

Vaatjie Moravian Primary School celebrates Christmas with the Defence Reserves Western Cape

Article and photos supplied by Mrs Regine Lord.

On Thursday, 9 December 2010, Father Christmas and his dedicated helpers from the Defence Reserves Provincial Office of the Western Cape (DRPOWC) arrived at Vaatjie Moravian Primary School, a small primary school in the rural area near Atlantis on the West Coast.

Earlier this year, the DRPOWC had donated a truck-load of school desks and school books to the school. This was celebrated with a special event on 11 August 2010 that included the erection of a flagpole on the school premises and the ceremonial hoisting of the South African national flag.



Photo 1: Ms Elsette Musso, L/Cpl Leon Wessels, Maj Dalene Coetzee, Lt Col Johan Conradie and Lt Col Bryan Sterne from DRPOWC serve lunch to the learners



Photo 2: The children enjoy a wholesome meal

Generous helpings of stew were shared out to all the children, who, sorted into their classes, queued patiently in neat lines. They received their bowls of food and cups of juice with happy, smiling faces.

After everyone's tummies were full, Lt Col Johan Conradie, standing next to the brightly decorated Christmas tree with its chain of lights, spoke to the assembled learners about the spirit of Christmas.



Photo 3: Maj Dalene Coetzee hands out buttered slices of bread



Photo 4: The learners listen closely to Lt Col Conradie's speech about the traditions of Christmas

bring lost lambs back into the fold, and that the tinkling bells guide lost sheep or cattle back to the herd, just as people are guided back to God and Jesus. They listened with rapt attention.

By telling them the story of that Christmas Day during World War I, when the British and German soldiers left their trenches and walked into No Man's Land to shake hands and exchange small gifts (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas_truce), Lt Col Conradie made the point that Christmas is about more than just sharing gifts: it is the spirit in which it is shared that is important.

The learners responded by giving a present of their own to the group from the Defence Reserves office, by singing the "Our

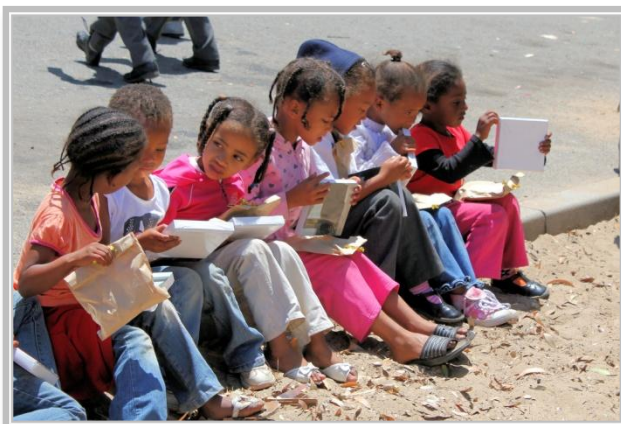


Photo 6: They curiously examine their presents

Lt Col Conradie wished them a Merry Christmas, a restful holiday, and an enjoyable time with their families, and added that he looked forward to seeing them again in the New Year.

He taught the youngsters the symbolism of the decorations that are traditionally hung on the tree, such as the star, the candy cane, the ornaments, the holly leaf, the bells and the angel who is often placed right at the top of the tree. For instance, he explained that the fir-tree is evergreen, thus symbolising everlasting life, and that the star at the top of the tree serves as a guiding light. Referring to the children's own experiences of farm life, he explained that the candy canes represent the shape of the shepherd's crook, which is used to



Photo 5: The children line up excitedly to receive their Christmas presents from Maj Coetzee and Lt Col Conradie

Father" prayer. It was a profoundly moving experience. Afterwards, it was time to hand out the presents, lying beneath the sparkling Christmas tree. The children lined up to receive their gifts, which were small bags of sweets. Puzzles that had been generously made available by Kia Motors to demonstrate their support for learner development were handed out too. From the big smiles and giggles of excitement, as they ran off to look at them with their classmates, it was clear that many of them did not often receive such presents. Lastly,