

REFORMED CHURCH IN ZIMBABWWE

MORGNESTER MISSION CONGREGATION

Narrative report January ----- August 2020

Preamble.

Calvary greetings to you brethren in the wonderful name of Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

First and foremost let me thank the Creator for the grace sufficient as we together experience life in a new dimension. The THEME of our congregation 2020 is derived from the book of Prophet Zechariah chapter 4:6 ***“NOT BY MIGHTY, NOR BY POWER, BUT MY SPIRIT SAYS THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY(N.I.B)*** This Scripture was read at the Official opening of the house of God “ temple “ at Morgenster Mission in 1956. This is another year where we as communities of faith learn to discover God’s will from another perspective. Indeed we continuously submit to this Authority upon which in our humanity we cannot comprehend God but depend on what He graciously reveals unto us. This report is my attempt to appraise you on the notable contribution done by Morgenster Mission Congregation as she participates in the Great Commission.

Mission Statement:

Vision: To become more like Jesus Christ each and every day. Thus to live and participate fully in Jesus Christ’s command an obedient to the process becoming Beloved Children of God.

Mission: To make disciples in this world according to Jesus Christ’s command in Mathew 28 verse 19-20

. By preaching and living out the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

.Confirmation of new believers into the community of Faith ‘church’.

. Instructing all believers in the Faith and practice of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe as made evident in the Word of God and summarized in the Reformed Confession.

Core Values

. Confessing the Faith

.community engagement

.reconciliation

.infallibility of the Bible

. Practicing prayer

.serving the Church

.living the mission

. Good governance

PART A

1. 0. A brief historical background

Morgenster Mission Congregation was established at the close of the eighteenth century. It was founded by the Dutch Missionaries from the Synod of the Cape in South Africa. They reached the land of Chief Mugabe on the 9th of September 1890. Their leader was a frail, untrained but committed missionary worker by the name Andrew A. Louw. These evangelists were accompanied by seven (7) black evangelists and together did marvellous work amongst the indigenous people. The history of the Christian mission in Southern Rhodesia happened along with the colonization of the country by British South Africa Company (B.S.A.C). Both the Missionaries and the Colonizers needed the support of each other for the advancement of each other's cause. According to Zvobgo (1996: 2) the missionaries needed the support of the secular power if the evangelization of the indigenous people was to be successful. Therefore an informal alliance was established between the missionaries and the British South Africa Company. The colonization of Zimbabwe by the British provided a better working environment for the missionaries as the roads and security issues greatly improved. The missionaries under the leadership of Andrew Louw had good relationship with the administrative powers of Rhodesia in Salisbury. Five month after their arrival at Morgenster the missionaries were faced with short supply of basic needs. **Cronje (1982:115) says that the Shona (Banyai or Vakaranga) in the**

surrounding areas of the Great Zimbabwe and those under Chief Mugabe were willing to accommodate missionaries. A good relationship was established and we which we continue to enjoy to the present time. The biggest challenge of the missionaries was the hostility of the Matebele clan under Chief Lobengula who categorically refused any mission work among the Shona. Today the Mission work is derailed by the melting economy of the country .The founding of Morgenster Mission was unique from its first stage. Van der Merwe (1981:2) mentions that the mission to Zimbabwe was the only Dutch Mission to be initiated by black a congregation in co-operation with a white congregation and the only where black and a white pioneer worked together side by side. **Morgenster is founded upon this rich history and has the capacity to relate with other faith communities/ partners.**

The following photograph shows the current mission church and the resident pastor. Rev Charles Juro was called by Morgenster congregation in December 2018 and officially this group in January 2019. He replaced Rev Edimio Nkomo who retired after serving the congregation for fourteen years. The mission house of prayer has a carrying capacity of one thousand three congregants. **During the initial lockdown weeks the faith community erected a ramp at the Church. Morgenster church becomes the first in the R.C.Z group to have such a church which caters for those living and worshipping the God with disabilities. The church was built in the early fifties and was officially opened in 1956.** The current state of the church both inside and outside is worrisome. The ceiling is falling due to age and the skirting floors are damaged. Due to hyperinflation the congregation is at present challenged to meet the costs of repairs. Morgenster church bears the historical foundations of the RC.Z group and our image as a historical institution are of great importance to us and to you our friends and partners outside. The congregation has five preaching centres. We are a gender sensitive congregation which comprises of twelve female serving laity against seven males. All ordained pastors who serve in church departments which fall under Morgenster are also members of the Church Council by virtue of their office. These are other ordained minister they complement the work of the full time spiritual workers immensely. **We have a youth worker who is full time, Mrs Reverend Mucheki. She plays a pivotal role in both spiritual and moral development of our youth group. It is our desire to grow this ministry since the present and future of church depends**

on the ability to raise a group that can stand for Christ in these changing times.



1.1 Theological Seminary

According to Van der Merwe (1953:48) mentioned that the Christianisation of Africa was not going to be complete without training of African lay leaders. Lay leadership training started on the 22nd of June 1925 with Andrew Louw jr as a lecturer. Training of ministers started in 1936 with Rev. W.H. Murray as the principal lecturer. From 1891 up until the opening of the 20th century doors were opened for women leadership for both laity and ordained ministry. Seminary students are exposed to the real feel of ministry as they are part of Morgenster congregation. We as congregation assign to them preaching opportunities and invite them to learn how several duties are done and coordinated in a congregational set up. Theological Seminary plays an integral value to the spiritual formation of members. Our members benefit greatly as compared to any congregation of the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. The congregation receives sound theological truth and contextual biblical teachings. Thus Bible study lessons in a congregation are enriched by the vast

knowledge of the resource persons around us. **The existence of the Theological Seminary and the Congregation are two in One. From the beginning of 2020 seminary students have participated in preaching, working at the church yard and production of study material.** The seminary has also enrolled a student who is coming from a marginalised community to study. This is in line with the vision and mission of the congregation.

Our present need to paint the church and attend to ceiling in the church applies the same to our theological seminary. There is need for repainting of the college premises and student accommodation.

The following photography shows one of the student premises and the need to paint it.

Both staff and students complement towards the Congregation's vision and strategic goals. Like any institution of higher learning accessibility to computers is vital. Our Theological seminary is poorly networked in terms of accessibility to computers in relationship to the student population. **There is an URGENT need for ten or more second hand computers to improve on the learning environment of students and to align themselves with global trends. We are glad the Seminary has managed to be solar powered which Office duties and apparatus can run as electricity has proved to be a real challenge in the home.** Reverend DR. Rangarirai Rutoro heads our seminary.

1.2 Mission and Medical Centres. "Morgenster Memorial Hospital".

Mugambi (1989:45) observes the importance of medical care for missionary work. In their pioneer phase the missionaries lost several members of their community through tropical diseases such as malaria. Three years after the establishment of Morgenster Dr. John T. Helm arrived as the first missionary medical practitioner (Cronje 1982: 126). In 1929 a hospital was opened with 50 beds. The hospital was named after him, John Helm Memorial Hospital. **Dr Helm was dedicated as he served as both doctor and evangelist. In our vision and mission as a congregation we pray this missionary spirit be born in us today. Morgenster attained a name when leprosy had hard hit the African societies but the Evangelist doctors preached and healed the sick. There was a common cause and purpose of the establishment of Morgenster Mission.** The missionaries saw the establishment of medical centres as a means of

bridging avenues and vehicles of the Christian Faith. The medical practitioners were active in the spread of the Gospel. Morgenster Memorial hospital was an evangelism arm of the congregation. Christian values and norms were strongly propagated in the wards. Medical centres acted as strategic places to the witness of the gospel and gave missionaries opportunities to exercise their faith in health environment. After the attainment of political independence in 1980 this kind of co-existence and missionary approach degenerated. The Church's voice and missionary zeal was challenged along funding lines. The bulk of the hospital staff is on Government pay roll an arrangement that has greatly relieved the R.C.Z group from several litigations. With current Administration at the hospital there is significant move towards aligning the hospital to the vision of the congregation. To be where we are now as Morgenster hospital, we give thanks to the friends of this community who have donated generously in cash and kind. Their gifts have been put to good use. In Zimbabwe the exodus of medical doctors is a known fact but the story is different with us. Through your prayers and support we managed to receive unbroken service from our Doctors. The following are photographs of Morgenster Mission Hospital which is composite home. We have a nurse training school and an Eye Clinic which is ranked one of the best in the country.

For the period under review the reporter conducted several prayer meetings with staff and visiting patients in their wards. House visits were conducted and audio sermons are delivered to members every Sunday.





NB: The hospital is being served by one ambulance which is now old enough to be disposed. This vehicle is over ten years old breaks down several times drawing from already challenged coffers. The Hospital as you may know largely depend on charity. Pray with us more especially this time of Covid 19. We need all the personal protective equipment to sustain the operations of the Hospital. Be friend of Morgenster Memorial Hospital. By the time of this report no case of corona virus has been registered at our hospital. Devotions are carried out on daily basis and there is hospital Chaplin by the Wonder Chitongo. He lives with disability “blind preacher” Other from the hospital are involved in the sanitization of worshippers as they enter into the church during these difficulty moments. The medical Superintendent is Dr Muchengwa Tafadzwa and assisted in clinical duties by Sister Hilder Hapanyengwi whom you see in photographs.

1.3 Educational Institutions

Morgenster Mission was established on the model of holistic ministry. The education of both able-bodied and those with visual impairment was considered of great importance. **Teachers were not only class biased by agents of mission work. They were evangelistic teachers. As a Mission today in the twentieth century this model evangelism stands to benefit us remarkably. This is a model worth undertaking.** The first school of primary learning was opened in December 1899 and missionary Miss Van Coller was the first teacher. In 1900 Mss Laura Makoele daughter to one of the seven pioneer evangelists was appointed to assist Miss Van Coller. Teachers contributed very to the evangelization of the local people that has seen Missionary Church expanding its influence around the province of Fort-Victoria “Masvingo Province today”. Training of teachers started in 1902 with Reverend Andrew Louw and Dr Helm as teachers. Later in 1907 Rev J.D. Moller was appointed principal. Madame Mangezi is acting Head Morgenster Central Primary School, Mr Stephen Chikwiro, Head Morgenster Secondary and Dr. Raviro Chipato principal Morgenster Teachers College.





NB: These educational departments have assisted the local church in her vision by providing space, and other material resources towards sustainable and spiritual development of the congregation.

These educational centres played a significant role in shaping what is today known as Morgenster Mission. The Church has adopted the theme of this year and beyond as an important land mark in the journey of faith seeking understanding. A special school was opened in 1949 to offer learning facilities to pupils living with disabilities. Today the Lord has blessed Morgenster Community and the nation at large by the calling of Rev Mary Zenda as the first R.C.Z deaf pastor. Mr Kudakwashe Nelson Rugare heads the school. Learners at Henry Murray School of the deaf now can receive the Gospel in their own sign language. Morgenster Mission has an important human resource in the female pastor. We pray to organise a deaf conference for the entire nation. **This will draw all members from former students and other around the country. No such conference has been ever done in Zimbabwe. This to us is a key strategy in evangelization. Another prayer point as you calls upon the name of the Living God. The school has state of the machinery can be used at**

industrial level for wood technology but due high costs in electricity the machines lie idle. Our prayer request is for this project to be solar powered.

1.4 Mission projects

The setting of a printing press in 1913 created a revue stream for missionary Church. It produced Christian literature that was useful in reaching out with important information. The Morgenster Mission Printing press became the first to offer printing facilities in the whole of the country. Heidelberg printing machines were fixed and brought financial resources to the Church. This is one of the greatest potential income generating projects for the Mission congregation. The limiting factors include, the ages of the machines, some are over six decades old. The Printing division requires partnership that will create contours for transforming the printing to meet the demand of the consumers. Machines are out-dated but if replaced or run on contract basis it is highly probable that Morgenster will retain to its former glory.



1.4.0 Canteen

By the middle of 2019 the congregation project committee opened a food outlet. Project funds are meant to finance evangelism outreaches in the congregation. This project had good start but at this time of reporting there is activity. Due Covid 19 and lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) this project has been suspended. Another contributing factor is the hyperinflation in the country. Our local currency is no longer ideal in doing business.

1.4.1 Evangelism Outreach

The congregation is being served on full times basis by two spiritual workers. The pastor and youth worker are involved in pastoral duties. However, as mentioned in the preceding paragraphs our works is supported by other spiritual who are engaged in other mission departments. This year alone we had planned for revival conference at the Mission and evangelism out reach. All these two have failed due to the global pandemic. Moreover due to internet challenges we could not offer sermon on face book and zoom. We depended largely on audio recordings send via whatsapp platforms.

Evangelism outreach is the heart beat of Morgenster Mission congregation. We have eleven people who gave themselves to Lord in the first two months of this year before the travel restrictions were made. During these lockdown months we have received cases of domestic violence and thus touched our hearts. **We need prayers and resource material to address this challenge. The service of the pastor remains essential and Government of Zimbabwe allow pastors to visit members. Covid is real and deadly but the need to be fully equipped remains critical.** Our evangelism strategies are usually gets affected by the melting economy. Fuel and transport is extremely expensive. **Our desire as we reach to communities around us and those far is to have a public address system. Currently we are out sourcing which has its own challenges**

1.5 The Spirituality of Morgenster Mission Congregation.

“Spirituality is the pattern by which we shape our lives in response to our experience of God as a very real presence in and around us,” (Rice 1991:45). We believe and confess that Jesus is the Son of God. Our daily conduct is guided by the teachings of the Bible and allegiance to the Reformed Tradition. Life is coordinated through our church and chapel service, the Church which is

situated at the centre. Sunday remains as very special day to us as Morgenster. Various groups assemble on Sunday all things being equal to devote themselves to God. For information I refer to the Mission Notice Board. Chapel service is here again done every Wednesday. Morgenster Mission faith community is to mature, to live out a joyful and grateful life of response to what God has done. We encourage the balance between corporate and private devotion, so that the community of faith will be enriched by the practice of each and the private lives of individuals will be corrected and deepened by the witness of the whole church.

1.6 UTILITIES DIVISION

This is another service arm of the Mission. The unit provides essential service to mission population numbering between two thousand and three thousand five hundred when in full operation. Basically, they provide water and electricity. Most of our electricity networks are locally owned and receives energy from the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (Z.E.S.A) into their transformer. From the transformer to mission residents the network is manned by the utilities division. This arrangement had its merit in early seventies but now we need to upgrade it. **NETWORK UPGRADING IS LONG OVERDUE. THE EXERCISE ACCORDING TO QOUTATIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED DEMANDS A FUNDING PARTNER.**



Water is pumped from two main sources. We have a small reservoir in the mission which effectively can sustain us for six months. The second pumping is done from a river nearby. All these two sources depend on the rainfall pattern, for instance for the past three years we have received below normal rainfall. This creates severe shortages in the months of September to early December. **As a home we need a least two or more boreholes to mitigate this crisis. Morgenster Mission Hospital and the School of the Deaf are sensitive areas that cannot operate without water.**

1.7 Summary.

According to Migliore (1991:48), Scripture witness to God's transforming activity. Morgenster congregation desires to actively participate in the Great Commission that will bring about a holistic transformation. On behalf of Morgenster Church Council (council of serving elders, deacons/ deaconess) would like thank in advance for sparing time to read. We invite you as individuals, families, congregations or corporates to be friends of Morgenster Mission Congregation. Let's join hands in prayer for God's answer to Covid 19 pandemic.

May God richly bless you and give you hope in these trying moments.

Complied by

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