

AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCH
Annual General Conference 2008



- Presidential Report -

**"The Church -
Challenges as Opportunities"**

YEAR 2009 - VERSE:

"So then, as we have opportunity,
let us do good to everyone,
and especially to those who are of the household of faith."
Gal 6:10 (ESV)

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.*

UMBONO MGOMO WEBANDLA LE-AEC:

"Ngokukholwa sibona ibandla laseMzansi Africa lisebenzisana ebunyeni phezu kokuba lehlukene ngezilimi, ngobuzwe, ngendlela yokuphila nangobulili; labo abavumelene ngesifundiso mayelana nensindiso, futhi-ke abaveza ukuba mzimba munye ngempilo ephilwa yiwo onke amalungu alo ukuze liphumelele ukwenza abafundi nokuzandisa ngokuya liqhubekela ekuphileni impilo engcwele."

IMIGOMO:

- 1. Ukuhlela izinto ezithile eziphawulekayo esinokuzenza ndawonye emsebenzini wokuqhuba ivangeli nokufinyelela ezindaweni ezintsha khona lapha kwelakithi nakwamanye amazwe. Lokhu-ke kuyabandakanya ukwazisana ngezinto eziphathekayo eziyizicelo zomkhuleko emabandleni ethu ahlukeneyo, lokho kwenziwe njalo ngezikhathi ezimisiweyo.*
- 2. Ukuhlela izivivinyo eziyakwenziwa ngezikhathi ezithile ngamalungu amabandla (zibhalwe phansi noma kuxoxwe ngomlomo) ukuze kubonakale ukuthi basiqonda kangakanani isifundiso sokusindiswa esiphilayo ngokwevangeli. Lapho kutholakala khona ukuthi kukhona ukungazi noma ukungaqondi ngokufaneleyo abaholi bayakuyimela ngezinyawo leyondaba.*

3. *Ukukhulela izikhungo zokufundisa abaholi bamabandla ethu mayelana nokufundiswa yiBhayibheli mayelana nempilo yoMzimba (oyiBandla) nokuthi imelwe iphilwe kanjani emabandleni ethu.*
4. *Ukufundisa izifundo ngokuhambisa ivangeli ngokwenza abafundi (kubhalwe phansi noma kukhulunywe ngomlomo kunikezwa amalungu amabandla ethu) nokuthi lowo nalowo athole umfundi othile azakumelekelela (II Thim. 2:2).*
5. *Ukukhulela izifundo mayelana nempilo yobungcwele; kube khona indlela eyenziwa ngamabandla ethu ukulekelela amalungu ukuba azi ukuthi awaziphileli-nje, kumelwe azidalule, eziveza ethembekile yilowo nalowo komunye ngezinhlelo ezithile ezifaneleyo ezenziwayo, okusho ukuthi owesilisa komunye wesilisa, nowesifazane komunye wesifazane.*

The dynamics of 1962 between the Mission and the Church resulted in the birth of the Africa Evangelical Church known as (AEC). When those who were in the church in 1962 reflect and reminisce, they can see growth and changes within the church. We have our Constitution, Bylaws, Distinctives, Vision Statement and different structures within the church. We have witnessed every year having students in Bible colleges and we have seen some being ordained during our past conferences. We note with thankful hearts the different languages that we speak and enjoy, we intermarry with other language groups thus increasing the bonds of brotherhood.

December 26 – 30, 2007 saw us invading the University of Zululand. We remember the long walks from the dormitories to the dome. We eventually shared with whosoever as we walked those few metres daily. We also remember the verse that has encouraged many

“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 year, as you might have gathered from your Regional Conferences what came to me is the comment that was uttered by the public as they saw the results of what Christ did. In Mark 7:37 we read “And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, ***“He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”*** Apart from being astonished beyond measure or completely amazed the testimony that came out from them I think, was indeed stunning and really startling. “*He does all things well*”. Jesus Christ took care of those people’s needs that might not appeal to us today. It is from this premise that background we look forward to the New Year with desire to serve. Our priority should be that unction and driving force to serve. He came to serve not to be served. Many of us have enjoyed to be served over the years. But 2009 greets us with that new challenge and opportunity to serve. ***“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”*** (Gal 6:10)

Let us do it well in all things!

Another year, 2008, has gone into history with many historical events. Let us reminisce by asking the question, how did we make it through? Without complicating the answer let us simply say, “*Here we are by His grace*”, as we witness His story that unfolds before our eyes.

We heard and saw xenophobic rage, deaths, signing of agreements, changes of governments, the fall of banks with some to the extent of closing down, the merging of some insurance companies, the rise and fall of oil prices, the global political instability, the strange fires in the land, the cost of living becoming impossible for many, strange diseases invading our frail planet and bodies, the rise of strange authoritative and undisciplined behaviour of people.

The church in some countries is going through tough times of persecution. The other day I heard that South Africa has about 1.5 million orphans. Who will do good to these million children? Who will give a warm loving heart to some of these abandoned children? Yes, “*let us do good to everyone*”! He came to serve, we are also called to serve, jointly let us enjoy the joy of servitude.

➤ **APPRECIATION –**

The Board and the entire leadership structures appreciate your generosity to your local church, circuit and region whether through giving, hospitality, prayer, support and or a word of encouragement.

You stood with those who were in pain and sorrow, you stood along the graves of those who departed this year, you adorned the beds of the sickly and the aged, you joyfully made those shrill cries for those who got married, you were dignified when you celebrated the anniversaries of some and joined the invited few guests in homes where there was a thanksgiving. You walked alongside the frail bodied when they needed assistance. You also offered your tender hands to those who underwent surgery during this year. While their bodies were sore your presence gave them a therapeutic soothe! Some of you offered their vehicles for service in short and long trips. You deemed service greater than the immediate expense in the midst of high fuel hikes. May you harvest the eternal dividends in glory for your humble service to humanity. Thank you for your great service.

To those who helped me finish this report in time, I salute you. To the editorial helpers, we made it again! May I say “*Bravo*”! To many prayer supporters who at times demanded prayer requests and used your airtime, thank you for your greater part in the ministry.

I am very grateful to my home circuit – eSikhawini who allowed me to travel from time to time on my denominational duties and at times offered fuel, food, prayer, vehicles and company to alleviate my deep passion to serve. May that legacy bursts into flames and consume our character as we serve.

➤ **GRIEVED BUT NOT CRUSHED –**

We are here just for a season and then we take our flight to our eternal home in glory. Some of our loved ones departed unexpectedly to be with the Lord. Our condolences go to the families, relatives, friends and church at large. May I thank all the saints who became the agents of comfort to the bereaved in all our regions. Some of you took time to assist in those homes and situations, sacrificing your resources. This was not only an act of doing but an investment for eternity. To all of those who lost their loved ones, may your faith in God be unmoved.

11 April 2008, Revd & Mrs Mavimbela's daughter passed away and funeral was on 16 April. When one loses the battle unexpectedly, they become weak. To those who supported our stalwarts – the Mavimbelas, may our good Lord bless you for the part you had during those sad days.

12 April 2008, funeral of Khaladi Samson Magubeni took place at Lusikisiki, Eastern Cape who passed away on 30 March 2008. This was another sad day and yet glorious day when we re-lived the life of this servant. The family was supportive and the service was really dignified. Revd AM Zondo gave the Word of God, which helped us focus on the fact that life goes on. The representation of Union Bible Institute and many ministers added warmth to the sad day. Pray for Mrs Magubeni and the family that they may carry on the light in that place.

07 June 2008, Revd VW Ndinisa's stepfather was laid to rest and the other side of Mpumalanga saw Mrs CC Mdluli (the wife of the late Rev CC Mdluli) laid to rest.

14 June 2008, Mama ET Mndzebele's son Ntokozo was buried next to his father at Ezulwini valley. We were so encouraged to see the strength of God in Mama Mndzebele and faith, which is well focussed on our living hope – Christ!

05 July 2008, Mrs Margaret Mncube from Nsane, Mtubatuba was laid to rest. This faithful saint was so committed in attending Church conferences even in her frail stages in life. We lost one of the prayer warriors of our time.

05 July 2008, Miss Hlengiwe Mngomezulu of Makhowe circuit, KZN was laid to rest and she was doing her first year at UBI passed away on 27 June. We just cannot comprehend the mind of God in dealing with his children.

13 July 2008, Revd Tsela's father passed on in Swaziland. When our elderly parents depart, we feel so empty behind as the history of being is shaken.

30 July 2008 Revd P Ncanana of Mtubatuba entered the pearly gates and his life was finally celebrated on 9 August 2008. We saw the support of the KZN church leaders and also the Swaziland chairperson, former President CPM Gumede and the Deputy President TM Dlamini.

20 October 2008, at Mseleni Hospital Mrs Maureen Gumede the wife of Revd JH Gumede passed on and her last service was held on 25 October. The speakers painted indelible portraits of the one who departed. Though we were all saddened,

we rejoiced with heaven for the knowledge of the fact that she fought a good fight, and completed the race in style!

24 November 2008, Mseleni circuit lost another worker who was just emerging by the name of Mrs Annie Vumase who graduated last year at UBI. She was laid to rest on the 30 November 2008.

➤ **ARRIVALS:**

We are thankful to God and take time to congratulate all 2008 arrivals. Others arrived on their first day on earth and some arrived as adults on their wedding days in new homes, new relatives and new church fellowship. Some arrivals have come into the light from the darkness of sin and joined the church this year. Some of you started new jobs and responsibilities. To you all, we say as a conference a '*Hearty Welcome!*'

➤ **SOARING HIGHER:**

We are thankful to God for many that we can congratulate. I know some who have graduated from different institutions. Education is very expensive although sometimes one may think it is free. It calls for discipline, prioritising, sacrifice and vision. To those who finished high school, rigorous technical sleepless nights, meticulous graduate research work, theological treatise and many new discoveries that were embedded in their quest for knowledge during this year – may we say to you – "*WE ARE PROUD OF YOU! WELL DONE!*" Whatever you do in that new level, do it well!

➤ **WOMEN; MEN; YOUTH & CHILDREN'S WORK -**

We are thankful to God for these structures we have in the Church. Many years ago, Moses said, "*We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, for we must hold a feast to the LORD.*" Exodus 10:9. When looking at our performance, it is clearly not balanced, not orderly and doesn't portray the beauty of the Lord in His church. These structures are not properly complementing one another. We are marching off step. We act like new recruits.

May we have a clear focus why we are in the body of Christ at this time. Our investment must be on people for eternity. Let us do whatever the Lord calls us to do and do it well. To those who are in the committees or other leadership structures whatever you do, do it as to the Lord. When you pray, talk well with Him, when singing, sing well in the glory of His name.

We should try to have no excuse in producing fine output for the Lord. Our reports, meetings, skills, speaking, preaching, counseling, singing, giving, and all other expectations should be accomplished in style! We should not only have a view of our local situation or regional, denominational view but it should be global leading to eternal destiny. Let us not be sloppy and sheepish in our involvement.

The women are thankful to God for improved giving and in their targets, inter regional visits and the joy of the Lord in their conferences. We must salute them and still say, 'it is not enough'. You have many untapped challenges in our

communities from all walks of life where we are based. Let us pray for creative ministry that will be incarnational and bonding.

- HERE AND THERE

➤ **YEAR OPENER –**

January was the month that I spent two Saturdays in Swaziland. The first Saturday was the 12th when most of the Dlaminis gathered at the home of Mr & Mrs Aaron N Dlamini to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary, renewing their wedding vows and dedication of a new home which was built by the children. It was a joyful service and, on the day, the Matsenjwas – the Regional Chairperson of Swaziland reminded me of the wedding of his son on 26th at Manzini which was another great day where I saw Matsenjwa dancing ‘with’ Jesus because of joy as they welcomed a Manana bride.

In both of these services I was reminded about the grace of God in the lives of those couples who have been instrumental in the growth and solidification of the work of God in that region. We pray that the Lord would give them good health and fulfilment of their desires in the ministries that the Lord has given them.

➤ **February 29 –March 2 – BOARD MEETING –**

We held our first meeting of the year at the African Enterprise in Pietermaritzburg. The women requested to have their handover meeting during that time and bank signature change was executed. This early meeting is designed to help the board evaluate the past year and conference and plan early for the current year and meetings and consolidate the year plans of the Regions. This was ably accomplished and we give glory to God!

After the business completion, the outgoing ladies who were signatories at the bank on their account, namely Mama Magewu, Mbuyazi and Mabuza shared what they learnt during their term of service and they shared what kind of leaders they were in the ministry. We were all appreciative of the grace they had of serving the church during difficult times with humility and firmness. The abilities that God gave them just welled up to the incoming team.

MARCH 2 EKUPHILENI CIRCUIT STOPOVER

After the Board meeting God gave me an opportunity to visit Revd AM Ncwane’s circuit on a Sunday. I was so thankful for the opportunity to see the saints whom God has called and the fellowship was so warm and exciting. I was encouraged to see happy young people in the church. The women also did their part as always. It is an undisputed fact that God has given this leader a gift of challenging other people to see the need to stand in the gap. Many leaders have been challenged to go to Bible School and study the word of God through the preaching and encouragement of this servant. Some of them are serving the church today. May our good Lord bless and continue to use and inspire you Mfundisi Ncwane. The joke came at the end of the service. When it was discovered that time was gone, and other groups were going to stay behind, Revd Ncwane did this announcement, *“Brethren, you are too many don’t come and shake the President’s hand, I will do that on your behalf!”*

MARCH 22 DURBAN CIRCUIT HAD A SPECIAL DAY FOR THE XABA FAMILY

I visited Durban Circuit at Umlazi where they were having their Easter meetings. On Saturday they were honouring the Xaba family for their long service in the Lord's work. It was my first visit to this circuit where I grew up spiritually under the pastoral ministry of Revd AM Zondo at KwaMashu. Revd Zondo has a questionable habit, if I happen to park the car next to him; he opens the door for me. That gesture just cuts me as if he is using a scalpel through my being, because I am the one who should open the door for him. I felt awkward when I was treated as a guest where I grew up. The long service of the Xabas was celebrated even though many present were a younger generation who did not know much about the Xaba's early beginnings when he was first elected as a secretary, when he got married to LaMabuza, when he went to Dumisa etc. But those who attended were very active and even the men representatives had a mini show of the Zulu dance led by Prof. S Ngubane and Revd F Mashiyane.

May I publish this for those who don't know, according to the Christian Calendar, the second Sunday of October is "**Clergy Appreciation Day**". Apart from second Sunday in May – Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day in June, there are other special days! Perhaps in your local church you can try something new on the **11 October 2009** and have a special service to appreciate your clergy through prayer and otherwise.

➤ **MAY 8 – 11 WORKERS' SEMINAR – SKOGHEIM CONFERENCE CENTRE.**

This year we looked at the challenge of leadership development and delved into the beautiful subject of mentoring. We realized that as leaders we have failed to have mentors in our own growth and also have become so busy that we have failed to spot those that could be mentored in the ministry or those young people who might be in our churches. We discovered many areas in our ministry skills, calling, development and leadership that could be sharpened. We marvelled together as we browsed through Bible examples of mentoring and desired that our membership in the church also catch this greatest pearl of developing others who are close to them.

The dates for the **2009 Seminar** are **May 07 – 11** and the registration will be **R1440 per couple and R660 for single** sharing. Please start planning to be there and put these dates on your diary for the New Year. The churches are reminded to invest in their leaders' skills and budget for such leadership upgrades. The local churches or circuits are expected to pay for their leaders to attend this yearly seminar.

We are grateful again for the facilitation and planning which Revd Bodibe, Kunju, Tembe & Dlamini FS executed.

MAY 30 – JUNE 2 POLOKWANE VISIT

This was a very tiring journey by car, which spanned more than 2000km. The driving unction was to visit our Polokwane AEC work where Revd K Riba does it all. Mr LT Ndlovu took time off from work and offered to accompany me on that trip. I am thankful to him and the saints who took care of our accommodation during our visit. We visited three areas, which are far apart, and going there by public transport requires the whole day.

Modimole – was our first stop and the first and only AEC church building in Polokwane. We found a couple there working with their children cleaning the newly laid tiles. This Mapanga family made me praise the Lord as I listened to their testimony and how the Lord delayed for more than twenty years in giving them the triplets who were very busy there.

Makgaleng AEC – was the next stop up on the mountains. It was another unique place, situated on a rocky hill. The corrugated walled church building with a big rock inside which could not be dug out to level the floor increased the passion that the souls are the priority than all other things that might be a hindrance on our way. Going up with a car was hectic, coming down was also challenging. I salute the hard work that the Ribas are going through in building that work. Praying with them offers you a partnership in their ministry.

Lebowakgomo Sunday service saw us witnessing the welcoming of the new members who were baptized that morning and they were given the right hand of fellowship during the main service and enjoyed fellowship in the Lord's Supper. Revd K Riba was so happy that day; he was smiling all the time just wishing to have wings to soar the skies with joy, until we left the place.

The brethren meet in a Crèche building, which might be an entry point for them to get a church site in that vicinity. Pray that the Lord might multiply the harvest there in such a way that the few who are there might be encouraged in their faith. Also the need for the workers there was evident indeed as that area could grow to a circuit and may be graduated to a region.

➤ **July 25 – 27 Planning Meeting –**

This meeting took place again at Camp Jonathan in Eston, KZN. Sixty leaders were expected to attend this meeting representing their structures (i.e. Children's Ministry, Youth, Men, Women and Board). We welcomed the new committee members during that time who were elected last year. We never enjoy fellowship during these meetings, as they are so demanding especially to the different Chairpersons, as they must finish their agendas.

Saturday becomes the only full working day. Most of the evening was spent together as a family trying to see the church as one unit with all structures contributing to the accomplishing of our goals. Looking at the different challenges that we are facing. Discussing the problems of different structures collectively.

All business had to be finished in the evening but as always, the Board was the last to conclude and consolidate their business in the early morning hours. 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. *May our good Lord give you good health and joy as you serve Him.*

➤ **August 23 Mseleni Centenary Celebration –**

This bright and sunny Saturday gave all present the reality of God's grace who goes before us. The Mseleni Mission was founded in August 1908. Great pioneers of those years were Olsen Feyling, Fred Suter, James Potter, Norman Keyes and his wife as well as Herbert and Maud Barrett. They brought the light of the gospel in that area that has shone brighter for hundred years. The circuit leadership saw it

fit, to pause and reflect on what God has done for the past 100 years. All the circuit church workers were in special regalia and they looked like God's army as they marched in singing: *"Hambani maKristu niye emazweni nipheth' ivangeli nibakhokhele!"*

The theme was *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations"* echoing Matthew 28:18-20. Missionary offering was taken thereafter, as the call to missions is still relevant today as never before.

We celebrated the day with many through the Internet and read emails from: Mrs Lorna Rempel; Mrs Josephine Stevens; Mrs Lois Morgan and her daughter Debbie; Dr David Mann and his family (Martin, Ruth; Reuben, Rachel, Anderson, Chris and Rebecca); Derek and Ann Brown, Kathryn and Luke; Ruth and Rob Dowthwaite; Fred and Dot Simmonds; Graeme and Carol Kent (SIM); Don Genheimer; Ron and Myrna Genheimer; Mrs Dorelle Shellard; Dr Peter Vos; John and Pauline Freeman. These spanned the globe representing USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Ammi Saayman and his wife as well as Dr Victor and Rachel Fredlund represented SIM. We wished all the young people who will be alive in 2058 God's blessing and good health when Mseleni celebrates another 50 years.

I presented the twelve young people who were under twenty years old with Bibles as a commitment to remind whosoever will be in leadership to reflect on this day when we will be no more.

May I encourage all local churches, circuits and regions to write a brief history of how the work began and grown wherever you are and submit that to your regional leadership. I would like to see that book which will remind us and future generations about God's grace.

➤ **September 14 Umzimkhulu work transfer -**

The Eastern Cape Regional leadership felt it necessary to transfer the Umzimkhulu work to KwaZulu-Natal Region because of the new State Provincial boundaries and the distance. On this day, being mandated by the board I, together with the General Secretary, the KwaZulu-Natal Regional Chairperson, the Durban Circuit Chairperson, the Eastern Cape Regional Chairperson, the Regional Secretary and the KwaZulu-Natal Women's Organization Chairperson graced that extra ordinary service of transfer of that work.

The late Revd LT Magewu who was our second president of the Africa Evangelical Church started the work. Then in 1992 Revd M Mdudu was called to pastor that work and he went to be with the Lord in 1997. In 2003 the Eastern Cape saw it fit to send Revd WW Kiji during which time there was Nokweja as their preaching point. Sadly, Revd Kiji passed away in December 2006. The work was officially transferred to KwaZulu-Natal on this day and the Durban circuit was tasked meanwhile to nurture that work until it grows perhaps would get a circuit status in few years to come.

Pray for Mrs FN Magewu, as she is a living testimony of that work. We thank God for the saints who are zealous to serve God and would like to see the development

of this work. Encourage them through your prayers and availability. There is a great potential in that area of our ministry as a church.

➤ **October 19 KwaMsane AEC, Mtubatuba –**

My desire was fulfilled on this day when I visited this local church at Mtubatuba where Revd S Gumede has been pastoring for a number of years. I was encouraged when I saw the happy saints full of hope and expectancy. The excitement was what we usually witness in the weddings. I repeat, the saints – young and old were full of joy, the fellowship was very warm. I felt as if it was a conference session. I saw the wonderful work they did in revamping the church building and the new pastoral residence which I think was tops in the entire AEC that I have visited. Whosoever will stay in that house will always feel the grace of God shown through His people.

Another praise item I witnessed there was the fact that the congregation had a large number of youth. This has been the trend in many of our churches, which compels us to have good youth programmes. We should equip our youth with all spiritual skills while they are with us. We should have a good leadership development programme for them so that when they go for tertiary education, they will be mature enough to cope with the rigorous pressures in institutions of higher learning.

November 22 - I was invited to attend the special service at Mtubatuba where they were honouring Revd & Mrs S Mbuyazi who have been serving at Ekuthokozeni but requested to be relieved from the ministry because of health. I was thankful to be there and be a part of that service. We were all thankful to see the Mbuyazis healthy on the day and also the words of appreciation that came from the local church and the circuit were so challenging to the present leadership and the youth. Mrs Mbuyazi had been very active in the Women's structures in the local church, circuit, regional and denominational. Mbuyazi also was involved in many committees in the former Natal-Transvaal, KwaZulu-Natal and the board structures over the years. May our good Lord give them new challenges in whatever they will be doing.

➤ **Regional Conferences**

Visiting Regions in 2008 was very challenging and encouraging for me. It is said that if you live in a bush, you don't see trees. It is the outsider who sees trees and other things because everything becomes new. This year I started in the Eastern Cape, came back to KwaZulu-Natal, later I went to Swaziland and finally I had an urgent call to visit Gauteng for half a day.

1. EASTERN CAPE - THURSDAY, 03 JULY 2008.

The timely theme of their conference was "*Evangelism our Responsibility*". This region decided to take their conference to a Mthatha Educational Institution for the first time, as they felt that meeting in their mission stations or circuits creates many problems. It was a 'mini AGCC' in a way and the attendance was good. The programme was almost structured like the one for our AGCC and people were really happy and excited to be in that conference. They had Revd JM Tembe, our Vice General Secretary as their Bible Study teacher and in the mornings and evenings they had a variety of speakers.

The Chairman had his report ready and I appreciate the hard work of gathering information from the circuits and have it ready in time for the conference. Most of the things were in the report except few things that were to follow. I am grateful to Revd Kunju and his executive. I spent the whole day and enjoyed both the morning and evening sessions as my plans were changed when Gauteng had their conference rescheduled for October.

Eastern Cape has really improved in many areas. I was so thankful to witness larger attendance, well-organized programmes, themes, and logistics of the entire conference. The graph has gone up since the 2000s. Keep it up ye saints in Christ!

2. KWAZULU-NATAL – 05 JULY 2008.

AEC delegates coming from all nine circuits of KZN invaded the Ogwini High School at Umlazi. The theme of their 2008 conference was: *“Effective Biblical Parenting & Care giving”*. I only joined them for one full day. As always, there was a fresh air of excitement, euphoria and thanksgiving as I saw a good conference attendance. The Regional Chairman and his executive members also afforded me a warm welcome on my arrival.

I stopped briefly in the youth group and my heart was overjoyed as I saw the tent almost half full of young people. May I encourage other regions to invest their energy and resources to this age group and children. They are not only the church of tomorrow but I believe that they are the church of today.

In the evening there were a number of new workers presented to the region who are already tasked to lead in their circuits. It was encouraging to see that addition of new workers, as there is so much to do with very minimal workers in this vast region. Also, the Umzimkhulu work was accepted by the conference with open hearts and hands.

3. SWAZILAND – 29 - 31 AUGUST 2008.

Swaziland is still the only region that enjoys a weeklong conference however they also face the problem of conflicts with other National engagements and educational programmes. 2008 was no exception hence many people found it difficult to fully attend the conference. Some would come in the evenings and others only came on Saturday and Sunday. A small group showed up on Sunday for the last service.

The theme was *“Challenges facing the Church in the 21st Century”*. It was ably handled by different speakers and were expository teachers, which I appreciated. *‘Understanding God’s season of visitation’* was the last challenge.

I had a privilege of paying a home visit to my predecessor, Revd CPM Gumede, who was not feeling well. The deputy president accompanied me. This turned out to be a long visit. We missed the evening service on Saturday due to our pastoral duties, which were greatly rewarded. I deeply appreciated the generous hearts of the saints shown to me on the last day. The men also really humbled me with their token of appreciation.

During the last service on Sunday, there was an announcement that one of the houses at Mbuluzi where we were was on fire, people were requested to go and remove their belongings to other houses nearby as the entire country was on fire and the fire fighters could not cope. After service we witnessed smoke and fire all

over Swaziland and some parts of South Africa. I literally drove through burning grasslands. Some lost their lives through those fires.

I picked up few pointers from the chairperson's report worth mentioning here.

- The retiring of Babe A Dlamini from Mbuluzi opened another gap, which was filled.
- They had numerous workshops for different groups during the year. My interest was captured by the workshop for all praise teams and keyboard players. We hope that when we go to Swaziland next time, we will have a preview of a mass keyboard players orchestra!
- Legal fraternities for proper documentation and ownership are attending other church sites' documents.
- All four circuits have about 18 on going building projects in total. Church buildings and pastors' residences are a priority, which is the sign of growth.

Let us pray, encourage and support many initiatives that this region has embarked upon for the glory of God.

4. GAUTENG – SATURDAY, 4 OCTOBER 2008.

This region decided to move their Regional Conference to 3– 5 October because of the cold weather that they face. But they delayed in informing me about the new dates until only a few days before. They met at Henly-on-Klip, Randvaal at the Assemblies of God property. I decided to visit them during the Saturday morning session until after lunch and then I had to leave them without attending their evening service.

The attendance was not too good and other leaders had to attend to funerals. But I could see that they were still searching for better time of the year. The dates they chose coincided with many events and most of the youth were not there. The Sunday School corner also suffered, as there were hardly five children.

I was later honoured to read Revd D Hams' research document before he could defend it for his PhD degree. His argument was so timely for South African government as his work is entitled "*The Decline of Christian values in South Africa Education*". Dr MD Hams concludes by saying,

“... that various education systems manipulated and corrupted Christian values in order to serve the interests of the dominant groups. The result was rejection and overthrow of these corrupted values by blacks and their being substituted with humanistic values in the current system of Outcomes Based Education (OBE).

Because the substitution process was executed without due regard to consequences, the outcome is the lawlessness and violence experienced at schools today. When all that we were taught at school has been forgotten, it is the values that stand and remain with us.”

In reading through his treatise, I could sense why he left teaching profession and many will leave after reading his work.

I picked up few pointers from the regional chairperson's report worth mentioning here:

- The Temba local church got a new pastor in the name of Revd H Rumo, and in October this church celebrated their 20th Anniversary. I could not attend that service as I was informed at the eleventh hour.
- The men's fellowship seems to be vibrant compared to other regions.
- The Mamelodi local church honoured our loving lady Mrs Sithole the wife of the late energetic and resilient Ntate Sithole.
- The Modimole, Driekop local church has also seen their worker Maurice N Mosehle graduate from UBI on the 29 November 2009.
- They also have a vision to focus on Rustenburg and Limpopo to grow and gain circuit status.

OUR HORIZONTAL INVOLVEMENT

UNION BIBLE INSTITUTE –

We are thankful for your prayers for this institution of Higher Bible and Theological Training based in Hilton, Pietermaritzburg. The Lord sent Dr George Mnisi as the new principal who started in July 2008. He has settled well but covet your continued prayer support and encouragement.

Revd P Mntambo and Revd WTA Xaba represent AEC in this institution. Strange enough they share the chairmanship of the council this year. You may visit UBI on your computer on: **www.ubi-edu.co.za**.

We saw four AEC members graduating this year: Maurice Mosehla from Burgersfort, Limpopo; Nkosinathi Zikhali from Makhowe; Joyce Khumalo from Mseleni and Philile Mbatha from Estcourt. We appreciated seeing their pastors and prayer supporters coming in their numbers to celebrate with their achievements. Pray for these saints as they seek God's direction in their lives.

I was deeply moved when the students shared how they struggle in trying to have their financial obligations met. Some churches delay in sending the school fees and the students are greatly disturbed. Also, they need airtime to call home, soap and cosmetics. They also need that special book to start their libraries. It costs more than R15, 000 a year per student to finish the year apart from other extras. Let us arise and build the ministry that God has given us. I also heard of a student who was working fulltime in a circular world and at the same time full time student for more than three years!

To those who might be feeling God's call in their lives, UBI waits for you and anxious to develop you into a Christ-like servant leader. The student body this year was very low. Let us go to the Lord of the harvest in prayer, so that he calls his choicest people to study the Word in this institution during this coming year. Let us fully support those who are returning next year with our prayers and finance.

BIBLE SOCIETY –

The Bible is available in all ten South African official languages with Southern Ndebele coming up in few years. It appears that we as a denomination have not as yet caught the vision of better investing for the eternity through our regular contributions to the Bible Society. This is a global involvement, which has a bearing on the eternity.

The “Faith comes by Hearing” programme is growing and many people who have never heard the Word of God are hearing. We can partner with the Bible Society and start many listening groups so that many might hear the good news and be saved.

Our denomination’s contribution reference number is still 001043 in South Africa. You can send your contribution to any of the Bible Society offices. We are thankful for those who are members of Bible-a-month club. Our contribution as a denomination is not regular. It would be appreciated if you could include Bible Society in your budget every year and be faithful in submitting the funds in time to the offices of the Society. We will be glad to help you if you need more information on how to support the work of the Bible Society.

HIV & AIDS –

We praise God for the good habit we now have of coming to this conference with clothes from all our regions to give to those who are involved in our communities in this noble task of having a heart for the displaced, shuttered and vulnerable individuals because of HIV & AIDS. Thank you for what you did during our last conference and this conference. May the seeds you sow yield many sheaves in glory.

It would also be appreciated if the regions could send the reports of the activities to their regional structures so that we could get the total picture of our involvement as a church. Mrs ET Mndzebele, our denominational coordinator attended a Hope for Aids planning meeting in Pietermaritzburg, which was organized by SIM in October. We are thankful to SIM for information and willingness shown to work with us. More information and requests will be submitted to our regions for action. We know that some of you have sheltered the orphans, fed them, bought school uniforms and provided food parcels. A thought of helping all men should drive us to be good ‘Africans’ by our acts of faith. We should also be driven by our eternal convictions to serve and the urgency of meeting the needs of humanity.

◆ CONFERENCE CENTRE

There was no update by the time of this report was sent to print.

- IMPORTANT INFO

◆ ABRIDGED CHURCH STATISTICS:

(Eastern Cape submitted their stats in time. Gauteng never submitted theirs. From KwaZulu-Natal only four circuits responded in time. Swaziland submitted theirs late.)

It appears that there are problems somewhere in most of our regions concerning the statistical data. These are needed for planning, reporting, prayer, praise, understanding and many other reasons. I have decided not to publish the figures from those regions that responded in time because we will not get a good picture of what God is doing through the Africa Evangelical Church without the contribution of all regions. We must work hard by faith to see the church in Southern Africa working in unity.

Finally, *bazalwane, zihlobo zam, baratuwa ba rona*, as I said last year, 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. Let us think about others, that particular one. Let us touch that special or forgotten one in 2009. Many of us are celebrating greater achievements for God.

May we serve many as we sail through 2009 with God. May the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Swaziland regions reach out as never before. To those who are on radio and television air waves continue with gusto and reach more people.

Wherever you are placed, may you serve the Lord and others until it hurts! May the presence of Christ in your life be tangible in your lifestyle in this coming year. Whatever you do or think, may you know that: –

“... we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Galatians 6:10 (ESV).

Be interested in others, look for what needs to be done and then do it. Take the initiative and get actively involved in God’s work.

I thank God and I thank you!
Ngiyathokoza, Kea leboga, Ndiyabulela,
Ndza khensa ngopfu, Enkosi!

Humbly presented by



Reed P Mtambo, PRESIDENT
AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCH
29 DECEMBER 2008

**AFRICA EVANGELICAL CHURCH
PRESIDENT’S REPORT – REPLY - Soshanguve
29 DECEMBER 2008**

REPLY TO THE PRESIDENT’S REPORT BY BHEKI NOMANDLA

Honourable President, Board members, the former President Dr CPM Gumede, the former General Secretary Bab’ uXaba, distinguished guests, church workers, men, women, children and the youth. Firstly, we take this opportunity to thank the President for his report. It encourages us all to see that God has placed a leader of your calibre, a visionary and an observant person, KUFIHLWA KUFIHLWANI, our source of inspiration, an agent of change.

Mr President your report reminds us of Jesus' message to the seven churches in the book of Revelation when you, travel among Regions. We humbly receive the words of encouragement that we have heard from the President. We are glad that much of what we are doing is in line with the Mission and Vision of the AEC, especially the Eastern cape, congratulations! You have done very well indeed.

However, we must acknowledge that we have had a good share of stumbles and falls along the way through the year 2008, as the President has alluded to some of the pitfalls that show that we have not entirely done well. He spoke of marching off step. We collectively promise that we will rectify our mistakes and march accordingly.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPEECH:

While listening to the President's speech I earmarked the highlights that we need to take home and focus on for the coming year 2009. Through these highlights the President has shed some light to all of us as to which direction to follow next year, so that we can march accordingly, and do very well.

THESE HIGHLIGHTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Creative Ministry – Mr President, we heard very well.
- Lack of mentors in general and for the youth in particular – Mr President, we promise to do very well.
- Youth programme for higher learning readiness –
- Swaziland! Work on your schedules for the year 2009 and march to the tune of AEC.
- Gauteng! There is still more work to be done, we are all behind you with support.
- UBI Graduates – They need our support, especially financially.
- Bible Society – This is not a promise, it is a commitment that we will do our utmost best to spread the word of God by giving the needed fuel to do so.
- HIV and AIDS – We humbly accept the pat on our shoulder and we promise to send the reports in time to the regional structures.
- Church statistics – again the Eastern Cape is showing the way, congratulations once again, may I not reiterate what the President has already said regarding this issue. We heard and we will do well in 2009.
- Last but not least, the Financial standing of the AEC. I believe that with 40 years under our belt we should be much better in terms of our financial standing. As it stands, what we are worth does not match the 40 years of our existence. Something must be done; we must march to the tune of 40 years.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, I would like to share with you these powerful words: "Do It Because You Can!" This is the message I have for you this year, moving on to the year 2009. Our collective achievements for the year 2008 show clearly that we can do very

well. You know, I am fascinated by the difference between the words “FACT” and “TRUTH”. That some of us did not do very well this year is just a fact, but the truth is that we have the potential to do best. Mr President, *kufihlwa kufihlwani*, have you seen a caterpillar? It is a fact that you see a caterpillar, but the truth is that what you see is a potential butterfly. So, Mr President we may look as caterpillars as your report depicted, the TRUTH is that we are actually potential butterflies. What you have seen in our performance in the year 2008 is the fact but that we have the potential to do or achieve more is the TRUTH. To all the regions, whatever you do, do it with all your might. Doing the common things uncommonly well is definitely the key to success. Any activity becomes creative when the doer cares about doing it right or better. Did you know that nothing happens until somebody makes it happen? Do you know what drives you to make things happen? Nothing else except the muscle to do it! All of us have that special muscle. Let us develop it and demonstrate its strength by using it more in this coming year. As we begin 2009, let us all say, “I WILL DO IT BECAUSE I CAN!”

Thank you

Compiled and presented by

Mr Bheki Nomandla. Mtubatuba, KZN
29 December 2008.