

May 2010

Staff Files:

**“Unearthing the Story I’ve Fallen Into”
Chris Kamalski, South Africa**

“Chris, I want you to know something: these Care Workers no longer see you as their pastor, but as their friend and brother.”

Petunia Kabongo’s words hung in the air with a sense of calling that was palpable. Petunia had been my ministry partner in South Africa for the previous six months, and as I glanced back at her it was as if God was pulling back the curtain to let light flood into the next season of my life.

I had spent the previous six months with CRM’s NieuCommunities team, attempting to provide spiritual care for hospice workers who offer a compassionate presence and late-stage medical care for terminally ill patients suffering from HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

Statistics and news reports of the AIDS pandemic in Africa are sadly familiar to most of us, but they take on a new meaning when experienced in the lives of people living in your own community.

Last spring I attended the funeral of a friend’s brother who had died of AIDS complications. As I was handed a shovel to help dig his grave, I glanced around to find myself participating in one of 20 simultaneous funerals—a ritual that plays out every weekend in the township of Soshanguve. Stunned, I began moving dirt, not realizing that I had fallen into a much larger story unfolding throughout Africa.

But this is simply the prologue to a powerful story yet to be penned. Petunia’s words of encouragement have changed everything, compelling me to dive into longer-term ministry in Africa as I come alongside care workers and walk with them through their darkest hours of pain, loss, and the grief they carry on behalf of others.

Through CRM, God is weaving my story into the story of His people in South Africa— inviting me to participate in the present reality of His Kingdom here. And on behalf of myself and the 400 CRM staff serving around the world, we thank you for being a vital member of our team through your prayer and generous financial support.

Thank you for all that you do to make stories like mine possible.

