



APC April Conferences

Malawi-Hillcrest-Newcastle-Welkom-Mokopane

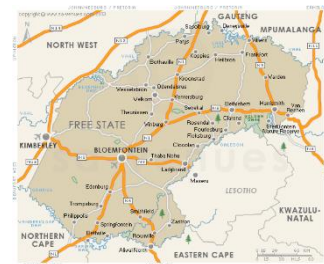
“God willing...”

In October of 2020, Nico van Zyl (APC Manager), and I (Joshua Bolaji - South African APC Director) met to schedule the conference runs for the upcoming year, 2021. Together with the APC Board of Directors, we had settled on a theme: The Scriptures in the Life of the Local Church. We had also selected the preachers for each conference. All in anticipation that the worst of the pandemic was over...so we thought. The new strain of the COVID virus, and the South African government lockdown put a swift pause on our plans. This resulted in a delay in starting the conferences, and rearranging the calendar. With Covid-19 having impacted much of our 2020 conference plans the few runs we were able to do were South African runs. The first run of the year was a South African trip in Kwa-Zulu Natal, our first run outside of South Africa was set to be in Malawi. Thus, by God's grace, we did not panic, and we have been able to continue with these runs, but operating within a much tighter schedule. So, God willing (James 4:13-17), we hope we will be able to complete the remaining runs for 2021.

Focus on Welkom



A new feature of our newsletter will include a section providing some detailed focus on one of the cities/towns/villages on a particular run. Our focus here is the small city of *Welkom*, in the Free State province of South Africa – also known as *The Goldfields*. It is a goldmining city, that has seen a significant decline (a loss of at



least 80% of its mining activities). This decline is also reflected in the state of the local churches in the city. Welkom has a large *Word of Faith* (health, wealth, prosperity, miracles-signs-wonders...) presence, and this is further compounded by the weak state of traditionally evangelical/Protestant denominations in the area (Dutch Reform Church, Church of England, Presbyterian, and Baptists)

The APC has been held in Welkom for circa twelve years, now. The conference is hosted by a Reformed Baptist Church – **Welkom Baptist Church** (established in Welkom over 70 years ago). In addition to hosting the APC, the local congregation at Welkom Baptist Church (WBC), saw an opportunity to build upon the fruits of the conference by setting up, the Free State Gospel Coalition (FSGC). The FSGC is an informal network of churches that gather several times a year for the purpose of fellowship around the word of God, and discussing/debating various areas of Christian doctrine. Through this approach, WBC has been able to introduce a lot of pastors/Bible teachers from various denominations (Pentecostal, Charismatic, African Methodist, Arminian Baptists, and others) to good reformed resources and sound theology. This group consists of approximately 35 different churches from the province. We have seen amazing testimonies over the years, such as: a pastor that confessed that he wasn't born again; a woman pastor that wanted to hand over her congregation to male leadership; pastors who have changed their governance structure to align with the Bible, rather than running the congregation like a personal business enterprise, and more.





Meet Pastor Daniel Ramakhale (mid 60s), he is a pastor of a local church in Welkom. He is currently studying through a distance mode with Mukhanyo Theological College (a Reformed institution) that is facilitated by Welkom Baptist Church. He attended the Welkom APC for the first time this year. Pastor Daniel comes from a “Word of Faith” background. He falls into the category of many ministers on the African continent who teach what they teach, because it was the only “Christianity” that they’ve known. There was no deliberate desire to deceive people. Our consultation with many pastors has borne witness to this. The combination of his theological studies, and his encounter with the APC conference have really opened his eyes to his need for a robust grasp of orthodox doctrine. When talking with Pastor Daniel, one can feel the weight in his heart about the years he has spent teaching some of the things that he has, he laments, “We never knew a lot of these things, no one taught us this. We just swallowed what our leaders told us and we didn’t question it.” This year’s theme was particularly convicting for him, as the preachers: Isaac Makashinyi, and Sipho Mfusi taught on the importance of the Scriptures in the life of the local church. He was also impressed by their handling of the Word. Daniel, has found the whole experience humbling. He was overwhelmed by the kind of books we had on display at the conference, as opposed to the variety of literature he previously read by people like, T. D. Jakes.

The South African Run (Nico van Zyl)

Hillcrest (near Durban) APC – 7-8th April



We began the trip on Tuesday the 6th of April. I had picked up our speaker, Pastor Isaac Makashinyi of Emmasdale Baptist Church situated in Lusaka, Zambia, from the airport, the previous day. Isaac spoke at the Hillcrest, Newcastle and Welkom conferences. I preached at Hillcrest, Newcastle and later at Mokopane. Austin, a member of Birchleigh Baptist Church, kindly handled the books at the first two conferences. Our theme for this year is:

"The Scriptures in the life of the local church". On the trip to Hillcrest (situated near Durban), near Estcourt, our Toyota Hilux, previously reliable for many years, refused to accelerate above 60km/h. The engine light went on as I drove and as soon as we got to Mooi River we took it to an auto-electrical garage where it was tested, and a setting was reset. Just like that the vehicle ran normally again! Isaac mentioned that this sometimes happens with vehicles. We did not experience any further vehicle problems during the trip.



Bruce Parker, an elder of Hillcrest Baptist Church, was the local organizer of the Conference. We were accommodated by various members of the church. There were 26 delegates at the conference, a significant drop in numbers from 2020. We thought it could be because of Covid and maybe because we had moved the date from January to April. Nevertheless, we had a good Conference. The speakers spoke with clarity and authority and many were blessed because we came.



It was a wonderful experience to have Austin with us. We visited the beach - It was the first time Austin had ever seen the sea. While there, many beggars asked us for food, which led to two fruitful gospel conversations. We enjoyed dinner each evening with our hosts.

Newcastle APC – 9-10th April



After the Hillcrest conference we hit the road to Newcastle. It took us about four hours to get there and at about 20:30 we arrived at Zelda Whitehead's house. Initially we had decided not to do the Newcastle Conference because our usual organizer, Japie van Kampen, was not willing, being weakened by cancer. More than 10 annual conferences have been held at Newcastle Baptist Church in the past. But Zelda Whitehead, a widow over 70 years old, insisted that we come and emailed me regularly to confirm.

This time around, the conference was held in the township area, Osizweni, at Jesus Life Church International. There were 22 delegates. Pastor Wilson assisted Zelda with organization. Pastor Wilson is also battling with cancer and in his late sixties. They did a good job in gathering pastors and Bible teachers, but we had hoped for a larger turnout. The delegates were happy and thankful that we came, and many books were sold. Again, because of Covid and a new venue, we had fewer delegates, but hope to build on this number next year.



We met missionaries from Scotland while there and hoped that they would invite us to have the conference at their church next year. Alex and his wife are ministering in Newcastle at a Bible Church. But when I spoke with them one evening and they realized I was a Calvinist, the conversation became a bit heated, and we realized we were not on the same wavelength theologically. They are connected with a Fundamental Baptist Group in the US. When the team attended Alex' church on Sunday and heard him preach, we wished that he had attended the conference, because the preaching was neither expository nor topical, but sprang from one text to the next without any real structure or coherence. I believe Alex could have benefitted from our talks and books.

On Sunday we dropped Austin off in Midrand, stayed the night in Midrand, and Isaac and I drove to Welkom for our third conference.

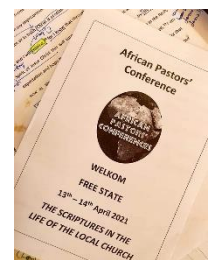
Welkom APC – 14-14th April



We were joined by Siphosiso Mfusi, the Pastor at Estcourt Community Church, who preached along with Isaac. I handled the books at this conference, organised by Pastor Joshua Bolaji and held at Welkom Baptist Church. This conference has run for more than 10 years as well. The speakers, once again, did a great job



in handling the word of God. They spoke with clarity, unction and grace. We received much positive feedback from the 41 delegates.



Mokopane APC – 19-20th April



Pastor Paul Schlehlein, from Mbhokota in Limpopo province, joined me as a speaker at this conference. Paul and his wife are from the US and have seven children. They have been working as missionaries in South Africa for more than a decade. Paul did a splendid job, teaching the word of God with much clarity and conviction. Pastor Lucas Stoltz was the local conference organizer at Mokopane Baptist Church, this being the fourth annual conference to be held there. Several new people attended and made up the 40 delegates. Book sales were extraordinarily good.



The Malawi Run (Kabelo Makgabo)

The speakers for this conference run were Pastor Rusty Grant from the USA, and Pastor Lichawa Thole from Zambia. Our main co-ordinator was Ps Newton Chilingulo who pastors in Lilongwe (There's a lot that goes into getting a **run** ready, we will detail this in upcoming reports).

Lilongwe APC – 8-9th April



Our first conference of the Malawian run has always been in Lilongwe at Reformation Bible Church where Ps Newton Chilingulo pastors. The church has now purchased property where they gather for fellowship, they are currently meeting in a tent with plans of building a structure in the future Deo volente. On the morning of the first day, we had what would be our first of our car problem adventures in this trip.

The Toyota Fortuner we had would not start! This was after we were all seated in the car with the books packed inside and ready to go. We managed to use a small car and a truck whilst the car went to the mechanic.



The theme of the year is The Scriptures in the Life of the Local Church. The speakers delivered their talks very well with a lot of clarity and conviction. There was no need for interpretation which made the delivery of the talks easier for the speakers. We had 75 delegates present, 25 more delegates than we had anticipated! The sales were over R10 000.00 with 402 books distributed! The delegates present bought many books. Ps Newton said that due to Covid regulations there has been few conferences so people were eager to come to the conference and purchase books.

The talks were very good and many delegates found them helpful and enlightening. Both Ps Rusty and Ps Lichawa delivered their talks with clarity and gave a lot of practical applications.

On Sunday the 11th of April we had our time of fellowship at Reformation Bible Church, the church had two sessions to accommodate for everyone whilst maintaining Covid regulations. Ps Lichawa and Ps Rusty both preached at different services. After the second service we left for Mzuzu, a brother

who fellowships at Reformation Bible Church by the name of Lawrence kindly borrowed us his car. On our way to Mzuzu we were met with our second car problem adventure as the car we were driving also had problems as it would not engage the gears! This is the similar problem the Toyota Fortuner had. This made our journey longer as whenever it would not engage gears it meant us having to stop on the side of the road for a few minutes.

Mzuzu APC – 12-13th April

We arrived in Mzuzu late Sunday evening. Our hosts were graciously waiting for us with supper kindly prepared for us. We stayed at a lodge close by called Immaculate Lodge. The car we had borrowed from Lawrence was a Ford bakkie that did not have a canopy. We took a long sail and covered the books and luggage at the back since we were told to expect some drizzle and gentle showers in Mzuzu. On the night we arrived it rained cats and dogs! The windy downpour of rain even knocked out the power at the lodge. During the night whilst it was drizzling and windy, I went out to go check if the sail had covered the books completely since we had taken our luggage out and left the books in the back because the lodge had security. In the morning I woke to find that some water had gone through the sail to some of the boxes and made the books wet. It was two boxes of free books that were wet, fortunately the books were not destroyed. We also did manage to give out enough free books.

The local organizers told us they had prepared for 50 but more than that had registered and paid already. They assured us that having over 50 people at the conference would not be a problem if everyone followed the regulations by wearing their masks and observing social distancing. In the end we had 73 delegates present, 23 more than we had anticipated. Sales were R4 300.00 and we distributed 194 books. These are good sales as we were expecting to only distribute a lot of books in Lilongwe and Blantyre. The sessions went well, we needed interpretation as there were many delegates who did not understand English well. We had a continuation of heavy rain during some sessions, the roof had no ceiling so we had to stop when it became inaudible during the session.



Returning to Lilongwe, in the hope that our first vehicle would be ready, we were met with more disappointment. This meant making new plans, and seeking another driver. We arrived in Blantyre shortly after midnight!

Blantyre APC – 16-17th April

We arrived in Blantyre very late but to the warm welcome of our hosts. Ps Newton and Ps Lichawa were hosted by Mayamiko Khuthyola, a deacon at Antioch Baptist Church whilst Ps Rusty and I stayed with Ps Masautso Elias who's part of the leadership at Antioch Bible Church.

The venue of the conference was in town at a building rented by the C.C.A.P in Blantyre. We had 59 delegates present and distributed 318 books, sales were R7 400.00. We had a good attendance and organisation. Many of the delegates had already registered and paid with the organising team which made things lot easier. There was no need for interpretation which the speakers were happy about because it meant being able to deliver their talks with a good flow. The sessions went well and the delegates received the talks well.

Zomba APC – 19-20th April

Zomba had the lowest number of delegates in the run with 46 delegates. When you consider that we had planned for 50 delegates at the conferences you realise how we have been blessed with good attendance in this run. We needed to have interpretation at the conference as some delegates did not understand English. I also did my Covid 19 test done in Zomba as I was flying out on the 21st in the early morning. Praise God for the negative results. We distributed 116 books, sales were R2 300.00 which is really good when you consider that many people did not fully understand English and needed the talks in Chewa. Even with interpretation there was a good response to the talks by the delegates and good interaction as well.

Tragedy

It is with sadness that I must add that we have been informed of Ps Newton's involvement in an accident on the 29th of April. This tragic accident has claimed the lives of three children, Ps Newton was with his oldest child Chisomo. Both of them are fine with Chisomo sustaining minor injuries from the crash. We pray that the Lord would comfort Ps Newton in this difficult period he is going through. That the Lord may be with his family and church as they come beside him to strengthen and encourage him. We pray for the families of the three children who have passed on, that the Lord would be with them in their mourning. May the Lord use this for the glory of His name and comfort in that even though we might not see it all this will work for the good of His people in Malawi and more specifically Ps Newton's family and church.

Questions and Answers

The concluding session for each conference is the Q&A. Below is a sample of some of the questions that the delegates ask: -

- If we say that God communicates with humans because we can relate with him, isn't that undermining God's abilities (his abilities to communicate with other species/beings)?
- Is it right to conclude that 3 persons work together to be/create/produce God? If we say it is right, then can we say that Jesus is part of God?
- if we don't need dreams and prophecies, why are they gifted to us? Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12:10 talks about the gift of prophecy. And when a person's dreams come true or they warn against something that ends up happening what should they do about it?
- What about the book of Maccabees and other Apocrypha books?
- Can women be pastors?
- "What should we say to encourage some of our congregants who believe that the Covid 19 vaccine is the mark of the beast 666? How can we encourage them and show them the way?"
- "Can you elaborate on the difference between Illumination and Revelation?"

We thank God for His goodness and grace for keeping us and protecting us on the way. We praise Him for allowing us to conduct these conferences and we continue to pray that He would bless the preaching of His word and that He would continue to grow His church in Africa.

To listen to audio talks, go to our website: www.africanpastorsconferences.org