



SOLA 5 E-NEWSLETTER

an association of God-centered evangelicals in southern Africa

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This week, two items for your prayerful consideration: a note received regarding Conrad Mbewe's health and a prayer letter from Antipas Church in Vereeniging, South Africa.

1. Conrad Mbewe

A note received today from Lumpuma Chitambala at Kabwata Baptist Church (Lusaka, Zambia) reads: *"Pray for Pastor Mbewe. He was admitted at the University Teaching Hospital yesterday due to severe back pain. The pain was so severe that he could not walk. Some tests will be done today to determine the problem. I will keep you informed."*

2. Prayer letter, Antipas Church, Vereeniging South Africa

Membership

We are very grateful to report that 14 people were welcomed as new members over the past year. This came through conversions and subsequent baptisms – but also through Christians joining from other churches. Unfortunately we had to exercise church discipline resulting in 2 members being removed from our midst. This brings the membership to 55. It might be of interest to note that of those, 3 are geographically separated and cannot attend church proceedings regularly. They will remain members until appropriate local churches could be found. The missionary couple Sebastian and Karin Floor (Wycliffe, Mozambique) is also included in the total.

Leadership

Preaching and teaching is done by the full-time elder, Kobus van der Walt. During the year the two long serving deacons stepped down. Four others were elected to serve in their place. Please pray that the four elders may provide Godly leadership to the church and grow in unity as they serve Christ and his church. Also pray for wisdom, boldness, and discernment (Phil 1:9-12), combined with a humbleness that will enable them to overcome and grow through criticism to greater holiness.

During February 2008, Kobus will be completing the 18 months counselling course presented by Dr. Wayne Mack in Pretoria.

Ministries

Prison ministry

- The church has been blessed over many years to be able to faithfully conduct a Sunday church service inside Groenpunt Maximum Prison to a small group of Afrikaans speaking brothers. The ministry is complemented with regular pastoral visits to the group during the week by church members.
- Assistance and support have been rendered to some of the families of the Groenpunt inmates. It was recently expanded when one of the elders made a house on his small holding available to inmates being released after completion of their sentences at Groenpunt to assist with their process of adapting to "normal" life. Please pray for the elder, his family, and the church, as it was one of the people they took into their home that later had to be disciplined – and left the house after some time.

- On a more general note: please pray for inmates when they are released as it seems a very daunting task to adapt to life outside prison.
- Recently the prison ministry grew when the Church was led to become involved at Leeuwhof Prison in Vereeniging as well. The Word is brought to three groups at Leeuwhof each Saturday morning: an Afrikaans group and two groups of people awaiting trial.
- One of the recent developments is that Church members are starting to get involved with the families of the inmates in Leeuwhof.

African pastors in the Vaal Triangle Townships

- During January the most recent pastoral training course was completed when 24 students graduated after two and a half years of training every second Saturday of the month. Exams were written regularly every six months. The subjects Bible Knowledge, Practical Theology, and Critical Thinking were presented by Bruce Button, Jacobus de Koning, Jeff Gage, Ronald Kalifungwa (before he left to take up the pastorate at Lusaka BC), Neville Nel, Len van Aarde, and Kobus van der Walt.
- The next phase is that many of them registered for the secondary certificate in theology presented by the Sovereign Grace Theological Seminary – please pray for the students, administrators and lecturers alike, especially for Kobus, as he has the overall responsibility for the subject Church History. A study centre (convening on every second Saturday of the month) is being established to assist students with their studies.
- Pray for the pastors who have come to love the doctrines of grace, that they will have the vision, biblical leadership and courage to lead their churches to formally accept reformed teaching.

Book table

- Not only are new books offered for sale at the book table, but a small library where books are available on loan is also in operation.

Meetings

Sunday evenings

- Currently the evening service is donned more informally – Kobus travels the journey with attendees through Pilgrim's Progress.

Home cell (fellowship) groups

- Four groups meet regularly during the week.

Youth group

- An active group of young adults has been established in the course of the year. Please pray for them as they meet regularly on Tuesday evenings for growth in understanding and faith.

Bible study groups

- Seven Bible study groups meet during the week
- Some of the books being used by the groups are Excellent Wife (Martha Peace), Exemplary Husband (Stuart Scott), Disciplines of a Godly Man (R Kent Hughes), The Fear Factor (Wayne Mack), The Titus 2 Woman (Martha Peace), and The Treasury of David (Charles H Spurgeon).

Trials

Over the past year a significant number of the members had to struggle with heavy burdens – from severe financial difficulties to interpersonal challenges to temptation – no, the last one all members had to contend with... We are so grateful that the Lord is faithful. Please uphold us in your prayers.

General

Pray that members will not succumb to worldliness but be salt and light instead. Also, that they will not fall into the trap of encouraging and admonishing the world while fellow brothers and sisters are sometimes seen as subjects for evangelism – where it should be the other way round.