremba has become and accomplished

Trans-World Mission radio, HCJB, Radio Free Europe and many other broadcasting stations.

Third Call: Arizona

More than a dozen countries were taken over by communists during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1976, the Lord showed Bill that "as the communist world expands, so does your mission field."

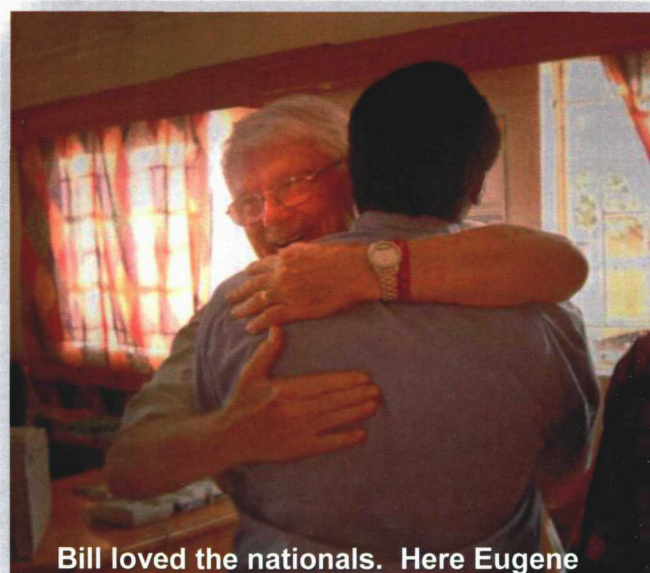
In 1981, the Bathmans transferred their base of operations from Austria to Tempe, Arizona. It was there they founded ITMI to assist the suffering church. Bill began working in Latin America, with several preaching journeys to India and China. Bill continued to visit eastern Europe, maintaining the relationships he and Harriett had built during the Cold War. And, of course, their main focus was in Africa.

The point of ITMI was (and is) to assist national missionaries and pastors in their work, not to do it for them.

African communism is just as bad as European communism, merely located somewhere else. Communist invasions are horrible. Travel is restricted for citizens. Government agencies, radio, television, newspapers and schools are taken over. Sometimes churches are closed or destroyed. The food chain is controlled by the new government, as are water and sewer systems, medical care and everything else. Refugees flee in great numbers for the



Alina Stiopu and one of the poor she and Bill worked with in Romania.



Bill loved the nationals. Here Eugene Kalunga, Zambia receives one of the "Bill Bathman Hugs". 2003

nearest border. The economy deteriorates, fuel supplies dwindle and hunger grows. Foreign investment dries up. Other countries pull out their support, relief agencies pack up, missionaries leave.

But when other people and agencies ran out, Bill and his colleagues ran in - with Bibles, discipleship materials and the hope of the Gospel. He worked as a reporter with TransWorld Mission radio, going into many countries to report on the conditions there, then broadcasting his stories to inform mission supporters in other countries, including the United States, of what Christians were suffering.

For example, when Rhodesia was fighting for its national life against communist guerrillas, Bill went in and interviewed political and military leaders to find out the real stories, all the while making contacts with Christians and discovering ways to help them. Now named Zimbabwe, that country has been devastated by communist policies under a brutal dictator. Christians have suffered starvation and every type of evil. Tens of thousands have died. White farmers had their farms taken and the farmers and their families were killed.

Suffering makes people receptive to the Gospel, thus many Christians there have been helped and encouraged by Bill and his colleagues through deliveries of life-saving food, cloth-



Three amazing Champions



Dr. Nick and Cornelia Gheorghita and Bill sharing a memory of work in Romania. 2003



Preaching the Word of God, Kwasizabantu, 2004

ing and medical supplies, and soul-saving preaching of the word of God.

In country after country, Bill and ITMI worked with faithful national workers and assisted their ministries in any way possible. Bill and Harriett helped with the purchase of vehicles, delivery of Bibles, medical equipment, supplies and services, pastoral support, financial assistance for projects, raising awareness through radio programs, and by field visits bathed in prayer, support and encouragement.

It must be noted that along side every successful man is an even better woman. Harriett is a trained nurse, and thus had a heart for medical missions work. She is also a good organizer.

Harriett developed ITMI into a viable mission. During the next dozen years she organized medical teams for Poland, medical/surgical teams to operate in Romanian hospitals, took medical equipment to Bethesda Medical Clinic in Romania, Medical aid to Bulgaria and sent an 18-wheeler truck full of medical equipment to Romania.

In 1982, while he and Harriett were traveling in Canada to preach, Bill had a major heart attack. He was operating with just half of his heart muscle. Then he had colon surgery. But God preserved him and put him back to work...for more than 30 years.

Fourth Call: South Africa

In two-thirds of a century of missionary experience, Bill founded three major missions: Network, Pio-



Peter Hammond, Steve, Bill and Timothy Keller at Tygerberg Radio, South Africa, 2003

neers and In Touch Mission International, and ministered in more than 100 countries. In particular, he had extensive personal experience in evangelism in communist countries.

He and his friends have planted churches, schools, colleges and medical clinics. And all of this ministry took place in a world of communism, atheism, economic hardship and brutal persecution.

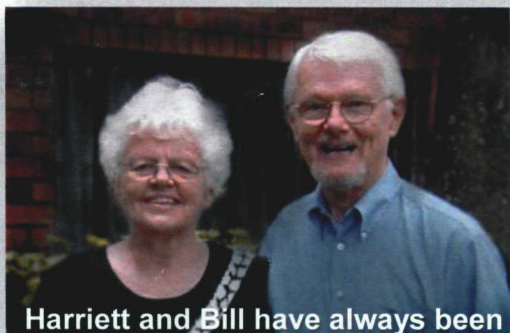
Then a miracle happened. In 1989, after generations of prayer, God answered the pleas of His people. One country after another began to shake off the shackles of tyranny. The last Eastern Bloc country remaining was Romania. President Nicolae Ceausescu was becoming absolutely demonic in his actions toward his people and especially toward Christians. In the latter months of the year, he ordered confiscated Bibles to be ground to pulp and made into toilet paper. Christians were thrown out of hospital windows to their deaths. Seeing the unrest in his people, his wife ordered the army to kill all 300,000 residents of the city of Timisoara.

But God intervened. After decades of prayer and selfless service and sacrifice, the faithful efforts of Bill and Harriett, Andrew, Richard, Joseph, Paul and many other Christians across the country bore joyous fruit.

The army refused to carry out the kill order. The secret police - Securitate - manned the tanks, but since the dicta-



Bill with daughter Deborah, Lenora and Alois (granddaughter and husband), and Steve at a farm in Austira, 2003



Harriett and Bill have always been an unstoppable force for sharing God's good news.

tor didn't trust the army, the tanks had not been supplied and ran out of fuel. Many other vicious actions, such as the slaughtering of citizens and the bulldozing of entire villages, ceased. Ceausescu and his wife tried to run from impending judgment via helicopter, but the army caught, tried and executed them. Romania was free.

Bill and some friends left Arizona for Romania. The border guards said, "Welcome to FREE Romania!" As they drove across the country, church bells rang, there was an absence of hammer and sickle insignia and everyone flashed the "V" for victory sign as they waved.

But there was more work to do. Christian leaders encouraged their congregations to love the communists rather than seeking revenge. An all-out effort was made to fill the spiritual void left by the vanishing communist presence. Bill and ITMI wanted to form the spiritual life of the people before other influences invaded the country such as pornography, the New Age movement and materialism, etc.

However, the primary geographical concentration for ITMI was southern and eastern Africa. For 24 years, from 1976-2001,

the Bathman's averaged from one to three months each year there. In 2001, they moved to Cape Town.

Overall work in Africa consisted of preaching to all who wanted to hear the Word of God, and delivering Bibles, and assisting the poor and suffering church in a myriad of ways.

All this was done as they endured exhausting road trips and lack of sleep. African roads (or lack of them) are not compatible with motor vehicles or human bodies. Traveling in restricted-access countries also means enduring restricted access to clean water, food, fuel and supplies. Traveling across Africa is often a testament to God's miraculous provision for ITMI personnel.

Once, a co-driver was needed to deliver Bibles and other materials to South Sudan, nearly 5,000 miles distant. Uncle Bill volunteered. He was 74 years old and had only half a heart. His road companion was Hansie, a veteran missionary.

Fifth Call: Back to Arizona

In September 2008, Bill and Harriett moved their base of operations back to Arizona for health reasons.

They relocated, but a few people misunderstood and thought they had retired. He responded to the misunderstanding humorously.

"We have not retired. That 'word' is not in our vocabulary ... having far too much fun to retire. Yes, OK, we're in our 80s now - that makes us 'octogeraniums.' But we ain't done yet!"

Bill continued to write autobiographical books and mentor many people in missions work.



Bill Harriett Lenora Daniella, 2003

After 65 years, Bill and Harriett continued to minister with clear-eyed purpose and obedience to God's calling and leading.

Bill would want each one of us to commit to carry on the task of touching lives for Jesus. Bill is an example of dying to self, self wants, and being obedient to God's plan and calling. Bill is now forever ...*In His Grip*.

- Steve Lee, Summer Kelley, Steve Evers



Bill was a tireless communicator of God's truth and God's plan.

For Praise . . .

1. **Zambia - Johan Leach** - God has provided for a solar system and for half the cost of a vehicle.
2. **South Africa - Gerhard le Roux** - lost 23 sheep to an accident, God used this disaster to feed many in the Onseepkans community.
3. **South Africa - Charl van Wyk's** recent trip to the U. S. - great success as Charl ministered to all age groups from East to West Coasts.
4. **Poland - Piotr Zaremba** - The new completed Bible is opening many doors in many denominations in the Polish speaking world.
5. **South Africa - Charl van Wyk - Mark Parris** - Crusade in Stone Hill camp saw 15 girls come to know Christ.
6. **India - Paul and Molly** - No family injuries or deaths from last month's 122 mph cyclone that hit their community.

For Prayer . . .

1. USA - **God's provision** for ITMI, its Staff and all our partners as need for truth grows each and every day.
2. India - **Paul and Molly's** (19) little orphan girls are starting another school term and school fees times (19) are now due.
3. South Africa - **Gerhard le Roux** and family seek prayer for God to break the spiritual blindness that grips Onseepkans.
4. South Sudan - **Jahim Buli** - Life and church are being threatened in the midst of the intense tribal tension.
5. USA - **Harriett Bathman** - Life and ministry without Bill. Finances and health.