

# The Presiding Bishop's Charge - 2019

## Part Three

### REACH-SA Going Forward

Over the last two days we have noted and discussed some key challenges and necessary changes we need to consider going forward. In this third session I want us to pull this all together, as we go from here, seeking to fulfil our role in the Lord's Kingdom building commission. We will consider briefly our main strengths and weaknesses, revisit our mission and then share a vision for future growth.

#### REACH-SA Strengths

- **Teaching:** REACH-SA has, under God, remained a fellowship of churches who are centred on the Divine Authority of God's Word. Paramount in our ministry practice is our commitment to expository preaching and faithful teaching and application of God's Word. We affirm that church tradition and human reason take second place to "God's Word Above All Things".
- **Leadership:** Our Bishops are united in confessing the Lordship of Christ in their life and ministry. That may sound obvious but looking at the current state of the Anglican world, it's not something to be taken for granted. We praise God for women who serve the Lord in all our REACH-SA ministry and leadership structures.
- **Training:** We do place a strong emphasis on training and equipping workers for gospel ministry. We do not licence our workers lightly but expect our requirements to be attained and adhered to. Our emphasis on high standards for Bible teachers has also helped in birthing one of the finest Reformed Evangelical Anglican Theological colleges in Africa. George Whitefield College is a preferred study destination not just for REACH-SA, but for many other students from churches and dioceses across the continent.
- **Unity:** We have remarkable denomination wide unity on doctrinal essentials and Anglican distinctives. We are grateful to God for such a kindness. These days we are seeing more and more traditional denominations fracturing beyond repair as the abandonment of Biblical authority continues along with the resulting moral and ethical corruptions.
- **Network:** It has already been identified that there is much room for improvement, and possibly even some restructuring, across our denomination. In saying that it is good to see that there is a strong 'family' feel to REACH-SA. We do have some good gospel networks and friendships in place. Several local churches have partnered quite effectively across society's economic, colour and culture lines.

- **Financial:** Perhaps this one is unexpected to some, but the reality is that we are not in major financial crisis nor are we carrying huge unserviceable loans or debts. We have a good banking record and most of our local churches have been faithful in repaying their bonds and loans (often ahead of schedule). REACH-SA negotiates favourable interest rates on behalf of all our local churches, and we all share in the same financing pool. This benefits us all, *if* we abide by our loan and levy agreements. If one church defaults on their financial commitments, we all suffer the consequences.
- **Evangelism:** Its been pretty much the bread and butter of CESA ministry over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our churches grew and multiplied through people hearing and responding to evangelistic preaching and the call to decision. Many in our gathering today bear testimony to hearing and responding to the gospel through the intentional evangelistic ministry of a CESA church. My wife and I are counted in that number and we give thanks to God for His gospel preaching servants, several of whom have since gone on to glory.

It was a delight to see how enthusiastically our churches responded to the #REACH500 campaign and it was a wonderful confirmation of the evangelistic heart that beats in God's people. It's this same evangelistic heart that will be indispensable to our future growth goals.

- **Church Planting:** It has been a joy to see some traction come from our challenge to begin fresh church planting initiatives in new and strategic population areas (Universities, New Suburbs, Growing Townships). I am delighted to report that our Church Plant and Church Development funds have been used to help kick-start and/or sustain 8 plants.
  - Red Post - UCT, Cape Town
  - Hope Church - Uitzicht, Cape Town
  - Cross Central - Parow, Cape Town
  - Masiphumelele Church - Cape Town
  - Christ Church Zwelihle - Hermanus
  - Lamontville Church - Durban
  - Christ Church Cascades - Pietermaritzburg
  - Christ Central Church - Soweto

It's clear that making designated growth funds available does help incentivise local churches to actively pray, plan and partner together for church planting. It has also been a great help to have our Generate arm providing ongoing assistance and focus on planting and growth through conferences and help networks.

## **REACH-SA Challenges**

I'm conscious that its easier to criticise faults than to commend progress. I confess that as a young Bible college student I thought I could tell the

incumbent leadership a thing or two about running this organization. Now that I am in the position myself, I find myself quickly repenting of my foolishness.

**Structural:** We have already discussed our federal structure and whether or not we need to be looking at adjustments or changes. We are also seeing some churches plateauing or even declining beyond hope of rescue. Some stubbornly refuse help or intervention (even showing themselves to be suspicious of our help). The reality is, we do need to make collective hard calls about some dying churches and also more strategic decisions about locating new churches. We all need to look beyond our own patch. A clear growth strategy will help us more effectively make these decisions.

**Leadership:** As much as we celebrate our born-again Bishops and other gospel centred leadership, some questions do need to be asked about our leadership pipeline. How effective are we in identifying and mentoring future leadership? Are we making real progress in the transformation we committed to almost 20 years ago during our watershed reconciliation ministry conference? Is Christian leadership training side-lined because of our strong focus on training Bible expositors?

**Economic:** Quite a few local churches are grappling with financial shortfalls which are symptomatic of our struggling national economy. We live with the reality of financial hardship in the majority of our Southern African communities. This affects our ability to employ staff as well as stock the necessary resources for doing gospel ministry. Let me say again we have much to learn from God's discipline in this area, particularly in resourcefulness, sacrifice and sharing.

**Social:** We are living in an increasingly secular society. The Christian gospel is no longer tolerated as a good option for life but is now actively opposed by many. There is a concerted effort to demonize Christianity<sup>1</sup> in some very prominent social (and social media) circles. We live in what some call an "outrage culture" and this hyper-sensitivity even causes a sub-conscious pressure on us not to offend. Some of us may not even be aware of how we have subtly taken on pressure to avoid preaching the 'unacceptable doctrines' (e.g. hell and judgement) and naming the modern 'acceptable sins' (e.g. materialism and homosexual practice).

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<sup>1</sup> <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/from-do-gooders-to-do-badders/>

All these obstacles, however, are not actually cause to despair. In many ways they are cause for encouragement, because its in just such an environment that the Lord caused the gospel to first take root 2000 years ago. If anything, it was actually worse.

Its important for us not to lose sight of this seemingly obvious truth. The church on earth is commissioned by Christ to grow His Kingdom in the midst of sinful and satanic opposition. It is out of such unlikely looking ground that God's Holy Kingdom grows. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is a great comfort here. God has chosen those He will call in every age and in every place. In the midst of rampant idolatry, attack, apathy and apostasy. The Lord reserves for Himself a remnant who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

So let us remember that context in which we minister is not a lost cause, but a mission field!

### **The Mission of REACH-SA**

The collective purpose of REACH-SA as a fellowship of churches must reflect the immense gospel need of our country and aim to fulfil the command that the Lord Jesus gave to his church:

***REACH-SA is a fellowship of Reformed, Evangelical Anglican churches partnered together in our Christ given mandate to go and make disciples of Christ among all people in our country, continent and world.***

We can only pursue this goal in dependence upon God in prayer and in reliance upon the powerful work of his Holy Spirit to change hearts through His Word.

It is with this mission in mind that we focus on four key objectives.

#### **1. LEADERSHIP**

*REACH-SA leadership must impart the urgency of gospel ministry and model a passion to make disciples.*

Leadership will focus on:

- Directing the Gospel Centred **Vision** for Growth
- Preserving missional **Unity** across regions
- Actively **Mentoring** a new generation of leaders
- **Guarding** our Reformed, Evangelical, Anglican distinctives
- **Applying** and Modelling Godly Biblical Leadership

- A. **Communication:** The online age has radically changed how we communicate. It is vital for us to properly harness new forms of media to help convey our vision. Each area would need to appoint Media Rep. A national co-ordinator would then help to establish and maintain an effective online presence. This medium would help us to reach unbelievers *and* inform believers. A well planned and executed media strategy is essential to a growth plan. Discussions have already begun in this regard.
- B. **Contact:** Our Area leadership play an increasingly important role in promoting and supporting a network of local and regional relationships between pastors and churches. We must be more intentional in this regard. The evidence shows that grass-roots relationships build more effective and long-term partnerships than top down instructions. What must not be missed is that leadership still need to initiate, facilitate and co-ordinate these connections.

## 2. EQUIPPING

*REACH-SA is responsible to help provide resources, people and expertise that will assist churches in fulfilling their mission to make disciples of Christ.*

This will include:

- i. Regional Ministry Training standards and assessment.
- ii. Clear pipeline for ministry training:

Local Church Ministry Apprenticeship → Theological Education (GWC) → Assigned Church for OJT / Curacy (LMin) → Licence and/or Ordination
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- iii. Providing churches with resources for effective evangelism and outreach.
- iv. Providing our workers with resources to grow in their leadership.
- v. Assist pastors and churches with accurate assessments of the latest trends and threats in theology and church practice.
- vi. Prioritise church growth and church planting funds.
- vii. Regular Generate, Preaching and Ministry conferences and workshops.

## 3. CARING

*REACH-SA aims to source and provide encouragement and care for our church workers who labour amidst much apathy and hostility to the gospel.*

We aim to help sustain our churches and their leaders in their mission in a context which is discouraging and increasingly hostile to the gospel

This will include:

- i. Working for the wellbeing of pastors, their wives and other church workers to promote a long term, fruitful ministry.

- ii. Committed to Biblical church discipline motivated by love.
- iii. Developing localized support networks that reduce pressure on a small central leadership.
- iv. Developing focussed prayer initiatives and networks.
- v. Co-ordinating resources to help support gifted and godly workers in struggling communities.

#### **4. PLANTING**

*REACH-SA leadership are to assist local churches in identifying strategic church planting areas and directing available resources.*

#### **This will include:**

- i. Ensuring priorities remain people, not profitability.
- ii. Making strategic calls with our limited resources.
- iii. Targeting critical demographic. New Suburbs; Young families; Students; High Population Townships.
- iv. Providing training and assistance through our Generate network.
- v. Providing available funds and other resources.

It is with this mission, and these objectives in mind, that I finally outline our vision for building God's Kingdom through REACH-SA

#### **Vision 2020**

This consists of two tiers:

- A denomination wide 20 year strategy for church growth
- A local church challenge for 2020

1. **Vision 2020:** Is a denomination wide goal of establishing 200 local churches in 20 years.

Currently REACH-SA sits at about 143 local 'churches' (if we include our church plants and preaching posts (some of which are quite large).

In this breakdown, we have 112 potential "hub" churches (82 Constituent churches and 30 daughter churches).

The goal is to grow that total to 200 churches in 20 years. (Just over 4 per year) Current constituent churches will form the 'hub' for reaching a strategic population area (e.g. new suburb, high population township; growing numbers of young families; students). Training and resourcing will be channelled through these hubs.

I would recommend further studies examine our Bhekithemba 'model' (South Coast KZN). This one 'hub' church has established 10 daughter churches across the greater Umlazi area. Our most successful township church planting exercise.

We would love to replicate this in other areas. I'm glad to report that this conversation has been going for some time already and some momentum has already begun here in the Western Cape. I recommend you all take time to listen to Rev. Phumezo Masango's talk on township church planting when its made available online.

There is much more to unpack in this vision, particularly into the specifics around regions and cities. We will revisit this in future gatherings.

Now to the first and most immediate 'phase 1' of this Vision2020 plan.

## **2. REACH2020**

Here is our REACH2020 challenge

**Today I challenge each local church member to prayerfully commit to 20 evangelistic acts in 2020.**

Make a similar chart to plot your progress.

- Invite friend to a Men's event
- Invite friend to a Women's event
- Develop a Bible Reading Relationship with an unbeliever
- Meet with someone for evangelistic and mission focussed prayer
- Seek out 20 personal evangelism opportunities
- Issue 20 invitations to church
- Pray for 20 missionaries / evangelists in a year
- Pray for 20 people who need Jesus all year
- Make 20 social media contacts you can witness to

- Begin a daily gospel reflection social media post
- Street Evangelism and tracts (still works in many of our contexts)
- Start a gospel discussion blog
- Write a letter sharing your faith
- Host an outreach dinner
- Attend an evangelism training course
- Start a community prayer group
- Host a coffee morning
- Participate in a short-term mission trip / outreach
- Join / Form a visitation team
- Start / Participate in neighbourhood care group.

Try and tick off **20 in 2020**

To help ensure this is effective each local church leadership needs to provide the opportunities for church members invite friends, family and colleagues to gospel gatherings (still the most effective means of gaining new visitors).

Some examples:

- TED type evangelistic talks (a specialist subject with gospel edge)
- Men's and Ladies events
- Marriage and Parenting events
- 'Hot topic' evangelistic sermon series
- Church social events (e.g. Heritage Day braai) with witness potential
- Debate evenings; Q&A sessions;
- Sharable social media pre-evangelism video clips.
- Children's events (Holiday Clubs; Family Days; Outings)
- Seasonal events (Carols, Easter Plays)
- Community care initiatives (e.g. Day Care; Food bank)

Some may think these are gimmicks or that its forcing someone to do ministry. That is clearly not our objective. (I certainly hope no one is in ministry because they feel pushed into it!) The purpose of our challenge is to provide channels and ideas for God’s people to serve the Lord through opportunities for discipleship and evangelism (which cannot be separated).

I’m all the more convinced that we need to keep consciously returning to the call to be missional with our gospel. We too easily become comfortable or complacent. The secular world (both online and public) is also intimidating many believers into silence or shame. Our gospel is not socially accepted or even tolerated in many circles. Our response is not to be aggressive or ‘fight back’ but rather to ‘love back’ and sincerely and share the gospel with our lost, fractured, frustrated, broken world.

Like Jesus, we must seek to go into our world full of grace *and* truth.

I’ve been reflecting on the several parables Jesus taught about the coming of His Kingdom. Particularly the tension his teachings create in Matthew 24,25 regarding the need to be ready for his imminent return, and yet to also prepare for the delay.

“Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

(Matt.24:42)

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

(Matt. 24:45,46)

Will the Master find His servants faithful *and* wise on His return? Will we be found to be feeding the servants at the proper time? Or will we be found feeding ourselves and exploiting God’s servants (Matt.25:48f)? There are some sobering and fearful passages warning ministers not to expect heaven just because they wear a clerical collar. Your actions (or lack of it) betray your heart.

We servants must be about the Master's business, working hard in the delay, conscious of His imminent return. This is the perspective that must drive our service.

In 2001 we had our very first GWC hosted Synod. Meeting in this very place. It was during that Synod that the 9/11 planes hit the towers.

And the world was thrown into renewed turmoil.

And David Cook preached on the imminent return of the Lord Jesus.

Today we gather in this same place, and the world (and our neighbourhoods) are in renewed turmoil.

And the message remains, Jesus' return is imminent.

The Master will soon return and hold us all to account.

And in this delay, don't be lazy and do nothing.

And don't be selfish and beat and exploit the servants.

But make sure you are found to be about the Master's business when He returns.

So let us go forward, together.

Lord, give us Africa for Jesus.

iAfrika mayibuyele ku Jesu.