

3RD MISSION TRIP

ZAMBIA AND CONGO: 25 FEB-14 MAR '99

INTRODUCTION

As I write this report, it is with the new realisation that our God is a good God and that nothing can separate us from the love of our Father. When I asked my apostle, Bruce Mitchell, if he would accompany me so as to come and water the work, I had no idea as to what depth and challenges that would amount.

Looking back we can really say that we have experienced this fact in much deeper dimensions than what we perhaps envisioned we would have to. If you had to ask me how the trip was, the short answer would be "It was good, but it had its moments". The schedule was exceptionally tight and we endured a few things that we certainly did not anticipate, yet amongst it all I really could testify to the peace of the Lord that surpasses all understanding.

DEPARTURE

This mission trip will be labelled as the one in which my faith was stretched beyond all previous bounds. Not only was the budget for the trip way beyond the usual, but God was out to prove to me that He is never late. It was a glorious experience to see how God moved and stirred people's hearts to give towards the work we set out to do.

After some minor delays, apostle Dickson Monaheng (from Lesotho) and teacher Dan Sweger (from USA) set off in my VW combi for Zambia at noon Tuesday 23rd February 1999. For both of them this would be their first trip up to Zambia and the Congo. It was with much excitement that I saw them off, entrusting them to the Lord's protection.

The evening of the 24th February we had the fellowship at pastor Brain Sweetlove's home lay hands on the rest of the team which included myself, apostle Bruce and Terry Thompson. What a joy to know that there are caring brothers and sisters in Christ who will uphold you daily before the Lord.

At about 6 am the next morning Lorna and the kids saw the rest of us off at Tempe airport where we also met our MAF pilot, Sjaak Walhout. Sjaak was not only a brilliant and dedicated pilot, but also proved to be a real servant of the Lord who fitted right in with the rest of the team and served way beyond what was expected of him. In a short while we had boarded his Cessna 210 and had the nose end pointing due north. After customs and refuelling along the way we landed at Kasompe airport (Chingola) a mere 7.5 hrs later. It was only after midnight that we met up with the rest of the team who after a minor mishap had exchanged (as planned) the combi for my dad's 4x4 in Livingstone.

CHINGOLA - 26 FEBRUARY -1 MARCH '99

Chingola was the first town where we were to minister. Due to some inadequate arrangements, the start of the seminar was delayed and apostle Bruce encouraged the believers in the Lord. After the loud rain on the tin roof subsided somewhat the next night, the seminar could get on its way. The Relational Church concept was very well received and some I believe have grasped to the point where they will seek to bring about the needed changes in their area of responsibility.

On the Sunday, whilst the other team members went to various other churches to minister, apostle Bruce and myself attended the celebration with pastor Kapungwe who is now looking to me for apostolic oversight. It was a good time of fellowship after which we spend some time also ministering to the leadership of that local church. God has done a good thing knitting my heart together with pastor Kapungwe. The same type of relationship is also developing between myself and pastor Stanley Safuwa as he has also asked me to be the one to "look out for his soul".

SOLWEZI - 2-4 MARCH '99

God has raised up as a gift to the body of Christ an apostle in the person of pastor Mwenze. And what a joy it was to see his heart and that of my apostle been knit together. The concepts of the Relational Church were also very well received as the men of God began to appreciate the need for the full ministry of Christ (five fold ministry) and also discovered how the various motivational gifts can impact the body of Christ in that region. The ministry in Solwezi was a good time of planting and watering the seed of the word of God.

MUFALIRA - 5-8 MARCH '99

We arrived in Mufalira at noon to discover that they had anticipated our arrival early that morning already and were all waiting for us at the venue. The result is that we walked (or shall I rather say crash-landed) into the meetings all dirty and sweating after about four ours of travel on some of the worst roads you have seen. None the less, the people had the grace to receive us as were and the word found good soil. Our host, pastor Muleya is a very gracious man and over and over publicly appreciated the ministry and the need for the word to be watered even further.

Mufalira also saw us been arrested and undergoing two hours of interrogation by the police because of one of the team members innocently using his camera in town. Under normal circumstances this would not have been a problem, but this incident followed shortly after a series of bombs went of in Lusaka. None the less the regional commander offered us an official apology. Little did we know that this was only to prepare us for what was awaiting us in the DRC.

A day was also spend in trying to work ourselves through the red tape of securing our visas for the DRC.

LUBUMBASHI (DRC) 9-11 MARCH '99

After some delays in Ndola waiting for the DRC Consul General to issue us our visas, we set of for the DRC. We were due to meet with a local pastor at the border but perhaps due to our delay, there was no one there to meet us. The local DRC officials with a measure of hostility received us at the border post. Retrospectively, they should perhaps have denied us entrance at this point. However, we were made to believe that we would be escorted to a certain hotel in Lubumbashi, at which time we will be assisted to make contact with Past Jim (for his safety - not his real name).

For reasons still unknown to us, we were taken to the provincial offices of the National Security Agency, and there under really threatening situations, held in custody for two days. After undergoing interrogations into the early hours of the morning, been bullied around by teenage boys with Uzi machine guns, going without food for about 30 hours, often times wondering whether we'll be returning home at all, and enduring much lying and deception, we were released to return to the border post. Our security escort duly arranged a military escort out of fear for his own life and the bandits we were sure to encounter during our travel back to the border post at night. His fears did not disappoint him as we were indeed stopped by two bandits in military dress.

Yet if God is for us, who can be against us! ...

LIVINGSTONE 11-13 MARCH

After expressing much relief and thankfulness upon crossing the border back into Zambia, we determined to move on immediately to Livingstone. So shortly after lunch we were airborne again with two of the team members making their way to Lusaka by road.

Friday morning (12th March) we had an opportunity to share with the pastors' fellowship in Livingstone. This was a lovely opportunity in which we shared our own experiences in the Relational Church concept. Once we were reunited with the rest of the team that came down by road, we made some time to also debrief ourselves after the experiences in the DRC. It was also a good time for me to receive constructive feedback from the team members concerning the trip.

For Saturday my father, Peter Hilhorst (who currently lives in Livingstone) had along with this pastors' fellowship arranged for us to share a bit with the leaders of the various churches. Although it was a power-packed time, we none the less really sensed that the word was well received and that some seed found good soil. The morning was spend visiting the Victory falls, a majestic expression of the power and majesty of our creator God which, in spite of seeing it a dozen times, still grips my heart with awe.

BACK HOME 14TH MARCH

It was with much joy that Lorna and our kids, and Brain Sweetlove met us at the Bloemfontein airport. Ann rounded off our trip with a most heart warming luncheon after which we proceeded home to Philippolis.

THE RETREAT 17 - 19 MARCH

My apostle Bruce hosted a wonderful and encouraging retreat, at a lovely campsite just outside Bloemfontein, with all those who relate to him in some form or another. What a privilege to sit under the ministry of anointed men of God. What a joy to hare in the encouragement of true brotherly love. What love expressed as relationships are strengthened.

SOME PERSONAL THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS

- More than ever I have become convinced of the Relational Church concept as the path of restoration and reformation of the Body of Christ in the world today. This has become more than a statement of faith, but rather an experiential reality.
- Besides our wonderful pilot, the whole team (Terry Tompson, Dan Sweger, Dickson Monaheng and myself) enjoys Bruce's apostolic oversight. Working in a team like this provided a fresh experience of what the "Full Ministry of Jesus" to his body is all about.
- In spite of the experiences of the Congo, I have determined in my heart that, when God directs me to do so, I will return to the DRC to further the work there. I do not believe that it was time wasted, but that it helped us understand what the body of Christ must endure in these times in the Congo. Some good contact were made and I believe that upon our return there, we will have an even greater impact than what would have taken place had things worked out as planed. I (and I believe I speak for the whole team) harbour no bitterness toward the DRC authorities or the people with whom we dealt.

- Much needs to be done in assisting the church in creating wealth. All of the churches are suffering, some form or another, due to the low employment and high inflation rate. I am of the opinion that two crucial things need to happen in this regard.
 1. As apostle Bruce puts it, the believers need to undergo a business conversion experience in which kingdom values of management and integrity are adopted.
 2. Seed funding needs to be made available as no-interest loans to emerging entrepreneurs within the church.

Pray then with us that God will grant us His wisdom and the resources and training needed to successfully and holistically address these issues.

FUTURE MISSION TRIPS

LESOTHO - 6-11 MAY

Apostle Dickson Monaheng has invited me to join him on a trip up high into the mountains of Lesotho. There are still a number of totally unreached people groups in those beautiful mountains. He is of the opinion that no white man (not that this carries any real significance) has yet visited the village that we are planning to go to. It will be kind of nice to think that I will be the first. It is strange to think that today there are such unreached people groups right on our doorstep.

This trip is going to involve some travel by Land Rover and at some point, due to the terrain limitations, we have to further the trip by horseback. After showing the Jesus Film and some ministry, we will then proceed by foot, again due to the terrain, even further up into the mountains, to spend a day just praying together. (And of course to be the first world person to set eyes on some of the hidden waterfalls etc.)

Paul Manolas and possibly Brain Sweetlove will be joining me for this trip. Pray then with us that God will supply all that is needed - an abundance of grace, strength and resources - to reach these precious people.

ZAMBIA - AUGUST

We are due to return to Zambia in August. The purpose of this visit is to among other things, spend some time with the men to whom I give apostolic oversight, to further water that which was planted recently, to address the Reformed Church in Zambia' youth retreat (Copperbelt Region). I plan then also to spend ± two weeks assisting apostle Mwenze (Solwezi) in ministry amongst the 30 odd churches he gives oversight to. Some of these churches are far removed from any semi-modern form of civilisation.

I am also trusting the Lord that he will release a seasoned prophet to accompany us. This gifting is much needed in laying the foundation in the churches in the areas where we minister.

IN CLOSING

My deepest appreciation goes to all of you who carry us in your heart and prayers. Thank you for supporting Gods call on our lives and for entrusting us to the leading of the Holy Spirit and to faithful men who watch out for our souls. Your dedication in prayer and your selfless giving into His work and His kingdom goes up before the Lord as a fragrant offering. The joy and rewards we receive are also to your account.

One day soon, we will together stand before the throne of grace, and present as gifts to the King of kings and to our Father, those whose lives have been changed for all eternity. Because of your dedication and His abundant grace, we (you and I) will be able to present our spiritual children (many whose faces you will probably never see before then) before him as grown and mature. To Him be the Glory for ever. Amen!