

AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCH
Annual General Conference 2007



Presidential
Report &
Inaugural Address

“GO WITH HIM”

YEAR 2008 - VERSE:

“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you;
he will never leave you nor forsake you.
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”
Deuteronomy 31:8 (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 (II 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.*

- HOOK

We are meeting here these days to celebrate our 45th anniversary as Africa Evangelical Church (AEC) since 1962. We have more strength on our side, to mention just a few: - We have children, youth, women and men gracing our churches today. We have material things like houses - big and small, electricity, cars (many brands and models). We have good Bible teachers; we have many professions in our church membership. I am sure that collectively we can speak more than 15 languages. We have world travelers and learned individuals. Above all we have faith in God, the Holy Spirit in us and with us. These are exciting days to be alive and to know Christ in such a chaotic world. As we move here and there let us hear a clear voice saying:

"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."
Deuteronomy 31:8.

This is my first experience to stand before you and unveil few things that happened since our Matsapha Conference last year. Some of us SEIZED THE MOMENTS that God

brought our way. We reminisce with much appreciation as we reflect on the Arrivals and Departures, the purifying of ourselves from everything that contaminates, the marathon meeting that encompassed our farewells to our leaders who served the church for decades from the South Africa General Mission to African Evangelical Church and to Africa Evangelical Church. I am referring to Mrs NF Magewu, Revd WTA Xaba and Revd Dr CPM Gumede. The ushering of the new Board members needed no practice except to grab the baton and run with it without an interval.

I remember standing with our first President of AEC, Revd EJ Mfeka and little did I know that one day I could fit in his shoes. I remember staying at his home while going to school, waking up in the morning, scrubbing and cleaning the floor, cooking the porridge etc and then going to school. I remember going around with the second President Revd LT Magewu and maKheswa, laughing and at times crying together. I never knew that today I could stand here in front of you wearing his shoes. I remember my erstwhile President Revd CPM Gumede when he picked up the fallen baton from the ground after we lost Revd Magewu. I wanted to pull away from the Board and do other things without portfolio as I felt that I had it. When I was elected his deputy, I could sense the interpretation that could result if I did withdraw then. He even said to me, “Nhlangothi ungangilahli” but really, I wanted to pull off from the Board. I stayed on for one term as his deputy. He became my common roommate wherever we went together. We hardly slept with other people because some nights were too short for us to rest. Sleeping at 03h00 to be up at 05h00 became the norm. Yes, I stood on the shoulders of spiritual humble men. Toward the end of his term, an extraordinary thing happened. “*Revd CPM Gumede, Revd WTA Xaba and Mr MTE Mtetwa were not standing for elections*”. I would have loved to be the fourth one, but ethically and responsibly it became impossible to walk that route. It was for this reason that I was weak or painfully burdened with sorrow when we went to Swaziland last year, weak as the intensity of the future leadership of the Church was at stake. Perhaps that is what made me sick and was brought to life at the Nazarene Hospital in Manzini.

You might have gathered from your Regional Conferences that the theme that came to me was from Titus 1:5 “The reason I left you in Crete (*Paul said to Titus*) was that **you might straighten out what was left unfinished ...**” We have a responsibility to complete the unfinished task. We must set in order the things that are wanting or put in order the things that still need doing, surely, we must be going, doing, straightening or setting those things with Him.

Our meeting here these days should equip us to finish the task before us. Our interacting, worshipping and commitment should be toward finishing the task before us. We should not be content until we stand before Him who died and rose for us. All those who are in any leadership role within the church structures, lead with dignity and humility. Remember that you are just servants who should leave a legacy of faith and persistent walk with God.

➤ **APPRECIATION –**

Briefly, may I formally thank all those who have prayed for the leadership of the Church in all structures. Thank you to those who have hosted God’s servants in their homes and local churches. Some of you offered your vehicles in running some of the errands and long trips. We also salute all our workers who laboured faithfully, some under trials and tribulations and yet their focus has been on Jesus Christ. In case you don’t know, we have leaders who have proclaimed the good

news through Radio and TV air waves in the like of Rev K Mbuwako, J Bodibe, S Msomi, KP Hlela, Z Dladla, WTA Xaba and others have addressed or facilitated international gatherings like Dr T Nhlengetfwa, Dr Z Mkhize, Make ET Mndzebele, Revd Dr CPM Gumede, Dr L M Ngoetjana, MTE Mtetwa and many more. We are so proud of you. *Siyazingca ngani bathandekayo!*

I am appreciative to those who have a gift of encouragement and also to the editorial team who helped me finish this report in time. To the Board members, Regional Executives and Denominational Committees I salute you for your support. To my Esikhawini circuit and local church who allowed me to be away on Denominational duties and their regular support in many ways may the Lord make you a signet ring to the nations. *Siyazigqaja ngani bazalwane!*

- LOOK

➤ **DEPARTURES –**

We were reminded last year that we always witness departures and arrivals in our short stay on earth. Some of our loved ones departed unexpectedly and they are with the Lord.

January 2007 was a sad month within the church family. On the first Saturday Rev WW Kiji was laid to rest at Lutubeni and on the last Saturday 27th one of our senior minister, Revd PM Buhlalu was laid to rest at Wattville, East Rand. When we were with Mrs Buhlalu on that day, little did we know that five months later she was going to depart to be with her Lord on June 27.

The KwaZulu-Natal Region suffered another loss when Mrs Dorah Kunene the wife of the late Revd Moses Kunene of Mbazwana, Mseleni circuit was laid to rest on the 21st April.

Many other brethren went through sorrow when their loved ones, young and old passed on. Our hearts, love and prayers linger before the throne of grace for the relatives as we miss their loved ones too. We are thankful to the leadership, the pastorate, the membership and relatives for your comforting support when tragedy strikes. *Ha tinyungubyisa hi nwina varhandziwa!*

➤ **ARRIVALS:**

We are thankful to God and take time to congratulate all 2007 arrivals. Others arrived on their first day on earth and some arrived as adults in their new homes. Usually those like to dress in white and crown themselves and we go there to witness their delayed appearances in many arrival halls. Some arrivals have come into the light from the darkness of sin and joined the church this year. To you all, we say as a conference a 'Hearty Welcome'!

➤ **SOARING HIGH:**

On behalf of this conference, we are thankful to God for allowing some of our members to finish their different areas of study, in tertiary and other institutions of learning. Remember what the preacher of old once said: "*My child, I warn you to stay away from any teachings except these. There is no end to books, and too much study will wear you out.*" Ecc 12:12 (CEV). Others got their driver's licences, some experienced driving new cars, slept in new houses, enjoyed running their own

businesses, visited other countries in Africa and abroad, got promotions at work or started new challenging working life. To all of these we say:

“Praise the LORD, my soul! All my being, praise his holy name! Praise the LORD, my soul, and do not forget how kind he is. He fills my life with good things, so that I stay young and strong like an eagle.” (Psalm 103:1-5)

Remember that with these opportunities given to you by grace, much will be required from you. **Go with Him** as you put in order the things that are wanting!

➤ **WOMEN**

Always appreciated, dedicated, loving, thoughtful, tender, and faithful to prayer meetings, attending the conferences in greater numbers. Always threatening in their growth, always challenging the status quo. Always excited when something is accomplished.

We are challenged to discover new dynamics in discovering who we are as the social fabric of a family is tarnished and breaking. We have to change some word usage and come up with new ones. For example, to say “umhlangano womama” we have to define who is this “mama”? What about other forums that are emerging within the church family? These include, widows, young adults, never married, divorced, separated, single moms, half families (the mother and her children at Africa Evangelical Church and the husband at another church on agreement) and many others. The list is endless. We have to redefine the family.

➤ **MEN**

Men, I think have been waiting in the taxi rank for years. They have been taxing on the runway for too long, watching things happen before them for ages hence many things have overtaken them. The blessings that were destined for men have been deflected to others. The question that should ring in your ears should be “How long?” How about making this coming year the most memorable year in your life in terms of your involvement, serving exposure and many other things. Join in the great rigorous march to victory and involvement as you engage! Onward Christian Soldiers!

Remember that your footsteps are hard and solid. Set a pattern for our young men who are looking up to you. Remember that your grip is firm and robust; grab the ever-passing opportunities with that crushing grip. **Go with Him** and finish the work!

➤ **YOUTH**

This is a dynamic stage in life. To some, anything goes, to others – well focused but not sure. Since this is our largest populace in our church let us pull our resources together and invest in them. I am glad that when I look back I had people who invested their resources in me. Some practiced their discipline style on me and others tried to scare me. I was never discouraged because of those who gave me good advice. I was used as a guinea pig at times but I did not become one. People exploded their emotions and frustrations on me in order that I might be able to be who I am today. Hence the words of a popular song in the inspirational mold "**You Raise Me Up**" say:

“You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas
I am strong, when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up ... to more than I can be”

Why all this? I am trying to say to our young people take care of your profile. Don't be tardy and avoid involvement in the church. The Lord is taking you through that experience with a purpose. You are destined to lead. Your character and background will determine the kind of a leader you will be. Unfortunately, we are living in the post-modern era, which is characterized by the rise of false teachers, the rise of egocentric leaders, the pride of life, the immoral behaviour and abuse of power, the merging of political hullabaloo with so called spirituality, the ushering in of the world into the church. The disappearance of respect and servant leadership has been taken over by the rise of professionalism. Your era will be more trying. You are in the church today, and the church is willing to prepare you for the ruthless storms of life tomorrow. Be willing to be sharpened, moulded and sealed for glory.

➤ **CHILDREN –**

Let us vigorously invest in our children. They need our love and care. Some have never experienced love, laughter, joy and warm firm hugs because they never lived with their parents. To all those who work with the children be careful in your speech and actions. You are impacting a fresh mind. You are downloading something that will never be easily erased. The church needs more children workers than pastors. Our church needs more youth workers than pastors because the populace of youth demands that in the church. We need to invest in these young lives because we were also once children. They have never experienced adulthood. Therefore, let us give them quadruple portion of our experiences. Yesterday we were children, teens, then young adults and some of us are adults or matured individuals today. Let us look back where we come from and awaken the young generation. Let us equip them to sprint with the baton when the time comes.
Go with Him!

➤ **ALL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES –**

The Lord has been good to the Africa Evangelical Church in many ways. He has given us leaders in many areas of our ministry. The local church is the foundation of the entire governance and smooth running of the Africa Evangelical Church. I have already mentioned something about women, men, youth and children. When we have all these special people in the church, we need quality leaders.

We are called to make an impact, to leave a legacy, to engrave a trademark, to demonstrate and personify our corporate image. When you are a leader, you learn a new thing everyday. You experience sleepless nights of tears wetting your pillow. In front of people, you appear strong and yet you are weak inside. You are just like the people you lead, but you have added responsibility to be a step ahead. You must always strive for excellence in whatever you do. Let us go to the places where we have never been. Let us experience new heights in our leading, preaching, counselling, giving, loving, worship. Think new and do new things for God and His church.

Sunday School teacher – be faithful as you download the heavenly secrets to those young minds. Youth leaders read more and be focused and grounded in the Word of God – you will not be lost. Women's leaders let your footsteps be dignified,

balanced and orderly. Be alert like an impala game. You are a multi talented and gifted individual. Men leaders, you are the soldiers, take care of those in the team. Think together, fight together, encourage the fainthearted, let the shy one speaks to you, let the brave be balanced. Let the young one run with excitement, be a mentor and always step ahead of the group.

Preachers, stay in the Word! Do not copy from others but be convinced and convicted. Be possessed! Be diseased with passion to share the pure good news. Be careful of stories that are told from the pulpit today. Contend for the faith and anchor your faith in the Word. **Go with Him!**

- LOOK

➤ **BOARD MEETING –**

February 2nd – 4th 2007 **Handover Meeting** took place at Camp Jonathan at Eston, KZN. The deliberations that took place on the 3rd February started with the hand over programme. It was noted that we had four portfolios that had to hand over the documents, responsibilities, unfinished tasks etc to the incoming team. The General Secretary handed over to the incoming General Secretary not only documents but also very important responsibilities. The same with the Vice President followed by the Treasurer and the outgoing President did the same.

After that session which concluded with committal prayer for the new leadership, one senior board member said: *“I have never seen such a moving session like this since I was born. I have been in and out of many portfolios in the church but I have never handed over anything or been handed anything. This is a memorable day for me.”*

Like in a relay game, there was no time to look at the baton or polish it but we had to run faster than the outgoing team. The incoming President and General Secretary took the lead and as usual such meetings end before midnight because the agenda has to be finished. Thank you, brethren, for praying for the Board and other structures of the church. They need your prayer support and encouragement as they **go with Him** straightening out what was left unfinished.

➤ **MARCH 23 – 24 EASTERN CAPE – MTHATHA & NKANGA**

During our February Board meeting, the Board felt that some of the Board members should go to Nkanga and try to help the saints there in the challenging issues that still linger within that circuit. We are thankful to the Chairperson Revd Kunju who coordinated this meeting and arranged sleeping accommodation at Mthatha. We thank God for those who came to Nkanga and deliberated on the issues they face. Our desire for them is that they may reconcile and see God working in their midst. The dawning of a new day is near hence it looks darker at times. Let the diamond of God’s love shine brighter in the dark. Our vision statement reminds us that we should like to *work in unity in diversity of language, race, culture and gender, with an agreed evangelical doctrine of salvation.*

➤ **APRIL 18 - MSELENI LEADERS’ MEETING –**

This was a courtesy call meeting which I took and met the pastoral leadership of the circuit. I encouraged them and at the same time requested them to pray for me. We also discussed briefly the beginning of the church work there in August 1908 reflecting on the arrival of Revd & Mrs NW Keyes and Miss C Carlson. The Golden Jubilee was celebrated in August 1958 where the leadership of the time said “We

would like to take this light to those who are still in darkness like us fifty years ago.” This was the vision of Revd EME Mbonambi who mobilized the church leadership and the missionaries who were there joined them in celebrating those fifty years. The Centennial in August 2008 is being planned to share with the Church what the Lord has done during the last fifty years in that part of the country. Pray for that circuit as they work hard towards celebrating what the Lord has done for them in the past hundred years. They must put in order the things that still need doing.

➤ **July 27th – 29th Planning Meeting –**

This meeting took place at Camp Jonathan in Eston, KZN. It was planned and designed to consolidate the entire vision and activities of the structural committees as they review and plan for the General Conference. Sixty leaders are expected to attend this meeting representing their structures (i.e., Children’s Ministry, Youth, Men, Women and Board). We never enjoyed fellowship, as Saturday became the only full working day. All business had to be finished in the evening. Committees finished at different times and the Board was the last to conclude their business around midnight. Again, let me express my appreciation to all those who are in these structures. Some had to take leave from their places of employment in order to attend. They used their resources to see the work of the Lord being done efficiently and effectively. *We are proud of you beloved.*

Most of the things that you have seen unfolding here these few days were conceived, planned and adopted from that meeting. We have come a long way and we are thankful that we can plan and execute our plans with the aim of finishing that is before us.

➤ **WORKERS’ SEMINAR – SKOGHEIM CONFERENCE CENTRE. MAY 10 – 13**

May I hasten to thank many local churches that made it possible for their leaders to attend this seminar. It was one of the memorable meetings in many ways inter alia, within five minutes we had an offering of more than R3000, which was divided into three categories. On behalf of AEC, I was privileged together with Revd Gumede and Xaba to visit the widow Mrs Gengan and her family. She is the wife of Mr Gengan who passed away last year who was the President of Evangelical Church of S.A. in Umzinto.

We were all challenged as we studied together the book of Haggai led by Revd WTA Xaba and Revd CPM Gumede jointly, the fellowship and laughter we enjoyed. Many people within AEC family and also in other denominations have enjoyed those notes that were produced. The 2008 Seminar will be on the 8th – 12th May please diarise those dates and plan to be there. The cost for the facilities at Skogheim will be R585 for singles and R1260 per couple. We request the local churches to pay for their leaders and spouses to attend. These meetings are very important in nurturing and bonding our unity. We have since learnt that growing together becomes a blessing.

May I personally salute the West Rand Circuit in Gauteng Region for taking their leaders to OR Tambo Airport and saw them fly above the clouds to Durban in about three planes if I remember well. The transport was waiting for them when they arrived at Durban International to take them to the Conference Centre. May I encourage West Rand never to let their leaders look at the tarred roads for more

than six hours again if they could fly them over. It is cheaper when you plan properly, it is refreshing and it is here to stay.

However, we learnt that the key man who was behind that gesture, Mr Levy Mohlala was called to be with the Lord on the very Sunday the Seminar ended. May our good Lord bless his family and many people who experience the joy of serving others. Yes, the servants became VIPs. *Re motlotlo ka nnete ka baratuwa ba rona!*

We are thankful to God for the facilitators of the seminar i.e., Revd Bodibe, Kunju, Tembe & Dlamini FS.

➤ REGIONAL CONFERENCES

Visiting Regions was a very challenging and humbling experience for me. This is where I saw the unseen and unnoticed. I saw the front rows in the church as well as the back rows. I saw the satisfied as well as the searching souls. I saw the children and our seniors. I saw how we give. I heard how we preach. I heard how we sing. I saw the committed and the non-committed. I saw the cars that the Lord has blessed us with. I saw how we lead others. I saw the kinds of Bibles we use in our services. I also saw how often we open them and how quick we find the portion we might be looking for. I witnessed also how we talk to those whom we are familiar with. I saw how we shun away from those that we don't know personally. I saw how we honour some and also witnessed how we ignore others. In short, I was in the centre lane and I witnessed both of our extremes. Yes I came, I saw, I heard, I tasted, I touched the texture of our Gospel and I smelled the aroma of our salvation.

1. EASTERN CAPE - THURSDAY, 05 JULY 2007.

Thursday July 5th 2007 – became a very unique day because I woke up at Mthatha and finished my day in Gauteng. The morning at Lutubeni was graced by happy fast-moving people; others were literally running excited to be at that Conference. I salute the Chairman and his executive for making it possible for me to be in their conference for few hours. Revd A Zondo from KwaMashu was their Bible Study teacher and they were looking at the whole ministry of giving. I was encouraged to see the saints having their Bibles and using them.

In all regions I wanted to emphasize the fact that we are left by the Lord where we are to finish a certain task or to put right or straighten out what was left unfinished. This theme came from Titus 1:5a. I had to grace one service there and while we were in the service the Gauteng brethren called me, as they wanted to find out where I was as they were also expecting me that evening.

The encouraging thing there was to see the membership freely moving up and down, in and out as I was reminded of other conferences at Lutubeni and also the conflict that rose not long ago in that place. Truly our God is worthy to be praised.

Ingxelo yengingqi kaSihlalo ndayifumana kwangoko ndiphaya eLutubeni eyayibhalwe kakuhle. Ndiyabulela Mqoma! In the Chairman's report I picked up few things worth mentioning here.

1. In the quest for unity there is still non-cooperation at times in other areas of the ministry. This includes doing things that are not in our documents, not being faithful in the services, not showing support in other structures. May I appeal to you by saying that we are left behind to straighten that which was left unfinished.

2. The Men's fellowship is not doing well. May I challenge men from the East that the wise men came from the east, the sun rises from the east, and the east introduces a new day. Go back to your posts and take guard. Guard your families and guard the Church of God. The onus is on you. If you drop your guards the enemy will conquer. Talk less and do more. Let the people see your works and better not hear your voices. We all need you and you also need yourselves!
3. The East London brethren have been granted a place of worship in a certain school, which is not used. The possibility is that one section of that property might be given to them in the near future. Let us rally behind that work so that when anyone visits East London, they might have a place of worship. May East London brethren be encouraged we are with you, let us join hands.
4. The involvement of Youth and Women in the church in the Eastern Cape is appreciated. The Women are still the top givers in all the regions and are the main prayer warriors. *Mandithi kuni "HUNTSHU! MAQOBOKAZANA NINGALALA ENDLELENI KUNYEMBELEKILE!"*

2. GAUTENG – FRIDAY, 06 JULY 2007.

The chilly weather and the problem with venue did not deter Gauteng from meeting at a beautiful venue, Prestige College next to Hammanskraal, outside Tshwane. Arriving on Thursday night I took shelter at the Mbathas' residence and then Friday started with great anticipation for something new. The delegates came in different times but eventually the devotions took place led by Mbatha and the Bible Study session started with a great challenging theme: *"Knowing the scriptures and the power of God!"* Revd J Bodibe ably expounded the Word with confidence and conviction. Little did I know that the evening was going to be so electrifying with Revd E Hlongwane flowing on stage with a deep reflection on the Word challenging and anchoring the saints in the truth. I was really encouraged to be a witness of such an event. The Regional Executive took me out for lunch in a very exquisite place. I felt like running away because as a servant I felt that I did not deserve such tender care. My second night was spent at Bodibe's residence because I was to be at OR Tambo airport early in the morning to start my route to KwaZulu-Natal.

To the Gauteng Regional Executive, all other structures of leadership, general membership - matured and young allow me to say thank you for your love, commitment to the Lord and availability in time of need. *Ha tinyungubuyisa swinene hivarhandziwa vha hina!* **Go with Him** and complete the task before you.

3. KWAZULU-NATAL – 07 JULY 2007.

After being faithful in attending our KZN Regional Conference for years and not missing any, I felt something strange when I joined them just for one session on Saturday night at Mfolozi High School, Mtubatuba. This was after leaving Gauteng in the morning. I felt the vibrancy and the warmth when I arrived at their conference. It was indeed a HOMECOMING welcome by the Executive. My time was limited because I had to attend that meeting only. Their theme was 'commitment' and the Bible Study session was led by Revd WTA Xaba and the evening session Pastor T Makhubu was in fire as if he was going to be taken home after the meeting. It was also encouraging to see many young people gracing that conference. The challenge is bigger than we think to the church leadership to build, mould, make

and transfer the fundamentals of faith, which has been one of our distinctive legacies as Africa Evangelical Church.

I noted two things from the Regional Chairman's report:

1. That Revd S Gumede of Mtubatuba is retiring at the end of 2007 from active pastoral ministry in this region after many years of service. He retires with needed experience in the fields of leadership, counselling and mentoring of the upcoming leaders. This conference salutes the Gumede family for demonstrating dignity and order in the church leadership. Let me remind you sir, that the fire that is locked in your bones must continue to burn wherever the Lord takes you to minister.
2. Dumisa Mission house caught fire and Revd & Mrs JM Ntuli lost everything that was in the house. But to my encouragement as he is a member of the Regional Executive, he went home on that emergency call, assessed the situation and returned to the ongoing conference at Mtubatuba. What a commitment! Mphemba, may our good Lord reward you and give you double portion of your desires.

4. SWAZILAND – 27 AUGUST – 2 SEPTEMBER 2007.

Swaziland is the only region that still enjoys a weeklong conference however they also face the problem of conflicts with other National engagements and educational programmes.

It was a joy to join them on Friday night and I was there until Sunday noon when the conference closed. I was amazed to see a number of young people in the conference. One evening when I looked around, I thought that they were bussed in from somewhere. I saw the big challenge that the region is facing as they move into the future with their youth.

Their conference had a number of speakers and while I was there, I enjoyed seeing the enthusiasm and the conviction that the speakers had. They were faithful and anchored themselves in the Word. I praise God for the leadership that I saw there, the children's moment was just great. I saw the Mbuluzi old church building where we used to meet as a conference but today even the young people could not fit in that building. *Ons kom van ver af met die Here geliefdes! Loof sy Naam!*

On Saturday afternoon, accompanied by our friend the former President of AEC Revd CPM Gumede, Deputy President Revd TM Dlamini & Babe J Dube we went to see the church building at Nkamanzi where Mr J Dube and Mrs ET Mndzebele are leading a wonderful building project by faith. A beautiful structure was up and I met some of the builders and we prayed together with them. I was greatly impressed by the passion and faith that these two beloved individuals had when they showed us around that building. *Siyategcabha ngani bazalwane labatsandzekako!*

UNION BIBLE INSTITUTE –

We are board and council members of this institution for Higher Bible and Theological Training based in Hilton, Pietermaritzburg. We have a duty to send our students who would like to be accredited leaders of Africa Evangelical Church. We have a duty to financially support our students and the institution in general. We pay our yearly membership fee. We are involved in many decision-making processes of the institution. That is why I formally request you to pray for the school as it is looking for the new principal. The present principal will be taking pastoral ministry in Johannesburg in the middle of 2008. We need God to clearly show us the person of His heart.

Each year we celebrate with graduates like Mrs Annie Vumase; Thokozani Thwala and Sibusiso Ngwenya who graduated on the 24th November. It was encouraging to me to see the General Secretary Revd VW Ndinisa, Motsai, Mathenjwa, Phoseka, Nxumalo and others gracing the occasion. We give thanks to God for those people who have sponsored some students through their years of study and we pray that our good Lord might increase those who have a similar desire.

It is very embarrassing for me and AEC to receive a call from the dean giving me a list of AEC students who might be owing R2000, R3000 or who might not graduate because of money owed. To our good students who are there it is so confusing to find themselves being left alone with their God to make the ends meet. Let us take our responsibilities and share our pain as a body. To all those who are in the field today, look back and thank the Lord who guided you during your years of study and make it a point that you plough back the harvest that the Lord gives you. **Go with Him.**

BIBLE SOCIETY –

Our involvement with the Bible Society is perpetual. The reason being that the Book we use the most brings new life and unity in our church is none other than the Bible. It is the measuring stick that we use. If we don't support it financially who will? There are so many initiatives that we have seen. The new look of Bible covers, the Faith Comes by Hearing programme with which we should be partners. The Bible is available on your cell phone today, which is South Africa's first in the world.

The Bible is available in all ten South African official languages with Southern Ndebele coming up in few years. The IsiZulu Bible in a new dynamic translation project will be starting shortly perhaps it will be based in this very University. We had New Testament in 1986. Many people will enjoy the richness of the language when they read the complete Old and New Testaments. You can be involved as an individual, as a local church, as a structure and as a denomination. I am ashamed to tell you how much AEC contributed in 2006/2007 year. Let us grow and be committed in the things of God as never before. Our denomination's contribution reference number is still 001043 in South Africa.

HIV & AIDS –

Thank you for your response in supporting this initiative. Last year in Swaziland you came with your gifts and we were humbled to see loads of clothes and other goodies. You have done the same thing this year again. May the Lord richly bless you in your thoughts and actions as you are reminded about this reality of this

enemy that has split, destroyed, changed the societal fabric of a family and wiped away a certain generation.

We got limited reports from different regions about the activities that are carried by different groups within the church. These reports are very important to all of us. We don't want to repeat the mistakes of yesterday tomorrow as we share these new activities. The information about HIV & AIDS is ever changing worldwide. Some of you who are involved in these structures and research can attest to this fact. We as a church need to be in the front lines.

May I challenge all regions to have this programme in your plans for the year. The orphans, the vulnerable children, the struggling grand parent who is challenged to raise up their grand children up to the third generation. When will they rest in raising young ones? Let them enjoy their old age in peace and fulfilment. Let the church bring hope and warmth where needed.

MISSIONS –

To our shame we are far behind in Missions. I think we don't know or understand what it means. We should be having some missionaries supported by the church at least in our neighbouring African countries like Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia and Lesotho. *It is not only where you are but also it is where they are.* Most of us can speak the languages that are spoken in these countries. Our leaders have the skill and ability to clearly communicate the Word of God with passion and conviction. But are we content as we see many people going into Christ less eternity? Next year we are praying that God should lead in everything we do. He goes before us. Are we willing to follow Him? **Go with Him!**

I remember few years ago we were challenged to give to Missions at least a minimal amount per year. I will not say that amount here because it might sound like an insult. It was Roger Fritz who said: *“Leaders are trail blazers. Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and make a trail.”* As a church, let us go where nobody has ever gone and experience the fresh and new things that God will do with us. Let us not be suffocated by mediocrity and slothfulness resulting in letting us fail to extend our vision.

◆ CONFERENCE CENTRE

This dream project goes like waves of our beautiful Ocean. The pulse of the church pulsates with oomph when we are together and when we go back to our areas of ministries we gently and generally subside. My personal observation is that we act like children and not matured and committed individuals. The places are available if we had money. We just cannot afford to purchase a property through the bond which might be payable after 25 years. If we do that, we are just sentencing our next generation before they take leadership. Even the present leadership will be hesitant to take the church to the new heights if we are not obedient to the prompting of the Spirit.

I do believe that we can raise three million within a short time. In fact, we have business people here who know how best we can invest our money for a year to get maximum returns within a short time. Why don't we say, a million plus before next conference set aside for the conference? I believe and I have seen people being obedient to the Lord in their giving. Some of them are here with us. I believe very

few people can raise a million rand. Only 200 people giving R5000 each can encourage the whole church. Those people are here and the battle is not ours but the Lord's. He is the commander of the army and he goes before us and that is why we say to you: **Go with Him!**

This is another dispensation. We will never hold our conferences either regional or denominational in our historical venues any longer. I am thinking about Ntabamhlophe, Jabavu, Dumisa, Mseleni Mission, Madwaleni, Lutubeni or Nkanga. We have overgrown these places. Those who have joined the church recently we never see those places during conference time. Let us come to our senses. Let us see this dream come true during our time!

- TOOK

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

CHURCH BUILDING PROPERTY –

We are leaving in different times. To all leaders of the Africa Evangelical Church may I remind you to do the following: -

- 1. General Layout of the Property** – Make sure that you know and have the official Property Papers, square meters, corner pegs, building plan, if there is any piping on the property e.g., electricity, sewer, plumbing make sure that you have a sketch for such to help others solve the problem that might arise in future. Use the people you have in the local church or in the circuit or in the region or denominationally.
 - 2. Maintenance** – take care of the buildings. If there are cracks on the walls, roof and water leaks, broken windowpanes or door falling apart, light bulb gone out, broken key, rusted hinge, take care of grass, pick up plastics, bottles and all papers you see, the floor that is unbecoming and dangerous chair to use should be fixed before you pay too much. Remember that maintenance is expensive but if you budget ahead for it you will be glad to see good returns.
- ◆ **Record keeping** (money). Please have proper records at your local church level. The whole structure collapses if you fail to do that. Read your documents about keeping your financial records and reporting. Learn how to write minutes properly. It is not only a legal document but it is also a credible record of God's faithfulness in the area of your service. The Board is anxious to have well-organized seminars and workshops which will be designed for skilling the regional leadership so that they might have confidence in their leadership roles.
 - ◆ Keep your attendance register, not that people are counted like money, but it is a good practice that will help you when the statistics are required and also when you make a report.
 - ◆ Look for positive things that will encourage people to pray for you. Sell your Christian life in style as AEC member. Do not be wishy-washy and hanky-panky! Negative reporting turns people away. Share what is worth sharing and keep those things that might be sensitive and handle them with skill.

- ◆ Keep the register for the church property. Some people call it inventory. Visit that file once a year and see your stock. If you have machinery, it is important to write down the Serial Number (SN) and check the warranty. It could be chairs, plates, spoons, brooms, know how many windows are there in your church building. Know the number and condition of your communion glasses etc. This is not a workshop, but as we pledge to **Go with Him**, we have to be orderly, organized and do things well!

Finally, *bazalwane, zihlobo zam, baratuwa ba rona*, let us enjoy that little push, that extra stretch and that full step of faith. We are called to do greater things than we ever can think. My prayer is that when we meet next year we might hear and celebrate greater achievements for God. Because has promised to go with us.

May 2008 be the year of reality in our life of walking and abiding in Him. May Africa Evangelical Church in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland raise the bar in our preaching, worship, giving, reaching out, service, prayer, administration, communication, and etc. as never before.

Wherever you are placed may you shine for Jesus. May the glorious effulgence of Christ be visual in our life in this coming year. Whatever you do or think, may you know that – *“The LORD himself will lead you and be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you, so do not lose courage or be afraid.”* Deut 31:8.

“On the plains of hesitation, lie the bleached bones of thousands, who, on the very threshold of victory, sat down to rest and while resting died.” Howard Hendricks – *The seven laws of the teacher.*

I thank God and I thank you!

Humbly presented by



Revd P Mntambo, PRESIDENT
AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCH
29 DECEMBER 2007

AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCH
ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE
UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND – KWAZULU-NATAL

RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT’S REPORT AND INAUGURAL ADDRESS
BY NOAH M NKAMBULE

On behalf of the Africa Evangelical Church in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal and Swaziland, I would like to convey our appreciation and thanks for the President’s Report that has just been eloquently presented to us. The Report also assumes the status of an inaugural address by our incoming President. I guess that is precisely the reason why we remained fully alert and attentive throughout your presentation.

We were naturally eager to perceive clearly your vision and aspiration for the Africa Evangelical Church. As an incoming leader of this great church whose foundation spans over a long history in which it successfully upheld fundamental Christian values and principles irrespective of the ever-changing socio-cultural environment, we were naturally keen to articulate clearly your vision and dreams for the church. We also had our antennas stretched high to pick up signals (if any) about your expectations from us, who are being led. It is the tradition of incoming leaders to state their expectations up-front.

We are delighted to observe that in all these areas of our concerns and apprehensions, you were able to allay our fears as you articulated your vision for the road that lies ahead. You have further portrayed yourself as a servant who has been tasked to lead. In this regard, it is our fervent hope that you will emulate your predecessors and lead this church with humility and distinction.

Furthermore, you boldly stated your expectations particularly with respect to the critical roles that must be played by our children, the youth, women and men in our church, if we are going to witness a spiritually revamped Africa Evangelical Church. We also noted with admiration your frankness when you expressed your displeasure with role of men in the church. When men are assigned specific tasks, they stay too long on the periphery analysing options while they miss golden opportunities. Meanwhile women plunge into the pool at the earliest opportunity, knowing full well that they will either swim to safety or drown. When they finally swim to safety, men would still be on the shore doing pre-feasibility and feasibility studies on how to get across. We join the President in commending the women for translating our church dreams to tangible action on the ground. Meanwhile, I believe that men will (at an opportune time) reflect constructively on this observation and embark on remedial measures.

We would like to flag our desire for good leadership and good corporate governance in the AEC. In order for this church to fulfil its mandate that is enshrined in the Great Commission verses in Matthew 28:19-20, the AEC needs quality leadership. Our church will flourish or fall depending on the nature of the leadership we have. We are all aware that the African continent is fraught with bad leadership, which is responsible for its current economic, political and moral degeneration. The AEC (which is geographically an African based institution) should be closely guarded (in particular by our new leadership) to make sure that it is not swallowed up by this continental bandwagon. As a church, we trust that God has indeed blessed us with

people of integrity, character and good moral standing who occupy leadership positions in our church. We trust that they will not bring the name of Jesus Christ into disrepute. We have confidence in you and your Board that (in partnership with all the standing church committees), you will steer this church to great heights of spiritual fulfilment. Under your leadership we aspire to witness a church that will grow both numerically and spiritually. We are encouraged to note that skills development initiatives intended to sharpen managerial skills of church committees have been prioritised in your vision for the future of the AEC.

The Board is further commended for choosing a powerful theme verse for 2008. We will by faith, cling to the inspirational message contained in this verse. Indeed, God himself will go before us in 2008. There is therefore no room for trepidation should challenges emerge along the way.

Mr President, the HIV & AIDS pandemic is posing a formidable challenge to the church. We can no longer afford to be indifferent and pretend as if the church is immune from this world- wide crisis. It is commendable that the AEC has already laid down a solid foundation for action. Indeed, we agree with you Sir that our church plans for the coming year should incorporate HIV & AIDS initiatives and action programmes.

We also applaud the outgoing Church Board, not only for outstanding accomplishments of the past years, but also for convening the handover meeting on 2-4 February 2007. The Report gives the impression that the meeting was a resounding success. It was both informative and beneficial to the incoming Board. This is 'best practice' which should be emulated by all the committee structures of the AEC. The buzzword today is 'transparency'.

You have rightly recognised that the AEC will be as strong as its Local Church. The quality of the upper echelons of the church structure will always mirror the quality of the Local Church. The AEC must invest in the Local Church, as a fountain of spiritual life for the entire spectrum of our church organisation. It must promote locally driven soul- harvesting and spiritual enhancement initiatives. Indeed, the Local Church must be accorded wider latitude to mobilise and direct resources towards investment in basic church infrastructure to improve its operational efficiencies.

You have also raised the issue of vulnerability of our children to cults and lifestyles of the secular world. In fact, the next frontier for the defence of the gospel will be in the area of secularisation of the church. There is a rising dichotomy in the church where conservatism is seriously challenged by modernity. While both worlds are welcomed, the critical balance between the two should be maintained with prudence. We are not going to be judgemental on these emerging styles of leading or living a Christian life. But the church should remain vigilant and sensitive to the lifestyles that openly deviate from holiness. We are called to holiness and to be the light of the world irrespective of the dynamism that is characterising trends in the secular world. Mr. President we concur with you that we should guard against the church invasion by the world. We urge the President in particular to lead the AEC on a path of 'holiness' regardless of the rising secular lifestyles in Christendom.

We also commend you for emulating your distinguished predecessors who maintained their visibility at Regional Conferences and meetings. The membership at regional and circuit levels take delight in meeting the President at their own localities. The interactions with the President at these lower levels of the church structure breed unity and promote a sense of belonging in the church. Funds permitting, these visits should be maintained

We are pleased to note that the Skogheim pastors' seminar has become a regular feature in the annual church calendar. Our pastors need this time of relaxation to reflect on God's work in an atmosphere that allows that kind of introspection. These outings also afford them the golden opportunity to relate closely to their spouses. Family bonds can only grow stronger in such an environment. We encourage Board to maintain these seminars.

With respect to the Conference Centre project, we think the President will agree with us that it is difficult to give bountifully in support of a project that has not demonstrated tangible outcomes over such long period of gestation. We are nevertheless not condoning our apathy and complacency over this long-standing project. In fact, contrary to that view, we strongly encourage the in-coming President and his team to conduct a thorough review of the strategies we have been pursuing up to now and then put forward a fresh plan of action even if this plan calls for the project to be overhauled and re-engineered from scratch. We urgently need a result-oriented plan that will re-ignite our hearts and re-ignite our commitment to this noble AEC project. Unfortunately, the President's report did not present a clear strategic vision on this project other than to lament on the poor financial support it is receiving.

In conclusion, the Africa Evangelical Church would like once again, to congratulate the President and his Board for a clear and well-structured Report, which captures the events, accomplishment and challenges of the past year as well as articulate the vision for the future. We further pledge our undivided support to you as you lead this church in an environment that is dynamic and posing new challenges for the body of Christ. There is the advent of gender issues, which are secular in nature but rapidly infiltrating the church and church constitutions. I understand that a sexist bible, which tries to accommodate the above trends already, exists. The landscape in which the AEC is furthering God's work is littered with emerging challenges of this nature. In spite of all these hurdles, we strongly believe that God has appointed you for the purpose to serve him in this generation. This is President Prince Mntambo's season. As you carry the AEC baton that was handed over to you by Rev Dr C.P.M. Gumedze last year, we would like to assure you that - *'the Lord himself goes before you and He will be with you, He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged.'*

MAY GOD BLESS YOU!

Noah M. Nkambule

Motshane AEC- Swaziland
29 December 2007