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on
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The Namibia Concerns Committee---
Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa

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The Namibia Fund and the Namibia Newsletter were begun in Dubuque in 1978. For nearly seven years, a Namibian family (Abisai and Selma Shejavali, and their daughters, Taimi & Kandiwapa) were part of the Wartburg Seminary community. Through their presence we learned, in a personal way, about the tragic situation in Namibia, about the struggle for freedom, and about the suffering of black Namibians.

We shared with the Shejavali family their sorrow when they learned that Selma's cousin had been assassinated. When news came of the the beating of Abisai's foster father (a retired Lutheran pastor) and the rape and blinding of his foster mother by white South African soldiers, we understood a little of the horror of being an enslaved people.

The Shejavali family returned to Namibia in 1978. As we had feared, they were immediately arrested; even Taimi and Kandi, ages 5 and 8, were taken at gunpoint. Although the family was quickly released, it was clearly an attempt to intimidate them. In spite of this "warning", both Abisai and Selma remain active and outspoken. Dr. Shejavali teaches at the united Lutheran Seminary in Otjimbingwe, while Selma is the leader of the newly developed Women's Department of the Evangelical Lutheran Owambokavango Church (ELOC).

Wartburg's ties to Namibia were strengthened in May, 1979, with the granting of an honorary doctorate to Bishop Kleopas Dumeni, head of the 350,000 member ELOC. During the days that Bishop Dumeni was on campus we grew to love and respect this quiet, gentle leader. Even in such a short time, we sensed the wisdom and the courage of this man who is a focal point of the struggle between his people and the South African forces of oppression.

Today Wartburg remains closely linked with Namibia through the presence of two Namibian families: Engelhard !Noabeb is in his third year of study, has completed his Master's degree, and will return to teach at Paulinum Seminary next summer. Engelhard, his wife, Christiane, and their four children have become a real part of the Wartburg family.

Emma and Zedekia Mujoro arrived this fall. Both are pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, and have been directors of youth work for their Synod. The Mujoros are very well informed about the political realities in Namibia, and are excellent resource people concerning the role of the church in Namibia.

The purpose of the Namibia Fund is to make clear, in a tangible way that we are "standing with" our sisters and brothers in Namibia. Their lives are filled with danger and suffering. We cannot share in that. But we can help in other ways. By helping to bring Namibian students to study at Wartburg, by building the library at Paulinum Seminary, by providing financial support for the Women's Department of ELOC, we hope to say: "We are one with you in the struggle".

A second purpose of the Namibia Fund and Newsletter is to inform people here about the situation in Namibia. Since over half of the Namibian population is Lutheran, our special goal is to reach our fellow Lutherans with the message of the suffering in Namibia. The mailing list for the

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Newsletter has grown from 350 to nearly 2000 individuals and congregations. We loan posters, films and other materials which help make real the conditions of poverty, persecution, and fear under which our Namibian friends are living. Since all work of the Namibia Concerns Committee is done on a volunteer basis, all money that is donated goes directly to the "cause".

During the past year we have been involved in a number of activities. Financially, we have given support to the Namibian families at Wartburg, contributed to the ELOC fund for children who have lost their parents in the struggle, provided sewing machines for the Women's Department of ELOC, made partial payment of boarding school expenses for the Shejavali children, and purchased two new films and other materials for our resource center.

In the area of education, we have provided speakers and films for church groups and high school classes on more than one hundred occasions. We have had some success in organizing letter-writing campaigns around certain issues. Some members of the Wartburg committee have been actively pressing the Board of Trustees of the American Lutheran Church on the issue of divestiture. Other members of the committee have written a booklet entitled, "Black Women Under Apartheid; Our Sisters in Southern Africa", which is to be used as a study guide in the women's groups of the five thousand congregations of the American Lutheran Church. Recently we hosted the visit of former Senator Dick Clark, who gave an excellent presentation on the history of the situation in Southern Africa.

Looking ahead we will be hosting the first "Working Conference on Namibia" sponsored by the Division of World Mission and Inter-Church Cooperation of the American Lutheran Church. Meeting at Wartburg from March 4th through 6th, 1983, the purpose of the conference will be to train persons for effective advocacy on behalf of the Namibian people. This national conference is to draw representatives from all districts of the American Lutheran Church, so that we may broaden our base for Namibian advocacy. For those already active in Namibian concerns, it will provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and coordinate our efforts. We invite all interested persons to participate in this event!

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