

CHRIST'S HEADSHIP OVER THE CHURCH

SOLA 5 Conference, South Africa, Sunday, 2nd October 2005, AM

TEXT: Ephesians 5:23-24

INTRODUCTION

Let me begin by thanking God and the organisers of the SOLA 5 conference for inviting me to be one of the speakers on this occasion. I have been asked to speak on the subject of Christ's headship over the church. I have chosen to do so from this text because it shows that correct doctrine is important. It is foundational to right living. Paul here was dealing with the relationship of wives to husbands. He used the doctrine of the church's submission to Christ to establish the fact and the nature of a wife's submission to her husband. My brief task today is to look at the doctrine that Paul uses and limit its application to the context of the churches that are uniting together under the banner of SOLA 5 on this joyful occasion.

CHRIST'S HEADSHIP STATED

Firstly, Paul stated unequivocally that Christ is the head of the church. He was not proposing it or saying that it was a good idea worth thinking about. He was stating it as a fact. "The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church..." By head, Paul meant that Christ was ruler over his church. This was a favourite imagery of the apostle Paul and in this epistle alone he uses it no less than three times (1:22, 4:15 and in our text). Yet the idea of Christ ruling his church will be found right across the New Testament (e.g. John 10:14-16, 27-30). Also, notice that Paul speaks about Christ being ruler of "the church" – and not "the churches". This suggests that it is primarily an organic and spiritual headship that transcends our local church boundaries. Yet, having said that, this headship finds expression at local church level (as was evident in the letters Jesus dictated to John in Revelation 2 and 3).

CHRIST'S RIGHT ESTABLISHED

Having stated Christ's headship over the

church, Paul proceeded to establish Christ's right to be head. He wrote (literally), "...his body, he himself being its Saviour." Every human body has but one head that governs the whole body. To move someone's body without passing through his head is to manipulate and abuse him! Jesus also is the only Saviour of the church. He purchased the church with his own blood and on this basis God the Father gave him the legal right as head of the church (see the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, chapter 26, paragraph 4). Through his Word and his Spirit, Jesus also gathers the elect at the point of their personal salvation and sanctifies them through the rest of their lives (see Ephesians 5:26 and Revelation 2:11). These facts argue eloquently for Christ right as head over the church!

This suggests that it is primarily an organic and spiritual headship that transcends our local church boundaries.

THE CHURCH'S DUTY ENJOINED

Finally, Paul turns to the duty of the church in the light of the foregoing. He tells us that as a result of all this "...the church submits to Christ..." Where the true church of Jesus Christ is, there you will find a deliberate, voluntary, whole-hearted and sincere desire to follow the mind of Christ in all things. Any church that deliberately and continuously goes against Christ's will in its life and ministry is not a church even if its building is thus designated. This submission to Christ must obviously be through its qualified leaders, i.e. its pastors/elders. The duty of elders is simply that of enacting and enforcing the laws of Christ in the church. It is not that of coming up with their own laws according to their whims and fancies (see Owen on this, in The Works of John Owen, volume 16, p.33-34). The church submits to Christ.

CONCLUSION

One hymn-writer has captured the spirit of this text very well by saying,

"The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is his new creation by Spirit and the Word;
From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride,
With his own blood he bought her and for life he died."

We must respect this even as we commence SOLA 5. So, here are a few "uses" (to use an old Puritan expression) of this doctrine that SOLA 5 should jealously guard as it takes off.

USE 1: The SOLA 5 leadership must not take on themselves the role of stewards of Christ's headship over the churches. This role belongs solely to the pastors/elders of local churches. SOLA 5 must remain but an association of churches that want to organise themselves after the New Testament pattern under Christ's headship.

USE 2: SOLA 5 must guard its doors so that churches that are not interested in submitting themselves to the headship of Christ do not hijack the association. We must remain a fellowship of God-centred and not man-centred evangelicals. Part of that God-centredness is in terms of respecting Christ's headship over his church. Any church that clearly exhibits rebellion against this must be exhorted to amend its ways in a brotherly way. Where these exhortations are falling on deaf ears, they must be removed from the fellowship.

USE 3: SOLA 5 must remain but a channel through which the organic unity of the church under the headship of Christ finds expression for the purpose of fellowship and joint projects.

— Conrad Mbewe



SOLA 5

an association of God centered Evangelicals in Southern Africa

Chronicles

Editorial

From time to time as Christians,

we are blessed by God with the unmistakable sense that we witnessing the beginnings of a significant and sovereign work of His grace. There is a sense of knowing that what is being achieved would have otherwise been impossible, if the Lord Himself was not powerfully, wondrously, graciously and providentially at work.

It has been with a growing sense of the Lord's hand at work that we have witnessed the establishment of "Sola 5". I do not believe that any of the brothers who have been involved from the very beginning could have envisaged just how far the Lord has brought us in the short period of just over one-year. Bruce Button's article on the beginnings of Sola 5 succinctly describes the events of the past year from "pleading with the Lord to make us more united and effective for Him" through "[t]he Lord seem[ing] to be initiating something" to "God's guiding hand [being] evident all the way".

Some may well, at this point be asking, "what is Sola 5?" It is, as the sub-title states, an association of God centered Evangelicals in Southern Africa". The articles in this issue together with the official documents, i.e. the booklet containing the Statement of Faith, Core Values and Constitution (also available on the website www.sola5.org), should adequately answer all questions in this regard. Right from the outset, let it be known that we do not in any way consider that we have "arrived". Nor that Sola 5 is anything more than an association of imperfect individuals and churches (comprising imperfect individuals), humbly seeking to achieve the ideals of Ephesians 4:1-16 by the grace of God alone and to the glory of God alone.

It is therefore with joy and humble expectancy that we publish this first edition of "Sola 5 Chronicles", a publication which we intend making available on a quarterly basis. The purpose of the publication is to publish news of what is happening within and around the association as well as to provide a forum for fellowship on a broader basis within the association. To that end we will publish articles of a doctrinal and theological nature on relevant issues in order to stimulate educative discussion without necessarily endorsing every view expressed and readers are welcome to respond in writing to any of the articles to enhance this interaction. We will however, reserve the right to withhold from publication any articles or letters that, in our opinion, do not constructively foster the above objectives.

We would like your feedback on the name of the publication, "Sola 5 Chronicles" as this has not been cast in stone or issued "in accordance with the laws of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be repealed". Many who receive this publication, will be receiving it as previous subscribers to Reformation Africa South, which this publication may be replacing pending decisions yet to be made by the Reformed Baptist Association. We will keep you apprised of the situation in future issues.

We trust that you will be as encouraged as we are by the developments described in this publication and be motivated to pray with us for the Lord to revive, reform and unite His church across the Southern African region in these days under the banner of His truth. May we see the true gospel triumphing in true spiritual power unto the salvation of those that believe.

— Peter Sammons

The Beginnings of SOLA 5

A few unpretentious meetings, numbering between fifty and a little over two hundred, are not the stuff of headline news. And there were no reporters present at the meeting place of Antipas Reformed Baptist Church in Pretoria when believers from around southern Africa gathered together in the Spring of 2005 to establish a new association of churches. Yet, those who participated in these meetings believe that the formation of Sola 5 during 2005 has signalled a historic year in the progress of God's kingdom in southern Africa. We do not claim any special insight into the sovereign plans of God, who alone is the Lord of history, but the unmistakable sense of His presence in our gatherings encourages us to believe that His blessing is resting on our endeavours. Our heartfelt response to the developments so far is to say with Samuel and the people of Israel, "Eben-ezer—thus far has the Lord helped us" (1 Sam 7:12). We wish to acknowledge His mercy by providing a short account of His working among us up to this point.

THE IDEA

One cannot speak about the formation of Sola 5 without speaking about the Spurgeon Fraternal—a fellowship of pastors from across South Africa which gathers two or three times a year for prayer, mutual instruction and encouragement. The Fraternal has been meeting since 1998, and in the time since its inception some deep, trusting relationships have been built. Only a few of us attended the Spurgeon Fraternal meeting of

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It is foreseen that all presentations made at the **2005 inaugural conference**

will be available in print, free of charge, towards February 2006.

Please contact Hein Strauss at PO Box 28276, Sonlandpark 1944 or at hein.strauss@sola5.org or 083 630 0303 in this regard.

Evangelical Pastors Conference
13 - 14 January 2006
Durban Central Baptist Church

Speakers Rev. Laban Mwashekele and Rev. Ernest Mcambi.

Please contact Rev. Dennis Hustedt at 072 216 5163 or Thembe Nxele at 083 394 7701.

sola5 conference 2006

scheduled for 1-3 sept 2006
in windhoek, namibia

more details to follow



SOLA 5 committee

Outgoing Committee Re-Elected



l.r.: Christo Beetge, Nico van der Walt, Jeff Gage, Ronald Kalifungwa, Bruce Button

New Committee Members Elected



Conrad Mbewe – Lusaka



Errol Wagner – George



Joggie Riecke – Windhoek



Hein Strauss – Coordinator

The Church Planting Work in Botswana

INTRODUCTION

The work is cosponsored by Kabwata Baptist Church in Zambia and Lynnwood Baptist Church in RSA as principal partners and financially supported by other churches in Africa and overseas. The work was launched on 16th May 2004 after advice from the government of Botswana that we could start meeting, albeit with restrictions, while waiting for completion of the registration process.

I resigned my job as Senior Project Metallurgist on 29th April 2004 and immediately, on 1st May 2004 became full-time missionary pastor to pioneer this missionary endeavour.

CHURCH REGISTRATION

Application to formally register the church under the name Central Baptist church was submitted to the registrar of societies at the regional office in Mochudi in December 2003 and moved to the HQ in March 2004. There was no response until August when various changes to the constitution and various other conditions were demanded for which have been duly complied with. A final response is still being awaited.

ACTIVITIES

Church morning attendances that commenced on 16 May 2005 with 14 – 15 people (including about 4 – 5 children) now averages 45 – 55 (about 50% children up to age of 14) during non-holiday periods. The evening service that was started a month after the

launch averages about 10 people. There are four ministries in operation. The children's ministry that ministers to about 70 children in two locations in the city, the couple's ministry, the women's and the youth ministries are currently in existence. Our dream, after registration, is to spread northwards towards central Botswana where most of the population is concentrated.

THE PASTOR'S FAMILY



We are a family of five. My wife Sylvia, first born girl Mukupa (16) doing grade 10, Kavuyi (8) in grade 4 and Mercy (10) doing grade 5 (to be adopted daughter of my late brother). We are currently operating outside Botswana pending registration of the church upon which work permit is dependent. I visit Botswana within the allocated 90 days per year per visitor (spread

across the year). In between the visits, I do work remotely through three gentlemen: Katongo Nkamba, Monametsi Moncho, and Phaniel Mweemba who function as deacons while I also help out with other church plants within Zambia.

PRAYER NEEDS

Conversion of souls • Church registration and work permit • Material / financial resources for missionary endeavours in Botswana

– Kapambwe Nsenduluka

Email: knsenduluka@zamtel.za
or nskapambwe@yahoo.com



**POWER CAMP
2006**

25-27 August

For All Teens 13 - 19 Years

I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through the Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ

Ephesians 3:16-18

More detail is available
from

Gary van der Heuvel
(011) 867 3505

or

Wilhelm Smalberger
(012) 348 6809

Tell me about "Sola 5"

It is not surprising that with the recent launch of Sola 5, which is intended to be an "Association of God-centered Evangelicals in Southern Africa", a number of questions have been asked which surely deserve an answer. One such question has been, "What is the difference between Sola 5 and the Baptist Union?". An answer to such a constructive question must cover at least the following aspects:

1. In asking and in answering this question there must be absolute clarity that Sola 5 is not designed to be in opposition to the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. The formation of Sola 5 is not to be regarded in terms of protest or resistance to anyone in particular, but has arisen out of a godly desire for unity and cooperation amongst like-minded Baptists and to provide a home and an identity for many independent and isolated individuals and churches throughout our sub-continent.

2. It is specifically envisaged that some churches who will desire membership of Sola 5 may currently be members of some other association or denominational structure. This is no hindrance to their belonging to Sola 5. Experience and logic do lead us to believe however that one cannot with a clear conscience belong for any significant period of time to two distinct families which seem to be heading in different directions and which are run on what appears to be vastly differing ethos. In Sola 5 we desire for there to be a consistent emphasis upon godly Christian character, meaningful relationships and integrity. These desires will of necessity be casualties where churches choose to belong, for the sake of expedience, sentiment or tradition, to Sola 5 as well as to some other grouping that appears to be significantly at variance with that for which Sola 5 stands.

3. If a comparison must be drawn between the Baptist Union of Southern Africa and Sola 5, then let the following issues be considered:

- Sola 5 as an association of churches wants to unashamedly promote the five Solas of the Protestant Reformation, and has consequently been constituted on the basis of a detailed documentation of our 23 Core Values and Doctrinal Statement. These have been (painstakingly!) formulated because of a deep desire for clarity and definition. In heading in this direction, the members of Sola 5 are fully aware that some equally sincere fellow believers may of necessity therefore be excluded from constructive fellowship with us. Whilst it is not our desire to be exclusive for the sake of exclusivity, we do recognize that true and lasting unity can only really be based on a shared commitment to common convictions – convictions that can and must be carefully defined and articulated. In debate it is simply not possible to defend a fuzzy and uncertain position. We want to know what we believe and we want others to be in a position also to know what we believe and hold dear, so that they can make an accurate assess-

ment of their own identity in relation to ours. This means that we must state our beliefs as clearly and as succinctly as possible, without violating principles of charity and liberty. Let it be stated that we are expressly in opposition to "hyper-orthodoxy" (note the final item in our list of Core Values). But we are also in opposition to doctrinal indifference, and the kind of approach to orthodoxy that either deliberately defines things so vaguely and broadly that a heterogeneous and disparate group develops, or which resists careful definition out of a desire not to exclude anyone who might vaguely desire fellowship. Without being uncharitable, it must be observed that some members of Sola 5 have been driven to the conclusion that within the Baptist Union there is a desire to remain "undefinable", precisely because of the room it provides for manoeuvring oneself out of potentially uncomfortable positions in the future. Taking up this "middle of the road" position where you have the freedom to swerve either to the left or to the right as the situation requires, this ability to be almost chameleon-like, is apparently viewed positively within the BU as a mark of big-hearted maturity and

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grace! By contrast, our desire within Sola 5 is to "assume the centre" by being definite and specific about our doctrinal convictions, even at the expense of broad acceptance. This is a critical area of divergence in ethos between ourselves and the Baptist Union. (As a discussion point, one may want to investigate for instance the practical commitment to and outworking of the article in the 1924 Statement of Belief to the fact that "Christ died for our sins, a substitutionary sacrifice...". We want to ask: "In one's efforts at self-definition, can one with integrity, use the word "substitutionary" with reference to Christ at Calvary and at the same time promote a broad acceptance of an Arminian position regarding the universal focus of the atonement? We applaud the desire to stand with orthodox believers in using words like "substitutionary". But we wonder how this commitment links with a willingness practically to smudge the central issue of the atonement, namely its outcome, by promoting the idea of the universal application of that sacrifice. Is this duplicity not culpably inconsistent and illogical – and dishonest?)

- Make no mistake - when doctrinal convictions cannot and do not form your foundation and the basis of your identity because you do not think it expedient to define yourself too narrowly, then something else will fill that void. It appears as if institutionalism has done this within the Baptist Union. It appears as if

the structures and the offices within the hierarchy of the organization are the motivation and the glue behind much of what is done and expected. Decision-making and communication follow certain organizational lines. Ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church) plays an almost non-existent role in financial decisions and accountability for ministry decisions. The hallmarks of institutionalism are typically man-centeredness, a programme-orientation and a pragmatic and even manipulative approach to decision-making. These marks are evident in the BU it would seem, when the financing of theological training and missions for instance are considered. Churches wisely associate together to achieve what none of the churches can achieve alone – such as in the training of pastors and the support of missionaries. And yet within the Baptist Union these vital ministries are divorced from the oversight of the local church and rest in the hands of institutional office-bearers, being run and financed independently. Institutionalism has huge administrative costs associated with it. The meeting of these costs demands as broad a base of donors and contributors as possible. Strategic decisions must now pragmatically be made on the basis of what will keep the donors paying, rather than necessarily on what is right and in line with our stated biblical convictions. Such is the very fabric of institutionalism, which is what Sola 5 is ardently opposed to. Man-centeredness within the institution tolerates the development of administrative personas who become larger than life, unattached and unaccountable in any meaningful way to any local congregation. As much as "servanthood" is part of the institutional vocabulary, "leadership" and the status and power that accompany it, as well as a "head office mentality", is closer to reality in the life of the organization. Sola 5 is intent upon doing all that is necessary to maintain and promote biblical local church structures and lines of authority and accountability. Visible role players are first and foremost members of local churches, and only secondarily leaders and servants within the association of churches.

- The number of churches in membership with the BU has consistently been of importance within the institution. Consequently, despite the stated process of assessment and scrutiny of prospective members, the integrity of the Baptist identity of these member churches has been secondary to the consideration of their initial and their continued membership. As a result, the spectrum of churches has become increasingly broad, and the existence of inactive "dead-wood" an acceptable reality. In Sola 5, by contrast, relationship and integrity are key issues. You simply cannot belong indefinitely if you do not participate and communicate. Within Sola 5 we are not interested primarily in growth in numbers or in "keeping churches on the books". We are interested

Lighter moments...



Jeff Gage, Kapambwe Nsenduluka and Ronald Kalifungwa



Thys Louw and Albert Ngoma (Chingola, Zambia)



Bruce Button, Nico vd Walt and Jeff Gage



Boyce Saleni, Sikhono Haashe and Denny Hustedt

Some serious discussion and interaction...



Bernard Kuyper and Bruce Button



Pieter van der Merwe and Errol Wagner



Brian Stone, John Rollings and Neil Henry



Brian Viljoen and Doug van Meter

FROM AFAR...



Emmanuel Sakala - Chililabombwe, Zambia



Hellings Kumwenda - Mzimba, Malawi



Sikhono Haashe - Butterworth



Grave Singogo - Lusaka, Zambia



Joseph Soko - Harare, Zimbabwe



Gideon Shikongo - Ruacana



Laban Mwashakele - Windhoek



Godwin Murangi - Windhoek

The committee...



Bruce Button, Christo Beetge, Jeff Gage, Ronald Kalifungwa, Nico van der Walt



Canny and Grace Malema and Nico and Hanlie

Worship



Scribe and chair... Christo Beetge and Bruce Button

rather in effective ministry to individuals in vibrant and robust partnership with member churches.

• It has been the sad but undeniable experience of too many people, that in BU circles one seldom hears reference to the Bible in debates and decision-making. This raises the unavoidable conclusion that within denominational circles there is an erosion of confidence in the sufficiency and authority of Scripture – despite numerous claims to the contrary. On paper, it would appear, the Bible is expressly of vital importance. But in practice, the debate is conducted in such a way as to lead to the inescapable conclusion that much of what we face today in our decisions and choices is simply not adequately addressed in God's Word.

• Sadly, one of the hallmarks of life within the Union, especially evident at the annual BU Assembly, is the absence of deep and trusting

relationships. As a means of emotional survival it appears as if the "system" conditions one to "play the game", even at the expense of a clear conscience. Consequently much activity is pursued in the unspoken context of fraternal insecurity and distrust. In Sola 5, we want to depend upon the Spirit of God to keep us humble and honest; to help us avoid the formation of organizational hierarchy that encourages "ladder-climbing"; to encourage the asking of the unpopular questions regarding consistency and integrity and motive; to repent of and desist from loose talk and slander; and to encourage healthy debate.

The five issues mentioned above - namely apparent doctrinal indifference; institutionalism; indiscriminate growth; Biblical debate and trusting relationships – are surely areas of deep concern for any Christian or family of churches? The fact is that we cannot hold ourselves responsible for the actions and val-

ues of future generations. Some people have cynically remarked regarding Sola 5, "Yes, the Baptist Union in its infancy was what you now are – in due course you too will evolve into a denominational institution suffering from all the maladies you have identified within the BU. What is to prevent Sola 5 also in due course falling pray to all the inter-personal politics, manipulation and conflicting personal agendas?". How can one respond, but to pray that God the Holy Spirit would help us consistently to live according to first principles?

We invite you then: Please pray with us and for us, that whatever the strengths and weaknesses of other churches and associations may be, God would graciously and powerfully allow us to put forth our salt and light so that the kingdom of Jesus Christ would advance in this world, and this to the glory of God alone! Visit us at www.sola5.org.

– Christo Beetge

Excerpt from the Minutes of the Sola 5 Inaugural Conference

Meeting at Antipas Pretoria from 29th Sept to 2nd October 2005, 55 brothers from five southern African countries, some with spouses, representing some 12 churches, met to conduct the following business as the Sola 5 association was finally constituted:

By mutual agreement and acceptance, the association was constituted with the following Member Churches: Harare Reformed Baptist • Emmanuel Baptist • Wapadrand Baptist • Antipas Pretoria • Newcastle Baptist • Free Grace Baptist • Germiston Baptist • Antipas Vaal Triangle • Grace Baptist Walker-ville • Brackenhurst Baptist • Lynnwood Baptist • Brackenhurst Baptist Church

Brian Stone committed these 12 churches to the Lord in prayer.

It was proposed that the Interim Committee continue to serve for the next year, and that at least one nominee from each region be elected. (The regions are: Western Cape; Namibia; Zambia-Zimbabwe-Malawi; Gauteng-Botswana.) It was therefore agreed that member churches would each vote for eight of the nominees. It was noted that the co-ordinator would, ex officio, be a member of the Committee. The following brethren were elected to serve on the Steering Committee: Nico van der Walt (Gauteng); Errol Wagner (Western Cape); Joachim Rieck (Namibia); Conrad Mbewe (Zambia); Jeff Gage (Gauteng); Ronald Kalifungwa (Gauteng); Christo Beetge (Gauteng); Bruce Button (Gauteng).

It was agreed that Hein Strauss be appointed as co-ordinator, who will be taking early retirement from about the middle of 2006 and is willing to serve on a voluntary basis.

Discussion was entered into on the following issues:

1. How the Association will be financed – the possibility of encouraging a membership fee and freewill offerings.
2. The practicalities of opening a bank account – possibly this would require opening a

relevant bank account in any of the countries involved in the Sola 5 Association.

And it was resolved and accepted unanimously by the member churches, that the work of the Association be financed strictly on the basis of freewill offerings, and that the financial needs of the Association be organized by the Steering Committee, who are mandated to do whatever is required, in the appointing of a Treasurer; the opening of whatever bank accounts are required in whatever countries as these are needed; and the necessary regular reporting to the member churches regarding its financial needs.

Discussion of Possible Projects

It was pointed out that we want always to be biblical in not allowing the Steering Committee or Sola 5 as an association to take on a persona and authority of its own. Instead, we would want to expedite ministries through local member churches or by means of committees that fall under the oversight of a particular church.

Initiatives were discussed around the need to keep contact with associate members around the country. Members were encouraged to supply printed and audio sermons via the internet. These isolated associate members need to receive pastoral care by them being allocated to local member churches. The point was also made that associate members must be joined to the nearest Sola 5 church where they are held accountable – they cannot, therefore be associate members 'in limbo' for an indefinite period.

Regarding the Magazine – discussion was entered into regarding content and purpose of such a publication. Hein Strauss, Bernard Kuyper, Peter Sammons and Clarke Gittens were appointed as the editorial and production team.

Discussion was entered into regarding the existing website www.sola5.org. Agreement was reached for the Steering Committee to mandate somebody to develop this site.

(Note: four web domains have been registered for Sola 5, namely www.sola5.org; www.solafive.org; www.sola5.org.za; www.solafive.org.za. The primary site will be www.sola5.org – others will direct internet traffic to the primary site.)

Regarding missionaries and church planting, the following ministries were suggested:

- Joseph Soko & Jeff Gage regarding support of three pastors ministering in Zimbabwe.
- Kapambwe Nsenduluka & Ronald Kalifungwa regarding church planting in Gabarone.
- Pieter Swanepoel regarding discipleship training in India.

This was followed by discussion regarding missions support being linked directly to a local church. This link with the local church will also involve the flow of fresh information regarding the progress of the ministry. These ministries must also form a core part of our prayer ministries. It was agreed that these three ministries be adopted as projects of Sola 5.

Exposure was also given to the Power Youth Camp and Dennis Hustedt's upcoming fully sponsored conference for indigenous pastors in Natal, with the express proposal of expanding such ministry opportunities all over the Southern African subcontinent.

Associate Members

Applications were received and accepted from 26 Pastors/ Elders of churches that envisage future membership, and individuals in other ministry positions. A further 6 Individuals who have no convenient access to God-centered ministry in a local church were accepted into membership until such time as they are able to link up with an appropriate local church.

Conference 2006

The Namibians have extended an invitation to us to come to Windhoek during the first week of Sept DV. Possibly Fri 1st Sept to Sun 3rd.

– Peter Sammons

The Beginnings of SOLA 5 – continue from page 1

July 2004 (held at Skögheim on the Kwazulu-Natal south coast), but there was among us a deep sorrow that Christians—especially those who share our convictions—were apparently so weak and fragmented. I remember our pleading with the Lord to make us more united and effective for Him.

The next Fraternal (held at the Vaal Dam during October 2004) was much better attended and a very different spirit prevailed. Suddenly the men present seemed to share an enthusiasm and a vision for an effective association of churches that would embrace the whole of southern Africa. Similar ideas had been discussed before, but we had never had so clear, cohesive and concrete a view of the way forward. The Lord seemed to be initiating something.

Shortly after that Spurgeon Fraternal, the Reformed Baptist Association of Southern Africa (RBA) met at Germiston Baptist Church. For some time there had been discussion within the RBA about how we could co-operate more effectively for the glory of God. When the idea of a new, southern African association was shared, the response was warm and positive. After some brief discussion, the meeting appointed an Interim Committee to prepare the ground for such an association. This entailed the drafting of a new confession of faith, declaration of values, and constitution for the planned association. Those appointed to serve on the Interim Committee were Christo Beetge, Bruce Button, Jeff Gage, Ronald Kalifungwa and Nico van der Walt.

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

The Committee was soon hard at work. Jeff and Ronald drafted the declaration of values, Nico and Bruce worked on the confession, and Christo prepared an introduction. Our aim with the confession was to draw up a document which would retain the important elements of our historic faith, but would express these elements more concisely and in more modern language than the 1689. The declaration of values, which has come to be called the Core Values of Sola 5, was an exciting project. Beginning with obvious ethical issues like the sanctity of life and sexual ethics, the document was gradually expanded to include issues like "animals

and the environment" and hyperorthodoxy. The initial drafts were discussed, refined and reworked a number of times in a process that was both exciting and challenging. We were thankful for the mutual trust and respect that we had built up through the Spurgeon Fraternal. This enabled us to express ourselves clearly and at times boldly, and yet to discuss the issues until we found true unity of heart and mind.

The documents were circulated to members of the RBA during January, and were then distributed to all the like-minded pastors and churches that we could think of, along with an invitation to attend a conference at Heidelberg (Gauteng, South Africa) in April 2005. The plan was that the association would be inaugurated at this conference. Important last-minute preparation for the Heidelberg conference was done at the Spurgeon Fraternal held near Lydenburg in

Our aim with the confession was to draw up a document which would retain the important elements of our historic faith...

March 2005. Some potentially contentious issues were addressed and further practical plans were made. Amongst these was a decision to send two representatives to Zambia before the April conference in order to extend a hand of fellowship and to convey the message that we wanted our brethren outside South Africa to feel included as equal partners in the proposed association.

HEIDELBERG, 6-8 APRIL 2005

The gathering at Heidelberg was attended by about 45 people from Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa. Although the initial idea was that the association would be inaugurated formally at Heidelberg, we discovered that the greater need was for delegates to get to know one another and to get to grips with the details of the planned association. Thus our meetings, to a large extent, took the form of workshops, but God's guiding hand was evident

all the way.

Representative of the whole conference was a lengthy discussion on Thursday morning about the name of the association. The Committee, with input from a number of people, had proposed the name "Sola 5", with the subtitle "An Association of God-centred evangelicals in Southern Africa". However, many of the brethren felt that the word "Baptist" should be included in our name. Strong opinions and strong feelings were expressed on both sides; it would have been easy to take a vote and get the issue out of the way so that we could move on to the planned business. However, under Ronald's sensitive chairmanship, something far more valuable was accomplished: we were able to listen to one another and eventually to agree from the heart. We were truly able to say, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." Discussions on the Core Values, Confession and Constitution were equally workmanlike and productive. The conference ended with our signing of a Declaration of Intent to establish Sola 5.

SOLA 5 IS ESTABLISHED

After the Heidelberg conference, attention was focussed on the planned First Annual Conference of Sola 5, to be held in Pretoria from 29 September to 2 October. Final changes to the documents, stemming mainly from Heidelberg, were incorporated and 2000 copies of an introductory booklet were produced. These were distributed across the region. Further visits were made—by Ronald and Jeff to Zambia, and by Christo and Bruce to Namibia. We looked to the Lord with great expectation for the planned First Annual Conference.

We are pleased to record, with gratitude to God, that pastors and churches from around the region have responded positively to the vision of Sola 5. This response was reflected in the presence and participation of brothers and sisters from all over southern Africa, leading to the formal establishment of Sola 5 with eleven churches and over thirty associate members. We praise and thank God for the way He has guided us and has brought so many pastors and churches to see the value of Sola 5. May His glory be over all the earth. – Bruce Button

SPURGEON fraternal

1st meeting for 2006: 15 - 17 March at a camp site in the Vaal Triangle

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