

MISSIONS TRIPS TO QWA QWA



- Report on Qwa Qwa Church 2002
- My visit February 2003
- My visit March 2004
- My visit December 2010

By: Bishop Warwick Cole-Edwardes

REPORT ON QWA QWA CHURCH
(Trip on Saturday, 9th November 2002)
by Rob Prohn and Mario Marshall

BACKGROUND

On Saturday, 9th November 2002, we went to Qwa Qwa to see the situation of our churches there, at the request of our Bishops and Synod. Reports had reached us that our church there had been “highjacked” by a new Anglican group calling themselves the “Traditional Anglican Church”, headed by Bishop Trevor Rhodes. Mario Marshall and Rob Prohn from St. James (Bloemfontein) and Simon Themba from Emmanuel (Bloemfontein) went on the trip which was 760 km.

1. OUR CHURCH IN PHUTHADITJHABA

This had indeed been highjacked. Our man there, Jacob Qhwesi, was tempted with financial support which we were never able to give him. They used to use a shack as a church building – which had previously been used by Emmanuel (Bloemfontein) and had been given to them. They did initially pay a very small amount towards it. It has now been “annexed” by them and they are using it as the Traditional Anglican church (T.A.C. Bishop Rhodes).

The site was initially allocated to C.E.S.A. by the local chief. However, someone in the congregation who is related to the royal household, had managed to have the site re-allocated to the T.A.C. Currently they are building a small, but very nice looking, yellow face-brick rectory next to the church. It is almost complete. We were not able to speak to Jacob Qhwesi.

We feel that one of the reasons we lost this church was because there was so little contact with them (or financial support), but also the fact that Jacob Qhwesi was instructed to attend G.W.C. the next year and there was no talk of replacing him. They were sour because they had already lost one minister, Peter Thinyane, some years ago to Bloemfontein and they felt they had been cheated.

2. OUR ‘SHELL’ CHURCH WITH ELIAS KHANYE & SON (St.Marks)

About 10-12km out of Phuthaditjhaba we found Elias. He is an old C.E.S.A. man who runs two little C.E.S.A. churches together with his son, preaching alternatively.

Sixteen years ago he built a structure with his own hands, using home made bricks and the help of his congregation. It consists of 4 good solid, stone walls, up to roof height – nothing more – no roof, door, windows, floor or fittings. It has been used this way ever since. It could possibly seat 150 people when complete. The man’s sacrifice, enthusiasm and commitment is to be admired.

However, we discovered that T.A.C. has also started services almost next door to him, only a block or two away. We feel this is another under-hand attack by Rhodes. The area is absolutely VAST, people in their thousands. There are areas where they could have started a second work, but of all the areas, they had to start almost next door to us again!! Elias is concerned they will try to hijack his building site as well and is currently investigating.

3. Visit the works after 3-4 months. We recommend that Warwick visits there (initially at least) :
 - a. As he knows all these men, having trained them all.
 - b. He thus has their respect and knows how to deal with them.
 - c. He is closer to their area than Bloemfontein is.

He may also counsel Jacob Qhwesi who will probably soon be squeezed into the “Traditional” mould i.e. Anglo-Catholicism, mass, etc – who knows? He may even find restrictions placed on him re: preaching the gospel some time.

4. All going well, we can eventually have some big service there. Run by Warwick and perhaps Bishop Moses Ndlovu and subsequently an ordination service. This will also help clarify the situation there and give the needed support.
5. Send a strong letter of complaint to Rhodes and his supporters in America (or whoever supports him), if that is possible. They seem not to be a Bible-believing group. They seem to emphasize tradition above Scripture. On their pamphlet they quote humanistic sayings from Mother Teresa and not the Bible!
6. Seeing this vast area with its poverty and spiritual need and being attacked by non-biblical groups, we as a church need to seriously make up our minds whether we want to make areas like these our mission field. (Botshabelo is a similar area, only 50 kms away from Bloemfontein) and – if so – establish strong works there. This will obviously require huge resources of prayer, manpower and money, but we need to decide whether or not we as a Church want to be serious partners in evangelizing this area, by bringing them a true and sound gospel. If we are not serious, let us – by God’s Grace and power – exploit avenues (overseas maybe) to obtain resources so that we can stem the tide of sin and corruption more effectively in this sub-continent.

POSTSCRIPT

We have just heard that a large church in Ficksburg (200 members) has just asked Abraham to come and see them as they seem to want to join us. Abraham is there now. It is a fair distance away from Qwa Qwa. Details are sketchy, but reports have it that Qhwesi is/was previously involved there under the C.E.S.A. banner.

ROB PROHN
MARIO MARSHALL

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REPORT ON MY VISIT TO QWA QWA

5TH FEBRUARY 2003

Dear Frank

Last weekend it was my joy and privilege to visit our church in Qwa Qwa. As I share this report with you, I do ask you to bear with me if I touch on some sensitive issues, but to give some serious thought to my suggestions. All in all, I drove about 700 kms and spent the evening in the home of one of the members of our church, rather than book into a hotel. I think this was well received.

1. VISIT

On the Saturday I met with Peter Thinyane who is the minister-in-charge, but who now works in Bloemfontein. He has a real love for the people and a deep concern for their future. We met Abraham Rankati and Thomas Leotela and went out into the rural areas where Thomas is leading a church. He had called a meeting at 3pm to which about 50 people came. We met in a mud hut which they had beautifully constructed, and for over an hour tried to answer their questions. This church site was acquired from the chief by Abraham while he was with the Free Church of England, but it appears our people built it. Just down the road was our official land allocated to us. With all the confusion, I suggested that we are not to fight with other denominations but to do things rightly and legally. So Abraham is to go to the chief with the names of our people and get it all registered in our name. They were happy with the outcome and much singing followed. I then went to see where our original church used to meet in Phuthaditjhaba. There our tin shed, land and members have gone over to the new church, the Traditional Anglican Church in S.A. right NEXT door they have built a brand new, modern face-brick house with a church to follow, for Jacob Qhesi. It is so tragic to see! From there I went to visit Abraham's home (a mud shack) then Thomas's home and then to see a new plot of land for us which is available in a central position.

On Sunday they had organized the church service to take place in the local church hall. I was apprehensive, but was later absolutely amazed to see it packed out with people. The singing was unbelievable and the warmth of the people moving. What an encouragement!

2. FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- a. The *poverty* of the area. Qwa -Qwa is another tragic reminder of the apartheid days. There is very little work in the area and lots of unemployment.
- b. The people that were at our meetings *love the C.E.S.A.* and were absolutely thrilled to have a Bishop visit them. At times it was overwhelming.
- c. *Abraham and Thomas, together with Simon*, are holding our work together. They are great men, godly men who love the Lord, but they

work for nothing – not a cent goes into their pockets for their labours. We owe them an enormous amount of gratitude.

- d. The rivalry between the C.E.S.A., C.P.S.A., Free C.E.S.A. and the T.A.C.S.A. is big.
- e. We are seen to have *totally neglected and forsaken them*. This came out from the members and moved me at times almost to tears.

3. MY SUGGESTIONS

- a. After this year of probation, I would recommend we *ordain* Thomas, Abraham and Simon in December. They are holding everything together at the moment and doing all the work.
- b. I would plead with you to give them R5,000 which is needed to purchase the land for their future. This would be something tangible and evidence of our new commitment to the work.
- c. I would ask that -+ 800 Sotho prayer books which we have, be written off and when I go there next, one could be given to each of our members. They are just “sitting” and again this would be seen in a positive light. At the moment there are no prayer books or hymnbooks.
- d. We pay *R2000* to these men as a gift. If I am to have a part in the future, I will then try to get money from the K.Z.N. Finance Committee on an ongoing basis, till things are normal.
- e. I promise (unless someone else wants to) to visit them again in May and then again with the Youth Missions team in July.

In closing, you can hear how moved I was. We have failed them terribly, but I promised, by the grace of God, “*a new beginning*”. Please consider my suggestions, and together let us pray that out of the ruins a new work will develop which will be to the glory of GOD.

Yours sincerely

WARWICK COLE-EDWARDES

REPORT ON FOURTH VISIT TO QWA-QWA
13 – 14TH MARCH 2004

Last weekend, together with Rev. Emmanuel Hadebe, I had the privilege and joy of visiting our churches in Qwa-Qwa. Looking back, it was a good idea to take Emmanuel with me because for the many hours we spent travelling, he was able to share his thoughts on K.Z.N. with me, some of his own fears and concerns.

We left Pietermaritzburg and arrived in *Phuthaditjhaba* where we met two ministers, Rev Abraham Rankati and Rev. Thomas Leotela. By God's grace they gave encouraging reports on the work. Abraham has opened up another branch near *Tsesing*, where there are a large number of unchurched people, so I was able to organize payment from Mark for the purchase of another plot of land. The needs still are:

1. *Payment of salaries*: We still can only pay them R500 per month, which is deeply disturbing.
2. *Erection of a building*: One day a permanent building needs to be put up on the city plot where Thomas works.

But otherwise these men plod on and they are encouraged. All the people have their prayer and hymn books and feel that we care for them.

We then set out for *Ficksburg*, passing through Clarence and Fouriesburg, and then drove through magnificent scenery on the borders of Lesotho. We arrived at our gracious hostess and stayed the night in the township. You may remember that we bought a plot of land and erected a large shed for them. The service took 2 hours and consisted of baptisms, confirmation, preaching the Word and Holy Communion. All told there were over 180 people and children present which was fantastic.

1. Simon Sennanyane is doing a fine work there and we thank God for him.
2. Two of his young men, about 24 years old, are both fine-looking men and unemployed. I want to try and bring them to us for 6 months to learn from the Bible and go back better equipped. Perhaps if they cope we could send them down to G.W.C. for further training. They are great men whom I want to encourage.

We then set sail for the 5 hour trip back, arrived in Pietermaritzburg to preach at the 6.30pm evening service. How I thank God for our three men, who against all odds and in spite of horrendous poverty, are doing a fine Gospel work. Pray for them and for the work now that the foundations are in place. It will grow from strength to strength.

'TO GOD BE THE GLORY'

3. FREE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN S.A.

Also on the scene is a church calling itself the “Free Church of England in S.A.’ which is not connected to anyone. It was started and is still run by a man called Joseph Ntili who used to be with us (C.E.S.A.) but was excommunicated because of immorality. Two of his men who were assistant preachers, have together, left him because, according to them, the immorality has not stopped and the teaching is often unsound. The one originally hails from C.E.S.A. and the other is an ex-Methodist. The ex-C.E.S.A. man is Abraham Rankati and the other is Thomas Leotela.

They approached us and asked to join us and are very keen to start new C.E.S.A. works for us in the area, including very near to our original church in Puthaditjhaba.

They have now applied for membership to C.E.S.A. and ask permission to work under the C.E.S.A. banner. The amazing thing is that both these men have completed 3 years study at Trinity Academy PMB, under Warwick Cole-Edwardes (as did Jacob Qhwesi) who is now with T.A.D. They are very keen, chomping at the bit to start but want to start under authority ie C.E.S.A.

Initially we felt concerned that we did not know them, however, when we heard that they had both completed 3 years at Trinity Academy, we felt that this may be the Lord’s provision. Discussion with them revealed them to be both saved and sound, as far as can be ascertained at such a short meeting. We also felt concerned that we did not really have anything to offer them financially but they just said “We will survive somehow – we’re not worried about money – we just want to start to serve the Lord Jesus”. We were suitably impressed and told them to get started. They may have a home available near our original church where they can begin. Some members of our original church are unhappy with the new T.A.D. arrangement and who knows? –

Maybe we can get enough of them back – Abraham knows many of them. We told them to apply for membership (which they did immediately) and permission to get going and report back. They were very pleased.

3. THE CHURCH OF THE PROVINCE ALSO OPERATES IN THE AREA

We suspect that Rhodes sometimes refers to his church as the “Traditional Church of England” so *there is much confusion in the area regards the churches*. Thus having four “Church of England” groupings in the area is very confusing for people. The people currently in the new T.A.D. also seem to have been taught the whole truth and they are as confused as anybody – some even seem to have been given the impression that Rhodes is a C.E.S.A. Bishop.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

1. Let Thomas and Abraham start- and see what happens. Maybe we can get enough people back and get our “shack” back. Time and events should dictate what we must do thereafter.
2. Put out a pamphlet stating the true position clearly – re: the four churches – and to clear up the confusion in people’s minds. This could also double-up as an evangelistic tract to give to prospective members.
3. Encourage Abraham and Thomas in whatever way we can i.e. with some finance etc. Even a small token amount will help!
4. Encourage Elias and his son. Perhaps some more money to put on a roof over his “church” will work wonders. Watch to see his property does not get stolen!

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My Missions visit in December 2010

BACKGROUND

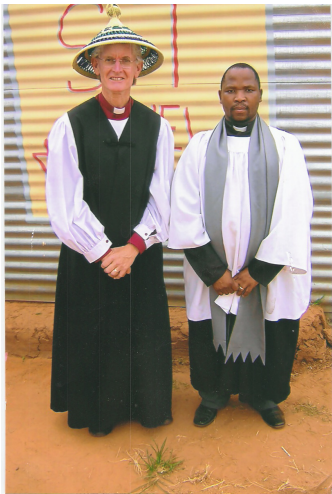
In January 2003 I was approached to take oversight of our work in Qwa Qwa.

At that time it was almost dead with one of our churches and one of our men highjacked by another denomination. BUT GODslowly over the years the work has been resurrected and now there is a growing Gospel work in that vast area.

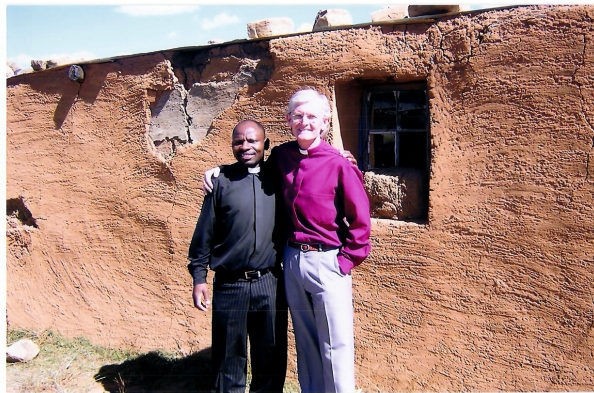


1. OUR MEN :

Three of our students from K.M.B.C. were sent to the area and they worked their hearts out. Abraham Rankati lead the work in *Phuditjhaba*, Simon Sennanyane began the work in *Ficksburg* while Thomas Leotola worked for a time in *Tseing*. They are to be admired for pressing on against all odds.



Simon Sennanyane



Abraham Rankati

2. BUILDINGS :

A steel structure was given to me which I placed in Ficksburg, where under Don Douma, it was erected.



In Phudithjaba they were under a corrugated iron building and a mud building in Tseing. But the great thing is that the Gospel is being preached and for this we give thanks.

NEW AREA COUNCIL:

Last year Qwa Qwa joined the Orange Free State area which meant I was relieved of the responsibilities, but.....there is a deep bond between the men and me which means I have to visit them whenever I can.

VISIT

I set out with Arcade and Murphy, two of our students, and headed off to Ficksburg. It is a long trip of about 4 hours. We bypass Phuthadithaba, Clarens and Fouriesburg, arriving firstly in Ficksburg at 9-30am, where Simon met us at the garage.

We were then taken to *ST MATTHEWS* in the township on the outskirts of the town. It was very, very hot and the service was held in a corrugated iron shed so we were roasted.

BUT it was fantastic, wonderful singing, a confirmation of 25 young people confirming their faith in Jesus, sharing in the celebration of the Lord's Supper as a family and then I was given the privilege of preaching from Matthew 7: 13-14.

Three hours later we all had lunch together, cooked by the ladies, and after a great meal we then headed back, arriving home at 6pm having covered 850 kms, exhausted but so wonderfully blessed.

.....*another footprint left in Africa.*

Should you ever wish to make contact or read my other journals, here are the details:

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