

Presiding Bishop's Charge Synod 2017

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It is a great privilege for me to be bringing the Synod Charge on this historic anniversary year. Next month we commemorate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's watershed Wittenberg protest and celebrate the ripple effect of the Reformation down to this very day.

The Church of England in South Africa is a direct descendant of the English Reformation and we give thanks to God that today we still stand on the doctrines of Grace and the Reformation distinctives that mark the orthodox Church of England. Our African Protestant church has grown from a few faithful congregations to a busy denomination of 150 churches with hundreds of full time workers – including 120 clergy and 7 bishops. From our local churches we have also seen many other ministries established in our communities. (Mercy ministries, student ministries, schools, creches and other para-church arms). Thousands of people have come to repentance and faith in Christ through the ministries and members of REACH-South Africa.

George Whitefield College was birthed through REACH-SA and is now one of Africa's leading study centres for Reformed Evangelical Anglican Theology. The official training college of our denomination is also producing many graduates who are making an impact for the gospel not just in REACH-SA but in denominations and communities all across Africa.

Added to all this we also have several associate and affiliated churches in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique and the DRC. Many churches in these southern African countries are church plants via REACH-SA churches and/or GWC graduates.

We must not also overlook the many missionaries who have gone out from REACH-SA churches into all the corners of the world.

When we look at what God has accomplished in 500 years of Reformation history at and what He has brought about in over 200 years of Evangelical Anglican ministry in southern Africa we can only say, glory be to God alone for all He has done in us and through us for Christ.

It is especially appropriate on this historic anniversary year to be able to officially add a new volume to our own history. Rev. Brian Cameron very kindly agreed to write "The Candle Still Burns" as a follow on from Tony Ive's comprehensive historical record, 'A Candle Burns in Africa'¹. I am so pleased to officially launch the new edition at this synod and we give grateful thanks to Brian for his faithful labour in this project.

I feel I am speaking as someone who is reluctant to admit that he is fast becoming part of the "old guard" but I want to encourage our younger ministers and members to read both of these volumes if they have not already done so. We must not forget where we have come from, nor take lightly the high price many paid for us to be where we are today.

It's possible some are not even aware that the "candle" title refers to the great statement of Bishop Latimer to Bishop Ridley in 1555, as they were about to be burned at the stake for refusing to recant the doctrines of grace. "Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man! We shall this day light such a candle by God's grace in England, as I trust shall never be put out." Those words have proved prophetically true as here on the southern end of Africa, in the 21st century, that candle still burns.

When I read about the sacrificial lives of the Reformers and other historic servants of the Word I feel some shame that I complain about so mild an opposition that many of us face today. The worst burn we will experience will probably come through social media but many of those early Anglican Reformers and ministers lost their lives to the flames for the sake of Christ.

We should all be concerned by the mild Christianity so much of society approves of today. We are surrounded by compromise and conformity to the world rather than transformation in Christ. We live in the times when many prefer to preserve their popularity by preaching the spirit of the age rather than the true Gospel of grace to repentant sinners. Be aware too that this pressure can be very subtle. It's possible to sound orthodox but gingerly avoid treading on any sensitive issues that could offend modern society's sentiments. We must be on our guard against the dangerous desire for popularity at the expense of Biblical truth.

"Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,
for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets." (Luke 6:26)

¹ Ive, Anthony (1992) A Candle Burns in Africa (CESA)

Our Local Churches

It is such a delight and an honour to be able to visit our local churches and see so many of our faithful workers serving the Master. Several of our men and women labour for the Lord in the midst of very difficult circumstances.

Several of our REACH congregations are growing not just in numbers but also in their members' commitment to maturity and ministry involvement. I also notice, however, that other churches just don't seem to be able to make any headway, even after many years ministry. From personal experience, I know how discouraging it can be to see other gospel preaching churches flourishing while yours is not. In this regard, we should firstly avoid the trap of competitively comparing ourselves to others, which is pure pride. Each one of us will ultimately give an account of our stewardship to the Lord alone (Luke 12:35f; 1Cor.3:10f; 2Cor.5:10). It is right, however, to be examining our own ministry in the Light of the Lord's expectations and with that perspective we can then benefit from the insight of our fellow gospel workers as we sharpen one another in our calling.

I have realized, from bitter experience, that the biggest problem in my ministry is me. I'm often blind to my own faults but so easily see the faults of others. Looking back over my pastoral ministry years I would have welcomed someone who administered the wounds of a friend in order to help me serve the Lord more effectively. I have had to constantly learn to put away my pride, recognize my weaknesses and humbly accept the wisdom and advice of others.

From my reading, experience and visits with many pastors, here are five consistent features of effective, Biblical, local church ministry.

- i. Clear Leadership:** Its popular these days to promote the team ministry model for a local church. I certainly support and encourage that practice as it has a strong Biblical basis. I do want to add, however, that we must not negate the important role of the leader of that ministry team. The Bible is full of examples of individual leaders who have been used by God to pioneer ministry and give direction to God's people. Our own Episcopal system recognizes that reality. In our REACH-SA structures it is the Rector's task to drive the overall vision and direction of the local church. This is the case because Christian leadership is centred around a solid Bible teaching and preaching ministry. I know that there have been many church growth books advocating the importance of team ministry and community centred ministry and there is much good and helpful truth in this. We must beware, however, of swinging completely away from the vital role of the Rector and the lead he must give from the pulpit.

A local church cannot do without a godly leader who gives clear, wise and Biblical direction to God's people. Good leaders don't just lead by consensus, they lead by conviction, a conviction that is nurtured and shaped by the truth of God's Word and a heart for God's people.

Learning how to lead a ministry team of employees and volunteers is challenging. Not all of us have the gift but all of us in leadership positions can learn to be better at it. I believe that many of us need to upskill in this area of local church leadership. It is to this end that we are looking at including Biblical Leadership modules in a future curacy training program. I hope to give more feedback on this in time.

Resources: Wisdom in Leadership – Craig Hamilton (Matthias)
www.ThomRainer.com

- ii. **Ministry Purpose** : Effective churches have a plan and they put it into practice. I'm talking about more than having a mission statement. Many church noticeboards display a vision statement that never seems to go further than the Sunday bulletin or annual vestry meeting. An effective church unpacks their vision into the daily life of the church family. It makes a big difference to the health of a local church when everyone knows what they are there for and so play their part more effectively.

A local church living out what it means to be God's family is a very attractive witness to the nations. We are in a world full of lost people, most go with the flow of society because they don't know where they are going themselves. Others latch on to false religions or even cults purely because these organizations offer some sort of security and direction in life. In the light of this, it would be nothing less than failure for the local church not to reflect its God given purpose to the world. Jesus saved and sent us to evangelise the lost and disciple the found. We must be about the work of the Master in an intentional way with a clear strategy for our context, under the direction of the Word of God.

Space limits me from saying more on this, but I must add how grateful we are to have Generate playing a role in helping to equip our ministers with tools for more effective church growth as well as ministry and leadership. They provide regular workshops, seminars and conferences which every local church minister should not miss.

www.generatesa.co.za; <http://churchleaders.com>;

iii. People Matter: We know and teach that the local church grows and functions around the centrality of the Word of God. We hold to our REACH-SA motto of "God's Word Above All Things". The question is, how does this really look in a local church? Do we connect the Word of God to people in sincere and loving way? Or do we just hold it up above our heads? It may be a surprise to some but in this social media age, people are desperate for genuine relationships. Social media and technology are poor and often unhelpful substitutes for warm hearted gospel friendships. To this end personal discipleship is clearly the key to the health of the local church. Real people connecting with real people around the Bible grows God's Kingdom. It's great to have programs and courses but if we do not communicate a genuine love for people (lost and found) we will not be effective in God's work.

Even evangelism cannot be separated from relational discipleship. It was popular for a time to have "altar call Christianity" as the climactic feature of church ministry. The danger is that we could end up with good evangelism response statistics but very few real disciples. Jesus did not separate mission and evangelism from discipleship:

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

True converts are disciples of Jesus, not just acknowledgers of Him. The great commission also teaches us just how people centred our mission is, both in distance and diversity. If we are doing ministry without a passion for people of all nations (regardless of ethnicity, gender, culture etc) we are clearly in the wrong place. Our goal is winning people to Christ *and* helping them grow to maturity in Christ. This takes a Cross centred love for God *and* for people and intentional life engagement with them. It's what our Christian love is all about (1 John4:7f).

Resources:

www.thevineproject.com

Marshall & Payne (2016) The Vine Project (Matthias)

Armes, LeRoy (1978) The Lost Art of Disciple Making (Zondervan)

iv. Expository Teaching: True church growth does not happen without able Bible teachers and preachers who labour intensely and faithfully at their task. I say this conscious that God is sovereign and can even make the stones cry out if He wanted to but the reality is that a gifted and faithful Bible teacher will gather more people than a poor one, even if his leadership skills are lacking and the church roof leaks. God's people will overlook many shortfalls if they are being properly fed.

We must beware of resting on our laurels with regards to our Bible teaching reputation. Many of the "new generation" churches are recognising the importance of Bible teaching and are honing their skills. We must ensure that we do not coast on our reputation in this area but strive to be even more excellent in our God given task.

To that end, there is a very important place for ongoing training in our teaching and preaching ministries. All of us must not stop learning, especially those of us in full time ministry. We should be occupied with private studies as well as attending regular seminars, conferences or even post-graduate study. I appeal to all our local church council members to ensure your ministers attend the regular Bible and Preaching conferences which REACH-SA and GWC offer.

This year we were also pleased to see the launch of the Simeon Trust Bible Exposition workshops in South Africa. The first workshops attracted pastors and Bible teachers from a variety of church backgrounds and were very well received. I trust that those who missed out on the initial meetings will be first in the queue for the next ones.

www.simeontrust.crossword.org.za

Recommended Resources

Ash, Christopher (2009) *The Priority of Preaching* (Christian Focus)

Bartholomew, Craig (2015) *Excellent Preaching* (Lexham Press)

Helm, David (2014) *Expositional Preaching* (Crossway)

Lastly, I must include what may seem obvious but needs to be stressed.

v. Personal Holiness: Without Godly men and women all the skills and programs in the church are useless. Remember that the Biblical qualifications for leadership in God's church emphasise godly character before teaching ability (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). It is right to look for the most gifted workers for our churches but it's also true that godly men and women with limited gifts have always been better used by the Lord than gifted delinquents.

Godliness begins with a personal, vital relationship with the Saviour. Our own times of study and prayer are non-negotiable essentials. Yet our increasingly distracted world is influencing believers too. It's sad to see that some people's quiet time is nothing more than a few moments on Twitter and a couple of spiritual Facebook posts. It's alarming to meet many young believers who regard days of fasting and prayer as a foreign concept and Bible verse memory and meditation as a mystery.

Friends, we must remain vigilant in this area. Perhaps even instilling a new type of regular fast from technology in order to aid and grow our spiritual disciplines. We will all be poorer for lack of personal growth in godliness and our ministries will reflect it in some way. It may well be true that the most important charge *you* need to hear at this Synod is the call to return to the daily disciplines of the Word and prayer.

Lord make us heed that call.

Our Denomination

As I begin my third year as Presiding Bishop I want to say how grateful I am to the Lord for my REACH-SA family. Your kindness, prayers and support have been humbling and greatly encouraging. To put it plainly, it's been difficult to leave much of my local church ministry and undertake a role that demands a different level of leadership, service and activity. I have often been driven to my knees, wondering how the Lord can give so weak a servant so great a responsibility. Yet God is sovereign and chooses the foolish to shame the wise. 'So I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.' (2 Cor.12:9)

National Strategy: In Synod 2015 we were alerted to the disturbing plateau in denominational growth. Since then we have seen encouraging signs of change as we increased our focus on funding new churches and raising and training new workers. We have had excellent numbers of enrolments at GWC and an encouraging start to our church plant incentive. The New Projects Fund has provided "kick start" funding for 4 church plants and there are 2 more pending. We hope to hear more about these plants during our synod.

Four new plants are an exciting development and I am praying for further workers and funding to help us reach the goal of 10 established church plants before my initial 5 year term is complete. This *can* be achieved (and even more) but it will require persistent prayer, bold faith and selfless co-operation.

National Leadership: I am very thankful to God for our Bishops and other national leaders (Executive and Trustees) who give so much of their time to the concerns of our denomination. I have also found, to my own frequent disappointment, that the more I stretch myself across the ministry spectrum the less effective I am. It is for this reason that I have asked my fellow bishops to take national responsibility for specific ministry arms rather than having us all carry oversight for every ministry in our regions. It's our hope that this will lead to greater communication and co-operation across the regions as well as help facilitate national ministry or outreach campaigns.

Martin Morrison	– Mercy Ministries / Schools
Njabulo Mazibuko	– Missions and Outreach
Raj Moodley	– Christian Workers Care
Gary Bedderson	– Youth and Children's Ministry
Alan Noble	– Student Ministry
Glenn Lyons	– Ministry Training

Ministry Training: As we grow its becoming more and more necessary for us to establish our standards and benchmarks for training and employment in our organization. This does not just apply to our Bible College, but to every aspect of our training pipeline.

Apprenticeship → College → Curacy / Post Graduate Training

a. Ministry Apprenticeship: We have already agreed that candidates for full time ministry must first complete a local church based apprenticeship program before applying to study at GWC. This is particularly important for the younger candidate who may have less ministry experience. It's also clear that much of our 'hands on' equipping happens in the local church. It would be unwise and unhelpful to expect all ministry training to happen at Bible college.

Thanks to the digital age, there are now dozens of different training courses available to us. A number of our churches have plugged into various options as well as developing their own material. Our concern is that we may end up with a wide variety of programs in our churches and have no way of measuring the level of preparation the potential college candidate has received. It's essential that we have an agreed training standard across all our regions and churches. The goal is to frame a program that makes the candidate best prepared for local church ministry as well as for the next stage of his / her training at GWC.

The GWC Explore course is the synod accepted standard for the REACH-SA Gospel Workers Licence (previously the Lay Reader's Licence) but this certainly cannot be the complete fit for a pre-GWC apprenticeship program.

It is to this end that I have asked the Executive to allow me to select a team who will help me review and recommend the acceptable standards for a regional or local church based Ministry Apprenticeship Program. This will also need the input of the college as we seek to dovetail local church based training with further GWC based theological education.

There are certain subjects that can be introduced at the apprenticeship stage as a way to help candidates learn ministry in a local church context as well as prepare them for seminary level theological study:

- Message of the Bible (Biblical Theology)
- Bible Interpretation Skills (Hermeneutics)
- Basic Bible Teaching skills (Homiletics)
- Local Church Ministry (Pastoralia)
- REACH-SA practice (Ecclesiology)
- Leadership and Administration

It would be ideal to have regional cooperation and training hubs in order to help local churches benefit from shared resources. I know that this will have logistical and other challenges but it is not an insurmountable problem.

Our smaller regions (Eastern Cape & Free State) have already made significant progress in establishing a regional training program and have good 'buy in' from their REACH-SA churches. This arrangement may be more challenging in areas where we have larger concentrations of churches. The primary objective therefore, is to have agreed standards and courses which each region (or sub region / cluster) can implement in a way that best suits their context.

b. George Whitefield College: GWC is an essential channel in our training pipeline. This is not just something that we in REACH-SA have realized, but many others in Africa are looking to our college as a training centre for their ministers. We have an amazing resource in GWC which offers accredited undergraduate and post graduate Theological training to all our ministry workers and ministers.

I know there have been regular requests for distance learning alternatives to study at GWC and I am sympathetic to some of the reasoning. It *is* difficult for many people to make the move for a minimum of three years

residential study in Cape Town. This is particularly so with potential GWC students who are some years past school and university years and may even have families, financial obligations or other ties that are hard to break.

Taking all this into account we remain convinced that a residential theological education is the best way forward for our ministers. The faculty and facilities provide a learning environment that cannot be matched by local church resources. The value of time set aside under the teaching of well-educated academics who love the Lord and His Word is a privilege that should not be lightly passed over. We therefore remain committed to GWC as *the* training college for our REACH-SA ministers and we give thanks to God for our ongoing and growing partnership.

(see the new website at: www.gwc.ac.za)

c. Curacy / Post Graduate Ministry Training: This is an area that has occupied my mind a lot in recent months. Some years ago we established the Licentiate in Ministry as a “finishing course” for our curates. The course has GWC oversight but is church based and requires the supervision of the Rector who ensures that the candidate completes the required assignments and ministry activities to a competent and acceptable standard. This helps prepare the candidate for their future years of ministry.

This pilot course is due for review in the coming year and therefore provides us with an opportunity to think through its further potential. I am thinking particularly of its application to all GWC graduates who serve in REACH-SA ministry, including our many women in ministry.

Women’s Ministry: As a Reformed, Evangelical, Anglican denomination we hold to a complementarian rather than an egalitarian view of women’s ministry. To put it simply, we are convinced that the Bible teaches different roles for men and women in the family and the church. This is not an expression of inequality but rather that of God designed difference. This obvious gender fact has entered a storm of controversy in our modern society and its clear we are facing serious challenges to God’s Biblical standard.

Our 21st century social context makes it all the more necessary to ensure we are convinced on our Biblical stance and express it clearly and conscientiously. If we are complementarian we must demonstrate it and not just pay lip service to it. Women have a role to play in local church ministry and this includes appropriate leadership roles and teaching ministry to women and children. This ought to be properly recognized.

The Gospel Workers Licence goes some way towards this but it's clear there are still questions and grey areas. It is my conviction that we would all be greatly helped if we had clearer guidelines on women's ministry roles and to that end I have asked our Executive to appoint a working group (of qualified men and women) who will confer and compile guidelines for discussion at our area councils.

This will include resolving the issue of women deacons. There is a long story behind the Deaconess references in our Handbook. For those who may not know, these changes were made to the handbook in anticipation of the motion being passed at the 2000 Synod. Due to the ensuing heated debate, the motion was not voted on and a more general women's ministry policy was passed the following year. It is long overdue for us to settle our practice in this area and I hope we will have more clarity by next synod.

Resources:

Sandom, Carrie (2012) Different by Design (Christian Focus)

Smith, Claire (2012) God's Good Design (Matthias Media)

Church Practice

Church Councils: Our church councils fulfil an important administrative and accountability role in the running of the church (Handbook pg.33). The responsibility of the council involves managing the affairs of the church and includes property, maintenance, financial affairs and employment of staff.

Our Handbook rightly allows for the Rector to chair this body and also allows for other ministers to join the council. This is all fine and good practice as it can ensure good communication and cooperation with regards to ministry direction in the local church. I have noticed, however, that some local churches allow employed ministry workers to be elected onto church council as voting members. This seems to me to be a clear conflict of interest. How can the employees also be the employers in their organization? A large church with multiple staff could end up dominating the church council and thereby gain control of their own employment security and salaries. I ask all local church councils to examine their structures carefully and correct any questionable practices such as these.

We must maintain the distinction between ministry staff and council for the sake of accountability and good church practice. I have never had signing authority on any church accounts and I never intend to, I believe this should be the same for every employed minister of the gospel.

Some of our churches have wisely chosen to establish a 'management committee' or 'leadership team' where council and ministry staff can meet together and focus on ministry issues rather than have awkward financial and employment discussions with the staff present. This to me seems to be a wiser practice. Please discuss this at your local church councils.

Financial Accountability: We are receiving increasing numbers of reports related to theft from church property and even internal misconduct. Many people are facing great financial difficulties these days and none of us is immune to temptation. I ask all our local churches to be vigilant in this area. Our trustees have also regularly advised church councils to encourage EFT collection rather than cash offerings. It is a far safer way to manage funds.

It is also clear that many of our local church councils would value guidance in these areas. There are plans to offer Finance Workshops for our churches through the help of qualified and experienced members on our Executive. More information will follow in time.

Policy Implementation: Although this has been highlighted regularly it is important for us to be proactive in areas that have become critically sensitive in our modern society. Biblical Christianity is clearly becoming more and more at odds with the mood of the day and we ought not to be complacent about it.

There is much suspicion of "organized religion" (some of it justified) and there is also much misunderstanding. Our best witness to the world is to follow Christ in seeking to be full of grace and truth at all times. Let us love our world with the love of Christ and share His truth with all humility and grace. In living out our Christian lives it will not help us to be vague or even deceptive about our Biblical stance. There have been far too many examples of this kind of practice backfiring badly.

Our Handbook contains a collection of comprehensive policies, statements and guidelines with regards to Child Protection, HIV-AIDS, Homosexuality, Women's Ministry and the Charismatic movement.

It's clear (as I've already highlighted with regards to women) that some review of these policies is warranted. Further clarity is needed and some policies may need to be returned to area councils or committees for further discussion and revision. We may also need new policies with regards to the increasingly confused views on gender that society is rapidly embracing. We need to get some of our best theologians to help us produce guidelines in this area.

Helpful Resources:

Allberry, Sam (2015) Is God anti Gay? (The Good Book Co)

Roberts, Vaughn (2016) Transgender (The Good Book Co)

With regards to compiling our own gender statement it will be worth examining the very recently published Nashville Statement on Biblical Sexuality (of which both above authors are signatories). A quote from the preamble sums up the heart of the matter:

“To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.”

To view the statement, go to: <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement>

Legal Matters: Many of you are aware of the Government commission on regulating religious institutions in our country. Without wanting to sound alarmist, there are some real threats to our freedom of religion if these recommendations are passed into law. To this end I’m very grateful to our Administrator and Chancellor for handling REACH-SA’s representations to the Government as well as our association with FOR-SA who are doing excellent work in representing the common concerns of our churches to the government and courts. I urge you all to keep abreast of these developments and to keep them in prayer. Freedom Of Religion SA - <https://forsa.org.za/>

Technology: You will have noticed that this charge includes numerous internet links to further resources and information. This is very much the norm for our 21st century and all of us local church leaders will have realized the necessity of websites and social media as a means of connecting with modern society. Many of our churches also use visual media in some form or another (Videos, PowerPoint etc) in their Sunday services and other meetings.

This medium has also reached the stage where we cannot just get a “friend of a friend” to do our websites, videos and databases. Our busy world wide web has millions of viewers and only the best and smartest communication will connect with an audience. There is massive potential in this field but it will need the attention of more than a couple of part time enthusiasts. This reality means we need to consider including IT as part of our ministry budgeting.

REACH-SA recently signed with **Go-Do-Church** and their resources have been a great help in compiling a comprehensive database for record keeping and communication. We will hear more from them at this synod.

<http://godochurch.com>

#REACH500

It has been both humbling and thrilling to see the extent of the response to the REACH 500 challenge. Last year each local church was charged to share the gospel with 500 new people through creative outreach and witnessing encounters. I'm happy to report that many of our pastors and local churches have embraced the vision and several amazing and exciting stories have been shared in the last number of months. There are still four months to go but some of our churches have already surpassed the 500 target and are now talking REACH750 or even REACH1000. Of course, we don't ultimately focus on the number but celebrate the fact that this incentive has resulted in thousands of souls hearing the gospel this year. That must surely be the way the Reformers would have wanted us to celebrate their 500th anniversary.

This coming year I promised to move our focus onto Discipleship, which in many ways is inseparable from Evangelism as we have already learned (Matt.28). One of the most effective ways of securing the Evangelism – Discipleship link is through 1-2-1 Bible reading. We are seeing growing numbers of our leaders becoming more and more convinced of this important ministry activity. Much of a new believer's growth in the faith can come through these relational 1-2-1 Bible meetings. I've seen that in my own experience as it was in the weekly lunchtime meetings with Pastor Barry van Eysen where my real growth was nurtured and my confidence in Christ grew (this way back in 1993 before 1-2-1 had a name!).

Our Evangelism, Sunday Services (Exaltation) and small groups (Equipping) are all essential to local church ministry, but we cannot afford to leave 1-2-1 out of our local church portfolio. I believe that the Kingdom benefits are just too great to ignore. Imagine what God can do if we had 100, 50 or even just 10 people in our own church reading the Bible with someone every week?

Hence my next challenge to you all: **#READ500**

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is simple: Each region produces 500 mentored and active 1-2-1 readers in 2018. That's 500 people who will read the Bible with 500 people, who will go on to read the Bible with 500 other people, who will go on to read the Bible with 500 other people, who will . . . (I'm sure you get the idea).

This is not an impossible task – with the Lord on our side. If we divide our country into three regions it gives us approximately 50 churches per region which means each local church’s initial target is **ten** 1-2-1 Bible readers.

- a. WC and EC
- b. Gaut and FS
- c. KZN

There is some variance in the number and size of the churches so to counter that larger churches should work on **10 readers per hundred members**.

One other catch. Full time workers don’t count! If *they* are not reading the Bible with someone why are they employed in the first place!? We must not rob our people of the joy of reading and learning God’s word for themselves and with others. Isn’t that what the Reformation won for us? Or are we slowly reverting to being medieval priests who mediate the Word to the masses because we don’t trust the Bible to speak for itself? We want our people to be reading God’s Word – and reading it with others. This is where the real growth happens. When the Word is opened, God goes to work.

This is also the foundational motivation behind the work of The Word121². This ministry uses a simple, friendly, non-threatening approach to engaging people with the gospel and is being used by thousands of people around the world. Richard Borgonon has already visited many of our churches and has helped us make effective use of this 1-2-1 material (which is available through CBD). These excellent and encouraging workshops should be mandatory for all our members. Richard returns to South Africa next week and will be running numerous training sessions at churches around the country. This is providential timing for our own campaign and I encourage all of you to connect your 10+ potential “1-2-1ers” to the nearest workshop.³

We know and profess that the Word of God is powerful and effective. It is fully able to accomplish God’s purposes in the power of His Spirit. Let us therefore show we believe this by taking the Word of God into our communities and cities through an army of God’s people equipped with the one effective offensive weapon God has given us, His Word.

The Lord is at work brothers and sisters, so let us be about His work.

² www.theword121.com

³ Email us for a copy of Richard’s SA itinerary: eden@reachsa.org.za

A Final Word

It only leaves me to say again how excited I am to be part of God's work in REACH-South Africa. Yes, there are many dangers, toils and snares. We hold out the Word of life to a broken, dying world that has no idea how desperately they need the rescue Jesus offers. There is much resistance to the Saviour but there are also many whose hearts are waiting for His call.

Our struggle is not against unbelievers so we must prayerfully do battle against the evil one and persevere in loving our enemies by sharing Jesus.

Brothers and sisters let us not shrink back or grow weary in our duty. Let us not be overwhelmed by the size of the task nor the noise of the opposition. Our God is for us, who can be against us?

So we say:

Lord, give us Africa for Jesus

iAfrika mayibuyele kuJesu

Amen