|  |
| --- |
| **Miraculous healing brings couple to Knysna**  **03:00 (GMT+2), Thu, 03 October 2013** |
| |  | | --- | |  | |  | | Dutch missionaries, Frans and Carly Alkema of Immanuel Ministries in Oupad are known for their hearty laughs and making a positive impact wherever they go. | |  |   KNYSNA NEWS  Normal bodily functions which the majority of us take for granted, may be the very miracle some seriously ill individuals dream of for a lifetime.  The Dutch missionary couple, Frans (62) and Carly (61) Alkema, who have become well-known locally as the driving force behind Immanuel Ministries, have a very unusual story as to how they eventually ended up, not just as missionaries, but specifically here in Knysna.  "I will only tell the story as long as God gets all the honour," Carly points a friendly, but warning finger.  Carly only discovered in adulthood that she had actually been born with Hirschsprung's (HD) disease and also had endometriosis. (Hirschsprung's disease (HD) is a disorder of the abdomen that occurs when part or all of the large intestine or antecedent parts of the gastrointestinal tract have no nerves and therefore cannot function. The affected segment of the colon cannot relax and pass stool through the colon, creating an obstruction.  In most affected people, the disorder affects the part of the colon that is nearest the anus. In rare cases, the lack of nerve bodies involves more of the colon. In five percent of cases, the entire colon is affected. Stomach and oesophagus may be affected too. It is usually diagnosed in children, and affects boys more often than girls.)  "Stomach problems were not uncommon in my family and because I did not know what is considered normal as a child, nobody realised I wasn't going to the toilet enough. It was only after my third pregnancy that I discovered that having a bowel movement every eight weeks is highly abnormal. Later as an adult when I asked my mother about how often I had a bowl movement as a baby she said she seemed to remember that my nappies were mostly clean, but that at the time she had not realised something might be wrong with my digestive system."  Despite the fact that Carly was being poisoned from within as her body was not disposing of toxins regularly enough, causing her health to steadily deteriorate, she kept a positive outlook on life and never fell victim to self-pity. "As my body became increasingly toxic, my eyesight grew weak at age nine and I suffered from terrible headaches and lower back pain, consequently missing a lot of school. Yet no-one made the connection to me not using the toilet often enough and I didn't know that the way I was functioning, was in fact not normal at all."  At age thirteen she even managed to be the best young gymnast in all of Holland. Frans and Carly met as teenagers as part of the conservative 'Gereformeerde' church and were soon married. "We knew that she was ill, but we had no idea how serious the situation actually was," explains Frans who was a painter teacher at a Technical School.  "With each pregnancy my condition became worse. I had to stay in bed longer and longer. Three months with Nathalie, six with Ristke and the entire nine months on my back with Timothy. The situation was so bad that they wanted to abort Timothy, but that was against our beliefs. We only later learned that someone in my condition were not even suppose to have children at all, so praise God that no-one bothered to check my history and tell us!" Smiles Frans: "Doctors tell you the facts, but God tells you the truth!"  After the discovery was made about Carly's inability to have normal bowel movements, she was send to a large academic hospital where she was eventually diagnosed with Hirschsprung's Disease. After that followed many years of hospitalisation, with Carly at one stage undergoing as many as nine operation in the span of three years.  "Many things were wrong with Carly's health. Too many to mention, but two days before Ristke's birth they discovered that afterbirth from her first pregnancy had not been removed properly. The umbilical cord was also tied around Ristke's neck a couple of times," recalls Frans, often overcome with emotion at the incredible grace which had carried them through ever challenge.  But despite Carly's health becoming worse and the Alkema's now having three small children, they never spoke about her condition and simply carried on with life as if everything was fine. In and out of many hospitals, the Alkema's coped as best as they could and simply adapted to their trying circumstances. This included Carly having to wear a colostomy bag in the end.  "It was terrible. It smelled and made sounds. I didn't want to go out anymore because it was a social embarrassment," remembers Carly.  Eventually Carly's entire colon was removed and the colostomy bag connected directly to her small intestine. After the birth of their third child Carly became predominantly bedridden for the next 22 years, although she preferred to sit up in a chair as often as she could manage. Her anus had also been damaged while fast growing fibroid tumour was cut out and a wound developed that would not heal.  Whatever could go wrong with her body, seemed to have gone wrong. At one point Carly's stomach had been opened six times. A nurse by mistake took out the staples too quickly and the wound opened up.  "I looked death in the eye on several occasions. I had lived with a lot of pain and I knew what pain was, but this was indescribable."  Their life was a medical nightmare. Carly would spend three weeks at home before her next operation. The experimental operation which had attached her small intestine directly to her anus was not successful.  "My life was one of constant pain. Everything hurt because the toxins were being reabsorbed into my muscles and I was always tired due to the fact that my supra-renal gland wasn't working. My husband installed ten red lamps above my bed to warm my muscles. When warm enough I would go into a whirlpool tub which would make my pain less for about half an hour."  Apart from the family constantly having to cope with Carly's condition, the Alkema's had many other trauma's to deal with. At age four Timothy fell through ice while trying to feed birds and at age eight he crashed with this bicycle into a car for which he had to have ten operations.  "At one stage I would come home and not only my wife was ill, but I would have all three children recovering from some sort of trauma. I began to hyperventilate at work from stress - to the point where I would pass out," Frans shakes his head in disbelief.  "I did what I could. I could still use my mouth and my hands. I counselled other people, helped my children with their homework and played games with them. I also enjoyed being creative and making three-dimensional greeting cards," Carly recalls proudly.  "I was ill in my body, but not in my mind!"  And just as the family was recovering a bit from all their ill fate, Ritske was diagnosed with two brain tumours at 17. At 22 he courageously went with his dad to buy his own grave as he was not expected to live another five years. On August 26, 2001, the Alkema's decided to attend a service by evangelist Jan Zylstra.  "We believed healing by prayer was only for the New Testament-times," explains Carly. "But I was desperate for my son to live! I didn't even think of myself."  During the lengthy service, in which Carly was very uncomfortable to be sitting for such a long time, Zylstra began praying for people who wanted healing at around 21:30 and the family watched Ritske made his way to the front.  "We had been watching our son die, yet the moment Zylstra prayed for him, he was healed instantly! As my son turned around, we saw how his eyes became clear and bright again as his brain function normalised!  Everyone kept urging Carly to go to the front, but she held back. "I didn't feel it was the right time yet." Yet it was only after 01:30 that Carly got her turn to be prayed for. She had clearly heard an inner voice say to her "Jy sal genesen."  When Zylstra prayed for her in the Name of Jesus the first time - an electrical current shot through her body and all pain left her that instant. Completely shock to be pain free for the first time in decades, Carly began walking back to her seat in a daze.  "No, come back!" Zylstra called after her. "We still have to pray for your healing now!"  The second time he prayed for her even more power surged through her body. Extreme pain returned to her abdomen area and everyone was amazed to see her clothes move in that area on her body.  "I began to cry! Zylstra had called me forward for prayer because he had had a word of knowledge that I needed healing in my bowels - something was happening to me and I didn't know what it was!" Carly remembers that unforgettable event which would change her entire destiny.  Afterwards the family went home and Carly woke up pensive.  "After everyone had left in the morning I looked at the table full of medication which I had to take every day. I said to God that I believed He had healed me and that I would like to see the evidence of that healing now. So I didn't touch the medicine and went to the bathroom by myself."  After 49 years of suffering, Carly had her first normal bowel movement that morning after the service. She also never took any medication ever again.  "I shouted! I was screaming with joy! I ran outside and hoisted a flag so that everyone could see something huge had happened at our home to celebrate!"  For six weeks Carly could not sleep because of the powerful current she felt moving through her. For two of those weeks she continued to feel a type of 'movement' in her abdomen which stopped one night as she was taking a bath. "I could feel that I had a new and complete anus and that the wound next to it had also healed completely!" For the first time in her life Carly could ride a bicycle or eat with her family or climb steps to the upper story of their home, things which had been completely impossible for her to do before.  "My muscles ached because I wasn't use to all the exercise!" she laughs. "I tasted meat and sugar and spat it out because I wasn't use to it and didn't like it anymore!"  For the next three and a half years the Alkema's began giving their testimony at Zylstra's healing campaigns. "I had three dreams in which I saw African people and God explained to me this was my calling." Carly asked God to also convince her husband that they were being called for the mission field.  In 2003 a woman called Frans forward during a service and confirmed that they were being called as missionaries to Africa.  "We had one year in which to prepare and also to learn to speak English," chuckles Frans. They spend their first two years in Brakpan, not having any idea that God was preparing to bring them to one of the most beautiful areas in South Africa! "Next I dreamt the words Knysna and Plettenberg Bay - places I had never even heard of before and suddenly we knew exactly where God was calling us to! At first I didn't even know those were place names and had to google it on the internet to see what they were. We were incredibly excited when we realised how clearly God was leading us to this place."  The Alkema's began prayerful scouting the needs of the community in Oupad in December 2007 and in 2008 they registered Immanuel Ministries. Today they run four feeding programs in Oupad, Nekkies, Dam-se-Bos and White Location. They have Bible study groups, classes for sowing and computers, youth evenings, bingo, a clothes market and have put up a R1.4 million-building as church and community centre with the help of Dutch sponsors. They have also since been joined by two other young Dutch families who have given up their European lives to become missionaries in Knysna  The Alkema's are now trusting God to begin a Technical School and children's home and campsite in Karatara. "We don't just believe in miracles, we are living proof that God can take you from wherever you are and doing something with your life way beyond anything you could ever dream possible - just be a willing instrument and trust Him!"  For more information, contact Frans and Carly Alkema on [www.immanuelministries.nl](http://www.immanuelministries.nl). |