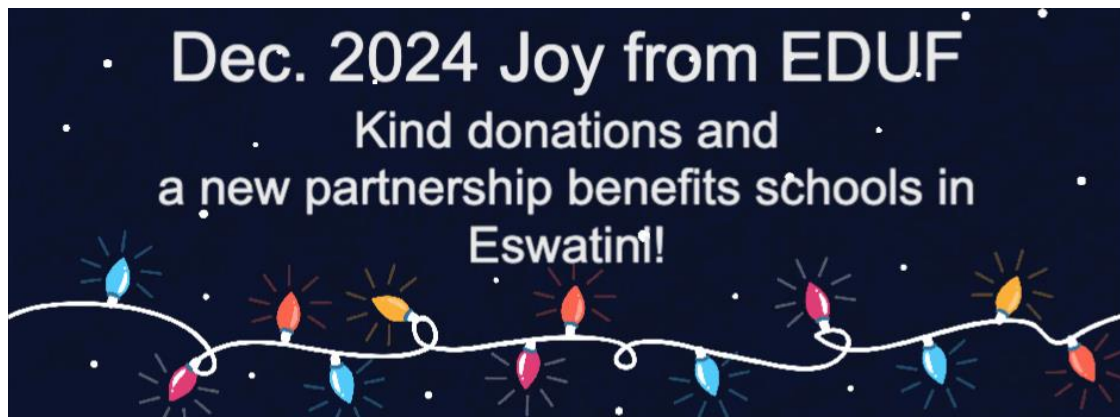




Dear Friends of Nazarene Education across Africa,

As we all find ourselves between Advent and the 12 days of Christmas (Dec. 25th until Kings' Day), we have many reasons to thank God for blessings He has given us. Reasons to thank Him, reasons to share the good news of Jesus' birth, reasons to share blessings with others.



KINDNESS – SORROW > JOY - SURPRISE – HOPE. These truths have shone into our lives at EDUF this month. I'm eager to share them with you.

In November I wrote, "The harvest is white in Africa and the workers have needs."

1. Scholarships for faculty in Angola, Cape Verde, South Africa
2. Roofs for churches in Mozambique
3. Travel costs for faculty for a conference
4. Equipment for science courses in Kenya and Eswatini

KINDNESS. Several kind donors responded to all four of the needs mentioned and so we're poised to disburse funds for each one. Thank you!!!

SORROW > JOY. Psalms 30:5 says, "One may experience sorrow during the night, but **joy** arrives in the morning." The closing of Eastern Nazarene College has certainly produced ripples of grief and sorrow for hundreds of alumni, students, faculty, staff, i.e. the whole community resultant from 124 years of ENC's mission. Sorrow is real on so many levels. The closing necessitated the emptying of every building on campus. However, the heroic leaders who have been in charge of closing down the school, testify to "sparks of joy" that also are real. Among those sparks are knowing that items from Shrader Hall of Science are bound for Nazarene universities in Africa. Other sparks come from books that were distributed to Nazarene institutions of higher learning in three parts of the world and another big set of books that EDUF helped pull off the shelves for schools in Eswatini.



SURPRISE. Our surprise came from Dr. Sharon Bull, who is an amazing asset to every group she helps to lead. She is secretary of EDUF, of her local church board but also OPALS library system coordinator for Global Nazarene Higher Education and Librarian Emerita, Northwest Nazarene University. Sharon had spoken to me of a friend in NCM/Canada who has coordinated for years the shipment of containers of school supplies from their local church in Cambridge, Ontario to Eswatini. Might Marg Stahlbaum help EDUF by taking the books and science equipment to SANU? . . . In a three-way phone call, Marg said, “Yes!” I said, “Hallelujah!” I found out that Marg’s trips benefit a large number of Nazarene private schools all over Eswatini. So, I went back to the ENC library shelves and pulled books for children, high schoolers and teachers in those Nazarene schools. There are 40+ boxes of books, 10 suitcases and boxes of scientific glassware and hopefully still, teaching boards to load into Marg’s container.

IF EDUF can manage to transport overland to Marg all of the items purchased and collected from the buildings at ENC, then, they can be shipped in the container. So, my next word to share with you is “hope”.

HOPE. EDUF hopes, (well I hope) that you wonderful readers of this newsletter may help us raise funds for two things related to this “Eswatini Project”:

1. Transportation of all the items from Quincy, MA to Cambridge, Ontario: about \$3,000.
2. A trip to Eswatini for two ENC faculty members who had the sad job of closing down their buildings: about \$2500 each.

We all know that “One book can change a life.” Please consider making a donation of any size to EDUF for the blessing of Nazarene kids in Eswatini with beautiful books from the library of ENC.

Wishing you a joy-ful, Spirit-filled, Christmas from all of us at Education Development United Fellowship.

Margaret Scott, for the board of Trustees, EDUF

P. S. Keep reading for instructions for your giving and for Christmas messages from Dr. Gabriel Benjiman, Rev. Benson Phiri and a recent report from SANU. Send a check to Mrs. Lauralee Nothstine, 2412 Wildflower Cove, Mishawaka, IN 46545, or give through the website link eduf.org.



The Blessed Life by Dr. Gabriel Benjiman
from the Sermon - Divine Disruption and the Spirit of Possibility

Living well doesn't necessarily mean you're close to God, nor does it mean you've been especially blessed by Him. Having material wealth is not proof of God's favour. Job's story reminds us that worldly riches can be taken away, but a relationship with God is the truest form of wealth. Eternal currency.

The birth of Jesus shows us that power, silks, and gold don't define a king. Even the devil can offer the world and its high places. The truth is, living well is not a sure sign of being blessed. One line stands out for me this Christmas: Gabriel's greeting to Mary. "*Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you... you have found favour with God*" (Luke 1:28, 30).

Essentially, the angel used a phrase that's familiar to many Christians today: "Mary, you are blessed and highly favoured." But when modern Christians say they are blessed and highly favoured, they often mean they're living well. Let's take a closer look at Mary's life after those words were spoken to her. Her life was far from easy. Her dreams of marrying Joseph and building a happy home were shattered. Joseph wanted to leave her until God intervened. The engagement seemed over. Mary was pregnant as a teenager, and hardly anyone would believe her claim of being a virgin. It was a scandal. Then she was forced to flee to a foreign land, becoming a refugee because the king and his soldiers were hunting the very child God had given her to raise. Does that sound like someone blessed and highly favoured?

Imagine being in her shoes. God calls you; He makes you part of fulfilling a thousand-year-old prophecy, and suddenly your life is full of pain and disruption. By today's standards, Mary's life on the run didn't look anything like the "blessed and highly favoured" one many of us imagine.

Perhaps you too encountered God. Perhaps you chose to follow God and you accepted the assignment God gave to you. But now, hardships and pain seem to be the only thing following you. Perhaps you are even asking-How can this be the blessed and highly favoured life?

So, what was it that truly blessed and favoured Mary? It wasn't her circumstances. It was that God was with her. Immanuel - Jesus, God with us - was by her side throughout. As a threatened woman, God was with her. As a woman shamed by society, God was with her. As a refugee, God was with her. As a woman with no Joseph by her side, watching her Son being nailed to a cross He didn't deserve - there too, God was with her. That's why the angel could say she was blessed and highly favoured.

The good news of Christmas is this: God is with us! That's what the shepherds heard. Joy restored to the world because God came to live among us. Whatever you're facing, God is with you. He knows your struggles, and He's holding you. Being truly blessed isn't simply about living well and living with material wealth. This may happen for some. But the true blessing this Christmas is knowing this God who is with you even now.

Victory and peace to you in the Spirit of Christ this Christmas season
With love, Gabriel, Mary, Karris and Eden Benjiman

Rev. Benson Phiri, Dean of Academic Affairs in Lilongwe, Malawi

As someone who loves to cook and experiment with different cuisines, I've often marveled at how individual ingredients, when combined, create a masterpiece far greater than the sum of their parts. My taste buds, trained to discern the nuances of flavors, know that some ingredients - while unremarkable or even unpleasant on their own - transform into something extraordinary when mixed with others.

This principle applies beautifully to how we approach the Bible. The tendency to discredit Scripture or dismiss its message based on a single verse or isolated passage reveals a limited perspective. Just as it would be unwise to judge an entire meal based on tasting only the raw garlic or a pinch of salt, it is equally shortsighted to generalize or misunderstand the richness of the Bible by fixating on one section while ignoring the broader narrative. Unfortunately, some individuals, driven by self-interest or resistance to the transformative power of truth, cherry-pick verses to discredit the Bible or diminish Christ's message. While such an approach may feed personal biases or pride, it ultimately leaves the soul unsatisfied and unfulfilled.

To truly appreciate the beauty and depth of Scripture, we must savor it as a whole, allowing its full message to nourish and transform us. Just as a well-prepared meal delights and satisfies, so too does Scripture when we embrace its complete tenor and allow its truths to unfold in harmony.

Savor the whole meal. Taste, and see that it is good. Godspeed!



Southern Africa Nazarene University, on the 17th of December 2024, successfully hosted the Professional Research Conference on Sexual Health for the Youth: A Responsive Care Approach. The conference, funded through a grant from Peace Corps, brought together leading experts and professionals to address critical issues in youth sexual health. Attendees engaged in meaningful discussions, shared innovative research, and explored new approaches to providing responsive sexual health care for young people. The conference fostered valuable collaborations that will continue to shape the future of youth sexual health care and support efforts for healthier and more informed communities. Dr Faith Mlotsa-Mngomezulu, the Vice Chancellor of SANU, gave the welcome remarks. The Keynote Speaker was Dr Gcinile Buthelezi from the Ministry of Health representing Deputy Director, Public Health. Dr Buthelezi commended SANU's Faculty of Health Sciences for organizing the conference.