

ACCOUNTABILITY

You as the reader have been reading many of the articles that have appeared in my column during the past few years, and you must be wondering what is happening in this welfare department. I am therefore departing from my normal practise of writing articles that relate to social development and have chosen to use this issue to inform you of what is taking place on the welfare calendar.

First of all I want to thank God for the privilege of being able to head this vital department for the past six years. During that time I have been able to go to at least 20 assemblies, 2 districts and three regions, and present capacity building workshops over weekends to empower the local churches to get involved with the issues that are affecting the communities they are ministering to.

During the past two years I have been active in drafting and presenting parliament with our view on dealing with children and the new Child Care Act that will soon be adopted by parliament. More importantly I have been able to represent our church in dealing with children's issues at a monthly forum which has input into the national report of our country to the United Nations.

A matter of encouragement has been the fact that there are many of our 1200 assemblies involved in social development work at this present point in time. Unfortunately, not all assemblies are currently registered with our department, and so I am only able to give you a limited idea of the work being done by our church in uplifting all those in need.

At present we have information on 71 assemblies ministering to over 21,000 people through feeding schemes, counselling projects, medical support ministries, job creation projects, old age facilities, crèches, street children projects, as well as computer literacy and HIV/AIDS projects.

Secondly, I would like to call on you to pray for this ministry and also get involved with your local church projects. There are so many people in need, and today I believe that the church stands as the only ray of hope in a world blinded by the darkness of evil.

Sadly, in most recent news articles and television, we have been confronted by the fact that even pastors and their wives have been guilty of abusing children who have been placed in their foster care. This breaks my heart particularly when I am reminded that Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

October of every year is considered as our State national welfare month, and following shortly after that we have 16 days of activism, in which the country is called upon to make some special effort to reduce the abuse of women and children in our country. From an international perspective we are currently in the year of the family and as this year is rapidly drawing to an end I would call on you to think of all those families who are in need, particularly as you start planning for the Christmas season.

Most recently I was presented with a report of a conference held by the Films and Publications Board, and in it they have expressed their concern regarding the increase in child pornography in South Africa. It is sad that when God has given such a precious blessing to a family, that we see those children become the victims of horrendous abuse. Child of God you and I must step into the breach and do our bit to stop this from increasing.

In closing I am reminded of a letter written by our Moderator where he has compared us to salt and light in keeping with what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. Let us shine whilst we still can, for the night is coming when there will no longer be light and this world will be plunged into a darkness from

which it can not escape. So often welfare work is relegated to being an after thought in local churches, instead of being seen as the outward expression of the compassion of Christ to a lost generation. Be a part of God's expression of love and mercy, by letting your faith be seen through your works. So often we say that faith without works is dead and in quoting this powerful portion from the epistle of James we forget that the context relates to the physical welfare of those who cross our paths.

I would dare to say that if churches practised the teachings and principles in the early chapters of the book of Acts we will go a long way to eliminating poverty and hunger in our communities and our country.