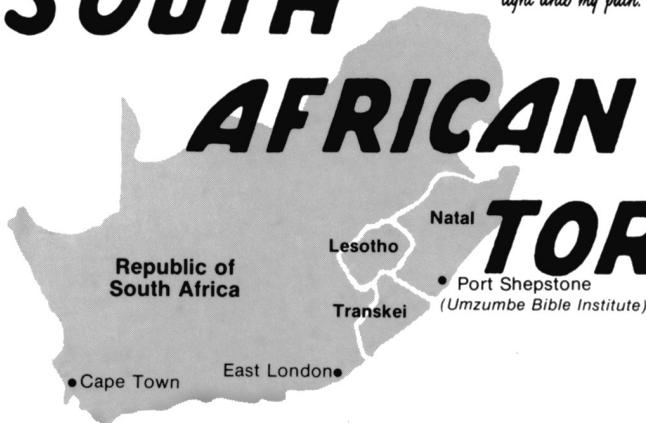


SOUTH AFRICAN TORCH



"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." --Psalms 119:105



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90th Annual Church Conference

By Michael Stanley

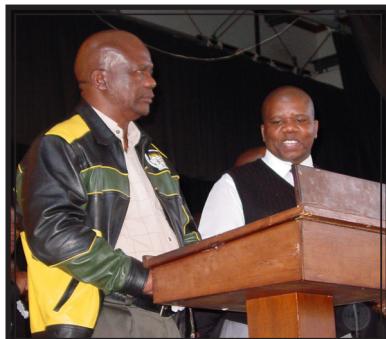
In October the Church of Christ Mission celebrated the 90th annual Church conference. The conference was held at the J.J. Serfontein High School in Queenstown (Eastern Cape). Since the Eastern Cape is the region where the church is the strongest we expected a lot of people to attend and that was the case. The facilities were good (well equipped kitchen, large hall, and dormitories where people could stay). The first development to disrupt the schedule was the lack of mattresses to sleep on. In the end mattresses had to be rented and brought in from King Williams Town. The cost of transport added significantly to the cost of accommodation.

The food was generally well-prepared, but late meals and some shortages resulted in complaints. As we tried

to resolve the issues we learned that the complaints had to do with much more than food. After all of the record-keeping problems last year I took direct control of the food purchases this year. That pretty much put me in the center of the

controversy. In the end most of the issues were resolved. I have more accurate records to work with and the food issues were resolved. I have proposed guidelines to prevent a repetition of this year's problems. Some people have told me that the problems have been brewing for several years and they were glad that at last action has been taken.

The 90th anniversary celebrations went well but more careful preparation would have helped a lot. There were three decorated cakes and snacks and soft drinks were served in abundance. More effort should have been made to involve those who have been part of the history of the church. John and Heather Kernan live in East London (150 km away). Even if they were unable to attend, they could have written a message that would have added perspective to the celebration. I missed most the program because I had to photocopy papers for the celebration program, and then resolve food issues.



A dignitary from the community spoke at the 90th Anniversary celebration during the annual conference.



Thulani Maki was in charge of the Anniversary memorabilia. He sold computer bags, t-shirts, mugs and pens. He had to reorder bags as they sold out the first day and by the end of the conference everything had been sold except a few pens.

Umzumbe Church

By Caryl Stanley

We have been working consistently with the Umzumbe congregation, which meets at the church at Umzumbe Bible Institute, for the past few years. During the last three years a previous minister, who lives in the area, has come back to work with the church. He is not a minister anymore because of some personal issues, but he has a vision for the church, is respected in the community and has been able to encourage the people who attend to become more active.

Michael continues to preach most Sundays, but George leads the service. We especially appreciate his musical ability and his gift for interpreting. He has been able to call church meetings and deal with some vital issues. With his guidance the Sunday School has been re-established. The adults meet in the church building and George usually leads the class while I take the children to the kitchen for their lessons. I often ask a high school girl to come and interpret for me, but if she isn't available the older boys in the class can interpret for the little ones. It is a small class, but they seem to enjoy it and they are learning some of the old, old stories from the Bible.

Many years ago the church women met every Thursday for prayer and to visit people in the church who were in need. That was discontinued during the 1990's when there was a lot of unrest in South Africa. George encouraged the women to start their meetings again, but it wasn't very successful. After several weeks, it was decided that the women and men would meet separately on the first Sunday of the month so that the women could have their own lessons and prayer time.

All of these activities have encouraged some growth in the Umzumbe congregation. We have seen a man who had not been attending for many years come back, a lady from the community started coming and now her husband has also started coming, some of the younger ladies who had drifted away have started to attend again, and a high school girl who had not come for a while also came back recently.

There is still a long way to go before Umzumbe is a dynamic church, but we are thankful to God that we seem to be on the right path.



After church we sing as we shake hands with each other. Michael, George and two of the other men from the Umzumbe church are usually at the beginning of the line.



Caryl teaches the children's Sunday School class at Umzumbe. Sometimes Akhona comes to help interpret.

Sinothando Creche "Graduation"



At the end of November we had a party to celebrate the end of the year and to say "farewell" to the children who will be going to school next year. We collected money and then two of the moms went shopping to buy food for the day. We had a feast including a beautifully decorated cake!



The children dressed in gowns and mortar boards for the occasion. They showed us some of the things they learned during the year and then each child got a certificate.



A former teacher was the main speaker, but the children were really looking forward to the gifts on the table. We were able to get a gift for each child; the local police station brought a gift, a packet of candy, and a packet of chips for each one, and the parents, grandparents, and other relatives also brought gifts.

Family News

By Caryl Stanley

Michael and I have been busy. We thought that once the Annual Conference was over we would be able to spend some time at home and not do any traveling for a while. Then Michael found out that he needed to go to Kimberley for a meeting of the South African Bible Institute Board of Governors (of which he is a member) and the Church of Christ Mission executive (of which he is treasurer). The Church of Christ Mission wants to take over South African Bible Institute so they discussed what that entails. He was in meetings for most of Saturday. I spent an enjoyable day with our friends Roy and Jenny Murray.

On our way home from Kimberley we went to Drakensberg Gardens Resort. Diane, John and Matthew were on holiday there and they invited us to join them for a couple of days. John has to take his annual leave before the year-end rush at work so they were there for a week. We had a really lovely time! We went for a walk, watched tv, played miniature golf, read, slept and ate! It was a really relaxing break.

Dawn has been extremely busy with her year-end reports. I am amazed at how much she has to do as a grade one teacher! She even roped in some of the rest of us to help sort papers one evening. She is looking forward to the school break! We have done a bit of baby-sitting for Chayah and Seanna. They have both been sick and Dawn couldn't be away from school at that time of the year so we stepped in and took care of the girls. We had Chayah for a week when she developed croup. I had to make two trips to the doctor with her. It was quite fun to have her stay overnight with us. The hardest part was making her take some medicine which tasted really bad! JP has been putting in some extra hours at work after a network server at work crashed! He is needing a break!



Michael and Caryl and their families wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy 2013. We pray that you enjoy the celebrations and that you have a happy and healthy new year.



Rebecca got a lot of certificates, a trophy, and money to take a friend to movies as awards at the prize-giving at school.



Gabriella got several certificates, 2 trophies, and a book as awards at the school prize-giving ceremony.

Dina and her family are doing well. Rebecca and Gabriella made us all very proud at their school prize-giving. They both came home with certificates and trophies for their achievements. Rebecca got awards for academics and dance. Gabriella got awards for her academic progress and for being the best reader in the intermediate section. Rebecca's dance school had an end-of-year show and prize-giving. She got the trophies for the student that her teacher felt was most focused and worked the hardest this year in both tap and modern dancing. It is the first time since her teacher started teaching dance in 1979 that she has given both trophies to one student. Gabriella is very proud of the fact that she is as tall as I am and will probably be taller than Rebecca! Erin is growing fast and changing a lot. We noticed a big change when we hadn't seen her for about two weeks. She is speaking a lot and we can understand most of what she says!



Rebecca does modern and tap dancing. She did very well in her dance exams and then was given two trophies for her attitude and hard work.

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Vandalism

By Caryl Stanley

For several months we have not had much vandalism at Umzumbe Bible Institute, but recently we were struck again. It doesn't seem that anything is being taken, but a lot of windows have been broken. In November Michael found that there were 13 windows broken. Shortly after that some boys brought another boy and said he was the one who broke the windows. He did not deny that he had broken the windows but

said he was not alone. He gave the names of several other boys who were also involved. The shocking thing is that the boys are in grades one and two! Michael has spoken to the police, but they can't really do anything with children so young. We probably need to deal with their parents, so we are trying to find the right person to help us with that. Pray that we will handle it properly