

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.”

Matthew 2:11

Thapelong, Cabbage, and the Divine

One of the most intimate settings in which we’ve been able to connect with our Basotho neighbors has been at our weekly prayer circle meetings, Thapelong. Thapelong gatherings are encouraged in the Lesotho Evangelical Church of Southern Africa (LECSA) and are seen by many as a vital expression of their faith. Members take turns hosting Thapelong in different homes every week. The meetings are fairly formal and include prayer, a scripture reading, a teaching/sermon, an offering, and SINGING! Hymns are typically sung between each segment of the meeting, so we’ve learned new hymns and Sesotho versions of some of our old favorites.

When it was our turn to host Thapelong, it was a bit daunting as we felt as if we were still getting settled. But it was such a joyful experience and one of the earliest experiences of genuine community and connection that I experienced in Lesotho.

On the night of our last Thapelong for the season, I spoke about gardening with one of our neighbors, Ntate Peter, a man in his eighties. I started a garden at the end of February, late in the growing season. Ntate Peter told me that he’d planted his cabbage in January and they were ready for harvest. He asked me how mine were and I told him that they were still small. Learning this, he insisted on giving us one of his cabbages.

After Thapelong that night, we gave Ntate Peter a ride home. He grabbed a knife from his house and asked us to shine a flashlight on his cabbage patch. He motioned to the row in front of us and asked me which one I wanted. I told him the small one on the end. “No, no!” he said and pointed to the biggest cabbage I’d ever seen. “I will give you this one.”

I had a clear sense of the Divine as we stood in the crisp, cold air that clear night, under the stars and sliver of moon, as Ntate Peter hacked away, harvesting the biggest cabbage in the patch. I was humbled by our neighbor’s generosity and heart-felt effort to share with us the best that he had, despite the darkness and cold of the season. And I felt hopeful about our growing sense of connection with our Thapelong friends.

Danielle Murry-Knowles serves with the Lesotho Evangelical Church. Her appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Church’s Wider Mission, WOC, OGHS, and your special gifts.



DANIELLE MURRY-KNOWLES

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