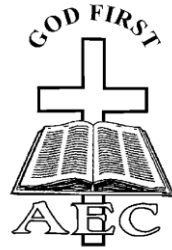


AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCH

Annual General Conference 2006

held at Matsapha, Swaziland.



- Presidential Report -

Seize the Moment!

YEAR 2007 - VERSE:

" Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God."

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

OUR VISION STATEMENT:

"By faith we see the church in Southern Africa working in unity in diversity of language, race, culture and gender, with an agreed evangelical doctrine of salvation whose body life is experienced by all members so that it disciplines and reproduces itself in holiness of living."

OBJECTIVES:

- 1. To plan specific activities and projects where we are working together, in mission and outreach programmes both locally and abroad. This would also include regular sharing of specific prayer requests among our different churches.*
- 2. To conduct periodic reviews (written or verbal) of the membership in order to find their understanding of the evangelical doctrine of salvation. Where there is lack of knowledge or understanding, the leadership in the church will address it.*
- 3. To conduct seminars for our church leaders on the biblical teaching of body life and how it should be operating in our churches.*
- 4. To conduct a course on evangelism and discipleship (verbal or written for all our members) and that each one be given or should find a disciple to minister to (2 Timothy 2:2).*
- 5. To hold seminars on holiness of life and that a system in our churches be adopted to help the membership to be accountable to each other with relevant programmes, i.e., brother/brother, sister/sister programme.*

In introducing this presidential report, I would like to site these words found in Psalm 103:1-2 "Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise His holy name. Praise the Lord, o my soul, and forget not all his benefits." He who said "Fear not for I am with you, do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand". Isaiah 41:10. Since July 1962 God has strengthened, helped and upheld us as Africa Evangelical Church with His righteous right hand. Oh how wonderful is our Lord!

BRIEF HISTORICAL TREATISE

Africa Evangelical Church in Southern Africa was born in July 1962 at Ntabamhlophe – Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal. It was then that as a Mission Church we were given the autonomy by the South Africa General Mission under the leadership of Rev. Wilfred Green who was the General Director. This means Africa Evangelical Church in Southern Africa is the daughter church of the South Africa General Mission.

FIRST PRESIDENT

Rev. Edmund Justice Mfeka became the first President who received the Bible as baton from Rev. W Green to lead the Church to run successfully the Christian race!

He became the special church leader who pioneered the way. Rev. Mfeka lead the church from July, 1962 to December 1978 when he resigned because of ill health. "Our President was the man of the moment, chosen to lay a foundation stone. He could bear pains without flinching", said the late Rev. LT Magewu!

SECOND PRESIDENT

Rev. LT Magewu who was the Vice President acted as President in 1979. He became the Second President of our church from January 1980 to 1st October, 1999 when he went to be with the Lord. Rev. LT Magewu as our leader fought a good fight as a child of God. He was a living testimony. He was a man of love, humility, prayer and faith. He finished his course well having kept the faith. As a church we lost our greatest leader who can never be matched. Rev. Dr. Ron Genheimer said "Lloyd was a man full of grace, one who combined dignity with humility, one who frequented the prayer room, who captured the interest of his Sunday School Class with his imaginative storytelling and interest in them as individuals. He listened more than he spoke but when he spoke it was with chosen words to build others up. He was an encourager and motivator".

THIRD PRESIDENT

The sudden call of our Church President Rev. LT Magewu caught us all unawares, two months before the Annual Church Conference. As a church we were going through trying times. The preparations for the conference were in a confused state, the court case in the Eastern Cape Region was still pending and the elections for new leadership were at hand. Oh, what a time it was! I was the Vice President and was asked to pick up the baton from the ground. I acted as President from October, 1999 to December, 2001 and subsequently the third President of the Church in 2002.

I had a heavy task and a great challenge, as I was still trying to recover from the home call of my dear wife Mallah Gumede. This was the time indeed that we needed total dependence upon the Lord for success. We had to pray, 'Lord, give us strength to fight a good fight! Lord, make us finish the course well! Lord help us to keep the faith to the end!' God is good and has honoured our prayers.

This has been a year of great change and elections at the highest level of leadership have taken place. May the Lord lead the new board as He has led in the past. Our task as a church is to pray for them.

The theme for the Conference is "**Seize the Moment!**"

Make good use of time. Do not waist your chance. "Time and tides wait for no man". Stitch in time saves nine. The President of Trans World Radio once gave a message entitled "Time is running out." As individual Church Members we need to watch out. It is our time today and now to seize the moment. Let us seize the moment to have prayerful lives in our walk with the Lord. Pray for God's will and guidance in our lives. Let us win men and women, young and old to Christ and pursue the holy living. Lord help us as a church and individual church member to "Seize the moment" in season and out of season. "Sisize Nkosi siyibandla lakho sibambisise isikhathi ngoba siyadlula! Yonke imicabango efika enhliziyweni ibuswe nguMoya kaNkulunkulu."

For this year's conference we have two verses. The theme verse and the year verse. The theme verse connects well with the conference theme "SEIZE THE MOMENT" and the year verse makes a good transition with emphasis from our last conference theme "Living the Holy Life" and connects well with the theme verse to emphasize—the day of Salvation and perfect or complete time of Salvation.

THEME VERSE

Here is the theme verse for the year 2007: 2 Corinthians 6:2. "For He says, At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of Salvation I helped you" behold, NOW is "acceptable time" behold now is "The day of Salvation".

YEAR VERSE

Our year verse for 2007 is found in 2 Corinthians 7:1.

"Therefore, having these promises beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

As Africa Evangelical Church General Conference, we thank God for a number of things we highly appreciate. Like the following:

All those who came to this conference from all Regions, Guest Speakers and visitors. Those who have hosted and given generously to all our workers and projects during this great year, 'we say your labour was not in vain'.

Those who have stood the test in their walk with the Lord and have become the shining light to the people of the earth, in their families, ministries and communities. Those who have been our ambassadors in other communities and even abroad during this year.

1. The elderly, though frail physically, pray for us and grace our local churches and our conferences year after year.
2. All the committees in all leadership structures of the church, in all the Regions, from the local church right up to this General Conference.
3. All the Chairpersons of the Denominational committees for being able to submit reports, our proof-reading team and the final compilation of this report. May you feel the joy of serving the Lord in all you do.
4. All those who prayed for the 2001 General election.
5. All the delegates who participated in the 2001 election of the President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Vice Secretary, Publicity Secretary, and Board members. Your confidence in us as your Board is greatly appreciated.
6. All those who have served in the church leadership from 1962 – 2006. God be with you and bless you.
7. Rev. WTA Xaba General Secretary, Mr. MTE Mtetwa Treasurer and the President for the many years of church service as Board members. May the Lord bless them as they retire from church Board.
8. All the intercessors who prayed without ceasing for us as church leaders.
9. SIM's support, donations and good partnership.
10. My sister, brother, sons and daughters who tirelessly cared for me during my church Presidency. May God richly bless them.
11. Mbabane AEC for your love and care.
12. All the church Board members who supported me with great respect

- and humility. Our Board was united and had good working relationship.
13. His Majesty King Mswati III sent His Representative Dr. AK Hlophe to the memorial service of Rev. BL Mndzebele.

THE SPIRIT IS MOVING

PLANTING OF AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Church planting as a result of the movement of the Spirit has grown.

Rev. P Simelane of Mankayane Swaziland planted AEC churches in the following places: Mtimane, Ethangeni, Machaweni, Mancubeni, etc. Pastor M Nene with his disciples started AEC churches at Mbelebeleni, Ntunja, Sigombeni, Nyankeni, etc. Yes the Spirit is moving. We visited Mbelebeleni AEC with Pastor Nene and had a fruitful service. Young persons and adults made commitment to live the Christian life. They also demonstrated the gift of love and giving. We had spiritual results and brought home assorted gifts. Praise be unto the Lord for the local Pastor Maphuzukuvela Ngwenya.

Pastor Maduna, a Dentist by profession, wherever he was assigned by Government to work, it was appointed time to plant a church or churches. He planted several churches at Siphofaneni and Manzini areas. When he was transferred to Piggs Peak Government Hospital, he seized the moment and planted local churches at Piggs Peak, Nsangwini, Mshingishingini and Mnyokane.

The Kunene family and teacher Gideon Gama planted one at Enkaba, Nathi Gumede planted UMjolobela. The late Pastor Bongumusa planted Mahwalala church. Pastor Petros Nkambule planted one at Hlobane. Mr. Simon Mhlanga planted Hawane local church and Matsapha planted Madonsa branch. Nkambule Kenneth planted Manzini local church.

When the Spirit is moving the people are moved. The Mndzebele family after the home call of Rev. BL Mndzebele was moved to help Enkamazi AEC with the Dube family and the church member to build the church. The Mndzebele family donated some of the money that was given to them to help towards the funeral of Rev. BL Mndzebele to the Enkamazi AEC. Mrs ET Mndzebele and the Dube family are key leaders of this building project. The church building has now the roof on. This is what happens even to a Pastor's family, when the Spirit is moving!

DEDICATION OF THE TENT CHURCH IN LIMPOPO – 22ND JULY, 2006.

The Lord is so good and loving, He provided to the Gauteng Region, Pretoria Circuit with the 'Tent Church' in Limpopo at Lebowakgomo through a Korean Christian lady. The launching of the 'Tent Church' was done by Rev Kyung-Hwan Oh, SIM Korean missionary and was received by the President, who handed over to Rev. KS Riba the Gauteng Vice Chairperson, Pretoria Circuit Chairperson as well as local pastor at Lebowakgomo. We had a moving ceremony with great excitement and jubilation. Pastor Mduduzi Shongwe, Men's Chairperson, gave the Word of God. We were all blessed.

We also had time to visit Rev. KS Riba's parental home, and three church sites. Pray for labourers to go and help Rev. KS Riba.

DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH AT ZITHOBENI IN BRONKSPRUIT.

There was rejoicing and jubilation at Zithobeni AEC in Bronkspruit on Sunday, 24th September 2006 when the President and the delegation graced the occasion. The delegation included the Board member Rev. J Bodibe, Gauteng Chairperson Rev. VW Ndinisa, Swaziland Chairperson Rev. TM Dlamini, Gauteng Vice Chairperson Rev. KS Riba, local Pastor Rev. Dladla, Rev. Lidwaba, Rev. Baloyi and other leaders and the special guest Rev. & Mrs. Kyung-Hwan Oh SIM Korean missionaries were also in attendance. They had come to present the church building to the church on behalf of the donors. The unveiling of the church stone was done by the Local church Pastor Rev. Dladla and the President cut the ribbon and the congregation went in the church building, where the President gave his keynote address. The President received the church building on behalf of the church and declared it officially opened. He then dedicated it to the Lord for His service.

The attendance was excellent. We also had a big feast thereafter. Pray for the local pastor and the church members of Zithobeni AEC 40 years' beacon church.

REV. TV SHABANGU—SWAZILAND

Rev. TV Shabangu, the retired Pastor of Mbuluzi AEC, went to be with the Lord. His funeral drew many people from all over Swaziland. AEC church members came in their great numbers. We were greatly impressed with the presence of the AEC Church leaders. It was indeed a wonderful revival. We felt the moving of the Spirit demonstrated by love and unity.

The moving of the Spirit motivated Rev. TV Shabangu to prepare for the protection of his wife Lydia following his home call. He went to the Chief of the area and requested how his wife should be treated and protected after his home call. His request was officially announced at the funeral service. What a testimony by Rev. TV Shabangu. Yes, let us all be aware that the Spirit is moving.

REVD M KUNENE of Mseleni Circuit passed away on the 28th January 2006 and the funeral took place on the 4th February 2006 at his home at Mbazwana. We thank the Lord for his life and many pastors who came to celebrate his life.

MR BANGIZWE J NCUBE of Pongolo went to glory on the 25th May 2006 and the East Rand Circuit was shocked and all of us. The funeral was held at Altona which was well attended.

REV. BL MNDZEBELE

Rev. BL Mndzebele went to be with the Lord on the 9th June, 2006. Many people began to visit the Mndzebele family. They were like ants come in and out. On 16th June, 2006 there was a memorial service, where people came from Swaziland and South Africa. The church leadership came from KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Swaziland. We had a very special honour by His Majesty's representative Dr. AK Hlophe. Church leaders from other denominations were also in attendance. These included Bishop S Zulu, Rev. Dr. N Nyawo, Rev. Dr. Mazibuko and Bishop Ncamiso Ndlovu. The funeral service took place on the 17th June 2006 at his parental home. Rev. BL Mndzebele's home call left behind a great revival that demonstrated love, unity and courage among Mrs E Mndzebele, children, sons-in-law, grandchildren and close relatives. Indeed, the Spirit is moving! Continue to pray for the Mndzebele family and the Nkamazi AEC.

The Mndzebele family experienced warm visits from different people after the funeral. These included Bishop S Zulu who was later followed by a delegation from eSikhawini AEC led by Rev. P Mntambo.

PASTOR M.T. SITHOLE

The great ambassador of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ went to be with the Lord on the morning of the 3rd August, 2006. He finished his life journey well. His life ended up in his dear wife's hands. "The hands that took him for marriage 50 years ago folded him and closed his eyes".

During the memorial service on the 9th August, 2006 at Mamelodi AEC – OPEN DOOR, we celebrated the life well lived. We celebrated natural and spiritual gifts well utilized and life ministry well fulfilled to the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rev. & Mrs X. Dladla, Rev. AM Zondo, Rev. VW Ndinisa and I, attended the memorial service. This was greatly appreciated by Gauteng Region and the Sithole family.

The funeral was held on the 12th August, 2006 at Sithole's son Rev. Titus Sithole Charity Church Centre. The attendance was wonderful. There were testimonies, music and the word of God. We were all greatly blessed of the Lord. The whole service glorified the Lord. The spirit and the attitude of the Sithole family was a blessing to all of us. This is Titus' meditation tribute to his father:

"You Titus have succeeded without a struggle. What you have in just a few years, it has taken a lot of people many decades. Your father does not have half of what you have. He has not done much of what you have. He has not been where you have been. Be reminded today that all the above-mentioned things you have and have done without a sweat, was because of your father. He blessed you. He has prayed and paved a way for you. You are riding his cloud."

Daughter in-law neè Dube recited a powerful poem entitled: "SIQONDA EKHAYA" "WE ARE ON OUR WAY HOME".

I would like to express my appreciation for the support that was demonstrated by the church leaders and church members to the Sithole family. The church leadership's presence at the memorial and funeral service meant a lot to the Sithole family.

Yes' Pastor Sithole fought a good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7). Continue to support and pray for Mrs Sithole and her children, Titus Charity Ministry and Mamelodi AEC.

REV. MGEWU'S SON

Rev. Mgewu's son lost his wife who was buried on the 14th January. He needs your prayers. He is a good upcoming leader. His loss is our loss as a AEC.

MRS ORAH NKAMBULE

The wife of Pastor Sam Nkambule of Bhekephi AEC went to be with the Lord on the 11th May, 2006 and her funeral was on the 20th May, 2006 at Pine Valley. There was a great celebration and great revival to the glory of God.

MRS JONITTA THWALA

The wife of the late Pastor John Thwala of Matsapha AEC passed on and was laid to rest on the 30th July 2006. Her funeral service was a great revival with wonderful Christian testimony.

REV. MATYABA OF DIKELA' FAMILY

The sons and daughters of the late Rev. Matyaba of Dikela got involved in a car accident which sadly resulted in the passing away of the second daughter whose funeral was on the 15th July and eldest son whose funeral was on the 5th August. May the Lord give strength to the Matyaba family and the healing process to the daughter in-law who survived from the car accident. We are grateful to Rev. ATW Xaba, Rev. X Dladla, Rev. Zondo, Rev. Mkhize and Eastern Cape leaders who visited and participated in the memorial and funeral services.

MRS MS NKQAYI

The wife of the late Rev. Nkqayi, Mrs Nkqayi passed away and was buried on the 26th August at Ndulini AEC. The funeral was attended by the President, General Secretary Rev. A.T.W. Xaba, and Miss Elizabeth Nkambule. We would like to thank the Eastern Cape Region leaders and church members who attended the funeral in their great numbers. Pastor S. Ntongana junior did an excellent job as master of ceremony. The Nkqayi family was greatly encouraged.

1. Weddings

He who finds a wife finds what is GOOD and receives favour from the LORD." (Proverbs 18:22). "*Wives, **submit** to your husbands as to the Lord.*" "*Husbands **love** your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.*" (Ephesians 5:22,25). To all our brand-new couples, this General Church Conference say, "*Congratulations!*"

We witnessed on the 15th July 2006 Miss Dumisile Gumede being married to Rev. MA Mbanjwa at Shakaskraal. Rev. WTA Xaba was afforded a privilege of officiating in this ceremony. We wish them God's presence in everything they do and hope to accomplish in life. The same applies to Rev S Mkhize of Durban Circuit who married Christinah Monyatsi on the 4th November 2006. We saw a wide representation of all four regional chairmen in this wedding with a number of VIPs from the regions. Rev. VW Ndinisa was honoured to officiate in this wedding.

2. NEW ARRIVALS 2006!

We also pause to thank God for all the new arrivals - both boys and girls who will always say; "*I was born in 2006.*" May the Lord give them good health in the midst of many diseases and allergies that are tormenting our frail bodies. May these babies grow and eventually be added to the body of Jesus Christ, His church, through salvation by grace! Wrap them in Christ's love. The 2006 conference says "**WELCOME!**"

3. PROMOTIONS & NEW JOB APPOINTMENTS!

We thank the Lord for all those who were promoted to higher posts this year in their places of employment. Even though competition might have been high, some made it. Some of our young people started working this year. Others bought new cars or new homes or affiliated with our church! To all those who were blessed by God with this rare commodity, work as unto God and glorify Him in your service. Earn that

high respect from your colleagues. Remember that with every promotion there is an added responsibility. This conference says "**Congratulations!**"

4. ACADEMIC & OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS!

To all those who, at the end of 2005 and in 2006, succeeded in getting the key to most doors by passing matriculation, obtained certificates, licenses, degrees and diplomas in various fields of learning from various institutions, we give you our appreciation applause! Some were blessed by new homes, new cars, new friends etc, you are indeed our pride! We sincerely congratulate you! Read, ask, debate and explore new challenges in life. Above all, let us give the glory to God for all that you have achieved. Seizing the Moment! **Well done!**

SPECIAL MEETINGS

1. PIETERMARITZBURG - BOARD MEETING JANUARY – 20TH - 21ST 2006

The Board met at Gateway in Pietermaritzburg in January 20th – 21st, 2006 to evaluate the year 2005 Annual Church Conference, plan for the 2006 Church Conference and do church administrative business. The meeting was well attended and the purpose thereof was achieved.

2. WORKERS' SEMINAR MAY 11-14 MAY AT SKOGHEIM - PORT SHEPSTONE

The Pastors seminar is for the Pastors with their wives and single Pastors. The aim and the purpose of the seminar is to give our church leaders time to be away from day-to-day church work. It is also to equip these leaders for their church ministry work. It is to bring together all the leaders from the four Regions to share ideas and to know each other. Pastors need time to reflect and relax as couples or singles.

We have had one seminar each year for four years during the month of May. This year our seminar theme was "An Informed Leader" The idea was to encourage the Pastors and their spouses to be informed, because an informed leader is effective.

The following topics were covered:

- *Knowing your tools and the need for them for innovative ministry;*
- *How to know the people we serve or minister to as Jesus did.*
- *Knowing the procedures and documents within the Africa Evangelical Church, and knowing health matters or habits.*

We were warned about the danger of certain practices we normally do without thinking.

The feedback from the leaders who attended the Seminar was that it should continue next year and that one day should be added. We are so grateful to the organizers Rev. P Mntambo, Rev. F Bodibe, Rev. MS Kunju, all the facilitators and the local churches who paid for their leaders. Thank you also to you all for your prayer support.

The dates for 2007 are already set – May 10 – 13 2007, and we will be going back to Skogheim. The fee will be close to R520 per person or R1070 per couple. We encourage all the saints to support these seminars as they are times of learning and also relaxation.

The climax of our gathering was celebrated by all leaders sharing the unity around the Lord's Table which was conducted by Rev VW Ndinisa from Gauteng & Rev MS Kunju from Eastern Cape.

3. BOARD AND DENOMINATIONAL COMMITTEES MEETING - CAMP JONATHAN—KZN

The Board met with all Denominational Committees at Camp Jonathan Conference Centre on the weekend of July 28th to 30th 2006. Committees accomplished a lot of work during this time and some met with the Board. The Board worked until late hours for both nights but we are thankful that the meetings were very fruitful and we are reaping the fruits of hard work by various committees even during this conference. May our good Lord continue to make you a blessing to many.

4. THE BILLION SOUL INITIATIVE CONGRESS

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, JOHANNESBURG NOV. 8-10, 2006.

The vision of Billion Soul Initiative came as a result of Amsterdam 2000 World Congress that was hosted by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. A small group of mission leaders, began a strategic relationship for the purpose of seeing every people group engaged with church planting initiatives. The group called themselves "Table 71" after the particular table number where they were gathered in Amsterdam.

As Dr. Bill Bright, Founder of Campus Crusade for Christ International was finishing his race in 2003, he challenged leaders to ask God for five million new churches for a billion-soul harvest. Dr Bill Bright's Billion Soul Initiative inspired key leaders to refocus and discuss the most effective and strategic way to fulfil the Great Commission in our life time. In the fall of 2004, the leaders as partners fell led by the Holy Spirit to launch a broader strategy called "Finishing the Task".

The Vision of Finishing the Task movement is to see every people group in the World engaged with an indigenously led church – planting movement.

The purpose is to win billion souls and to plant 5 million new churches (Local churches) before AD2020 that is 10 – 15 years from now.

The Billion Soul Initiative team has planned to hold 12 International Church Planting Congresses in the World.

The first Billion Soul Initiative Congress was held in Lima, Peru on the 28th September 2006. The second one was held for the Sub-Saharan Africa Countries on the 8th -10th November, 2006 in Johannesburg South Africa at Rhema Bible Church. The President attended the Congress at the invitation of The Billion Soul Initiative Team. The Sub-Saharan Africa Countries Christian Leaders collectively committed themselves at the Congress to plant 468,066 new churches and win 601,063,623 people to Christ.

The Billion Soul Initiative is also known as "GLOBAL PASTORS NETWORK" (GPN). It has also the Pastors Wives Network (GPWN). The emphasis of this Initiative is to help fulfil The Great Commission of our Lord Worldwide in our life time – winning souls, disciple them, planting of leaders and multiplication of churches (church

planting) Win, Build, Train, Send. Training can be made available to the church leaders. This initiative is a confirmation to us as a church of the vision to plant one church in each Region to mark the 40 years of our church. The Initiative has a Worldwide vision that gives a good challenge for our church to be part of a Worldwide strategy. How exciting!

OUR PARTNERS

1. OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE BIBLE SOCIETY:

The AEC in South Africa has a contribution number, which is **Code 001043** in the Bible Society of South Africa. When sending your donations from the Africa Evangelical Church in South Africa to the Bible Society please quote that number to your Regional Office so that such a gift would go to an appropriate category. In Swaziland just send it to Swaziland Bible Society directly. It would be good for all local churches of AEC to set aside one Sunday a year to give to the Bible Society. Without your support there will be no printed Word of God. There are numerous projects on the way that require millions of Rand. Let us stand tall with our gifts. We are thankful that Revd P Mntambo, our Deputy President was re-elected into the National Executive Committee of the Bible Society of South Africa National Board in February 2006. This term expires next February.

2. OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE UNION BIBLE INSTITUTE:

We have membership in the Council of the Institution. We pay yearly membership fee of R500 for one member presentation. We met twice as a council this year and the Council has a Board and this is a new leadership style that has been introduced. Revd Xaba is in the Board and Rev P Mntambo is in the Council and next year he will be the vice chairman of the Council. Africa Evangelical Church had eight students this year. We have a legacy of sending more of our upcoming leaders to be trained there. We therefore have an obligation to pray and give financially to the school. Sometimes we have people who would like to be trained there but have no money. Let us also encourage those Bible students who are in such schools with all our gifts.

Twenty-three students graduated this year and one was from KZN Region by the name of Zamokwakhe Nxumalo—Mseleni Circuit. Two AEC first year students took both the first and the second awards in Zulu stream. Philile Mbatha got the Canada Award for highest marks and second was Joyce Khumalo who got a Book Award for the second place. Four graduated during the year with B.Th. degree —Mafuna from Eastern Cape, Motsai, Khumalo and Mkhize from KZN.

3. EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA—07 MAY 2006

We were invited to grace their rally on the 7th May 2006 at Durban City Hall. Our delegation (Rev. ATW Xaba, MX Dladla and P Mntambo) was given few minutes to bring greetings on behalf of the Africa Evangelical Church. We then enjoyed and observed their style of worship in English as well as in Tamil. They even sang Zulu choruses and we were amazed. Other pastors were honoured and others given the right hand of fellowship in the ministry.

UPDATES FROM REGIONS

EASTERN CAPE REGION

LUTHUBENI MISSION STATION

We are so grateful to the Lord that the Property issue of Luthubeni Mission has finally been legally resolved. Thank you all for your prayers. Regional Chairperson and the Executive of Eastern Cape Region your quick action to protect Luthubeni Church property is greatly appreciated.

EASTERN CAPE REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The Eastern Cape Regional Conference was held at Nkanga AEC Mission 4-10 July, 2006. It was well attended. We were encouraged to see good attendance of the youth. It was also good to see young church leaders taking an effective role.

CONFERENCE THEME

The conference theme was "Our position and authority in Christ" Ephesians 3:20,21. This was well introduced by the Regional Chairperson Rev. Kunju.

CONFERENCE VERSE

The conference key verse was 2 Timothy 1:9. We would like to thank the Regional Chairman and his wife for taking care of the President during his conference visit.

GAUTENG REGION

We give praise to the Almighty God for His enabling grace and sustenance. We also thank Him for the year verse, 2 Timothy 1:9, which was the base of the messages at our local churches, circuits meetings and as well as at the Regional Conference. Indeed, we have been called to Holy Living. This was as always a challenging theme! The Regional Church Conference made a follow up of the theme from Genesis 17:1. It also had a banner that had the following words: "Walk before me and be blameless."

The year 2006 Church Conference was held at Dobsonville, hosted by Dobsonville AEC where Rev. Hlongwane is the Leader. The Church Conference had three aims.

1. To celebrate the 5 years of God's faithfulness since we were granted a Regional Status / Ebenezer! There were many gifts for church leaders and the President in appreciation for their faithful services. There was also a very big cake.
2. To exalt all the members to walk before the Lord and be blameless, Genesis 17:1 (i.e., To walk the talk).
3. To fund raise for a building project: to build it in phases:
Phase 1. Multipurpose Hall with:
 - " An Administrator's Office; Regional Chairperson's Office;
 - " Circuit Chairperson's Office; Local Church Office and Boardroom .Phase 2: Adding a kitchen
Phase 3: Adding dormitories
Phase 4: Other Conference Facilities

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 5TH YEAR CELEBRATION

1. The presentation to the President of the Fund-Raising Trophy: Sunday was a special day of the Gauteng Region 5th Year Celebration. A special

floating trophy was bought by the executive for fund raising purposes from this year onwards. It had the following engraving: "AEC GAUTENG REGION 5TH YEAR CELEBRATIONS 2006". It was agreed that a structure (men, women, youth and Sunday school) that will raise R15 000 on that special celebrating service will take the trophy and keep it for the year for the next fund-raising drive. Because there was no structure that raised this amount on that day even though Inkanyiso came close to that amount, the trophy was presented to the President to keep in the Board Office until the following year. Mrs Nhlabathi's (was also the Programme Director of that special celebration service) teaching and motivation on giving will stay with us for a long time to come. She commented about different animals in paper money, and that a lot could be learnt on them. She emphasized that we need paper money in the house of the Lord! She did a good job.

2. The Cutting of the 5th Year Celebration Cake

The President together with the Chairperson (who was again chosen to lead for the next term Rev. Ndinisa) cut and tasted the cake. They both agreed that it was nice and sweet and they commented on the chorus that says "... it is so sweet; it is so sweet to walk with Jesus!" Later the participants were given a piece of cake which was big enough for all the attendants.

3. Special Music Items

The two Praise and Worship groups from Hammanskraal (Temba AEC and Dobsonville AEC) did an excellent job in leading the conference in singing. The last day was outstanding. We really celebrated in style!

4. Special Gifts

There were many gifts for Church Leaders in appreciation for their service. The President also received a special gift.

CONFERENCE SPEAKERS AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS

The different speakers were well prepared: Devotions Pastor S Ratholo, Bible Study Rev. KS Riba, Ladies (Inkanyiso) Mrs Z Mbatha; Men's Mr. N Pooe; Youth Rev. VS Ndwandwe, Sunday School Mrs HM Gqoba, and the Presidents' message on "Holy Walk".

Concluding Remarks:

The Gauteng Region had generally a fruitful 5 years, as well as a successful 2006 conference except for the absence of Pastor Sithole from Mamelodi AEC which was noted with sadness. He was in hospital and the leadership visited him few days later. He is now with the Lord.

KZN ANNUAL REGIONAL REPORT-2006

Looking back over the last five years since we became a separate region from the former Natal/Transvaal we can say the same. "Thus far has the Lord helped us". Things have not been easy, and there have been many challenges. A number of tasks that we had hoped to accomplish were not accomplished. Some of them never even got off the ground. They ended up being good on paper, but lacked the propeller. We, nonetheless, are hopeful that the Lord will, in His time, materialize those that are in His will and according to His plan.

THE ANNUAL REGIONAL CONFERENCE:

The Lord blessed us with another good conference at Mbazwana this year. The attendance was good, but could have been better! For the first time we cut our conference days to three full days this year. The Executive Committee and some of the other committees arrived on Monday evening and the rest of the people arrived on Wednesday.

We were honoured with a beautiful weather most of the time in contrast to the usual Mbazwana heat in summer. It was cherry on the ice cream to welcome the President and have him share with us from his heart. We were humbled that he ventured to visit three Regional Conference within one week although they were so far apart. This is singled out as a sign of love and commitment. The business sessions went well also. It always humbles us to see the peaceful way in which the business meetings are conducted even in church circles these days.

SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR:

1. THE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

The ladies had their Annual Convention at Ntabamhlophe in October last year. As always, they came out in large numbers. They had good speakers who shared from the Word. The concern is always that what is taught be translated into life and personal experience. This is what we pray for concerning all the structures. The last convention was at Dumisa in October this year.

2. YOUTH ACTIVITIES:

Our youth hold a Regional Camp once every two years when the youth from all the circuits converge together for a week. They organize circuit camps on the years when they do not have Regional Camps. A number of Circuit Camps were held in December of 2005. These camps help to reach even those that cannot attend Regional Camps for financial and other reasons. The Lord blessed us at these different camps last year.

3. THE ANNUAL MEN'S FELLOWSHIP CONVENTION—28th-30th April:

This year's Men's convention was held at Mtubatuba. It is a general concern that the men seem to drag their feet in attending activities planned for them. It is an item of prayer that the Lord will awaken the men to want to be more active in the church. A number of pastors could not attend because of funerals that weekend.

We nevertheless had a good and blessed time together as we shared the Word and as it was preached. It was also good to see the concerns and enthusiasm that the men showed as they discussed the needs of the church. We are looking forward to seeing them mightily used of God in meeting these needs.

It was shortly after this convention that the Lord called home to Himself our brother Joel Ncube in a car accident. He was the Treasurer of the Regional Men's Fellowship and was a great blessing to all. He committed himself to whatever he was asked to do and he did it with his whole heart and might.

4. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY:

We thank God for what is happening in the ministry to this most open group of

society. Sunday School is thriving, but only in a few local churches and circuits. Much still has to be done in encouraging the churches to realize the value of this ministry; to train teachers and to encourage those that are doing something to meet this need.

One hampering aspect in teaching children has been the suitable materials prepared for children that the teachers can understand and use without much difficulty. The Union Bible Institute has published good materials that have been introduced to our Regional as well as the Denominational Sunday School Committees. We trust that this is going to be of help in giving encouragement to those that would like to minister to children.

5. **NEW WORKERS:** We are grateful to the Lord of the harvest, who still calls reapers into His harvest field. We recognized and accepted four new workers at our 2005 Regional Conference and two at this year's Conference. They had all had a minimum of three years Bible School training. They have been assigned to fill needy areas in church work for which we are thankful to the Lord. Of the eight AEC students at the Union Bible Institute this year, six are from our Region. One of them is graduating this year. This poses a challenge to raise financial support for them.

6. The plenary session speakers did well: Rev. MX Dladla led the Bible Study Sessions on the theme of "The Life of Victory for the Christian", emphasizing the fact that victory is assured and Christians must be confident of that no matter what happens. Pastor SJ Msomi from Folweni in the Durban circuit spoke in the evenings. They were both used of the Lord to bless us.

7. The ladies surprised the older pastors and the President with gifts, honouring them for their faithfulness in the work of the Lord in the AEC. Their gesture of love and appreciation was very much appreciated by all.

8. The Regional Executive Elections results went as follows: The Chairman: Rev. MX Dladla; The Secretary: Rev. SE Dlamini and the Treasurer Mr. FE Mbutho.

The Regional representatives on the Board for the term beginning at January 1st, 2007 are: Rev. MX Dladla, Rev. P Mntambo and Rev. MJ Tembe.

CALLED TO HIGHER SERVICE IN GLORY:

Mrs Catherine Sosibo, the wife of the late Rev. JSN Sosibo of Dumisa, was called home to glory after a prolonged illness. She had lost her sight, could not recognize people and could remember very little. In spite of these handicaps, she displayed the joy of the Lord. We thank God for her life and her support of her husband in the Lord's work.

Rev MN Kunene was also called Home to be with the Lord during the course of the year. He retired from pastoral work two years before he was ushered o glory. We praise the Lord for his service at Malangeni No.2. We commit Mrs Kunene and the children to the Lord's care and continuous comfort.

GOING ON RETIREMENT:

Rev EMZ Nxumalo of Mbazwana in the Mseleni circuit retired from pastoral work in

December 2005. The churches in the Mseleni circuit gave him a farewell in early December, and the farewell by the Region was at the Annual Regional Conference this year. We thank God for the faithfulness of this servant and his wife over the many years they have served the church. We wish them God's rich blessing on their retirement.

The Rev SM Gumede of KwaMsane in the Mtubatuba circuit will be retiring in December this year. The Mtubatuba circuit churches had a farewell for him in September this year. The Regional farewell shall be during the Annual Regional Conference next year. We thank the Lord for the many years of faithful service that Rev and Mrs Gumede have had in the church in Port Shepstone, in Mtubatuba as well as on the Executive Committee and wish them the blessing of our God on their retirement.

We are praying for the people of God's choosing to fill the vacancies that opened up as a result of these retirements.

PRAYER NEEDS:

1. The KZN Region is large hence meeting its needs is a challenge. It is a strain on the Executive Committee to reach it as they would like to. Pray for the new Chairman and his Executive Committee.
2. Pray for the children's ministry and the attempts to encourage the churches to engage fully in it.
3. Pray for more workers to join the force of the Lord's army. There are still areas of much need of workers.
4. Pray for faithfulness and persistence in proclaiming the unadulterated gospel of God's grace, repentance and judgment.
5. Pray for a continuous vision to reach out and win, train and send many to the white fields ready for harvest.
6. We want to be on the sharp edge in meeting the social, material and other needs of our communities. We need the Lord's wisdom to know which ones to meet and how to meet them.
7. The KZN Region is one of the worst affected with HIV/AIDS. We want to be effective in fighting this scourge. Pray that we shall be able to identify people who have a burden for this ministry and who will commit themselves to it.

Because our Lord and Master lives on, we shall continue to press on for His glory. Victory is ours at the end. May we never be discouraged by the difficulties and failures of the past nor by our weaknesses. He is strong and the battle is His!

SWAZILAND REGION

STORMS

Swaziland had storms that caused a lot of damage to our schools and church building we also had fire that burnt Mankayane High School. By the way AEC in Swaziland has 17 schools whose Grantee is Pastor Aaron Dlamini. We would like to

express our sincere sadness on the disaster that was caused by the storms and fire. We are grateful to all those who have already given help to these schools and churches. The Government has also helped the schools from the Disaster Fund. Pray for the teachers and the students who were greatly disturbed by the disaster that came at the time when they were preparing for the final school examinations. We would also appeal to all our church members and friends to donate whatever they can to help these schools and churches.

1. Introduction.

As the Lord God guarded His people into His promised land, Moses sang and proclaimed that “The Lord shielded his people, cared for them and guarded them **as the apple of His eye**, and that He alone led him; no foreign god was with Him”, the Lord our God has carried us as His Church even this year through it all. (Deuteronomy 32:10-12).

As we came down from the Mountains of Mbuluzi Mission Station in the spring of 2005, we came with much zeal as a Church from all disciplines with a mandate to do great exploits once again and like never before. Being reminded again of our High standard of Holiness as proclaimed in **2 Timothy 1:9 “Who has saved us and called us to a Holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.”**

2. Aims and Objectives

The Regional Executive Committee strived to follow the provisions of Clause 11 of the Church Constitution. All the Church disciplines endeavoured to work and also compliment in fulfilling the Aims and Objectives through proclaiming the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ as the only way by which a person can be reconciled to God, with a purpose of establishing a fellowship of believers.

3. Achievements:

3.1 Meetings: As set out in the Church’s Annual Church Plan, the Executive committee held all its monthly meetings and whenever a need required, the Committee held special meetings to work on other urgent matters brought or that arose.

3.2 Mpaka AEC Pastor: Rev. Lucky Dlamini is now the Pastor of Mpaka AEC in the place of the Pastor who left the Church.

3.3 Donation — A member of the church donated a computer to the Church Office in the place of the old one.

3.4 Workers' Committee: We are pleased to report that the Workers' Committee is now in place and already working on Workers' issues, thus contributing to the smooth operations of the Church.

3.5 Good Friday Services: In all the four Circuits, Good Friday services were successfully held and a high number of participants were recorded and people find a new relationship through the ministry of the word of God.

3.6 Workers' Retreat at Skogheim: We noted with appreciation even this year

when these services were held even this reporting year. Though some could not attend due to different reasons, those who did, still value the lessons shared at such a seminar.

3.7 **The Swaziland Regional Church Conference:**

Swaziland had the Regional Church Conference at Mbuluzi AEC in August 2006. Pastor Z Mtetwa was responsible for Evangelistic messages twice a day morning and evening. He recently graduated for a B.Th. degree.

Rev. MJ Tembe of KZN lead the Bible Study session on “The Uniqueness of the Christian Faith” Matthew 16:13-20. His teaching was clear, and was greatly appreciated.

The elections went well and Rev. AS Matsenjwa of Ezulwini is now the Regional Chairperson.

4. **Challenges:**

1. **Sustainable Sources on Funding:** The non-committal by the local churches has led to a pathetic situation as the Church is unable to meet its administrative costs and obligation on Workers' salaries. Thus, Church business has greatly been negatively affected.

2. **Administration of Funds:** A policy on the Administration of funds has been submitted to the Executive Committee and we trust this will soon be adopted by the Church and implemented.

3. **Full Time Church Administrator:** The Church find itself still without a Church Administrator. We were hoping to get applications from Church members as Circuits were asked to convey the need. It is regrettable that to-date none has been forthcoming.

4. **Squatters at Church grounds:** We again bring to this house the problems the Church has continued to have with the existence of squatters at both the Mbuluzi and Bethany Farms. The Church wrote letters to individuals with the hope to address this problem. We are still getting a little response to that yet the problems are getting worse by day. Urgent action has to be taken cautiously without bringing the name of the Church and its mission into disrepute.

5. **Recommendations:**

Much as the Church Business is done by people who have other commitments, it is highly recommended that a candidate be found who will serve as Church Administrator, thus a fair segregation of duties can be realized.

Local Churches and Circuits should make drastic efforts to interface with the Church Office and support the strategic initiatives of improving the Church's efforts to pursue its aims and objectives.

6. **Conclusion:** As we have conducted our business well even this fiscal year, let us also pursue our objectives with vigour and support all Church initiatives that aim to enhance our existence as a Church. To the Incoming Executive Committee members, pursue the goal of excellence as you conduct your business and the one

who has entrusted you will help you to finish the goal set before you.

Rev. P Simelane of Mankayane AEC retired last year. We praise the Lord for his faithful service at Mankayane AEC as local Pastor Executive member, and AEC Board member.

DENOMINATIONAL WOMEN'S REPORT

Praise the Lord who watches over the Church ladies from December 2005 to December 2006. They greatly appreciated the good working relationship with the Church Board. The Church Board received suggestions and ideas from the ladies with open hands.

The ladies successfully organized fund raising for the Church Conference Centre during the Annual General Church Conference held in the Eastern Cape Region in December, 2005. Money raised was as follows:

Men raised R5,819.55 got first place and took the trophy.

Ladies raised R4,348.90.

Youth raised R2,009.50.

Children raised R1,369.20.

Conference cleaned the table by raising R843.50.

The TOTAL raised was R14,390.65.

There was great excitement during the fund-raising time. We are so grateful to the ladies who conducted the fund-raising time. The ladies also came up with an idea of R5,000 and above target to be raised and brought to 2006 conference by men, women, youth and children. Each envelope will be augmented by all conference members. This is another initiative by the ladies.

The church ladies' support for the Church Conference Centre need is greatly appreciated.

HIV/AIDS UPDATE

Mrs ET Mndzebele and Rev. P Mntambo tried their best to break through in getting funding through different channels but never succeeded. The challenge comes back to the church to be involved in this massive project. We were thankful to SIM for their sponsorship of the workshop they conducted at the African Enterprise Centre in Pietermaritzburg in June. We had representatives from all four regions attending that workshop—AJ Magagula from Swaziland, T Ntongana from Eastern Cape, MJ Tembe from KwaZulu-Natal and M Nhlansa from Gauteng.

We encourage the Regions to report their activities to their Regional Executives for the purpose of updating the church on the developments. The programme we launched at Adams was centred around local structures taking the initiative. Though we depended on possible funding through SIM which was not successful, we still believe that wherever we are we can make a difference to the needy.

THE PRSIDENT'S LAST MESSAGE

Dear colleagues, all church members young and old, God has graciously allowed your President to fight a good fight, to run the race well, to finish the course well and to keep the faith as the leader of Africa Evangelical Church Southern Africa. He is so thankful first and foremost to the Lord, all church leaders of Africa Evangelical

Church, SIM, Campus Crusade for Christ International, Missionaries, AEC Members young and old, Mbabane AEC, and Gumede family for their prayer support, care, love, patience, financial support and moral support. Leadership is determined by putting God first, fearing God, humility, respect and unconditional love, for all those you are called to lead.

The last message of the President is taken from Colossians 3:12-17;

V12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

V13 Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

V14 And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

V15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body and be thankful.

V16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

V17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

Paul in the letter of Colossians deals with ***Heresy in the church*** and ***sets standards*** for holy living that challenges any modern leader and all believers to pursue a life of integrity and godliness. “Peace and unity are necessary aspects of any fully functioning organization”.

HOLY WALK

I. HIGHLY ESTEEMED v12

- A. Gods’ chosen people
- B. Holy people – “As the one who called you is holy you also are to be holy in all your conduct, for it is written. Be holy, because I am holy. 1 Peter 1:15,16
- C. Dearly loved people.

II. CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH v12

- A. Compassion
- B. Kindness
- C. Humility
- D. Gentleness
- E. Patience – “Patience is better than power and controlling one’s temper, than capturing a city” Proverbs 16:32.

III. BEAR WITH EACH OTHER v13

IV. FORGIVE! FORGIVE! FORGIVE! v13

- A. Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.
- B. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

V. ABOVE ALL PUT ON LOVE v14

VI. LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS v15.

- A. You are called to peace as members of one body.
- B. And be thankful.

VII. LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU RICHLY v16.

A. As you teach admonish one another.

B. As you sing Psalms, hymns.

VIII. WHAT EVER YOU DO WHETHER IN WORD OF DEED v17.

A. Do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.

B. Giving thanks to God the Father.

IX. CONCLUSION

YES, OUR GOOD GOD HAS LEAD US THUS FAR – EBENEZER! Therefore, let us as members of the Africa Evangelical Church Southern Africa “Walk before (God) and be blameless” Genesis 17:1.

He who is the way the truth and the life, He who is our refuge and strength, who has promised to be with us always, will surely help us to walk before Him blameless. Therefore, our prayer for the President, Board members, Church leaders, Denominational, Regional, Circuit and local church committees, all the AEC members is that “as beloved fellow Christians we will be steadfast and immovably strong in the Lord, always abounding and focused in the work of the Lord, knowing that our hard work of service is not in vain in the Lord.

May the Lord be with us and bless us all as members of Africa Evangelical Church in Southern Africa in the year 2007 and in years to come. Amen!

Humbly presented by

Revd Dr CPM Gumedé, President
Africa Evangelical Church
29 December 2006

**A REPLY BY DR ZM MKHIZE ON BEHALF OF
THE AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCH AFTER THE PRESENTATION OF
A PRESIDENTIAL REPORT AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE
HELD ON 2006-DECEMBER- 26—30 AT MATSAPHA HIGH SCHOOL, SWAZILAND.**

The President of the Africa Evangelical Church (AEC) Rev. Dr. Gumedze, the Board, the servants of the Lord who are with us, the representatives of the Swazi Kingdom, men and women of God, the youth and Sunday school learners I greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. My task is a difficult one as I have been requested to reply on behalf of the church particularly because the Church is a body of Christ and has different categories as I have alluded to in my introduction. I am not quite sure whether my presentation will be the reflection of what is in the hearts of the beloved but I trust God to open my mouth with wisdom.

On behalf of the Africa Evangelical Church, may I thank the President for the detailed and informative report that he has presented. I would also like to thank Mr. MTE Mtetwa, the Treasurer, for the financial report and we need to concentrate on page 21 of the Presidential report for the detailed financial statement. Such reporting is good for accountability purposes. While it is true that the church is a spiritual body of Christ, it is important to note that it is a legal entity, an organisation and needs to comply with the laws of the country in that regard. Accountability is one principle to which all organisations would have to subscribe. Let us give applause to the AEC leadership for being organised and compliant.

I would like to thank the President for his leadership. Rev. Gumedze you have thanked the church for being loving and caring. I would like to say you were cashing on what you had deposited. You were getting in return what you had given to us.

As he was presenting his report, I noted that he cited the book of Isaiah 41:10 in his introduction. What came to my mind was “*what would have been the cause of fear in a man of God*”. I noted a couple of challenges that confronted the President when he assumed office. These are:

- Preparation for the Church Conference
- Court case

When the word of God says “*All things work together for good to those who love the Lord*” it means nothing else but just that. I am referring to the court case that was pending. It was such a daunting task for the President to ensure that the assets of the AEC are protected. We thank God that we won the case. One thing I would like to single out as a benefit in this case was the fact that we were able to retrieve church records.

I would like us to note that the President worked in a dedicated manner without any support of a wife as his wife had been called to be with the Lord. We thank God for giving him sustenance and guidance.

In his presidential report I noted that he used the phrase “*...picking up the baton from the ground*”. Those of us who have experienced a relay know how difficult it can be to pick up the baton from the ground. In a relay, for a team to win, the coach

would have to identify sprinters with similar paces to ensure that no runner lets the team down. Picking up a baton from the ground would mean that one gets to the finishing line later than others do. We thank God that in a spiritual race it is not a matter of *when* does one reach the finishing line but a matter of *how* one does. We thank God that our President has made a good finishing.

Taking over from Rev. LT Magewu must have been a huge challenge for Rev. Gumedze. Getting into the shoes of a powerful but very humble man of God was not an easy task for him. We thank God that He never leads us where His mercies do not abound. Looking up unto God in such challenging times was the best that Rev. Gumedze could do. When Joshua had to take over from Moses, he had an equally challenging task. He did not lead the Israelites in Moses' anointing but relied on God for a special anointing for him. We thank God that Rev Gumedze did likewise.

Leadership is explained as an interactive process that gives rise to a visible conduct. For instance, as human beings we are quick to judge the leadership of a school by making inferences on the conduct of the teachers and the learners. We thank God for the growth that has taken place in the Church during Rev Gumedze's term of office. The Church did not only expand in numbers but is also growing deeper in the things of the Spirit. Church planting is one aspect, which is indicative of such growth. We have seen Church planting taking place in various Regions and we thank God for our fellow Christian brother, the dentist, who planted a couple of churches. I would like to remind the congregation that church planting is not easy. It is for this reason that most evangelists pitch tents for a couple of weeks and people come to the Lord in droves but once the tent has left the area people go back to their old behaviour. Church planting is about bringing people to the Lord and teaching them how to stay in the Lord and the Lord will take the responsibility of developing them.

As a Church we thank God for giving the President good health and strength to run the race. Rev Gumedze is the 3rd President of the AEC and the two erstwhile presidents are with the Lord. We thank God that you are giving the baton to your successor after seven years of leadership. Theologians say the figure 7 represents perfection and this is the perfect time for Rev Gumedze to pass the baton on. We thank God for the perfect work that you have done in the church. If we were in a secular gathering, I would say, "*you should be proud to leave at this particular phase of development in the church*". We trust God that He will continue to develop the church to perfection even after your retirement. At least your successor would be able to refer to you when things seem to be out of track.

The tight schedule and the itinerary of the President are of grave concern. He was able to visit all the Regions and we are grateful to his children for the support. The major challenge for the church is meeting the financial needs of the President. Our level and rate of offering leaves much to be desired. We need to reach a level where the church financially sustains the servants of God as the Apostle Paul puts it clearly that those who labour in the field of God should enjoy the product of their labour.

May God bless you.

DR ZM MKHIZE – AEC Esikhawini - KZN