

PRISON WORK IN EGYPT TFONZ GLOBAL

True Freedom Outreach New Zealand bringing help and hope to inmates of Kanater Prison linked with Maadi Community Church and the international visiting team in Cairo, Egypt, led by Poncet Ouwo Mete.

Psalm 100:4-5 "Give thanks to the LORD, and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever."

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There is good reason to be joyful in the Lord and to thank Him with grateful hearts.

In fact, most of this news letter will be a celebration of His goodness. Yusuf Okechukwu has been released at last. Christmas was a time of special celebration in Kanater. And we have Eva Schmitz's testimony to share with you all. THANK YOU, Lord Jesus, for all these blessings. And I do thank all of you for your love, prayers, and faithful giving to help the Christian fellowship members as they serve God in Kanater. For each one of you I pray you will experience the comfort and grace of God throughout this new year of 2013.

(1) Yusuf's Release:

On Dec. 22, 2012, Poncet emailed me, saying that Yusuf's paper approving his release had come to Kanater on 17th Dec. and been sent back to the state security office on the 18th. However, there was sure to be a delay before Yusuf's transfer to a police station, and Yusuf wanted nothing said until his transfer took place.

On Jan. 24th this happened, and Poncet emailed me on 25th Jan. Poncet and Eman visited Yusuf with food and drinks, and he looked tired, but happy to be released. He had court on Sunday, Jan. 27th, and had to go to state security and immigration as well. Only when he got his final clearance from the court and state security could his ticket be bought. Poncet told me that Yusuf could travel the next week "if things go fast". So I felt quite upset when Eva's email on Jan. 30th said: "...It seems that Yusuf has to wait 3 more months in prison or the police station until he can fly home." I assumed the holdup must be related to his unpaid fine, as it was with Tina Geraldine.

What good news came on Feb 5th!! Poncet wrote: "I'm happy to inform you that Yusuf arrived in Nigeria on Sunday 3rd of February and is with his mom now. He left Egypt last Friday and had a one-day transit in Scotland. He is finally free and safe at home. He spent 10 days in the police station after being transferred from the prison, but could have spent more, 3 months, as stated by the letter sent to Immigration by the court. The reason was to commute his fine to 3 months. Actually, some unknown person altered the letter, writing something different from what the court decided on Sunday 27th of January when Yusuf was there. Yusuf was surprised and so despondent when he learned this news. He and his lawyer decided to return to court the day after, and he was then granted his freedom, as the court issued a new letter for Immigration, for him to go home immediately. We thank God for all he has done for our brother!"

On Feb 4th, Anne Offer sent word that Yusuf had arrived safely in Nigeria on Friday (1st Feb.) and had a big welcome, including many former inmates from Cairo. He was really overwhelmed. Also, he was able to take all his luggage without having to pay. Anne plans to visit him at the end of April.

(2) Kanater's Christmas Celebrations:

- KMPCF sends a big thank you to all who generously gave for Christmas. In KMP there was a special time with the International visiting team on 18 Dec. The visit was one and a half hours long, and ended with singing in various languages, sometimes the same song together ('Joy to the World" and "Silent Night" are both in Chinese). Father Ghislain prayed at the end, and everyone embraced. The team gave Christmas decorations, chocolates, biscuits and beverages.
- On Dec. 20, Bishop Mounier gave communion to all the brothers and sisters in KMP and KWP. Then the prisoners sang. After the Arabic song that calls for all to lift the name of Jesus high in all the world they spoke the names of all the countries represented. The All Saints team gave food for Christmas: rice, frozen vegetables, oil, and soft drinks. They also gave a Christmas tree and decorations, and a sweatshirt for each prisoner. On top of that, they gave a table tennis table, requested by the chief of security in the prison.
- On Dec. 24, they made and gave cards to the senior prison officials, and posted an invitation for all in KMP to celebrate Christmas with the Fellowship. They decorated their rooms, and Midardo and his team prepared everything to cook the special meal on 25th. This was no easy task, as more came than expected – about 150 people.
- On Dec. 25, the Director allowed the doors to be opened early so Midardo's team

could begin to cook. John and his team erected the tent and decorated it. The service began at 10 a.m. with singing and then prayer. Worship followed, with songs in different languages. Pastor Yusuf spoke on the meaning of Immanuel and the joy of knowing God is with us. He called on all to experience God's presence daily, even in that prison. The message was translated into Arabic by Midardo, Spanish by Mauricio & Tigrinya by Teame.

Then people shared about the way Christmas is celebrated in their own countries. When the Director and his officials came in they gave the prisoners some words of encouragement, and the prisoners prayed for them and for Egypt, as well as singing "We wish you a merry Christmas". After the officials left, all embraced each other. Then all the balloons were burst, and the meal shared together: rice, vegetables, chicken, and a can of soft drink.

The Orthodox Christian brothers were there, but were still fasting (for Christmas on Jan. 7th).

Many Muslim inmates attended. And although they were not expected to come on Jan 7th, many did attend that celebration, too.

- At KWP, Bishop Mouneer was greatly encouraged by 3 women who attended the Christmas service, all 3 awaiting execution. None knew the date set for their execution, but they had all come to Christ while in Kanater. One said, *"We are not afraid because we know where we are going. We asked for God's forgiveness and He forgave us. Now we are His children and we know we will be with Him."* Another said, *"We were imprisoned by Satan when we were living outside the prison, but now Jesus set us free here in the prison."* The third said, *"Isn't it amazing that we met the Lord in the prison! We were prisoners outside the prison."*

(3) Eva Schmitz's Testimony:

At Eva's confirmation, God's promise to her was *"Do not fear, only believe"* (Mark 5:36). This Word became a real help and comfort for her, especially in Egypt. (You will be blessed by her testimony).

"When I came to Cairo in April 1983, it was, because I just had married my husband Helmfried and his job was in Egypt. In the beginning I did not like Cairo at all. The dirt and rubbish everywhere, the smell, the come-ons of men of any age and even young boys, everything annoyed and frustrated me. The contrast between Hamburg, where I had lived and worked for some years as a leading nurse in a dialysis center, and Cairo was immense. I could hardly cope with it. The only reason I stayed in this city was my love for Helmfried. But I told him, that I only could imagine

living in this terrible city for three, or maybe five, years. Nearly every time we were in Germany or somewhere else for holidays, I went back to Cairo reluctantly. When friends left after having spent some years in Cairo, it was another reason for me to be sad, and I felt helpless.

After some time I got involved in caring for an old German woman, who was born in Cairo and had spent her whole life there as a single person. After a badly done thigh operation, she could hardly walk anymore, nor leave the house. The deacon of the German Evangelical Church in Cairo was looking for a nurse who could give old Emily needed injections and look after her from time to time, which I did for 13 years. I went monthly to the German Embassy to pick up her social rent, I looked for an eye doctor and a dentist to inspect her at home, I was cooking for her and brought her to the hospital several times for surgery on her face as she had skin cancer. My husband and I took Emily for her birthdays to our flat or we celebrated it in another friend's home, and we made it possible for her to celebrate Christmas in our church. But then came the day she had to enter a nursing home, as it was not possible any more for the deacon and me to care for Emilie. I visited her regularly until she died on Jan 24th, 1998. The home had called me in the morning. Our pastor came with me to give Emilie the last blessing, and I spent the last four hours with her, holding her hands. The funeral took place under blue sky at the German Cemetery in Old Cairo, and Emilie was buried in her parents' grave.

Just nine days before her death, on Jan 15th, 1998, I went to the prison for the first time with my friend Ricarda, who was at that time responsible for the Prison Ministry of the German Evangelical Church in Egypt. Ricarda only visited foreign women in KWP, the men in KMP being visited by the Pastor of the French-speaking Evangelical Church in Egypt. Both churches had started the Prison Ministry together at the beginning of the 1990s. When Emilie had to go to the nursing home, it was clear to me that the Prison Ministry was waiting for me. For about 1½ years I made monthly visits with Ricarda to KWP. Then the Pastor of the French Church asked me whether I would be interested to visit the men with him monthly as well. Soon I realized that the visiting rules in the two prisons were different and it would take weeks until I could see all the prisoners in KMP. In KWP we could visit the few inmates every



month, no matter how many visitors we were. So I started going every week to Kanater Prisons, once a month with Ricarda and Geraldine's mother-in-law Angel to KWP, the other three weeks to KMP, with the French Pastor, Poncet, or other interested people.

When Ricarda and her husband left for Almaty in January 2001, I took over responsibility for the Prison Ministry of the German and French Evangelical Churches. My connections with other Prison Ministries in Cairo were good: with Father Monir from All Saints Episcopal Church in Zamalek, and Annemarie Graf from Maadi Community Church (MCC). But both groups only visited the men prisoners, my group being the only one which looked after foreign Christian women. But there are two Egyptian women from the Evangelical Church in Egypt with permission to worship with all Christian women in KWP every other week. And there are small Egyptian groups from different churches, and a few others, who go to KWP, but they can only visit Egyptian Christian women.

Annemarie Graf left Egypt in 2007, and as MCC did not have a successor for her, they and the prisoners asked me to take over this ministry as well. With this takeover the cooperation with TFONZ started and our ministry not only gained more interested people, but we also received more financial support. Until then we only had a yearly budget from the German Christmas Bazaar, donations from friends and supporters of the ministry, and sometimes collections from our churches. The connection with TFONZ gave us many more possibilities to support the prisoners. I am very thankful for these years of partnership. It was and still is a real blessing for the ministry, and I thank the Lord for His generosity and His love He showed to us.

During the last few years our Prison Ministry became truly international. Besides Pastor Daniel from Côte d'Ivoire and Poncet from the Democratic Republic of Congo (both from the French Evangelical Church), Father Achilles from Uganda joined the ministry with some people from St. Joseph's Church. Carlos from Nigeria is a very important member of the ministry. Since Father Achilles left in 2011, his successor, Father Ghislain from Benin, has joined the ministry. From 2009 until 2011 the lovely couple Tanja from the Netherlands and Hugo from South Africa brought more and more people from MCC to our ministry. They were a real blessing. Now the Prison Ministry has members from 7 different denominations/churches and they come from 15 nations.

The years I was serving in the prison ministry and the experiences I had with many prisoners changed my life. I was always a believing Christian and was involved in many voluntary jobs in the church and elsewhere. But when I started visiting prisoners in Kanater, I was more than astonished to find Christians who had converted in prison and now served the Lord. The time I could spend with them, having conversations and discussions with one or the other, had more importance for me than being together with many other people I knew. It is amazing what I have learned from some of them for my spiritual life. I want to mention especially Geraldine, Ohenese and Yusuf, and the Christian love many of them have given to me. When we prayed and sang at the end of the visits, I felt the Lord's presence in our midst. Very often I left the prison in better condition and happier than when going in.

The Prison Ministry will follow me all my life. During my 15 active years in this ministry, I realized that a very important purpose for my long stay in Cairo was to serve the prisoners. Most of my time I was busy caring for the prisoners' welfare, which helped me to forget the difficulties I had in my beginning years in Cairo. I felt affection and love for the prisoners which they showed me as well. It was a constant giving and taking.

My husband and I left Egypt in summer 2012. It was not because of the latest turmoil in our host country; we had made this decision already two years before. Helmfried turned 65 last June, which is retirement age in Germany, and I had spent 30 years in Egypt, which is half of my life. I just added a 0 to the 3 years I thought would be enough for me living in Egypt. But God had a plan for me in this country, and I am more than thankful to Him for these 30 years. I feel blessed with my beloved husband Helmfried, I feel blessed for the way the Lord has used me, and that He used both of us as a blessing for the prisoners and other people.

God bless you all. Eva Schmitz."

The Situation in Egypt:

PRAY for Egypt, reportedly close to collapse, with many violent protests at present. In a move reminiscent of the Mubarak era, **President Morsi** spoke on **Egyptian** state television, imposing a 30-day state of emergency with curfews and military control on Port Said, Suez and Ismailiya. Mr Morsi had been criticised for his low profile during a series of disturbances that began in Cairo on Thursday night, Jan. 24, eve of the second anniversary of the Tahrir Square protests that brought down ex-President Hosni Mubarak. Protesters took to the streets in Suez to vent their anger against the curfew and against Morsi himself. Meanwhile, in Ismailiya, anti-Morsi demonstrators threw petrol bombs at police, who drove them back with tear gas.

Please Pray for the brothers and sisters in Kanater, especially those in leadership and those being trained to take over. Also for the 150 Eritreans and Ethiopians just brought in to Kanater from the Sinai border; and for immigrants waiting for tickets so they can leave Egypt (at least 6 men). Pray too for the prison administration in Kanater to treat inmates with care and compassion. And for those released recently: the Makassas, Nosa, Ganiyu and Yusuf.

SENDING CARDS and LETTERS to prisoners in KMP and KWP

When writing to any of the prisoners, please address each letter as follows:

"Prison Ministry"

(Name of the Prisoner),

M.C.C., P.O. Box 21, Maadi, Cairo, Egypt

I do encourage you to send Christmas cards to our brothers and sisters in prison if you can.

COMING BIRTHDAYS in February-May:

Remember to use the new address given above when you send letters and birthday cards to a brother or sister in Kanater.

KMP Birthdays:

Alfredo Cuevas (Mexico), Feb 13;	Leslie Gustaaf Willy (Belgium), Feb. 14;
Mauricio Rivera Sierra (Columbia), March 25;	Carlos Garcia Abad (Peru), March 30;
Urbano Vidal Rebello (Mexico), April 25;	Eel Ibrahim, (South Sudan), May 9.

KWP Birthdays:

Carmen Leonor Figueroa (Venezuela), Feb.13;	Anna Maria Hernandez (Colombia), March 9;
Nagamoni (India), April 24;	Nadiezda Steiepanowa (Russia), May 19.

LETTERS and DONATIONS to TFONZ:

Online Giving:

The TFONZ Board decided you should have the option of online giving. If this is how you prefer to donate, here's how: always give a reference, your name, and who/what the donation is for and send to:

SWIFT CODE ANZBNZ 22

Account number 01 0482 0063492 50

If mailing a cheque, please **do not send cheques to me by name**, but if you wish to send one for the prison ministry or for a particular inmate (or inmates), please **make it payable to TFONZ**, and post it to Jeanette Grimmer at this address:

**Miss Jeanette Grimmer,
154 State Highway 1,
RD 1, Warkworth 0981,
New Zealand.**

Jeanette's e-mail is: jgrimmerster@gmail.com