



With Pastor Tshabalala in Madadeni

The Agonizomai Striver

**“We proclaim Him ...”
Colossians 1:28-29**

Dear Friends and Ministry Partners,

December 18, 2019

It is hard to believe I am already penning our final retrospective for 2019! Like most of you, Debbie and I can say, “Where has the time gone?” So, before we transition from 2019 to 2020, Debbie and I want to quickly update you concerning the ministry here in Cape Town.

After the last update a couple months ago, Debbie and I traveled 900 miles to the town of Newcastle, which is where Debbie grew up and where we were married. I was invited by an Indian congregation last January to minister in their midst the second half of October. Thus, the last half of October saw me teaching a module on the Pentateuch on

weeknights to 12 students in a fledgling Bible school. Additionally, I was asked to teach two all day seminars on homosexuality, the Bible, and the church in two different locations, as well as preaching in four different churches in the northern Kwa-Zulu Natal province. It was a very full schedule to say the least.

One of the Saturday seminars was in the Zulu enclave of Madadeni, just a few miles outside of Newcastle. Some forty Zulu pastors and church leaders were in attendance to listen to my seven-hour seminar. This was the first time in twenty-five years of ministry that I had to work through a translator, which required some significant adjustments on my part. In the Q&A that followed the seminar, I learned that homosexuality, which was once very taboo in Zulu culture, is now rapidly gaining acceptance. Why the about face? Because, as I was told, the *zangomas* (witch doctors) are telling the people that the ancestors now approve of same-sex unions. This underscores just how much influence the *zangomas* wield in African culture. For this reason, I have long maintained that one cannot reasonably understand African culture and society without some understanding of African Traditional Religion and the role of the *zangoma*. Debbie and I now pray that the seminar I gave them, along with detailed notes, will serve to help those Zulu leaders biblically navigate this hot-button issue in their respective churches and communities.

All and all, the time in Newcastle was very encouraging and the response was very enthusiastic! During the two weeks there, we crossed ethnic lines several times, but all with one common denominator located in the gospel of Jesus Christ! Before we even left Newcastle, we had already received an invitation to return to Newcastle in 2020. Even though next year is already shaping up to be a very hectic year, we will earnestly try to avail ourselves to the invitation.

Now as 2019 hurtles towards its inevitable terminus and 2020 begins, we are planning and praying about the startup of our proposed training center/seminary. I recently met with the other men interested in helping me, and we will begin offering a few non-accredited courses while we work through the details and red tape to officially start the seminary. In our first update of 2020 I will share more about our proposed plans for 2020!

2020 will be a transitional year for both Micaiah and Janelle: Micaiah will be graduating from The Master's University with a degree in computer science, while Janelle is getting married to an aeronautical engineer from Cincinnati, Ohio a week after Micaiah's graduation. Both kids arrive from LA early next week to spend the holidays with us! It may be the last time we are all together for Christmas for a long time. So, we will savor the brief time we have them.

There is certainly much more we could share with you all because so much has happened in the last couple of months, but suffice it to say we are extremely grateful for all of the encouragement, prayers, and support that have been offered on our behalf! We never take it for granted, but often marvel at how God has raised up such a wonderful support network to keep us on the field for 25 years now! Thank you for being a vital part of that network.

It is our heartfelt prayer that each and everyone of you has a most blessed Christmas and New Year as you celebrate and reflect on Him who is the extreme fullness of grace and truth!

Again, thank you for your prayers and support in 2019! We look forward to what God has for us in 2020.

Yours for the Master's Use!

Mark & Debbie Christopher

Prayer Requests:

- For South Africa in 2020. It is my humble opinion that 2020 will be a very defining year politically, economically, and socially as the ills that plague us begin to ripen.
- For the slow rollout of our training center/seminary and all the details and plans that must still be put into play.
- For both Micaiah and Janelle as they transition to the next stage of adult life and for their safe travel to and from Cape Town.
- For the ongoing impact of our recent ministry in Newcastle.



Pentateuch Class at the Evangelical Bible Church