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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

THE MISSION OF

NICHOLAS B H BHENGU

IN A DIVIDED AND POLARISED SOCIETY:

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LIFE, WORK AND CONTRIBUION TO MISSION

IN SOUTHERN AFRICA OF AN IMPORTANT 20TH CENTUARY PIONEER

By

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DEDICATION OF STUDY

The study is dedicated to:

1. First and foremost my wife Aggie and my son Kenneth Skhumbuzo both of whom had to put up with me whilst working on the dissertation.
2. Waxy, Mvusi, and Dawn, Bhengu and Mylet's (first wife) children who generously agreed to be interviewed and provided the family albums including their parent's wedding photo.
3. Mother's Movements, the engine that drives Back to God Crusade by raising millions of rands for the evangelization of Africa.
4. All structures in Bhengu's Work: Back to God (Assemblies of God Movement).
5. Researchers and Church leaders who are searching for workable strategies that promote God's Mission (Missio Dei) on earth.

DECLARATION

I Daniel Simon Billy Lephoko, hereby declare that the work which this dissertation is based, is original (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole nor any part of it has been, is being, or shall be submitted for another degree at this or any other University, institution for tertiary education or examination body.

.....	**16 January 2006**
SIGNATURE	**DATE**

D S B LEPHOKO

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I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed towards the success of this study recognizing that it is impossible to mention everyone by name.

However the following individuals are recognized by name:

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- Dr Peter Watt who provided some of the source documents on Nicholas B H Bhengu.
- Ms Rosina Ndhlovu for giving up her leisure time to type the script of this work.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 RELEVANCE OF STUDY

The study is on the late Nicholas Bhekinkosi Hepworth Bhengu who died on 7 October 1985 at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town at the age of 76 with his second wife Nokwethemba at his bedside. Nokwethemba died in July 2005. Bhengu was one of the most influential church leaders in Africa and abroad. In South Africa, in the 1950s he established a formidable and effective organization, the Back to God Crusade, through which he conducted countrywide evangelistic campaigns and planted churches in the country and neighbouring states namely Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Botswana. Since his death, his work has also spread to Namibia and Mozambique through the Back to God Crusade. At a crucial time in the history of the Church in Southern Africa, he provided vision and leadership that continue to inspire and inform Christians in South Africa and abroad. The time has surely come to analyse and evaluate Nicholas Bhekinkosi Herpworth Bhengu's contribution.

1.2 GOAL OF RESEARCH

The goal of the study is to capture the vision, mission and strategies employed by Bhengu in his evangelistic campaigns through which he planted and developed self – propagating, self-supporting and self-governing churches at a time of political and social polarization in South Africa when most black churches were dependent on support from missionary sending countries.

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis for my research is that at a time when strong Christian leadership was sorely needed among Black Christians in South Africa, – during a time of rapid transition and dramatic socio- political upheaval, - Nicholas Bhekinkosi Herpworth Bhengu came to the fore to provide such strong and inspiring leadership. A careful study of his life and work, his message and his leadership style, will prove to be of great benefit to the Churches in South Africa in the endeavour to develop missionary and evangelistic programmes that were truly relevant to the challenges of our times.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher uses a qualitative approach. The research firstly, consists of a literature review, as well as collecting fresh material by way of interviews. A questionnaire was developed with the help of IMER (Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research, UP). Not much is written on Bhengu. However, the research is largely based on interviews of people who worked with Bhengu and primary source documents (circulars) written by him to his churches.

The focus of the study will be South Africa where Bhengu's mission and evangelistic work had the greatest impact and from which he launched his Back to God Crusade campaigns into Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique etc.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH THESIS

The study consists of six chapters:

Chapter 1 – INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the purpose of the study. It also introduces the era in which Bhengu worked, relevant literature review to guide the research. The researcher is a participant observer. He worked with Bhengu and others, the subjects of the interviews.

Chapter 2- BHENGU: THE MAKING OF THE MAN

The focus is on Bhengu's early life, conversion, training for ministry, his marriage to Mylet Ndlela, and later to Nokwethemba Mthethwa after the death of Mylet on 26 May 1971, his association with Alfred Gumede, Gideon Buthelezi, Hubert C Phillips, how he joined Emmanuel Mission and later the Assemblies of God and his influence in the direction the Assemblies of God would take, socially and politically.

Chapter 3 – BHENGU: THE EVANGELIST AND CHURCH PLANTER

This chapter captures his work as an itinerant evangelist, his evangelistic work through Back to God Crusade which he used to reach millions of people with the gospel and plant more than 2000

churches in Southern Africa. It also looks into how he organised and governed his churches including financial administration.

Chapter 4 – BHENGU'S SOCIO-POLITICAL MESSAGE.

The chapter focuses on Bhengu's response to the socio-political pressures of his time, the way in which he sought to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to both traditional leaders and leaders of liberation movements, whilst maintaining his independence as a prophet.

The study also shows that Bhengu trained and encouraged his people to engage in income generating programmes so as to be self-reliant rather than depend on handouts from expatriate missionaries more than four decades before Black Economic Empowerment became current in South Africa.

Chapter 5 - BHENGU'S LEADERSHIP STYLE

Bhengu was a Zulu man, born and raised in KwaZulu (now KwaZulu Natal). Whilst Bhengu was a man of the Bible; his leadership style was also guided by African culture. In this chapter the researcher also seeks to bring forth Bhengu's desire to unite all people of God, both white and black and across denominational divide.

Chapter 6 – CONCLUSION: BHENGU'S LEGACY TO MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Bhengu's work will be evaluated to identify what is usable or otherwise of his ministry and legacy to Mission and Evangelism is determined.

Areas for future research are noted.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions are used in the study.

1.6.1 Baptism of the Holy Spirit

For elucidation of my definition

I refer to three statements by eminent theologians.
"The baptism with the Holy Spirit is an operation of the Holy Spirit distinct from and subsequent and additional to His regeneration work", (Torrey 1957: 271)

"... baptism of the Spirit is identical with the gift of the Spirit, that it is one of the distinctive blessings of the new covenant, and because it is an initial blessing, is also universal blessing for members of the covenant" (Stott 1964:43)

With them it was no mere intellectual assent to some article in a creed defining an orthodox doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit. Neither were they satisfied to acquiesce to a vague idea that in some indefinite manner the Holy Spirit had been imparted to them upon conversion. They gladly and thankfully recognized His gracious operations in their regeneration and sanctification, but their own personal reception of Holy Spirit was an intensely vivid experience. They knew when He came, where He came, and how He came. Nothing reveals this more than Paul's searching question to certain disciples whom he immediately sensed to be spiritually lacking in a vital part of their Christian inheritance "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" Acts 19:2. The challenge was to experience, not to doctrine. How significant! An Ephesian "Pentecost" speedily rectified their short-coming and it was an experience as vivid as all the rest had received "They spoke with tongues and prophesied."(Gee 1928:4)

1.6.2 Contextualisation

Contextualisation is an effort to understand the frames of reference and worldviews that people have developed to make sense out of their environment (Bradshaw 1993:49) .

"... THE HOLISTIC NATURE of Christian development is analogous to evaluating the presence of the Kingdom of God. We achieve both through processes instead of acts"
(Bradshaw 1993:151)

1.6.3 Culture

Culture is not just an open-ended way of life. Rather, it is a plan, map or blueprint for living that is always in the process of formation and adjustment. It is a code for action, for survival and for success in life (Neely 1995:4).

1.6.4 Diakonia

"The diakonial dimension of our mission approach therefore refers to the various forms of ministry and service in which the Christian community, in imitation of Jesus of Nazareth (who was among us as one who serves), puts itself at the service of the whole world".(Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:37)

1.6.5 Evangelism

"To evangelise is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men come to put their faith in God through him, to accept him as their personal Saviour and to serve him as their King in the fellowship of his church" Archbishop William Temple (Green: no date)

1.6.6 Key Leadership Factor

A key leadership factor is the ability to inspire your followers to accept your vision of the future. Some of the followers of the ruling National Party were not prepared to take the risks involved in a radical change of course – even though they could see the breakers smashing on the reefs ahead. It was the task of the party's leadership to assure them that there were other courses that could effectively protect their core interests, while at the same time affording full political rights to all South Africans. We explored the possibilities of power sharing; of constitutional guarantees; of the devolution of power (De Klerk 2002: 611).

1.6.7 Kerygma

"With the kerygmatic dimension we are therefore referring to all the various forms of ministry of the word in mission: preaching, witnessing, providing literature, theological education etc. The content of this ministry is the good news that "God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Saviour and Liberator (Bosch 1991:412 [in Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:36])

1.6.8 Koinonia

The missionary church must therefore become church-with-others (Bosch 1991:368-389), must truly incarnate the essential koinonia of the body of Christ. This has important consequences for our practice of mission. It makes very clear that Christian Missionaries can never proclaim or witness as if from some safe haven, as people who have "arrived" whose journey, apart from intermittent forays into "the world", is over. It calls into question much of the history of missionary church planting, as much of the effort was concentrated on domesticating the church (in a nation, people, group or culture) rather than on equipping the church for its open-ended existence in fellowship with other pilgrims on our journey through the world" (Kritzinger, Meiring, & Saayman 1994:38)

1.6.9 Mission

"...evangelism is not the same as mission. Mission is a much broader term than evangelism. It speaks of the total impact of the church on society, while evangelism is more restricted, the passing on of the good news" (Green 19?:14)

1.6.10 Pentecostal Mission

"Pentecostal missionaries therefore set out to their "mission fields" to accomplish one task and one task only: the evangelisation of the world (understood as personal salvation) in preparation for the imminent return of Christ. One must add to this the fact that there were not many ecclesiological traditions the missionaries could take with them. So, for example, the American AOG only came into being as a denomination in 1914, by which time it already had more than twenty missionaries in various parts of the world (McGee 1987:113-115)".

1.6.11 Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership transcends the power of personality and all other natural gifts.
The personality of the spiritual leaders influences others because it is irradiated, penetrated and empowered by the Holy Spirit. As the leader gives control of his life to the Spirit, the Spirit's power flows through him to others (Sanders 1994:28).

1.6.12 Theology

"Theology is concerned with the basic presuppositions and underlying principles which give direction to our ecclesiastical activities. Such presuppositions and considerations are always present, in any ecclesiastical activity, even if they are not always expressed or formulated systematically. This implies that behind every missionary enterprise in the various periods of missionary revival there was indeed theological reflection, albeit not always formally articulated. Theology was, therefore decidedly not absent. No mission is possible without theology". (Bosch 1980:24)

1.6.13 The Call

"To me the call is that divine urge, that compelling impulse, that passion within that makes it impossible to resist. There is something within that is calling, ever calling. I am restless. I am a hunter's dog on the leash, straining to get away. It is that irresistible must" (Neely 1995:108)

1.6.14 The Church

The notion of the Church as society by its very nature tends to highlight the structure of government as the formal element in the society. Thus it leads easily, thought not necessarily, to what we shall call in this chapter the institutional vision of the Church – that is to say, the view that defines the church primarily in terms of its visible structures, especially the rights and powers of its officers (Dulles 1987:34).

In defining the Church it will be necessary to bear in mind the distinction between the visible and the invisible Church. (1) The former may be defined as the company of the elect who are called by the Spirit of God, or briefer still, as the communion of believers. (2) The latter is a broader concept and may be defined as the community of those who profess the true religion together with their children. It is important to bear in mind that these two are not entirely parallel. Some who are members of the invisible Church may never become members of the visible organization or may be shut out from it; and some who belong to the visible Church May be unbelievers and hypocrites and as such form no part of the body of Christ. (Berkof 1933:282-289)

1.6.15 Participant Observer

The participant observer comes to a social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people and physical aspects of the situation. The ordinary participant comes to that same situation with only one purpose: to engage in the appropriate activities. In the process of carrying out these actions, this person does not normally want to watch and record everything else that occurs, describe all the actors present, or make note of the physical setting. (Spradley 1980:56)

1.7 THE AUTHOR, A PARTICIPANT OBSERVER

I was born and raised in the Assemblies of God and I am also a pastor of the Assemblies of God. I was privileged to have numerous discussions with Bhengu relating to ministry and was involved in some of his ministry activities. I have served as a member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God and an Executive member of the Assemblies of God Movement (Back to God). I participated in many ecumenical conferences in some of which Bhengu spoke including: the 1973 Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism (at which Billy Graham spoke). In 1977 and 1980, at the request of Bhengu and together with Derek Crumpton I helped organise the first Charismatic Renewal Conferences in Johannesburg that brought together thousands of people from Southern Africa, the rest of Africa and overseas. Speakers included Nicholas Bhengu, Lorren Cunningham, Cecil Kerr, the Archbishop of Cape Town, Bill Burnett, who was Conference Chairperson and many others. I was also involved in organising the SACLA (1979) university student conference and addressed the Youth Group of that conference on Rebuilding the Broken Walls.

In 1966 Bhengu wrote a preface to my second book Ingane Yakho Neyami (Your Child and My Child). I also had the privilege of being with him in private meetings alone and sometimes with others where he shared his vision and mission for Africa. His vision was to preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo driven by the slogan 'Back to God – Africa for Jesus – Jesus for Africa'. I knew personally some of Bhengu's early associates: Alfred Gumede, HC Phillips, whom I closely worked, as an elder in his church James Mullan, Fred Mullan, Austin Chauwner, Fred Burke, Mrs Larsen, LS Mjaji and many others. My involvement with Bhengu and some of the founders of the Assemblies of God is borne out by the following inscription by John Bond former General

Chairman of the Assemblies of God for 27 years in a complementary note of his book For the Record – Reflections On the Assemblies of God (2003).

1.7.1 Comment to Dan Lephoko –John Bond

To Dan Lephoko (sic)

My very good friend, you are one of the few people who knew most of the characters mentioned in these memoirs. You were part of the unfolding developments I have tried to describe. I trust that you will find my account accurate, fair and enjoyable to read.
With warm greetings.

John Bond, (September 2003).

1.7.2 Bhengu's Letter to the Author

Bhengu's letter was a sequel to my response to his request to me in September 1974 before he left for Selly Oaks College where for one year he served as visiting professor of mission and evangelism, to me to be Editor of the Back to God Magazine which had at that time become defunct. The Back to God magazine was Bhengu's evangelistic crusade's mouthpiece. It carried articles on his crusades, healings, outstanding miracles, youth ministry, women's work etc.

The circumstances were that in 1966, in Durban, he had promised to invite me to a meeting, at which he would re-organise the Youth Ministry. This invitation had never materialised. I therefore responded in a letter to his request by saying that I found it strange that he would now want to entrust me with the responsibility of editing the magazine and writing on youth issues when he had not invited me to the restructuring meeting. In reply to my concerns, he wrote the following letter:

Selly Oak Colleges
B 29 6 L E
Birmingham
ENGLAND
12/11/74

Dear Brother Dan

Greetings in His Name!

Your letter dated the 19th September reached me before I left South Africa but I was too busy to reply and for this I humbly beg your forgiveness. Everything you said in your letter was nothing else but the truth. I felt very guilty as I read the letter statement after statement. One of the causes of our hesitation in encouraging you to get into full time ministry was not that we did not appreciate your ministry but (1) your present position with its good pay and security (2) the health you have and that of your wife (3) and the children's future as we know we could not give you anything close to your present salary. The second reason is that I personally felt you could do as much as a part time worker. I am awfully sorry for all these. I knew your contribution of teaching and counselling especially in the Nelspruit trouble in Mkhaba's time and I was always aware of your budding ministry. Please forgive me for all the oversight. I am awfully sorry. In any case, I am glad you are now settled and you will be giving God your best in your lifetime. I was only worried because of your health if you are to be in the evangelistic exercises and thought of your gifts in "PEN WORK". God leads His children along. If He had not led you into where you are it just could (sic) happen. So He has led you into an open door...

Nicholas BH Bhengu.

CHAPTER 2: BHENGU- THE MAKINGS OF THE MAN

2.1 FAMILY BACKGROUND

Bhengu was born on 5 September 1909 at Entumeni in KwaZulu, the Kingdom of Zululand as it was known then. The area is now known as the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. Entumeni is a Lutheran Mission station. Bhengu's father, Josiah Khanda, was married to MaNxele (Nee Nxele). Bhengu had five brothers: Simpson, Jonathan, Jeconiah, Sithembiso and Shadrack. He was the fifth son. He also had two sisters, Regina and Bella. The eldest brother, Simpson was a Secretary and interpreter to the Zulu nation under King Solomon kaDinizulu, the grandfather of the reigning Zulu King (Isilo) Zwelithi Goodwill Zulu (Written submission: Bhengu, 2003.10.02).

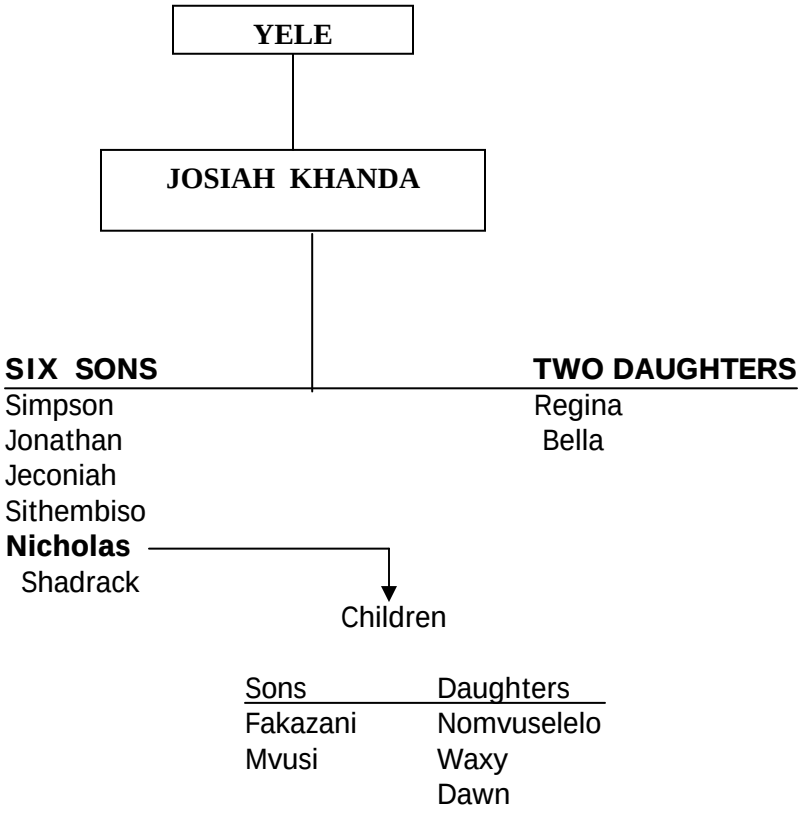


Figure 1
(Lephoko 2003:7)

2.2 RELIGION IN THE FAMILY

Bhengu's father, Josiah Khanda, was an evangelist of the Lutheran Church. The children were brought up according to Christian principles and values. Two of his brothers, Jeconia and Shadrack, were ministers of the Lutheran Church (now the Evangelical Lutheran Church). Jonathan was a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, whilst Nicholas ministered with the Assemblies of God. One of his two sisters, Bella Zungu, ministered alongside him as an evangelist in the Back to God Crusade. She was trained at the African Bible Institute, an Assemblies of God Bible College in Witbank (Interview: Vilakazi & Bhengu, 2003.07.02).

At the Assemblies of God General Conference on 10 October 1955, Bhengu addressed the Conference on The National Church. He said the following about his Christian upbringing:

> I am personally indebted to the missionaries who brought about the conversion of my grandmother whose husband, my grandfather had died. He was a chief in the Pomery Area (sic) and had many wives. My father was brought up by the missionaries and finally became a worker for the Mission and crossed with the Norwegian Lutheran Missionaries to Zululand. We were thus born in the Mission Station and brought up and educated and disciplined by the strong hand of the Norwegians as their own children. Now in the formation of birth of the National Church I shall be the last to oust or disfavour the fellow-yokemanship or inclusion of the foreign and local white Missionaries. The Church of Christ is definitely not composed of people of one colour. We visualise the birth of a Holy Ghost propelled Church in the entire Continent where the scope for European participation will never end.

2.3 SCHOOLING

Hollenweger states "He attended the Lutheran missionary school in Entumeni and from 1925 the Roman Catholic missionary schools in Inkamana and Marianhill" (Hollenweger 1972:126). This information is disputed by Professor Sibusiso Bhengu, the former Minister of Education in Nelson Mandela's Cabinet. Professor Bhengu's father was Jeconiah, Bhengu's elder brother.

Professor Sibusiso Bhengu says: "My uncle never had a formal education. Neither did he attend Inkamana or Marianhill Catholic schools. He studied privately attending night school classes in Durban, in that way earned his Matric Certificate" (Telephonic interview, Bhengu: 2004.01.06). Professor Sibusiso Bhengu's story is corroborated by Samuelson Fihlela, Bhengu's sister, Regina's son. Samuelson Fihlela states: "My uncle never went to a formal school. He taught himself by reading newspapers and then attending night school in Durban and Kimberley. In this way he obtained his Senior Certificate" (Telephonic interview, Fihlela, through his daughter Ntombi: 2004.01.07) (in Lephoko 2004:8).

2.4 FINDING EMPLOYMENT

Bhengu came from a poor home. He was driven by poverty to seek employment early in life. Finding work was not going to be easy for a young man from the rural village. Bhengu had grown up eating Izinkobe (samp meal), which he later hated and never allowed his children to eat.

2.4.1 Malaria Control Officer

Because of poverty, he was driven to find employment from a white man in the area in order to survive. The white man always sent him to buy meat for his dogs but never gave Bhengu any of the meat. As a result he never wanted to keep dogs.
Later Bhengu was employed as a health inspector at Makhathini Flats, a malaria infested area (Interview: Vilakazi & Bhengu, 2003.07.02).

2.4.2 Court Interpreter

From Makhathini Flats he went to Durban where he was employed as a court interpreter clerk at the Magistrates Court in Warwick Avenue. They were looking for someone who could type. Despite the fact that he could not type he was offered the job (Interview: Vilakazi & Bhengu, 2003.07.02).

2.4.3 To Kimberley in Search of Work

From Durban Bhengu went to Kimberley seeking for better employment opportunities. It is not

known what kind of employment he had in Kimberley. In 1929 while he was in Kimberley, Bhengu was converted under the ministry of two young white American evangelists from the Full Gospel Church and became a born again Christian.

2.5 BHENGU'S CONVERSION

The story of his conversion is vividly related by Hollenweger in the following words as told to him by Bhengu. It is quoted in full:

> The upheaval that led to his subsequent career was his conversion in the course of a mission by two young Americans belonging to the Full Gospel Church. He broke off his connections with the Communists, the Bible Students and the Seventh Day Adventists. Two things in particular had attracted him in the revival preaching; the American pronunciation and intonation of English, and the simplicity of the interpretation of Isaiah 53. Verse for verse, line for line, the two evangelists built up their preaching on their personal experience. Thirdly, the joy and sincerity with which they proclaimed their message aroused in him the desire to be one of their followers. But he asked himself whether people of his race could equal the two young white men.
>
> Bhengu gives a vivid description of the inner restrains he had to overcome before he could manage to speak to the preachers. He would willingly have
>
> gone forward when sinners were called to the penitents' bench. But he was afraid to lose prestige in the eyes of his girlfriend. At least he did not want to be the first to come forward, and no one else led the way. But the conviction that if he were not converted that night he would never be saved and would die a sinner drove him to ask to speak to the preachers. Bhengu's account clearly indicates that it was fear of eternal damnation, which drove him to this step. From his own experience Bhengu now hammers home to his audience the lesson: 'Do not delay the decision! Tomorrow may be too late! Do not wait for another to take the step first!'
>
> Bhengu had to overcome other psychological difficulties before he could come to the knowledge that he was saved. After talking and praying with one of the preachers, he was asked whether he now felt he was saved. Bhengu said 'I do not feel anything

> yet.' The preacher then asked whether Bhengu had any money on him and could feel that. Just as he had no need to feel the money to be sure that he had it with him, so he could take his salvation for certain. "From that time faith came into my heart. I did not wait for feelings of any kind but took the word of God and thanked him in prayer". But he felt the effect of his conversion the next morning, when he found himself incapable of smoking and drinking as usual. The mere smell of tobacco and gin made him feel sick. He asked, "what is gone wrong with me? A thought came – maybe this is the result of salvation. I knelt down to pray for the first time from the heart and I said, "Thank you God for Jesus your Son who died my death and now I am saved and have eternal life. My name is in the Book of Life" (Hollenweger 1972:127).

Bhengu often spoke of his conversion, including how the American evangelists would say "slip up your hand to indicate your desire to receive Christ". Bhengu adopted the slogan "raise up your hand" a version of the American "slip up your hand" at all his campaigns when inviting people to accept Christ as their personal Saviour. He would often say "I see your hand but God sees your heart. Your hand is a point of contact as you stretch it up to God".

2.6 THE EARLY REJECTION

"After his conversion in Kimberley Bhengu returned home to Entumeni and tried to give testimony of salvation to his own people, but was rejected by his church. His testimony was not welcomed. The church condemned him for teaching heresy because it said it was not possible to get saved on this side of the grave. When he tried to join the Salvation Army he was refused membership by a white group on racial grounds." (Hollenweger 1972: 127-128). At conferences Bhengu often spoke about his rejection and the fact that even in his old age he was ejected from Entumeni when he tried to build his retirement home there. On 26 October 1985, the Daily News in a caption "Death of heretic" when reporting the death of Nicholas Bhengu. It said "The Rev. Nicholas B.H.Bhengu who was labelled "heretic" by his mission has died in Cape Town at the age of 76". The report is an indication of how Bhengu felt about his relationship with the Lutheran Church.

Professor S Bhengu explained that the land had been given to the Lutheran Church by the Government of the day but was under a chief who was democratically elected by the residents of the church on the mission station. Prof Bhengu said that he was not well received with his new brand of evangelisation. He wanted to build a church on the mission station; it was this that was rejected by the people. He was nonetheless at liberty to build his home there since he was the son of the soil. He was permitted on numerous occasions to pitch up his evangelistic tent from which he preached and many people on the station came to accept Christ as their personal Saviour including Bhengu family members. Professor Bhengu himself was saved at Bhengu's Clermont campaign in Durban in 1956. (Interview Bhengu 2006.01.05).

2.7 BHENGU'S EARLY ASSOCIATES

The following people were Bhengu's first associates. Later, Chiliza, Gumede and Buthelezi became directly involved in assisting Bhengu in ministry.

2.7.1 Job Chiliza

After Bhengu's conversion in Kimberley, he felt a need to go back to Durban. In Kimberley he had been fellowshipping with the Full Gospel Church under which the American evangelists had been preaching when he was converted. The pastor of the church in Kimberley commended Bhengu to Rev. Job Y Chiliza of the Full Gospel Church of God in Durban.

Job Chiliza was born in Mzumbe on the South Coast in 1886 and died in 1962. His original church was the American Board Mission in which he and his friend M.D Mseleku were ordained as preachers by the Church. In 1925 he was troubled by words, which he understood to be the Word of God calling upon him to go and preach the gospel.

The preacher a Rev. Cooper was preaching on the Holy Spirit, a subject for which Chiliza was searching. After the service he approached Rev. Cooper and asked if he could baptize his converts, to which Cooper agreed.

In 1942 Chiliza left the Full Gospel Church of God and joined the Pentecostal Holiness Church. However, Chiliza had already established his church as African Gospel Church in 1920. In the

Holiness Church, Chiliza and his people were allowed to retain their property under their own name. Because they were coming in as a church into another church, they were given a new name African Gospel League. (telephonic interview Mzolo 2004.09.25)

In 1946 Pentecostal Holiness Church informed Chiliza that they were going to dissolve the African Gospel Church. However a Pastor Lucas assisted him to have the church, African Gospel Church registered by the government in Pretoria. (Nondabas:?) It appears that Chiliza had a great influence on Bhengu regarding his philosophy of being independent from white domination in ministry. The researcher met Chiliza at one of the Assemblies of God Conferences in Witbank in the late 1950s. Chiliza addressed the conference. He was old and frail.

It can be reasonably inferred that the African independent spirit in Bhengu was to some degree developed during his association with Chiliza.

2.7.2 Alfred Gumede

Alfred Gumede was born on 03 May 1910 at Illovo in the district of Umzinto. Gumede trained as a teacher at Marianhill College near Durban. He was at that time a nominal member of the South African General Mission (Personal communication with Gumede 1959).
In 1931 whilst teaching at a Lutheran School at Mpaphala in Kwazulu, he began to hear about Bhengu. He left Mpaphala at the end of 1931 and took up a teaching position at Kwa Dumisa in South African General Mission School till 1933 and went to teach at an Anglican School in Malizayo.

During school holidays he would visit the Bible School at Kwa Dumisa. In 1933 Gumede was converted under the ministry of Rev Suter, Principal of the Bible School where Bhengu trained for ministry in the mean while. Bhengu had heard of this teacher who had recently come to the Lord and started corresponding with Gumede. They had as yet not met.

In 1934 Gumede heard of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit and became thirsty for the experience. The following year he visited people who had been baptised in the Holy Spirit. That year he heard that Bhengu had been invited to speak at an Easter Convention. He walked many kilometres to go and meet Bhengu at the convention. He met Bhengu and another man; together they went

into the church to pray and thank God for bringing them together. Bhengu and the other man started praying. Gumede hoped they would stop so that he too could pray but they didn't. He relates the events of that meeting:

> I started praying too. I opened my mouth and prayed in my language, 'Father who is in heaven', after saying these words I could not pray any longer. I felt like it was a real physical hand that touched me. Its power on me was so heavy, it gently pushed me. I then found myself lying on the floor. I felt something welling up in my belly. This power filled me with joy and started shouting Amen. I could not stop and went on and on. The experience went through my whole being and I can't express how I felt. I was rolling on the floor not because I wanted to; it was the experience that caused me to roll. I rolled until I came up against the door. I was shouting and rejoicing. (Gumede interview: Watt 1986.10.28)

2.7.3 Gideon Buthelezi

Gideon Buthelezi was one of the first people Bhengu met after his conversion when he returned to Durban. He met Buthelezi in a restaurant in Durban. He overheard Buthelezi sharing Christ with someone in the restaurant. He went over to him and together they shared how they each had met Christ. From that day they became friends. Mkhize and her husband were Buthelezi and Bhengu's first converts in Hill Crest, Durban. Buthelezi started work in Durban and in Northern Kwa Zulu Natal when Buthelezi died in the middle of 1950s his work was taken over by Bhengu. (Interview. Mkhize; 2005.01.04)

2.8 BHENGU'S NEW FAMILY

2.8.1 Marriage to Mylet Ndlela

General speaking, in African culture it is unacceptable to be a pastor without a wife, since a pastor or preacher has also the responsibility to help families solve their problems. For Bhengu this seemed to have been a felt need.

Whilst conducting an evangelistic campaign in Pietermaritzburg he met Mrs Ndlela (Nee Mkhize), Mylet's mother, a devout Christian. Recognising her commitment to the Lord, he asked her if she

had a daughter he could marry. He had as yet not met Mylet as she was studying at King Edward VIII Hospital, Durban to become a nurse. She later married Bhengu. After the marriage she did not go back to complete her diploma in nursing.

Mylet contracted TB and was in hospital for two years from 1950-1952. Her children Waxy, Mvusi and Dawn were then placed in a Children's Home in Queenstown. They were later removed by their aunt Mabel Dombo Ndlela Mylet's younger sister and taken back to Port Elizabeth where she and Violet Hillary, Bhengu's co-worker, looked after them. Bhengu, who had enrolled at Taylor State University in the United States of America to study Theology, was forced to come back to be with the children and Mylet. He never went back to pursue his studies (Interview: Vilakazi & Bhengu 2003.07.02).

2.8.2 Children

Bhengu and Mylet had five children: Nomvuselelo Adelaide, Fakazani, Waxy Ruth, Mvusi and Dawn. Both Nomvuselelo and Fakazani died young. Nomvuselelo (Revival) was their first-born. She became ill during one of the many preaching tours Bhengu and Mylet undertook. They were preaching with Rev Kenneth Spooner of the Apostolic Pentecostal Holiness Church on farms in the Rustenburg area. Nomvuselelo had been sickly and died during one of their evangelistic outreaches. With no money to buy a coffin they emptied their tin trunk suitcase of their clothes, placed the tiny body in it and were going to bury her on the side of the road when the owner of the farm in which they had been preaching intervened. He gave them some tomato boxes to make a coffin in which they buried Nomvuselelo. She was buried on the farmer's property in Hunters' Rest where the Hotel Hunters' Rest is now situated. The farmer made a rockery on the grave. Bhengu is reputed to have visited the little grave each time he was in Rustenburg, possibly to reminisce over the cost of God's calling upon his life and the death of his child (Telephonic interview: Phinda 2003.10.31).

After the death of his two children he never allowed his other children to be out in the cold fearing for their health. He would not even allow them to attend evening prayer meetings (Telephonic interview Vilazazi 2004.01.09).

2.8.3 Relationships in the Family

Both Waxy and Dawn described the relationship between their brother Mvusi and their parents as having been very good. Their parents were like friends to them. Mylet was always at home with the children unless she was away with her husband on ministry trips. She loved reading woman's magazines, gardening and roses.

She taught her children to work by allocating each of them house chores and giving each of them a plot to cultivate vegetables. After supper or prayer she would play games with the children and read Bible storybooks to them.
Prayer became a vital part of the lifestyle of the Bhengu family. There had been occasions when Bhengu would rush out of the house to get to work without praying, when the children would call him back to come and pray with them. He always humbly obliged.

2.8.4 Money in the Home

The children were taught not to ask for money. He never asked anybody for money for himself. He taught his children to live by faith. Children were rebuked for asking for Christmas gifts or money from other people. If anyone gave the children money Mylet would take it away from them. He did not live above his people, he lived like them in the townships in a four-roomed house although he could afford a better house. In Mthatha where he had a big house, he brought some of his ministers to live with them. He taught them to share whatever they had with others. (Interview: Vilakazi & Bhengu 2003.07.02).

2.8.5 Mylet's Funeral

Mylet died on 26 May 1971. She was buried in Pietermaritzburg her home town. Bhengu was later to be buried there himself. I was living in Pietermaritzburg at the time and was the official interpreter at Mylet's funeral. Rev Louis Botha Potgieter, then general Secretary of the Assemblies of God preached on the text "let me die the death of a saint". Bhengu had written a valediction in honour of his wife. Prof Sibusiso Bhengu read it at her funeral. I was the interpreter of the day. It is quoted in full as reported by John Bond (Bond:91)

A VALEDICTION TO A DEPARTED FRIEND - MYLET BHENGU

You began from nothing and saw nothing ahead,
Before you there blankness and at times a mirage;
The desert, hunger and want were your food,
But in you was an indomitable spirit to press on,
In you was the will to look up and go on.

Your mate whose mind was made of flint enwrapped in lightning,
Whose heart was more than that of a lion,
Whose horns of faith overcame the bulls of Bashan,
Drank his inspirations and saw his visions, with you.
Forsook all like the Abraham of old.

You and your mate welded together by God's Spirit,
He and you became one in one by God's hand,
Both of you had nothing but the love and the will.
Your God, the Saviour, the Holy Spirit and the Bible to lead you.

These were your weapons and sources of strength,
Your portion was in humiliation, opposition and poverty,
Sickness also decided to assail you more than your mate,
Your will and faith to bring up your children in the fear of God,
And to work for God alongside your husband, were your food.

Towards sunset you saw unprecedented success,
In Africa, where the sons and daughters rose from dust,
To be honourable citizens of both heaven and Africa,
Orphans became doctors, nurses, teachers and lawyers,
Ministers of the Gospel rose from nothingness yearly.

Alas, my true friend, the angel was counting your years,
Twice you bore excruciating pain's periods.
Without complaint your faith and will were compensated.
Prayer plus all available care succeeded,
You recovered to cover more for God and humanity.

The last count came, the third period of suffering,
Prayer rang throughout the world where your name
Was known through your mate and your labours of love,
Medical science was resorted to in every instance,
But the angel had his last and final count.

Wednesday morning May 26th 1971
will never leave our memory,
When your life's friend, husband and partner in tears and sadness,
Was left bereft, forlorn, bewildered and puzzled,
Ruth, Mvusi, Dawn, on his side
Under a dark cloud of sorrow, hopelessness and despair.

But the morning star rose from the Lord our God,
"Your beloved is not dead, she has gone home before you,
You are also under a count, sooner or later you will follow.
Rejoice therefore, rejoice with the angels above,
For she loved and served the Lord to whom she has gone now"
Sleep therefore, sleep my beloved friend,
Sleep for a while,
Rest in peace in the bosom of your beloved Saviour,
Sing with us and we shall sing with you,
"JOY COMETH IN THE MORNING"
Soon your beloved friend will join the march on the golden streets,
He is left to rectify his mistakes and set God's work in proper order.
"GOOD NIGHT MYLET, GOOD NIGHT"

By Nicholas Bhengu

2.8.6 Bhengu's Second Marriage to Nokwethemba Mthethwa

Mylet died on 26 May 1971. Three years later on 26 January 1974, Bhengu married Nokwethemba a School Principal in Durban. She came from outside the Assemblies of God but was saved in Clermont Township in Durban during one of Bhengu's Back to God Crusades. In September 1974 Bhengu and Nokwethemba went to Selly Oaks Colleges in Birmingham where he was a visiting professor in Mission and Evangelism. Out of own interest he attended Islamic classes to broaden his knowledge about that religion (Telephonic interview, N. Bhengu: 2003.10.27). This is confirmed by Bhengu himself in his letter to me already quoted in page 10 above "I lecture and do research work extensively. I also attend classes of other professors. It was a bit difficult at first as I lecture to graduates mostly but the Lord is helping me through. I wish you could have had this opportunity, as you are younger. There is nothing much I can do at my age".

It was not easy for Nokwethemba to walk in Mylet's shoes. Mylet and her husband had started the Mothers' Ministry. It was therefore not easy to adjust to working with women who had been under the leadership of a charismatic and gifted person such as Mylet, however, she worked with women who were leaders in their own right. She worked with other women who were already key and capable leaders in the work: Doreen Sikiti who was Secretary during Mylet's time, B Qina, B Nodada, Monica Tembe, N Bafo and D Mofokeng. Sikiti took over the chairmanship after Mylet's death with Qina becoming Secretary. Nokwethemba became chairperson of this work after the death of Sikiti. Sikiti, Nododa and Bafo have since passed on.

Nokwethemba also testified to the simple life style led by Bhengu. He would not spend church's money on himself. All the money had to go toward mission and evangelism to bring people back to God. He lived in the township among the people in a four roomed match box house. He warned his ministers not to live beyond their means (Telephonic interview: N. Bhengu 2003.10.27).

2.9 THE CHURCH BHENGU JOINED

The Assemblies of God, the church that Bhengu joined, was born out of the outpouring of the Spirit in Azuza Street, California, Los Angeles, USA in 1904. In South Africa, the first Pentecostal

missionaries came at the beginning of 1908. The first Pentecostal church was the Apostolic Faith Mission in Johannesburg established in 1908 by Mr Lake who worked among some whites.

In 1908 Mr A.E Turney and his wife started missionary work among Africans and established a mission station in rural Doornkop, Mpumalanga among the Pedi speaking people. This work was later known as Assemblies of God. Unlike the Apostolic Faith Church, which started as a white church and started daughter churches among blacks, coloured etc, the Assemblies of God on the other hand began as an African church. Pentecostal Workers and Assemblies of God from many parts of USA came together in 1914 in Hot Springs, Arkansas to formally establish the Assemblies of God. In 1925, in South Africa, Assemblies of God was formed as the South African District Council, to represent groups of American, British, and South African missionaries. It was registered with the South African government in 1917 by Mr Turney.

Later, early missionaries were joined by other missionaries such as H.C. Phillips, (British), John .S Richards, USA who was later appointed the General Superintendent in South Africa by the General Council of the Assemblies of God in the USA. C. Austin Chawner from Canada had by this time also joined the Assemblies of God. In 1928 Chawner was elected Secretary of the Assemblies of God in South Africa. (Upton 1972)

2.9.1 Missionaries decide to form a South African Assemblies of God

At a conference of missionaries from USA, Ireland, Britain, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, and other parts of the world held in Shingwedzi in 1932, with the consent of their home councils it was decided to form a South African Chapter of the Assemblies of God. They formulated the following statement:

At this Conference the following Constitutional Declaration was adopted:

Whereas the Councils at Springfield, Missouri, US America, and London, Ontario, Canada, have sanctioned the dissolving of the Joint Field Council and the forming of a self governing Field Organisation, subject to the conditions attached hereto; and,

Whereas the Joint Field Council has been dissolved in order to form the new body; therefore,

Be it Resolved, That we, a body of Pentecostal Missionaries representing the Overseas Councils at Springfield, Missouri, US America; London, England; Zurich, Switzerland; and London, Ontario, Canada; and our co- workers here in South Africa, recognize ourselves as a cooperative fellowship of Missionaries, Christian workers and believers from the local assemblies, to be known as the "South African Council of the Assemblies of God" whose purpose is to work in complete harmony, cooperation and fellowship with the Councils of the Assemblies of God in other lands, for the promulgation of the Whole Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Southern territories of Africa, and for the promoting of Scriptural methods, unity and fellowship in the work established throughout these territories; and

Be it further Resolved that this field Organisation take over the entire Consistency and work as well as the properties, rights and privileges of the Joint Field Council, which has been dissolved.

Dated at Shingwedzi Mission Station, Zoutpansberg District, North Eastern Transvaal, this third day of October 1932.
The suggested Constitution was then adopted item during the sessions of this October 1932 General Conference.

Brother C.J.H Bennett of the Assemblies of God in Great Britain was elected Superintendent and Brother C. Austin Chawner of the Assemblies of God in Canada elected Secretary. (Chawner 1962:12.20)

Bhengu and his friends had been looking for an umbrella body that would allow them to preach the gospel without any hindrance.

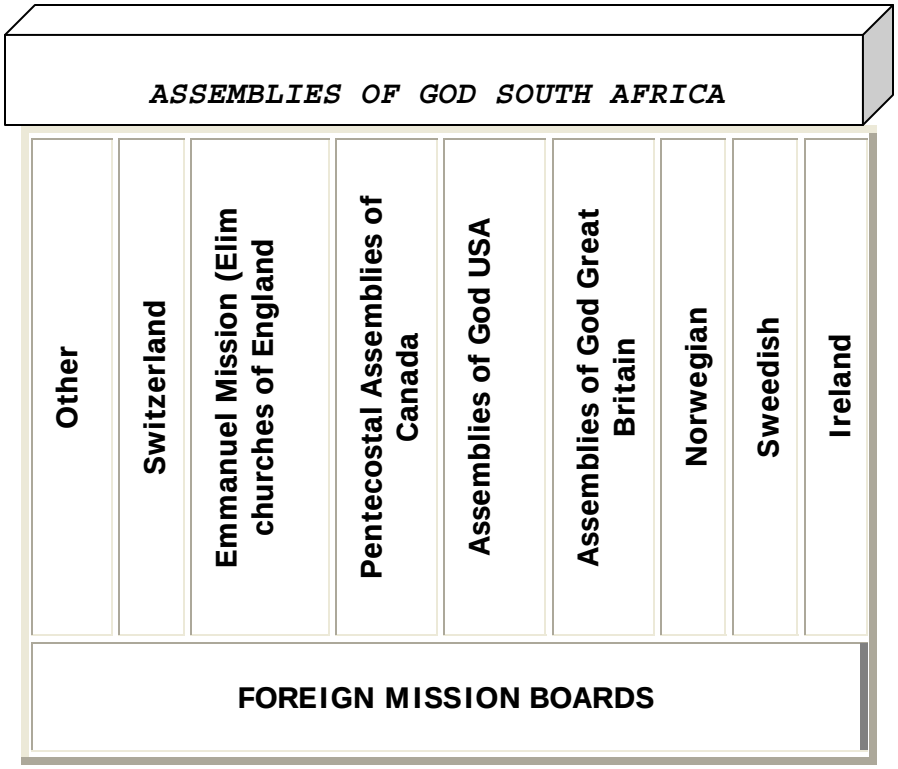


Figure2
(Lephoko) 2006)

These are some of the Pentecostal Missionary Boards that were doing work in South Africa who with the approval of their Boards joined hands to work under the umbrella of the Assemblies of God.

This structural arrangement by missionaries was ideal for Bhengu since it would later allow him to organise and develop his work the way he thought best.

In a letter dated 26/ 07/1955 to Mrs Larsen, a retired missionary with the Emmanuel Mission at Komatipoort, and was then living in England, Phillips explains the reasons for joining the Assemblies of God in 1938

Dear Mrs Larsen

Greetings in His Name!
Thank you for your letter received yesterday. We have followed your journeys and doings with our prayers, getting the news from my brother and Miss Frederikson. We do trust that you are through with hospitals now!

I note what you say about Elim and think that I did not explain the position clearly. You know we joined the Assemblies of God about the year 1938, and since that date we, in Nelspruit have just been ASSEMBLIES OF GOD and nothing else. The fact that we were in the Emmanuel Mission had nothing to do with the Natives of South Africa, the Native Affairs Department or any other missionary society. It was a private arrangement among ourselves and between ourselves and our circle of friends overseas. If Natives spoke to me about the Emmanuel Mission I would always day “You mean the Assemblies of God. Look at the name on your ticket or certificate.”

Now if Elim takes over the responsibility for Nelspruit, it would not affect our work out here in the slightest degree. We would still be ASSEMBLIES OF GOD and that only. Otherwise we would not consider offering the work to Elim. The only people who would know about the change would be the Elim Churches in England. No Native or anyone out here would hear the word “Elim”. It would only be an adjustment of relationships between the Phillips and the Elim Missionary Society.

The reason we joined the Assemblies of God was that we Pentecostal people might be one body as far as missionary work in South Africa is concerned on the field, instead of being a number of little groups. This has been tremendous benefit to our work and we treasure this fellowship very much and would not agree to doing anything to spoil it. Most of our missionaries have their own relationships with their respective home missionary boards you have with Peniel, but no other missionaries are concerned. The change over to Elim would not affect you IN ANY WAY WHATEVER, any more than it would affect Mr Heffer or the Prime Minister. We would still carry on EXACTLY THE SAME in our work as now.

I hope I have put the matter clearly, if not, please do not hesitate to write. Jean is writing the news items, so I will not attempt to outdo her!

Very sincerely in the Lord

Hubert C Phillips

2.9.2 Austin Chawner's Death

Austin Chawner, elected general Secretary of the Assemblies of God died on Sunday 20th October 1963 in a hit and run accident in Durban. His funeral was held in Nelspruit on Saturday 26th October 1963. His wife Ingrid wrote; "it was a large funeral. Buses with Africans came from all over the country, his fellow executive members and missionaries from our fellowship. It was said that there were more than 1000 Africans here and seven hundred from other areas. I don't know I did not see anybody" (Upton: 1972)

In paying tribute to Chawner during the funeral service H.C. Phillips said of Chawner " He had a unique ministry. He was an evangelist, a missionary, a writer, a teacher, a church builder and a Statesman in the Kingdom of God. He loved all men without distinction because he loved God". I had also been involved with Chawner, who was the General Secretary of the Assemblies of God at the time of his death. I travelled with him and Gumede to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) on a Bible teaching tour in September 1960.

2.10 BHENGU JOINS THE EMMANUEL MISSION OF HUBERT C PHILLIPS

2.10.1 Hubert Phillips

H.C. Phillips was born at Crouley Sussex England on 13th February 1891 and died on 12 December 1973 and was buried in Nelspruit. His funeral service was attended by several General Executive members of the Assemblies and the African people he ministered to. He was educated at Bedford Modern School in England. He studied engineering and articled as a civil engineering at Newmarket. Whilst at Letchworth he helped plan for its new church at 'First Garden City'. (Jean Phillips: no date)

Phillips was a missionary of the Elim Four Square Gospel Church. In 1928 whist pasturing a small church in England he had felt called to mission. In February of that year he sailed to South Africa. He first went to Komatipoort where he worked under Rev. Norman Barley. Barley was chairman of the LEBOMBO district of the Emmanuel Mission.

In 1937 whilst working in Durban as a court interpreter Bhengu saw an advertisement in the UBAQA an IsiZulu church magazine published by the Union Bible Institute a successor to Dumisa Bible to which Bhengu had received his Bible training under the instruction of Mr.S. M. Sutter. The advert for a teacher had been placed by H. C. Phillips of the Emmanuel Mission in Nelspruit.

Phillips was later sent to Nelspruit to head up the work there. It was in Nelspruit that in 1937 Bhengu met Phillips. Phillips had been looking for a teacher but accepted Bhengu as evangelist to work with him. In 1937 Bhengu had to go back to Pietermaritzburg to be married to his fiancé Mylet Ndlela after which he came back with her to Nelspruit. (Document: Jean Phillips: no date).

Mullan writes about Bhengu “His heart was in the Lord’s work and he linked up with the Emmanuel Mission and thus became part of the Assemblies of God together with other members of the Emmanuel’s Mission. His outstanding ministry bore the imprint of the hand of the Lord and soon became known as the ‘Black Billy Graham’ of South Africa. (Mullan: 1978) James Mullan came from Ireland and had been a missionary in the then Congo (now Democratic Republic of Congo). In 1945 he and Bhengu linked up to start work in Port Elizabeth.

For many years before his death H.C. Phillips was honoured with the title of Executive Emeritus of the Assemblies of God in South Africa. The following words were written on his funeral programme:

> Thou shall know also that thy seed shall be great,
> And thy offspring as the grass of the earth.
> Thou shall come to thy grave in a full age,
> Like as a shock of corn cometh in his season (Job 5:25)

2.11 BHENGU AND THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

Because of government restrictions on church registration by blacks, in 1937 Bhengu and his two friends Alfred Gumede and Gideon Buthelezi joined the Emmanuel Mission under H.C. Phillips in Nelspruit (now in Mpumalanga). H.C. Phillips was at that time on the verge of joining the Assemblies of God. In 1938, together with HC Phillips, Bhengu and his two friends, Alfred Gumede and Gideon Buthelezi, joined the Assemblies of God. The Assemblies of God was at the time a Black missionary church run by Pentecostal Missionaries from different foreign countries: England, Norway, Sweden, Canada, United States of America, Switzerland and Ireland. The Assemblies of God was never a denominational monolith in the true sense of the word. It has always been a fellowship of groups who are united by a common desire to minister to the dying world. The inscription on the logo – BOUND IN FELLOWSHIP BY THE SPIRIT says it all. Watt describes what happened:

> The general conference in December 1938 was held at Nelspruit, and the decision had to be made regarding the nature of the association between the Emmanuel Mission and the Assemblies of God.
>
> On 14 December 1938 an historic conversation took place. The chairman, Fred Mullan, requested the secretary, Austin Chawner, to meet with him during the lunch period. They sat facing each other on the sidewalk of the gardens at the Emmanuel Mission. Fred Mullan drew a large circle in the dust, with several smaller circles inside the large one. The large circle, he explained represented the Assemblies of God of South Africa. The smaller circles represented the various sections of the general body, such as the Canadian and the American section. They felt the time had come when the existing policy of the Assemblies of God had to be amended and each section had to be given complete autonomy with the right to hold its own properties and govern its own affairs relative to its overseas board. When the matter was explained to the conference, the change of policy plan was adopted unanimously. Hubert Phillips declared: 'This is a very real and wonderful decision, for it has removed all barriers to continued fellowship and co-operation'. It was through this development that Nicholas Bhengu, Alfred Gumede, Gideon Buthelezi, and James Mullan came into the Assemblies of God along with HC Phillips and the Emmanuel Mission (Watt 1992:38).

This made it possible for Bhengu and other ministers to work without interference from a hierarchical body. At one time the Assemblies of God had several groups including: Bhengu's Group, which came to be known as Back to God Crusade, American Missionary Group, James Mullan's Group, Canadian Missionary Group, Winkie Creamer's Group, Noel Scheepers, Mike Attlee, Stephen Govender and Colin La Foy's Group and a number of independents, headed by Fred Mullan, Jacobs, Jonathan Leach and others. Later however, Bhengu's work swallowed many if not all of the missionary works. In one sense this led to the breakaways of 1964 and 1981, first by the American and later by Canadian missionaries and some South African White Assemblies including Coastal Assemblies led by Mike Attlee, Sam Enrus in the Transvaal and Neel Scheepers in the Eastern Cape respectively. These breakaways took some black Assemblies with them. It is therefore not correct to say that the Assemblies of God was or is structured according to the apartheid ideology. Structures in the Assemblies of God were designed to facilitate ministries according to giftedness. The American splinter group formed what is known as the International Assemblies of God, the Canadians and South Africans established the Assemblies of God Fellowship. In 1977, L.S. Mjaji and Ron Gull, an English missionary, created the Emmanuel Assemblies. For many years attempts were made toward reconciliation among the enstranged groups without success. Recently an agreement was reached to form the Fellowship of Assemblies of God Churches with a Chairperson and a Secretary to drive the process. Pastor Collin La Foy is Chairman, whilst Dr E Mahlangu of the International Assemblies of God is Secretary of the umbrella body. It is sometimes called 4X4. Although no merger has taken place there is a strong bond of fellowship among the groups.

2.12 BHENGU'S HOME GOING

In a sermon before his death, which he called "home going", he prepared his people for his departure. He warned them to guard against people who were seeking positions and fame in the church; people who were not led by the Spirit of God; people who would seek to undo all that he had built over so many years; people who are after money to enrich themselves. He also said that true leaders should depend on the Holy Spirit to lead the people of God.

2.12.1 Bhengu's Last Message to his Followers

Bhengu was concerned that his work would fall into the hands of unscrupulous people after his death. The statement Bhengu wrote before his death is reported in full to show his philosophy and commitment to ministry and concerns for the work:

> There shall arise men from among you who desire to live a high life like white people, who will have properties, expensive furniture and pomp. The Spiritual life will go down very low and men shall be glorified and preaching will be mentally devised to replace the Holy Ghost and inspirational messages. But God will from time to time raise men who will denounce these things and call people back to the God as I did. These will be greatly opposed and persecuted in the very movement I had established. Watch for these things and remember I warned you beforehand. Are there men among you who dare to live as I have and teach as I have taught and walk as I have walked in the Church of the Living God? Faithfulness to God and honesty to men are a good maxim. These are my closing words before I close my ministry for my home going. My whole life has been spent in bringing the "VOICE" of God to you although there are prophetic messages I withheld because the Nation was not ready and still divided and struggling for independence and power. I have lived being misunderstood, misinterpreted, misconstrued and abused by reckless men from all sections and sides. These were all very good for my moulding up as well as humiliation. They were practical lessons to prove theories. They helped to keep me low, selfless and self-effaced. I could not ride a high horse after all my success for they were (sic) all His. I was glad when no street, road or avenue in all the townships was named after me. My life was buried with Christ and although I received great honours from the leaders of various countries yet I was never elated to feel that I was above my fellow men in the street. I am going to lay myself down in death in real equality with all men of low estate. Men who never went to school, never preached to thousands in Africa and overseas. I feel I am worthless. I feel I am nobody but God took my life and used it for His own pleasure as useless as I was. It was all for His honour and glory … If things go against you do not despair or react. They all help to keep you low and humble. Be a man of prayer, fasting and Bible reading. Pray always and present yourself to God in secret and seek His face. His glory will come over you and this is the only way to be effective in God's work.

Never pretend to be an academic when you are not one and if you are one, never be ostentatious about it. Desire no titles unless those you can earn. Do not be side-tracked by any temporal thing but be wholly consecrated to God. Build the Church of God. The names of our Churches are our own inventions and not God's! Let the Christians come together as God's children. Build the Nation where you are remembering that you are part of that Nation and you are in it for a specific purpose for God. Pray for all leaders in Africa, support leaders of your Nation and present Christ to them by all means. The Church is the light of the world. The Church is the salt of the earth and the Church should lead the Nation to Peace, Unity and prosperity (no date)

2.12.2 Bhengu's Funeral Arrangements

Before he died, Bhengu gave a directive dated 27.01.1984 as to how his funeral ought to be conducted:

1. The coffin shall be supplied by the undertakers without consultation with either relatives or church people.
2. The hearse shall take the corpse from the mortuary direct to the grave and neither to my home nor to church.
3. There shall be no funeral service either at home or at the church.
4. Hymns shall be selected by me, which shall be sung while the coffin is being lowered.
5. No speeches, no preaching, no ceremony and no wreaths, absolutely none.
6. Announcements on the air and press should be as follows: "Nicholas Bheka, son of Josiah Khanda, son of Yele Bhengu. Born on September 5th 1909 at Entumeni Mission Station, expelled twice for his faith by the mission as a heretic, first as a young man, 21 years old. Came back to settle down in his father's land, built a home and was forced to leave in 1973 and settled at Mtunzini. Died at ..... on ..... at the age of ....." Nothing else should be said, absolutely nothing!

   No watch night services anywhere and no substitutes.
7. Absolutely no slaughtering of any beast of any sort, not even a chicken and no food provision of any kind.

8. The burial or funeral shall take place three days after my certified death and no more.
9. The funeral should take place any day of the week and should not wait for friends, relatives or church people.
10. All expenses shall have been paid for and there shall be no money collected or given for my funeral.
11. Curse shall be upon those who shall deviate from these instructions

Nicholas B.H. Bhengu

It is clear from the above quotation that Bhengu was a wounded man as the result of a series of rejections. First when he tried to witness to his own people at Entumeni after his conversion and later when he tried to settle down there. It was not only the Lutheran Church that rejected him. Within the Assemblies of God and in the Back to God Crusade there were people who injured him with their venomous criticism. For strength he often quoted from Is 54:17 " No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me declares the Lord".

2.13 BHENGU'S CALL TO MINISTRY

Bhengu often spoke about the call of God upon his life. I remember talking to him and a Mr Mkansi at whose home he stayed during his evangelistic crusade in Nelspruit in 1956. He told us that God had spoken to him specifically in a vision to go and preach Jesus Christ to the masses who were enslaved by sin and living in poverty and oppression. This is how he explained it according to Dubb:

> The Lord explained to me that I was authorized to serve Him, but I did not know how to go about it. He showed me a great ocean to which He brought me. There I heard the voices of many people crying in fear of death. They were all under the water and their hands and feet were bound with chains. But they were trying to set themselves free. They all had black faces. When I listened I noticed that one could hear their voices. They were speaking in all African languages and dialects, and yet I was able to understand them all. They were all pointing at me for I was standing on dry land, and said: "We are dying, we are dying. We are perishing. Help us out of

here." I felt a great sympathy and wanted to help them all out of there. But they were as many as the sands on the seashore. The more that I tried to help them the more I sank into the water. Bewildered I called on the Lord. Jesus appeared and lifted me out. He showed me an open Bible and said: "This is the Word of Life; study this Word, and through the words of this Book you will break these fetters and free your people from the chains of sin, in which they have been bound for centuries. I wish you to do this" (Dubb 1976:10 [translated from Schlosser 1958:24])

CHAPTER 3: BHENGU – THE EVANGELIST AND CHURCH PLANTER

3.1 BHENGU'S UNDERSTANDING OF MISSION AND EVANGELISM

3.1.1 Missio Dei

Bosch asserts that Barth was the first to give a clear theological explanation of Missio Dei which broke radically with the Enlightenment theology (cf Küng 1987:229)

> Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine on the Missio Dei as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another "movement": Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world. As far as the mission thinking is concerned, Bhengu, too sent out his people to evangelise those who had not been converted to Christ.

In one of his annual reports dated Sunday 23 November 1969 – delivered at Assembly Hall, Belgravia Crescent, East London, Bhengu writes:

> John 20:21 "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: As my father hath sent me, even so send I you".
> It is striking to realize that we have a mission not less than the one for which the first missionaries who travelled the longest distance came to this earth. It frightens us to know the immensity of the task before us. It behoves us to intensify our efforts. He was sent by God to do the greatest Mission on earth. We, in turn, have been sent by Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth whom we have accepted as our Saviour, King and Master. We are made aware of our position first in Him as members of His body, and His bride, as His church and as bones of His bones. We belong wholly to Him but there is a task set before us. If we have been accepted into sonship with Him we have also been commissioned by Him to this ministry on earth –to

fulfill that which was begun and left incomplete by Him.

> The work of salvation was his Mission to this world and this was accomplished – "It is finished" when he bore our sins on the tree and died the death of a malefactor "having done nothing amiss". His mission was accomplished. "I must work the works of him that sent me John 9:4. The Mission of gathering the lost souls, building His body and extending His kingdom by proclaiming to the world the glad tidings of what has been accomplished in their behalf is left with (sic) us and for us. We are fully aware now of our task and mission from the risen Saviour – 'even so send I you!' We all want to fit into His programme and play our role respectively as grateful and obedient children of the Great King. We are constrained by His love to do His will. The indwelling Christ compels us to love as He loved, sacrifice as He extending and suffer with him in all Things. What is His will? His will is that no one should perish but they should all come to the knowledge of the truth and repent, believe and be saved. 2 Pet.3: 9. How shall they hear without a preacher? Romans 10:14. How shall they preach except they be sent? Romans 10:15.

Flowing from his extraordinary calling he believed that God sent the Son, and that God the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit. The sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and Son meant that the Church was in the world to do Mission work. He also understood that "Mission is no longer thought as the Church's activity overseas run on cultural lines. (Kirk 2000:24). The mission frontier is not primarily a geographical one, but one of belief, conviction of a commitment. From the beginning of his ministry Bhengu sought to reach out to people of all cultures: Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Pedi, Swazi, Venda, Whites, Indian, Coloured and Shonas in Zimbabwe. The coloured work in the Assemblies of God was started by Bhengu in Swaziland and in Port Elizabeth.

Bhengu took the call to preach the gospel seriously. He believed that just as the Father had sent the Son, through the Holy Spirit, the Son had now sent him to take the Gospel from Cape to Cairo. His vision was to reach all of Africa with the Gospel. In an endeavour to reach all the people he learned to speak most of South Africa's black languages including English and Afrikaans and became a student of their cultures.

Bhengu's teaching emphasised the work of the Holy Spirit in ministry. He was concerned that after he had gone "the Spiritual (sic) life will go down very low and men shall (sic) be glorified

and preaching will be mentally devised to replace the Holy Ghost and inspirational messages"(Farewell message: modate)

Most of Bhengu's work was among his African People. Although he also preached to whites in this country and overseas in places such as Canada, USA, Norway, UK, Sweden and in Japan, his main work was in South Africa. He also conducted evangelistic campaigns in Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Lesotho and planted in those countries.

3.2 BHENGU THE ITINERANT EVANGELIST

In the beginning Bhengu preached for other churches including the Church of the Nazarene, The Full Gospel Church of God, and the Apostolic Pentecostal Holiness Church, etc.

3.2.1 Preaching for the Church of the Nazarene

Dr Samuel Hynd of the Church of the Nazarene speaks very fondly of Bhengu whom he met when Bhengu was invited as a speaker at the Church of the Nazarene Christian Camp meetings at Ndzingeni in Swaziland in the early 1940s. Hynd had come to the Lord as a young man through the ministry of a black evangelist, thus he was drawn to Bhengu:

> Bhengu had a way of ministering to people (like African to African). He had a very powerful evangelistic ministry. His messages were so simple. He preached God's Word with authority – which gave him a degree of honour and respectability. He, as a black man (not a white missionary) preached the Word of God in a very powerful way. His messages were convincing. Bhengu was authoritarian in terms of God's Word, and people responded to him. He was a wonderful man. He was like a president of South Africa in the spiritual sense. If he were a politician, he would have been a very strong politician.
>
> His message was plain gospel and he never pushed people to speak in tongues. He was a wise man who had a way of engaging his audience. Nazarenes were not open to tongues and were never imposed upon or pushed to speak in tongues. Bhengu never pushed people to give him anything (Interview: Hynd 2003.10 18).

It was during one of these meetings in Swaziland that Bhengu met the Carmichael family in Siteki in 1943.

3.2.2 The Carmichaels come to Christ

The three Carmichael brothers and their sister Jessie Creamer and a married couple met in Carmichael's home in Piggs Peak, Swaziland during his evangelistic meeting with the Church of the Nazarene where Bhengu in an informal manner shared the gospel with them. They all accepted Christ in that meeting. Jessie says that he had shared the gospel in a simple but profound manner. 'It was here that he was requested to establish his first church ever in 1943. In this Church I was shown benches that were made in 1943 and are still in use (Interview: Creamer 2003.11.19).

3.2.3 In the Transvaal (Now Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Limpopo)

After joining Emmanuel Mission Bhengu started preaching in and around Nelspruit.
In 1944, he moved to Benoni on the Reef where he preached in the township and on the mines. In 1945 before going to Port Elizabeth he had planted a church in 4th Street, Twatwa Benoni (Twatwa was called Twatwa because of gang shootings that used to take place in the streets)

He left Gumede to look after the small Benoni congregation whilst he moved on to Port Elizabeth upon the invitation of Jim Mullan. Mullan had already moved to Port Elizabeth from Tzaneen where he had established a work amongst the whites whilst Bhengu worked among blacks. (interview Gumede Watt-1986:)

3.2.4 In Port Elizabeth

Bhengu came to Port Elizabeth in January 1945. He did not know anyone among the Xhosa people. Before coming to Port Elizabeth he had been fellowshipping with some brethren in the Full Gospel Church in Durban. When he came to Port Elizabeth he looked for people from Durban; they had come with Bauman Bakeries to work in Port Elizabeth. They lived in the hostel. Bhengu went looking for them for shelter and he lived with them in the hostel. (Interview Vena 2005.03.05)

According to Thembani and Makanina, one of Bhengu's first workers, the campaign meetings started on 22 January 1945. Thembani had gone to the meetings, a day later on 23 January 1945 and got saved that night. He also got healed from a stomach ailment he had had for many years. Many miracles happened during the campaigns, the blind could see, the deaf could hear and the crippled walked. Many other miracles took place.

As the church got established Bhengu organised classes where men were taught leadership skills in the church, how to live in harmony with their wives and raise children. Women likewise, were taught how to take of their husbands and children. They were also taught basic hygiene and how to work with their hands to support their families.

In Port Elizabeth Bhengu was assisted by a choir from the Full Gospel Church of God. He called his meeting a garage where souls were restored to God and bodies were healed. He told people he was not starting a church.

On Sunday mornings he told people to go back to their churches and come back in the afternoon for his meetings. Those who were not churched demanded a Sunday morning service because they had nowhere to go. After establishing his first church in Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. He brought in Alfred Gumede, the man who had joined the Emmanuel Mission with him and a Mr J.J Dlamini to teach in the Pilgrim Bible School, which he had established in the church: Bible School classes were held in the evenings for those who wanted to enter ministry and those who just wanted to enrich their spiritual lives by getting into the word of God for themselves. He also brought Pastor Nebe from Benoni, Transvaal. (Watt interview: Makinana, Thembani 1986.09.13)

3.2.5 In Korsten

Two weeks later Bhengu went to Korsten where he preached in a community hall. The same modus operandi was followed by Bhengu. People were healed from diseases and many were saved and had their lives transformed by the gospel Bhengu preached to them. Many who came to Christ were from different cultural groups, Zulus, Xhosas, Coloured etc. There was opposition from mainline churches who were concerned with some of their people leaving the church to go to Bhengu's meetings although he encouraged them to go back to their churches. His preaching

was not about the church or people joining a church but about having a born again experience and a relationship with Christ.

Bhengu encouraged those who had been saved and the crippled that could now walk to give their testimonies in the streets on Sunday afternoons and display their crutches to demonstrate the power of God. (Interview Vena 2005.03.05).

3.2.6 Bhengu's marketing strategy in Port Elizabeth and Korsten

He had no money. Dressed in a blue overall that was shorter that he was, he rode around the township on a bicycle with some pamphlets, which he distributed in the street, especially among children. Vena was one of the children he gave handbills to assist with distributor. He pasted them on walls; whilst he took others into shops and asked permission to paste them on walls.

3.2.7 In East London

It was in East London where Bhengu established himself. He went to East London from Port Elizabeth in 1950.

In 1945 Mr Camngca saw a vision of a man dressed in a black suit wearing a bow tie. Camngca did not know the man. God told him to go to Port Elizabeth and asked the man he had seen in a vision to bring revival to East London. He later went to Port Elizabeth (German Hall) to try and find the man he had seen in a vision. He met Bhengu at the entrance of the City White Hall (German Hall) where Bhengu had his meetings. Camngca shouted, "Here is the man I saw in a vision ". Bhengu shouted back "here is the man I saw in a vision". Bhengu had also seen a vision of a man of Camngca's description. Camngca told Bhengu that God sent him to come and ask him to bring revival to East London-a Macedonian call AC 16:9-10. Bhengu went to East London but had no place to stay. He stayed in Mr Camngca's home. Mr Camngca lived in a two-roomed house with his wife and children. He offered his bed to Bhengu but Bhengu chose to sleep on the floor not wanting to cause discomfort to the family.

Bhengu conducted his campaigns at a Tipini (Dumping Ground). There was no other place for his meetings. Many people came from all over the Eastern Cape to hear Bhengu. His meetings were

highly successful. The mayor of East London and the police published in newspapers the effects of the meeting.

The African National Congress in East London and church leaders called Bhengu to a meeting. The ANC wanted to know from which political party and the side he was supporting. Bhengu responded "You are building the outside wall, I am building the inside wall". He told them that they were comrades in arms. They then left him alone. When asked about what church he belonged to he would tell the people that he belonged to no church but that he was bringing revival to the people. (Gcwabe 2005-09-18)

The Daily Dispatch (no date) publicised the reduction of crime and how people had turned to God. Many people brought back stolen goods, and dangerous weapons, which were later taken to the police to be handed back to their rightful owners.

3.2.7.1 Good Audience for African preacher

Bhengu would now and again be invited to address white audiences. Some of the meetings were organised by white Assemblies that supported his work.

> East London- An audience of between 400 and 500 whites attended a Back to God Crusade service in the City Hall last night to listen to an address by the African minister, the Rev. Nicholas B.H.Bhengu.
>
> Mr Bhengu has recently returned from a visit to Germany and Canada and spoke of the need for African missionaries to spread the Gospel among the Africans.
>
> Mr Bhengu said "a return to God was the only thing that could save South Africa from disaster". He also said "the world was seething and boiling. People stood in awe watching what was to happen. The Africans were puzzled and bewildered by what was happening today, but Christ was the answer", he said.
>
> "The Europeans in this country have a great responsibility. Of these to whom much has been given, much will be expected, he said. The European Christians have done much to help us, in our task and much has been accomplished. (Daily Dispatch: no date)

Dubb describes Bhengu's Back to God Crusade in East London:

> The Crusade was a new experience for the local African populace. Unlike the limited evangelistic efforts of the local churches, the Crusade was
>
> characterized by its high-pressure publicity, impressive marquee, vehicles and equipment, and highly trained personnel. Since no funds were solicited, it appeared that Bhengu had unlimited financial resources, while it also became apparent that the duration of the campaign was limited only by its continuing success. Many thousands attended the revival services, some encouraged by their ministers, some in search of healing, and some simply out of curiosity. "Everybody was very excited about the new and wonderful preacher and healer," recalled a member of the local Methodist congregation, "and I, too, was curious to hear this man. In fact I attended one of his first meetings. The tent was packed. I was very impressed with his preaching and, like everyone else, I was emotionally moved. He healed people with ordinary illnesses and converted many." (Dubb 1976:4-5)

In 1945, in Port Elizabeth where he planted his first church in the Eastern Cape. He was assisted by his friend, Jim Mullan who had started work amongst whites, whilst Bhengu ministered and established churches in the black townships. Jim Mullan also assisted with the teaching at the Pilgrims Bible School.

The crippled walked and the blind could see. Broken marriages were mended. He preached forgiveness of sins, a message that had not been heard before. Church leaders in the community were opposed to such a message. (Interview: Gcwabe 2005-09-18)

According to Hollenweger Bhengu's church was known as the "Healers Church". For Bhengu divine headlining was proof that God exists and is stronger than the Devil; indeed to him preaching without healing was useless. (Hollenweger)

3.2.7.2 Bhengu builds a Big Church in Duncan Village

In East London in the late 1950's Bhengu built the largest church in Southern Africa at the time. It was called "Gwinyazonke"(swallow them all). Which meant it could swallow or accommodate

thousands of people. It was also used as a convention center for Bhengu's work for many years. People came from all over Southern Africa to attend December and Easter conventions where they received inspirational messages and made financial contributions for the spread of the gospel.

It was at this church that he held his Annual Conventions and conferences in the 1960s. He planned and directed from this church. It was the hub of his work. It was from here that the work spread to Transkei and rural areas (Ezilaleni). People gave liberally to get the gospel to those who had not heard.

The Dispatch Online Friday, June 8 2001 has a caption " The Reverend Nicholas Bhengu preaches to a large congregation in East Bank in 1957". The writer says that Bhengu had brought a new brand of Christianity to East London that attracted wide support because it tolerated customary practices such as lobolo and circumcision with commitment to discipline.

3.2.7.3 Bhengu builds another Big Church in Mdantsane

The big church in Duncan village was sold after the government gave notice to have the church moved to Mdantsane because of its location in what was known to be a white area. Another big church was later built in Mdantsane. Bhengu was criticized for building a big church in Mdantsane to which he responded by saying "We cater for both the spiritual and social aspirations of the people". He said that people who criticized the church's business were mainly those who contributed little or nothing to society.

3.3 BHENGU ESTABLISHES BACK TO GOD CRUSADE

The following show how Back to God was formed. It was established as the result of a vision Bhengu received from God.

> The Back To God crusade came into being because of a vision Rev N B H Bhengu saw in 1949 at Port Elizabeth shortly after his return from the United States of America where he had gone to study, but had to cut short his stay because of the illness of his entire family. On the day of the death of General J C Smuts that night Bro Bhengu saw the vision and a

choir (Heavenly) was also singing in the sky. The message from above was loud and clear that he should preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo and bring people "Back to God" he got up and paced the room uttering 'Back to God' Back to God' and Back to God' that was the beginning of the Back To God Crusade. (Mothers Convention Reports Accounts: 1982-1983)

Back to God Crusade is known among his people as "Nozala" the one who gives birth to hundreds of churches in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Swaziland and to a lesser degree in Lesotho and Namibia. These churches now number more than 5 000. (Interview: Shabalala 2003.10.12)

Crusades were mainly held in tents although community halls were also used especially at the beginning of his evangelistic crusades.

3.3.1 Extracts from the minutes of the Back to God Crusade Workers Conference Lamontville 12TH JULY 1971

1. Name of the Crusade: Back To God Crusade.
2. Sphere of Operation: The whole of South Africa
3. Programme: Outreach by way of the crusades and implementation of the programme. Soliciting Funds, from interested persons and people of all races embracing all goodwill people.
4. Affiliation: affiliated with the Assemblies of God Church in South Africa – not a platform for criticism.
5. A committee of THREE men for Back To God Crusade will be appointed to look after the funds of the B.T.G.C.
6. Back To God Crusade is not an end to (sic) itself but is for the establishment of Assemblies.

Typical campaign notices read like this one:

RENOWNED REVIVALS TO BRING PEOPLE BACK TO GOD.

COME AND LISTEN TO A MAN WHO HAS HELPED THOUSANDS: FROM SPIRITUAL SICKNESSES, AND PRAYERS THAT HAVE TOUCHED LIVES OF MANY PEOPLE IN AFRICA AND OVERSEAS.

Topics to be dealt with during the Crusade were also included: SIN, CHURCHLINESS, ANCESTORS OR GOD – WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE? DO THE SICK REALLY GET HEALED? IS JESUS A WHITE MAN? WHAT HAS THAT TO DO WITH US-BLACK PEOPLE? (BACK TO GOD CRUSADE: 1972:10.21) (a free translation from IsiZulu handbill).

3.3.2 Back to God Crusade Registered: Section 21 Company

The registration of Back To God Crusade as a section 21 Company on July 1 1976 was of greatest importance for Bhengu. Money had to be raised from individuals, white Assemblies and interested parties overseas and in the country.

3.3.3 Constitution of the Back to God Crusade

Here below is a section of the Constitution dealing with the name, and objects and principles of the organisation.

1. Name: The Name of the Institution shall be the “Back To God Crusade” herein after referred to as an Institution.
2. Head Office: Johannesburg (R.S.A.)
3. Objects and principles
    a) To spread the gospel throughout the country.
    b) To provide premises and equipment such as tents, motor vehicles etc.
    c) To maintain such premises and equipment and to engage such officers and staff, as may be necessary for the establishment, maintenance and promotion of the Crusade.
    d) To purchase, take on lease or acquire any other interest in any land , buildings and property, real and personal which may be acquired for the purpose of or capable of being used in connection with the objects of the Institution.
    e) To borrow and raise money in such a manner and subject to such conditions as the Crusade may deem fit, for the purpose to bind the whole or any part of the properties, assets and revenue of the Crusade both present and future.
    f) To do all such things and carry out all such undertakings as may be necessary or desirable for an incidental to the objects of the Institution.

Objective (a) “to spread the gospel throughout the country” was the key focus of Back To God Crusade. This objective is still aggressively pursued by the organisation with more cities, townships, rural villages throughout the country, Mozambique, Lesotho, and Namibia. Millions of rands are raised yearly by Mothers’ Ministry and spent in outreach with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Bhengu established eight regional teams for strategic effectiveness and best results: He stated in circular titled “FOR RESULTS IN THE CRUSADE WORK”.

> The division of the Crusade into eight regions is far better and profitable than a big solid team moving from area to area. This has a tendency to HIT & RUN leaving rural areas and small places untouched while racing for the big cities. The campaign stops, the tents rolled and carried away to the next town. The tide of revival subsides and many relapse into their old life. But when a team is continually, constantly and permanently in the area the results will be permanent in most cases. We can thus see crime reduced and children activities established to curb the rising irresponsibility and idleness. This is our task.
>
> Each team will be semi- permanent in an area with daily crusade meetings, follow- up work and prayer meetings. In this way I feel I can do more by directing, planning and initiating these campaigns for the teams the first few nights as a DRAW-CARD perhaps. I can do more by prayer, writing, arousing interest, making reports, praying for the sick and visiting these regions by rotation.

Regional Teams and their Leaders:

1. Transkei (Now Eastern Cape) – Hartley Qina assisted by 3 workers.
2. East Pondoland (now Eastern Cape) - Gideon Colombile assisted by three workers.
3. Ciskei (now Eastern Cape) - Atwell Ngcangisa assisted by three workers
4. Cape Peninsula (now Western Cape) - Don F Siko assisted by two workers
5. Witwatersrand and Southern Transvaal (now Gauteng and Mpumalanga respectively) led by a team of five evangelists yet to be appointed
6. Natal and Zululand (now Kwa Zulu Natal) - Dan Masondo assisted by two workers

7. Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga Lowveld) leader to be appointed
8. Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo) leader and assistants to be appointed

Some of the requirement "---experienced, matured (sic) and tested workers who will create no problem or anxiety in the cruse"--- "select men and women with a vision and a call from God (and not hirelings"--- (Circular 1967-11-01)

The document "FOR RESULTS IN THE CRUSADE WORK" lays down his strategic focus and the need to conserve campaign results by establishing churches. He did not conduct crusades for crusade's sake but to build up the work.

His focus was not only on towns and cities but rural areas as well. He was interested in efficiency and effectiveness in the work. He wanted to see fruit "--- that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples"(Jn 15:8) " fruit that will last"(Jn15: 16). The way to achieve and conserve results was by having a "semi permanent "team in the area with daily crusade meetings. He himself was to play the role of director – directing the operations through planning, prayer, writing and stimulating interest, generating reports, praying for the people and visiting the regions.

This strategy worked very well. With several tents in different places, his major task was to initiate the campaign, withdraw and leave the tent with a team leader. He would then move to another area where this would be repeated. Once a church had been planted, a pastor would be sent to look after it.

Shabalala is adamant that the label "Billy Graham of South Africa" is not only misleading but incorrect. Shabalala says Graham preached for others, never established churches. He left converts in the hands of participating churches. Graham did not contact with the people. After he had left he never helps build them up. With Bhengu it was not so, he made sure that his converts were established into a church with proper care, descipled to become themselves winners of souls for the Lord's kingdom.

Back to God Crusade regional teams worked in collaboration with Regional Leadership (District Councils) and Local Assemblies.

3.3.4 Funding for Back to God Crusade

As early as 1950 Bhengu became aware that in order to fulfill his mandate to preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo, he would need money. He often went to the USA to seek financial assistance for the crusades. He either came back with insufficient funds or no money at all.

It was during one of his fund raising episodes in Brooklyn, New York, USA that whilst he was praying God spoke to him and told him to go back to South Africa to raise money for the work there.

That night in a vision he saw an African woman wearing a typical “doek” (head gear). He then heard the voice of God asking, “Do you see this African woman?” “Go back to your country; you will get money that you need to do my work from people like this woman”.

3.4 BHENGU ORGANISES WOMEN TO RAISE MONEY FOR THE BACK TO GOD CRUSADE

After his striking vision in Brooklyn, Bhengu returned to South Africa. After much prayer he called together a group of women: Mrs Mylet Bhengu (his first wife), Mrs Doreen Sikiti, Mrs Virginia Buthelezi (wife of Gideon Buthelezi, one of his early associates) and Mrs Mngoma.

He trained these women and commissioned them to train others. In 1961 he enlarged the team by adding two more women Mrs Ruth Moduka and Mrs Beatrice Qina.

In 1970, seventeen more women were added and trained as organisers. They represented regions. They were tasked with organising women and the establishing of Local Church Committees to raise funds. They also had to train women in various handwork and small business enterprises to earn money for themselves and feed and educate their children, and give money to God for evangelism.

The first Mothers’: Convention was held in Bloemfontein in 1969, at which a total of R2000 was collected, a substantial sum in those days.

He never asked his African audiences to make financial contributions to his campaigns until they were formed into a church. (Back to God Mothers' Organisation, no date)

In later years the following Structure for the Mothers Ministry was established:

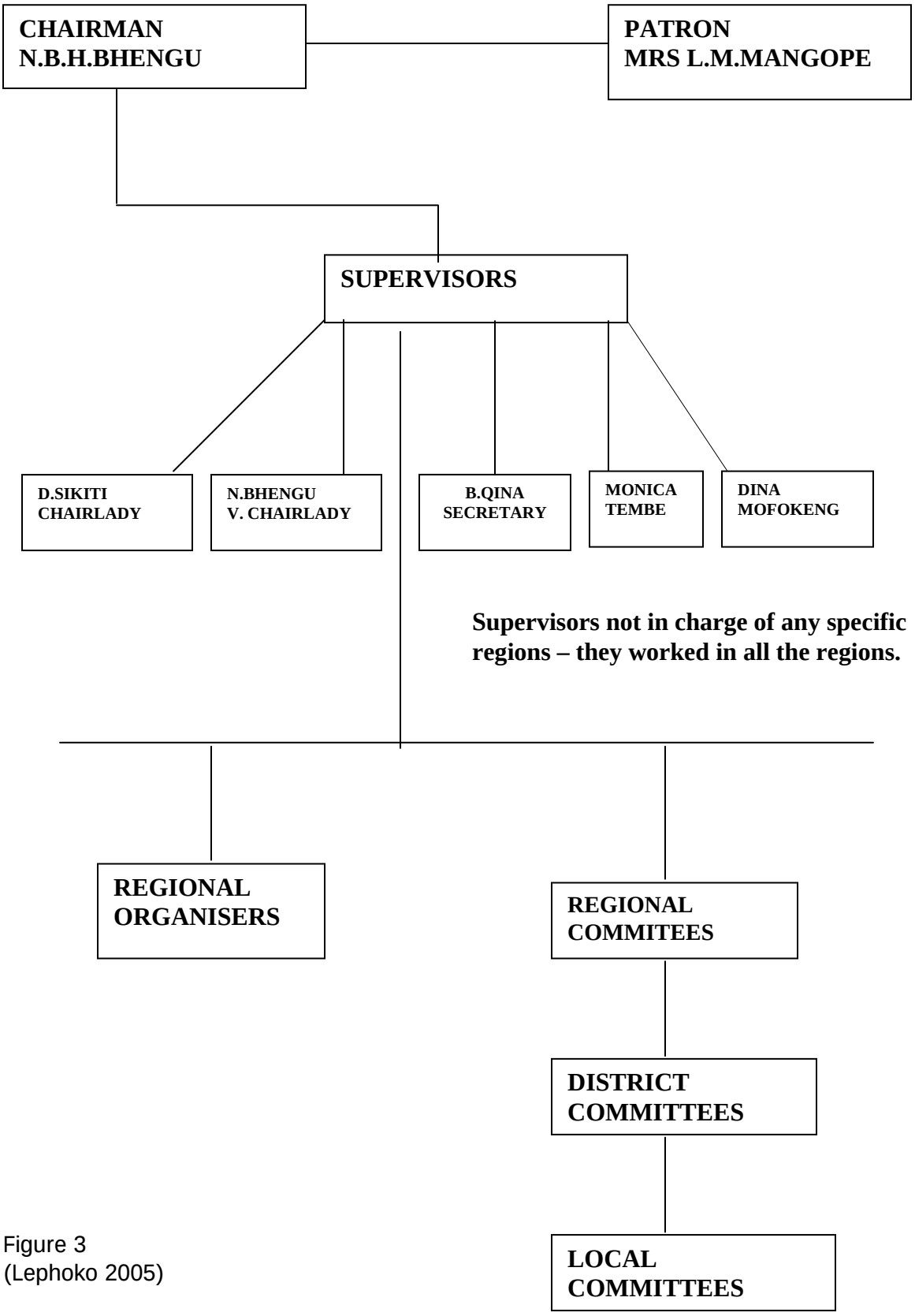


Figure 3
(Lephoko 2005)

Neither the Supervisors nor Organisers have power or authority over Assemblies. Local Committees are under the leadership of the pastor and his leadership team.

Bhengu disapproved the election of Convention Committee by secret ballot for fear that people who did not share his vision and commitment to the Great Commission might end up in leadership positions. He appointed the following people on that Committee:

Chairlady: Doreen Sikiti
Secretary: Beatrice Qina
Additional Members: Ruth Moduka
Dina Mofokeng
Monica Tembe

Later it was the team that would appoint Convention Committee Members.

Local and Regional Committees received strict instructions on how to collect money, bank and withdraw it. Money was to be banked in the name of the Local Mothers work. This was true at regional and national levels, with supervisors acting as co- signatories for regions.

3.4.1 Presentation of Annual Financial Audit at Mothers Easter Conventions

Regions brought their (bags) monies raised during the year. There were also displays of handiwork (sewing, knitting, etc) from regions and countries such as Swaziland and Lesotho and Namibia. A spirit of competition was engendered during the convention among regions vying to beat others with their giving and other works.

Before the presentations of bags, Financial Audit would be presented to the Convention of between 20 000 – 30 000 people. Bhengu was very emphatic that white people had gifts with which they could help the black work but resisted white control and domination of blacks by whites including through their financial giving.

3.5 WHITE ASSEMBLIES PARTNER WITH BHENGU IN SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH FINANCIAL GIVING

Under the leadership of James Mullan and later John Bond, white Assemblies became involved in supporting Back to God Crusade financially. Pastor Noel Scheepers in East London coordinated all contributions from Assemblies countrywide. Regional Offices were set up in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho with responsible leaders:

1. Transvaal (now Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo), Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), and Overseas: J.S.W. Bond.
2. Orange Free State: Kimberley, Lesotho: Ted Rawlings.
3. Natal and Zululand (now Kwa-Zulu Natal): John Howe.
4. Eastern Cape: Hustler
5. Western Province (now Western Cape): N Cromhout.

Funds were channelled into the Back to God Crusade account through Noel Scheepers' Office in East London. A large number of workers were supported by this fund.

For his part Bhengu prepared Crusade reports for Noel Scheeper's Office. The reports included conversions, healings, highlighting of workers needs and equipment. He spoke at white rallies organised by Noel Scheepers to motivate them to continue give to Back to God Crusade.

A typical advert in the Daily Dispatch of November 24 1967 to rallies organised by Scheepers for Bhengu read:

THE
CHALLENGE OF AFRICA
FOR 1968
TO THE EUROPEANS
OF
EAST LONDON
UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF
NOEL A. M. SCHEEPERS, B.Sc.
in the CITY HALL, EAST LONDON
TOMORROW--- Nov. 25
At 7:30 p.m.
…….

SPEAKER
NICHOLAS B.H.BHENGU
That mighty African Man of God, with
A message for Africa

Together with
70 Voice All African Choir
Every European of Every Church
needs to hear the needs of Africa.

Scheepers was keen not to interfere:

> However we are totally committed to non- interference in the leadership of Bro Bhengu, and each time we have managed to raise an increase of funds over the previous year, requesting him to use this exclusively for an increase in salary, he has felt constrained rather to put new men into the field where the harvest is truly great.

3.6 OVERSEAS DONORS

There were a number of overseas donors who gave money to Back to God Crusade . In one of his reports to Faith Partners, he names one such donor, the Rev J Meares of The Evangel Temple of Washington D.C who supported three evangelists with three thousand dollars a month (Bhengu Report: 1966).

In the same report he mentions a pledge from Len Jones of Christian and Mission Enterprise in Australia, which he calls “WONDERFUL NEWS IS TO HAND”.

Bhengu also reported on a campaign that was held in Umsinga in Kwa Zulu Natal upon the invitation of the chief of the Bomvu tribe. The Umsinga area was riddled with faction wars between the Bomvu and Mchunu tribes. In August 1970 he reported as follows:

> It is not easy to render a clear report of what has taken place, as we were overwhelmed by the Tugela (Umsinga) success.
>
> As I reported last year, we received an urgent call from one of the very important Zulu chiefs of the Bomvu Tribe on the Umsinga Hills between Dundee and Greytown. This chief, Muntu Ngubane, is a primitive Zulu, as is his tribe, which is one of the largest in the country. For over ten years there had been faction fights and tribal skirimishes result (sic) in deaths and bloodshed. These people use guns and sometimes manufactures (sic) their own arms and ammunition. The government has established a special station as a firearm squad, but the guns are still there and people are still shot in spite of these efforts.
>
> We pitched our tent in February, with fear and trepidation, but faith rose up as we saw crowds filling our largest tent to capacity on the very first day. Chief Muntu – never been to school or church before – was the first to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his own personal Saviour. The joy of the Lord and the power of God filled the whole tent, and everybody clapped hands as if they said “ Hurrah”.
> Now you may guess what followed: We felt that for the first time the gospel message had penetrated this backward tribe. Chief Muntu baptized on April 5th, together with the wife of the late Paramount Chief of Zululand. Hundreds will be baptized after winter. Eight people were shot dead a month ago, less than a mile from the tent; but our people ‘s morale was not shaken. This is a very notorious area, but we have a feeling that VICTORY IS ON THE WAY.
>
> The Crusade has been very costly. There is starvation in the land, and feeding the workers and others from the shops and markets which are fifty miles away, drained a lot of

money. We could not look on the sick and hungry people from long distances; we have to give them something to eat.

3.6.1 The Constitution of the Assemblies of God

The Constitution empowers the formation of groups (see Appendix 1 Constitution Section 7-Definitions. [a-f]). This section defines groups or associations and their powers (see specifically subsections (a) (e) and (f). Sovereignty. PART IV (Assemblies: Recognition, Sovereignty, Organisation, Discipline and Relationships) section 38 (a) Organisation of Assemblies stipulates as follows:

The spiritual and temporal leadership of a recognised Assembly is exercised by a local oversight acceptable to the said recognised Assembly. This can be augmented, if the Assembly so desires, by the inclusion of some person or persons of mature spiritual standing, accepted by the Assembly, provided that such person or persons are approved as overseers by the Executive.

This sub-section enabled Assemblies and groups of Assemblies to ask for Bhengu's oversight. Bhengu had a well-run administration, was a powerful leader and provided his people with a sense of dignity and respect. Some missionaries only recognised black ministers as evangelists although this had nothing to do with their giftedness or ministry. This was done to make a distinction between a white missionary and a black minister. There was also a huge disparity with respect to stipends paid to a missionary and those received by a black worker: Missionaries received their support from their home mission boards. Black workers were paid by missionaries. In the Bhengu group there was parity in this area of financial support even though what they received was not enough to meet their needs.

3.7 BHENGU PLANTS CHURCHES

Bhengu started his ministry as an iterant Evangelist preaching for other denominations. He also preached on the mines in Johannesburg and later established a church in Benoni in 1945.

3.7.1 How Bhengu became a Church Planter

Bhengu often spoke about why he started planting churches.

It was during some of his itinerant evangelistic episodes with the church of the Nazarene at a boarding school at Ndzingeni, Swaziland. Many students had come forward during Bhengu's preaching. Dr. Hynd Snr. asked Bhengu why when he preaches many students came to Christ, but when they (missionaries) preached not many gave themselves to Christ.

Bhengu said "the problem is that you missionaries do not believe that blacks can be genuinely saved. Here at the school you do not allow a young man to speak to his sister without the matron being present to listen to their conversation. Missionaries on the other hand can travel alone with a lady (white) missionary from here to Pigg Peak and back without a supervisor". Dr. Hynd Snr. responded by saying "You go and start your own work so we too can criticize you".

In 1956 Dr. Hynd Snr. was on furlough and his ship had docked in Durban. It was during this time that Bhengu was conducting his Lamontville campaign in Durban. He went and fetched Dr. Hynd Snr. from the ship, took him to Lamontville to show him his work; "here is my work, now you can criticize me".

This happened at the height of his crusade in Lamontville.

3.7.2 Bhengu and Hesselgraves "The Pauline Cycle of Church Planting"

Hesselgrave (1980) designed what he called "The Pauline Cycle of Church Planting for the USA and overseas". He postulates 10 steps, viz: 1) missionaries commissioned, 2) audience contacted, 3) gospel communicated, 4) hearers converted, 5) believers congregated, 6) faith confirmed, 7) leaders consecrated, 8) believers commended, 9) relationships continued, 10) sending churches convened. (Hesselgrave 1980: 58-59)

Bhengu's philosophy in church planting is in line with Hesselgrave's Pauline Cycle of Church Planting. He seemed to have complied with all ten requirements set out by Hesselgrave.

Once the people were congregated Bhengu preached a clear salvation message to his audience focusing on the sinfulness of man and the Love of God and the salvation, the forgiveness of sins in Christ. He emphasized the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ “He died for your sins, he died in your place, so that you would be set free from sin and eternal death. Take Jesus and live”.

He had thousands of people converted during his meetings and new converts were organized under a local leadership church structure where they would be looked after and discipled. These churches became sending churches. Mature believers were taught to witness for Christ both in word and deed. They were challenged to talk about Christ in the buses, trains, streets, school and workplaces.

Here is comparing the criteria set out by Hesselgrave and Bhengu’s strategy:

1. Bhengu was himself commissioned by God to preach the gospel through which he would deliver his people from the bondage of sin.
2. Audiences were contacted by way of notices setting out crusade meetings, venue, dates, time, and nature of messages that were to be preached during the crusade(s).
3. He preached and explained the way of salvation in a manner that the educated and unschooled could understand. Like the Evangelist Billy Sunday who said “I want to preach the gospel so plainly that men can come from factories and don’t have to bring a dictionary”.(In Lephoko 2001:87)
4. Although it is not possible to estimate how many people came to Christ each evening or at each crusade; hundreds if not thousands came to Christ at each of Bhengu’s campaigns. In January 1956 at his Nelspruit campaign the church had to be extended to accommodate the people. Many hung in windows to hear Bhengu. In East London more than 3 000 converts were baptized in one day.
5. New converts were introduced to existing churches, where none existed new churches were established. A pastor or a spiritual leader would be appointed to care for the young Christians.
6. Teaching and discipling of converts took place in groups e.g. mothers, girls, youth and men. In these groups and in Bible study groups, young Christians were introduced to the new Life in Christ. They were built up in their new found faith.
7. Leaders were appointed to shepherd the flock e.g. elders and deacons or church committees were elected to guide the church so that there was permanency.

8. Believers who showed leadership capabilities or potential were challenged to take up responsibilities under the leadership of local assemblies. A large number of disciples answered the call to serve the Lord in full time ministry or in various capacities in the church and community. Some of them became youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, women's group Leaders etc.
9. Relationships were built across the board among the youth, women, men and those in leadership in the churches. Relationships were continually strengthened through teaching, in worship and witnessing.
10. Bhengu's churches were all taught to give to mission and evangelism. Churches sent out evangelists, pastors, and lady ministers into the world to preach the gospel. Port Elizabeth and East London became the hub of Bhengu's ministry in the area of sending workers into the field. People donated clothing and other belongings to the church to raise funds for evangelism. Siteki, Swaziland was the first group to do so when in 1945, it sent money to support Bhengu in Port Elizabeth. The church raised what is known as the campaign fund. These monies were collected every Monday at prayer meetings. Members were encouraged to fast their Monday lunch, save the money they would have bought lunch with and give that to the Monday campaign fund for the spreading of the gospel.

He was committed to good, transparent leadership from local level to the very top echelon of the church including the Executive District Councils, Back to God, Teaching Team, Mothers, Supervisors, Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Youth, Girls, Sunday School, etc, setting himself as an example.

3.7.3 Church Government

Church governance was uppermost in Bhengu's mind. He appointed a team of twenty-four men whom he called together and trained in East London in 1977. He called them the Back to God Teaching Team. These men were charged with the task of teaching in churches and set up churches in order with elders and deacons. I Tim 3:1-15.

3.7.4 Leadership in the Local Church

Bhengu's churches were autonomous under his leadership and under delegated authority of the Executive and District Councils. These churches were not to be dominated by any of the hierarchical structures above. They were under the leadership of local oversight, pastor, elders and deacons. In the majority of the churches where elders did not exist, churches were under the leadership of Church Committees who were chosen democratically by churches themselves once every year. Ac 6:1-7.

Elders and deacons were also elected democratically under the supervision of the Teaching Team who would have spent a week or two weeks with the Assembly teaching on the qualification, duties of elders and deacons and how the two groups relate to each other and the pastor.

Elders and deacons are elected to permanent positions. They can only be removed from office on two grounds, death or falling into sin, in very special circumstances for dereliction of duties. Positions were only filled when any of the above occurred.
The numbers of the elders and deacons in an Assembly depended on the size of an Assembly. The number would range from three elders and five deacons. Whilst in a large Assembly the number would be five elders and seven deacons.

Elders and the pastor are responsible for the spiritual oversight of the Assembly whilst deacons deal with temporal aspects of such an Assembly collecting and banking of money, care of needy etc. Elders and Deacons have meetings once a month and discuss issues affecting the church, no spiritual issues are discussed in the presence of deacons e.g. disciplining of estuarial members. Both deacons and elders report to the pastor. The pastor is chairman of both bodies. These bodies meet once on alternative weeks to allow the pastor to chair each group's meeting. None of the elders or deacons is senior to others.
In minutes of the Workers Conference 10-16 July 1978 he stated:

a) The Assemblies are autonomous, they determine and decide all issues in consultation with their oversight.
b) The pastor has no power to force or decide issues on his own. He cannot dictate or rule out the Assembly and its oversight

c) The District Council deals with irregularities of workers and assist Assemblies to adhere to procedures. They also do not dictate and force the Assemblies. They have to use the guidelines and never their whims and qualms. They cannot govern a self – governing Assembly.

However in cases where an Assembly is unable to settle disputes it approaches the District Council. The District Council would appeal for help from the Executive should they be unable to resolve the issues.

Bhengu's aim for an Assembly was that it would have the "Three –selfs" self government, self support, and self propagation (Bosch 1991;378). Any help from outside was temporary. Pastors were enjoined to teach congregants to tithe and give offerings to help support the work. (Circular 1967-19-01)

3.7.5 Financial Administration in the Assemblies

3.7.5.1 Finances and Administration

As a black Church leader, he had probably one of the best financial administration system in place. Money collected in the church was counted by three people in front of the congregation and then entered on an A1 Form under specific category (e.g. tithes, free will offerings, campaign fund etc.) for which the offering had been given. The monies would be banked on the first business day following the service. The following Sunday, deacons would bring a copy of the deposit slip and have the amount read out to the congregation. A member of the congregation would be invited to go forward to examine the deposit slip and the A1 Form to validate that the amount on the form agreed with the amount on the bank deposit slip and announce to the congregation that the money collected had indeed been banked.

Funds could only be withdrawn once a month. An A2 Form (a requisition form) would be completed by the deacons, the amount for each item would be read out to the church before withdrawal. The church would approve or disapprove of some items of expenditure. The withdrawal form would be signed by a trustee in the Assembly. The A2 Form is then sent to the District Council Office where the particulars of the request would be checked against specific

items relevant to the requested amount on the financial books of the congregation making the request. Bhengu would then approve the expenditure if money was available. Financial books of Provincial and National Departments: Women, Mens, Girls and Youth Conventions' were audited and reported on at relevant convention meetings where members have the opportunity to debate the audited accounts.

Bhengu did not use money for himself or for his family. For Bhengu all monies had to go toward evangelism. “He led a very poor life, it was not a life deserved by a man who built so many churches in each and every city” (Interview: Shabalala 2003.10.12). Bond sums it up:

> I found Nicholas Bhengu meticulous in money matters. I came to realise that his word was his bond, precisely and literally. In dealing with him my one concern was always to ensure that when we made an agreement we both understood precisely the facts, terms and conditions we had agreed on. Once we were in agreement, I knew we had a binding agreement whether it was in writing or not. Never once was I disappointed (Bond 2003:66).

According to Shabalala the only money Bhengu had to his name when he died was R20 000. He did not leave money to his children. At conventions he often said the only inheritance he was going to leave to his children was the education he had given them.

Writing about finances he said, “All finances were completely in the hands of the Assembly on behalf of God”. The local oversight were not supposed to dispose of any funds without the approval of the Assembly. Tithes were to be centralized for pastors to share equally and to assist with the support of small and poor Assemblies.

In all money affairs there will be endless troubles.

a) There will be those who use money for their own agrandisement.
b) Some will overspend and place the church into endless debts.

Some will see an opportunity to get rich. The church leaders and the church itself are both capitalistic and scorn at all social concern for the people. That is why people hate churches and their creeds. Many have expressed to me that the church is neither a social institute nor a welfare society. This is where the modern Church differs from the early church. The Christians and the church institutions cannot remain immune and unconcerned with the physical needs of society

and hope to survive the challenges, condemnations, and criticism. See that money is not abused by one person or a clique. The whole Assembly should be aware of what happens to the funds. This is exactly what I have taught throughout my ministry. Are there men among you who dare to live as I have and teach as I have taught and walk as I have walked in the church of the Living God? Faithfulness to God and honesty to men are a good maxim.
He warned, “Money is the cause of all church splits and fights”

3.7.5.2 About Himself and Money

He asserted that his hands were clean before God and men. “ I have desired no high life, luxury, pomp, greatness, wealth, name, fame, or vain glory, I have taken no money for myself apart from what I take for the work of God for (sic) poor countries.” He warned, “some will see an opportunity to get rich”. The church leaders and church itself are both capitalistic and scorn at all social concern for the people. (Undated circular)

3.7.6 The Role of the Pastor

The pastor is key in Bhengu’s assemblies. In addition to chairing elders and deacons meetings, he is ex- officio of all church committees. Any correspondence to any of the five departments in the church is addressed – Chairlady/Pastor, Secretary/Pastor etc. Before any notices are made in the church, the pastor must read them to familiarize himself with the content before they are announced in the church.

In an undated circular: TO ALL ASSEMBLIES, PASTORS AND DISTRICT COUNCILS, he wrote:

> A Pastor who does these things will never get into problems with his assembly. A Pastor should avoid arguments, strife and autocracy. He should be a father to all kinds, sorts and characters of his sheep. He should be tenderhearted but stern. Never pick (sic) up a quarrel with any of his sheep – avoid showy and haughty spirit, cheap talk, idle of foolish jokes; never listen to stories or tales by people about others. Be neutral and take no sides. A pastor should never judge, decide and condemn any member by himself autocratically. A good pastor discourages people from bringing (sic) cases before the Scripture has been fully followed:

1. When you have something against your brother — Matt 5:23-24
2. When you have been wronged — Matt 18:15-17
3. When you see a brother going astray — James 5:16,19,20
4. When your brother sins — 1 James 5:16-17

If people were taught clearly about this, many quarrels and cases could be reduced to the minimum. “A good pastor is a man of prayer and Bible reading and waiting upon God; a pastor should be a man of faith. A pastor who is greedy for wealth, positionalism, (sic) fame and high standard of living will not make it: we should think of the sheep more than we think of ourselves.

The pastor is a very important person in the life of the church. (In Lephoko 2001:10-11). Bhengu elaborated further on the role of the pastor

1) A pastor should think of the lambs of the sheep. It was not a lamb that was lost. It was a sheep (Luke15:4-7). The Lambs of course, need special care. The church needs to produce Sunday School teachers and allow them to work amongst the children.
2) A successful pastor is interested in all departments of the church- fathers’ meetings, girls’ meetings, Sunday School meetings and all the activities of the Assembly. Once a week Sunday School Teachers should meet together with the pastor and discuss the Sunday School lesson. Sunday School teachers are not allowed to miss Sunday School at any cost. It does not matter where they go, even to quarterly meetings, they must come back to take care of Sunday School children on Sunday.
3) Produce Sunday School teachers and work with them among children.
4) Sunday School is the pastor’s chief work. He is the Sunday School Superintendent.
5) A pastor should teach and produce men fit for the offices of elders and deacons, himself being an example. The hope of every assembly is the production of men who reach our standards, or even a standard above ours.

Concerning District Council Offices he wrote:

“The offices are there to keep records, see that the money in the Assemblies is recorded, that all expenditure are legitimate before money goes out, see that no unauthorized expenditure or debts

are made out. Use the offices, obey the Offices, and respect the Offices. They are not dictators over you but they are your safeguards and security". (Not dated circular)

The majority of Bhengu's Assemblies are mature, able to build their own churches, support their pastor, conduct their own affairs including financial matters. Some Assemblies have financial investments that run into hundreds of thousands. He taught his people not to get into debt with no one this includes banks. All church property belongs to the church immovable and movable. However church buildings are registered in the name of the Assemblies of God.

CHAPTER 4: BHENGU'S SOCIO-POLITICAL MESSAGE

4.1 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The context in which Bhengu ministered is of critical importance in evaluating his leadership style. In South Africa in 1948 under the leadership of Dr DF Malan the National Party won the election, with a majority of five. Dr DF Malan had campaigned on a race ticket. The National Party set out to bring into being laws that would affect the lives of black people, especial Africans, who were at the bottom of the socio-economic and political ladder after Whites, Coloureds and Indians.

The new government proceeded to enact restrictive laws that affected blacks including the following:

1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act No 55 of 1949 - across the colour line
1950 Immorality Act No 21 of 1950 – forbade sexual relations across racial lines prohibited
1950 Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950 - which determined and categorized the identities of all South Africans in order to make sure they did not marry across the colour line.
1950 Group Areas Act No 41 of 1950 - which proclaimed certain areas for the sole use of particular races (Abraham 1989:34), Blacks were consigned to the ghettos faraway from the places of work e.g. Soweto, Soshanguve and KwaNdebele etc.
1950 Suppression of Communism Act No 44 of 1950.
1945 The Urban Areas Act 1945 – prohibited black people from seeking employment in urban areas. Black people were allowed to enter an urban area for 72 hours without a permit after which they would be arrested if they had not obtained one. In order to acquire permanent residence in the area, they would have had worked for one employer for not less than ten years or were born in the area.

The Law made it almost impossible to transfer or move pastors and other workers from one place to another. They could also not transfer their status from urban area to another urban area.

4.2 LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

The Union of South Africa was established in 1910. Black people were left out of the agreement

entered into by the British government, the former colonies and the Boer Republics. In response to this blatant injustice, the African National Congress was born in 1912 at a meeting held in Bloemfontein. Its goal was to fight for the rights of black people and against discrimination in a non-violent way. However all means of negotiation and non-violent protests to find a solution were thwarted by the government with more repressive laws. Other Liberation Movements included the Pan Africanist Congress by Sobukwe in 1959 and AZAPO espousing Black Consciousness.

4.2.1 Sharpville Killings

On 21 March 1960 in Sharpville the police shot and killed 69 unarmed protesters at a peaceful march organised led by the Pan Africanist Congress to protest against the introduction of pass laws requiring women to carry reference books. That same year the African National Congress and the Pan Africanist Congress embarked on an armed struggle to force the Nationalist Government to a negotiation table and to stop repressive laws against the black majority.

4.2.2 Soweto Student Uprising

In 1976 Soweto was set ablaze when students took off on to the streets in protest against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in Black Schools. The riots spread to all major cities in South Africa. The police fired at protesting students, this was the beginning of the strategy “to make South Africa ungovernable” and “liberation first and education later”. This saw many young people skip the country to take up arms against the minority government. It is generally believed that the uprising precipitated the eventual demise of apartheid. It also produced a lot of uneducated, unskilled youth and unemployable work force.

4.2.3 The Death of Steve Biko

In September 1977 Biko died in a police cell in Pretoria having been transported naked on an open police van from Port Elizabeth to Pretoria. The infamous statement “it leaves me cold” by the then Minister of Police, Mr Jimmy Kruger when responding to the news of the death of Biko sparked wide protests here and abroad.

This was followed by the banning of newspapers such as The World, Pro Vitate of Dr Beyers Naude and other publications perceived to be anti government.

4.3 BHENGU AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

He was criticized by Liberation Movement for not aligning himself fully with the political struggle. The late Chief Albert Luthuli, former President of the ANC and a Nobel Prize winner is said by Schlosser to have held Bhengu in very high esteem. However he said of him "He is one of the best Christians we have. But I do not understand why he has declared his support for the passive resistance movement"(Schlosser cited in Hollenweger 1972:136) Professor Sibusiso Bhengu son of Bhengu's brother Jaconia also expressed dismay at his uncle's unwillingness to openly and fully support the liberation struggle. It is important to note that South Africa had always been a segregated society before the Nationalist Party came to power. Under these circumstances, it was not going to be easy for Bhengu to do his work and discharge his ministry as he perceived it.

It was assumed by some of those in the liberation movements that Bhengu was anti the struggle and therefore a marked man. To the contrary Bhengu was committed to ridding his people from the shackles of sin, political and social ills of his time through the preaching of the gospel. He believed that change had to begin from inside. Dr Gamedze confirms:

> When I got to East London in 1953, there was a big commemoration of the ANC Youth League and there was a great presence of the police. I expressed my
> concern to Bhengu at the risk of being arrested. I decided to stay in the car whist Bhengu went ahead to address the meeting. Bhengu had a way of capturing crowds. He would start with jokes and would just deliver the powerful message during the last five minutes of his message. This meeting ended well.
>
> The next day Bhengu told me that he was going to meet people who had been saved on that day. I did not believe that anyone got saved on that day. This taught me that- anointing has nothing to do with what you say; it has something to do with the power of the Holy Spirit that propels what you say (Interview Gamedze 2003.10.18)

Bhengu was an Africanist and politically astute although he did not belong to any party political grouping. Phinda also said that the Special Branch of the Police arrested Bhengu. They feared he

was about to incite people at the rally against the government. He was only released through the intervention of HC Phillips and Edgar Pettenger who went to Pretoria to plead his case. (Interview Phinda 2003:12:20)

Tutu affirms that Bhengu himself or his people opened ANC meetings with prayers that "supplied religious impetus for the politico-socio re- awakening of the masses"(Tutu 1986:115),

4.3.1 Bhengu and Homeland and Traditional Leaders

His association with Homeland and Traditional leaders was not an easy one either. He spoke of how some of these leaders had refused him and his people land to build churches in their areas. His main objective in working with both Traditional and Homeland leaders during the political struggle was so that he could in the words of Paul "though I am free and belong to no man. I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jew I became like a Jew to win the Jews, to those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law)"(1Cor 9:19-21) Paul continues "---I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I might share in its blessings (I Cor 9:22-23)

Bhengu did not only seek to minister to Homeland, Traditional and leaders in the liberation struggle, he also ministered to kings and presidents of the world. He was often called upon by King Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland to lead services at the King's Kraal or Imbizo. The King also invited him to minister to him personally. He prayed for the King on several occasions. In 1982 when the King died Bhengu officiated at the King's funeral (Interview, Gamedze 2003.10.18). He was on a number of occasions invited to Presidential Breakfasts in the USA.

The Daily Dispatch of January 1976 under the heading Duncan Village cleric to dine with Ford:

"The founder of the black section of the Assemblies of God, the Rev N B Bhengu, of Duncan Village has been invited by members of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives to attend the 24th annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington on January 29".

4.3.2 Lawrence Tutu of the Daily Dispatch

Lawrence Tutu was at the time a journalist with the Daily Dispatch in East London. He lived in Duncan village. His parents were members of Bhengu's Duncan village Assembly. He had hoped to write a biography on Bhengu, but later become Bhengu's arch critic apparently according to Bhengu he was unable to provide Tutu with money for the research. In his book *Twilight of the Struggle*, he writes in a chapter titled "Pied Piper of the Pulpit" questioning Bhengu's wisdom in inviting Homeland leaders to his Annual Conventions. However Tutu concludes, "make no mistake Bhengu was not a sell-out"(Tutu 1986:117).

4.3.3 Bhengu defies his Political Detractors to preach the Gospel

It is common cause that before his conversion, Bhengu had joined the Communist Party.

In this way he had hoped to liberate his people from white oppression and poverty. When he became born again this all changed. He now had another way – redemption, transformation and development of all peoples through the gospel of Jesus Christ became his focus. But this was not going to be easy.

Bhengu was a brave man, a man who would not bow to pressure from any quarter, be it from the Liberation movements or a King, Homeland or Traditional leaders or government. He invited whosoever he wished to his conventions in East London, Bloemfontein, and Thaba Nchu including representatives of the South African Government. For example he did not hide his friendship with Dr Piet Koornhof, the then Minister of Bantu Affairs in P W Botha's Cabinet.

When he returned from one of his trips in Germany where he had attended a World Convention on Evangelism and from Canada and the USA, in one of his meeting he responded to allegations that evangelism in South Africa did not progress much because of racism. He stated "Even the (sic) countries without problems cannot claim to have advanced the work better than we have done in South Africa".

Bond, then General Chairman of the Assemblies of God, asked Bhengu to respond to statements made by Tutu in the *Daily Dispatch* (no date).

On 7 May 1980 Bhengu responded to Tutu's Criticism. Out of 15 statements in Bhengu's document I refer only to some of the key ones.

> Lawrence Tutu is not really shooting at me, he is shooting at Homeland Governments. We invite anybody who is a leader; we make no preference for parties. We maintain our neutral position in party politics but honour chiefs and all leaders. This is why I attended Chief Botha Sigcau's funeral in Transkei. Mr Biko's (the Black Consciousness leader who died in police detention in September 1977) funeral in King Williams Town (sic) and Robert Sobukwe's (founder of Pan Africanist Congress) funeral in Graaff Reinet. I am a Christian and I adhere to the Bible and to 1 Tm 2:1-4, which Tutu has doubts about. I am a Christian first of all and I am a brother to all men of good will irrespective of tribe, ethnicity, colour, political or denominational affiliation. Tutu and the venom in the press will not change me an iota. We have people from all parts of the world in our churches and we cannot afford the luxury of favouring certain parties and disfavouring others. We are a church catering for spiritual and social welfare of the people and so we do not bark.

About South African whites he said," The Europeans in this country have a great responsibility" Of these (sic) to whom much has been given much will he expected. "The European Christians have done much to help us in our task and much has been accomplished" He challenged his white audiences to "Help us to rescue the souls of our men in peril, rescue them from the pending blood bath, rescue them from communism. Rescue them from mad nationalism". (Daily Dispatch 1976.1.7)

He was convinced that a return to God was the only way to save South African indeed the African continent saying" we don't need a new type of politics in South Africa we need a return to God and that only a black man can reach and bring him the word of God.

4.4 SOCIO- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Regarding social issues, he championed the development of his people to help themselves through working with their own hands, education and community involvement.

Watt quotes Dan Lephoko (in Watt 1992:112)

> In the black section of the movement there has always been a strong emphasis on the social issues. This has its roots in Bhengu's understanding of redemption. Dan Lephoko, a member of the executive of the Assemblies of God and ex- chairman of the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa, said that he knows no other person who had such a clear grasp of the totality of the meaning of the Gospel than Nicholas Bhengu.
>
> Bhengu believed in the salvation of souls, but he also believed that black people would be brought to liberation from political and economic oppression through the Gospel. He believed that, by coming back to God, blacks would be prepared for nationhood and political power.
>
> Bhengu's preaching and teaching covered a great variety of subjects including personal hygiene, faithfulness at work, the fight against crime, the appearance of believers' homes, litter in the streets, and the obvious spiritual and ethical emphasis of his Gospel. It is believed that during and after the 1976 riots, Bhengu directed large sums of money to help the victims of violence.
>
> Dr Ntshangase believes that Bhengu was very much ahead of his time, he instilled in his followers a spirit of self-reliance, and that concept of Black Economic Empowerment banded around today were things that Bhengu taught forty years before. Bhengu spoke of black people owning and employing others rather than seeking to be employed. (Interview Ntshangase 2005.01.04)

For the youth he established a Bursary Fund to help young people receive University and College education so that they could come back and teach their people, develop the country and more importantly take leadership positions in all spheres of community and societal life: government, business, church, politics etc.

Youth work was organised at Local, District, Regional and Provincial levels. Bursary money was raised at all levels of the youth structures. Each province would be responsible to collect and distribute money to deserving applicants. Proper legal contracts would be entered into by the applicant and Provincial Youth Education Boards. The recipient would bind himself/herself to pay back the money once they finished their studies and started working. This was done so that

others could also be helped (Telephonic Interview: Mthimunye 2003-09).

The Bursary Fund was not for Bhengu's people only. It was open to young people from other churches as well. In 1976 I had whilst ministering on university campuses started a small Bursary Fund (Christian Agency for Bursaries) to assist young Christian students with their education, I was chided by Bhengu for doing so, "you know that our Bursary Fund caters for all people" Nevertheless he gave me his support saying" it does not clash with what we are doing, it complements it". Bhengu spent his own money " I spent money to educate peoples' children, most of them never ever said "Thank You" after completion and until now". "Thank God for two or three who are very much grateful, devoted and thankful to me"(undated circular)

In a written submission dated September 2003 Bond wrote:

> "You refer to Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) as being on a level with his work in Lesotho, Botswana etc. This I think is a mistake. Zimbabwe is quite a significant example of his establishing a new work from scratch. It also sheds light on his working relationships with whites (including me John Bond), Drs Cuthbert Chidori and Oliver Chidawu are fruitful examples of the attention he always gave to promising protégées and his effort to disentangle himself from the budding influence of conservative missionaries and of rustic, shall we say peasant influences that make up a large part of Back to God"

The thrust of Bond's comment is that Bhengu was a people developer.

Bhengu did not only speak to the soul, he also tried to develop the people he ministered to. He taught women to do things with their hands: sewing, knitting and embroidery. He taught them basic hygiene and how to look after their families, husbands and children (Hollenweger 1972:134). They also gave money to the Back to God Crusade. In the Back to God Crusade women were mobilised to raise money by working with their hands doing – sewing and knitting, baking etc. and to sell their products to raise money for themselves and to give to the Back to God Crusade for evangelistic campaigns. He organised men to start their own businesses and be their own bosses instead of working for whites. Bhengu taught and practised Reconstruction and Development long before it was introduced by the ANC in 1994. It has already been mentioned in this chapter how he organised the youth to raise funds for the education of young people in the Church. He sent his workers to Bible College especially to Union Bible Institute a successor to Dumisa where he received his Bible School training in the mid 1930s. Wetmore recalls, " While

teaching on the UBI staff 1964-1983 he regularly sent hand picked men (and some women) to be trained for the ministry in AOG. I recall they were men of top calibre, who stretched me to beyond my limits! Sipho Bhengu, Wilson Hlobo, Gilbert Mxego, Makinana! Their names still stand out in my memory some 40 years later" (Written submission Wetmore 2003.10.28).

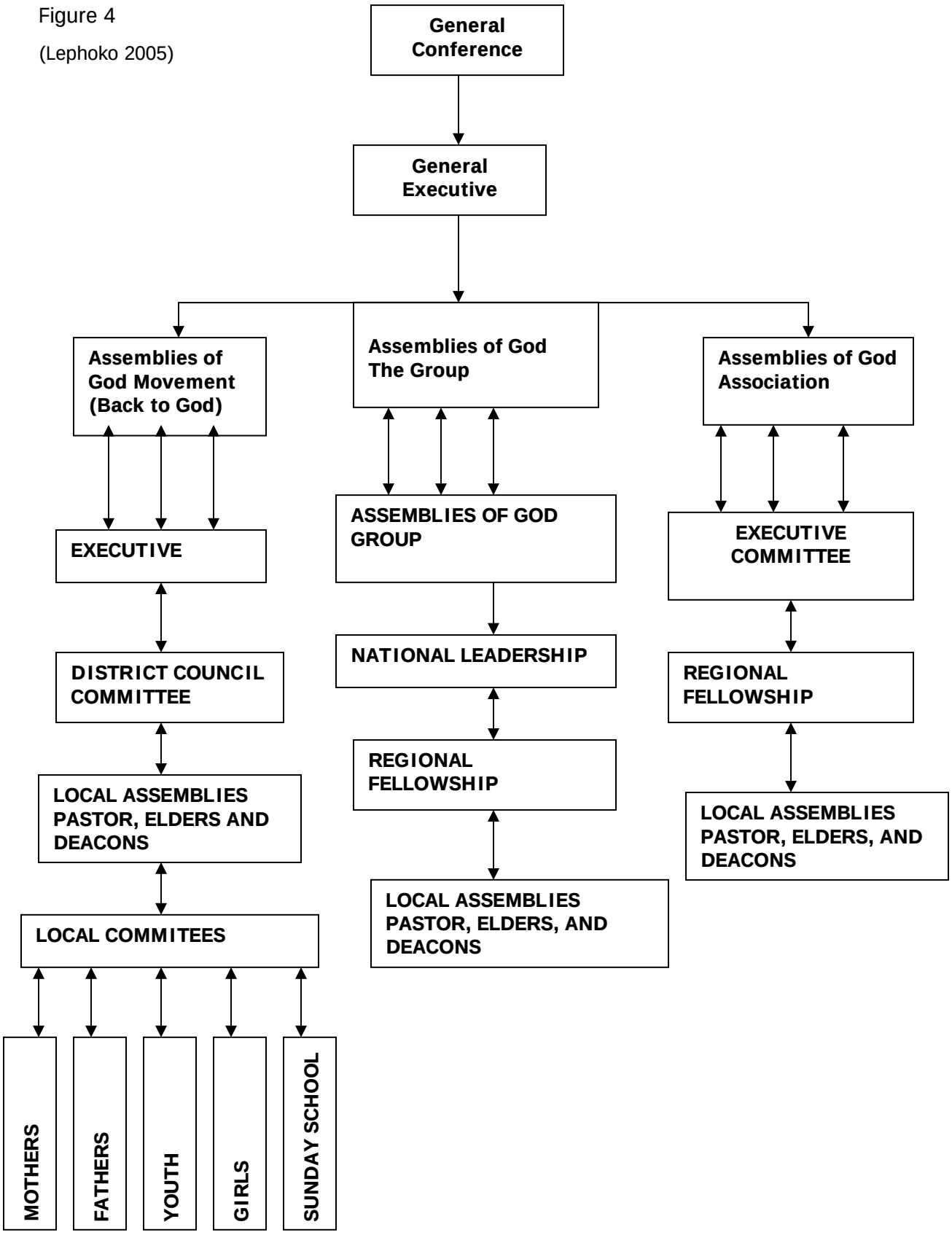
4.5 ORGANOGRAM OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

The General Executive is elected by secret ballot at the General Conference which is held every second year. Candidates are nominated from the floor by the Conference consisting of Accredited Ministers, Probation Ministers, Delegates, Elders from local Assemblies and Organizers. The General Executive is responsible for the whole of the Assemblies of God.

It consists of twenty three members including the chairman and vice chairman elected on separate ballots, first the chairman, then the vice chairman followed by the rest of members of the Executive. Election nominations are conducted on an open floor.

Figure 4

(Lephoko 2005)



CHAPTER 5: BHENGU'S LEADERSHIP STYLE

In this chapter an attempt is made to established Bhengu's Leadership Style in a number of areas including: the home, Assemblies of God, Mission and Evangelism, development for evangelisation and life changing strategies, ecumenism, people development, vision mission self reliance and culture for his work, his political influence on the South African scene, in the face of opposition and abuse both inside and outside the church.

5.1 CONCEPTS OF LEADERSHIP

The study of leadership is wide and varied. There are numerous definitions of leadership. This study will refer to three definitions, which I think will help us understand Bhengu's leadership style. It is not hereby suggested that Bhengu worked in accordance to these definitions nor that they governed the manner in which he ordered his life or ministry.

Heifetz says: "Rather than define leadership either as a position of authority in a social structure or as a personal set of characteristics, we may find it a great deal more useful to define leadership as an activity." (Heifetz 1994:20) Heifetz argues that it is important to unhinge leadership from personality traits. He further argues that there are many people who perform acts of leadership without "being leaders". According to this theory leadership is more than influence. We should according to Heifetz focus on leadership as an activity of a citizen from any walk of life mobilizing people to do something.

In Twelve Keys to an Effective Church, Callahan says "a competent leader as one who leads in a participatory way, not one who leads in an authoritarian and dictatorial fashion" (Callahan 1983:44)

In Spiritual Leadership, Sanders explains what spiritual leadership is "…. spiritual leadership transcends the power of personality and all other natural gifts. The personality of the spiritual leader influences others because it is irradiated, and empowered by the Holy Spirit as the Spirit' power flows through him to others" (Sanders 1967:28)
From the above definitions we may draw the following inferences:

1. Leadership is about being active or activity involvement in something in which the individual leads,
2. Participative leadership and not in an authoritarian or dictatorial manner,
3. The leader gives control of his life to the Spirit and the Spirit's power then flows through him to others.

We can from the above also conclude that a "leader is a person who influences others to accomplish a purpose or mission. It can be aptly illustrated by the diagram below.

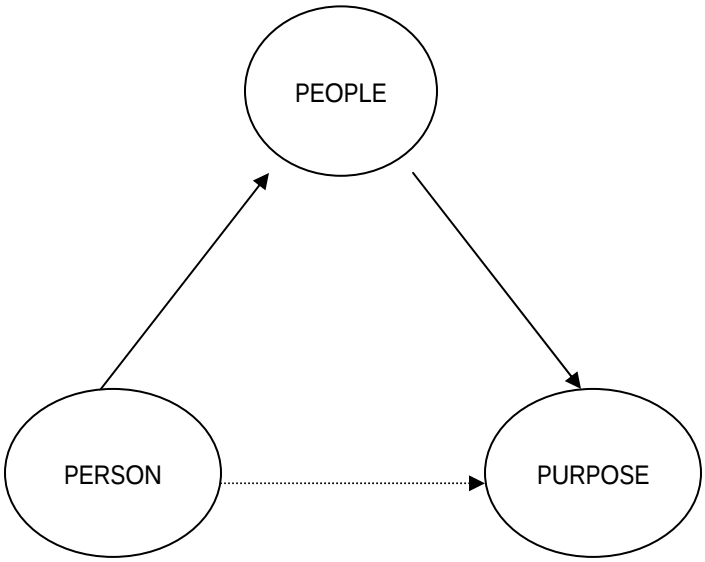


Figure 5

(Leadership Dynamics 1977[in Lephoko: 2001:97])

I will base my analysis of Bhengu's leadership's style on the diagram above looking at Bhengu as the Person, the People he led, and the Purpose he set out to achieve:

5.2 BHENGU THE PERSON

The first 'P' has to do with Bhengu as a person.

Dr. Moses Ntshangase a man who knew Bhengu well describes his leadership style: "He was using a situational leadership approach. When the situation demanded that he should exercise his authority he did that, when the situation demanded that he should consult, he consulted extensively, and when the situation demanded that he should set himself direct, he used he direct approach (Interview: Ntshangase 2003.09.24). On the other hand Dr Elijah Maswanganyi, who on

many occasions ministered alongside Bhengu, says, “Bhengu was first an African, a Zulu, therefore his leadership style should be viewed from that angle. An African leader combines Chieftainship, and semi dictatorship tendencies. Bhengu, however, projected Christlike and servanthood style of leadership”. (Interview: Maswanganyi 2003.12.4)

I agree with the observations made by Ntshangase and Maswanganyi. My experience in interactions with Bhengu, in private conversations and at conferences, is that he would change gears according to the need of the moment or the intensity of the discussion underway. He would let no one stand in his way once convinced of the correctness of his mission.

His leadership style will be explored as we look at various situations in his ministry and in the Assemblies of God.

Maswanganyi continued: “It is very difficult to put down Bhengu’s leadership style to anyone style because of cultural, historical and political influences. The context of his times, makes it actually difficult to judge by what he said or what he did not say” (Interview: Maswanganyi: 2003.12.4)

Luke Shabalala a senior pastor in Bhengu’s work of more than 30 years and Secretary of the Teaching Team established by Bhengu in 1977 affirms observations made by Drs Ntshangase and Maswanganyi. He postulates the following:

1. **Consultative –** He consulted with his followers.
2. **Directive** – He place procedures to be followed in many areas. The way of handling funds is the best in the world characterised by simplicity.
3. **Benevolent** - He had all the authority to demand all church funds (sic) into his own account and buy farms for the posterity of his family, but he did not. He only requested the churches and all funds to contribute 10% of their conventions’ collection. He did not like to impoverish the local churches. All his belongings were contributed to the church.
4. **Christ – like –** He believed in hierarchy of service as written in Mark 10:45. I ascribe his success to his benevolent ability to teach fundraising and monitoring. (Written Submission, Shabalala 2003).

5.3 BHENGU'S SPIRITUALITY

Bhengu was depend on God to meet the needs of his ministry.

His spiritual life can be summed up in the following three areas:

5.3.1 Prayer Life

He spent many hours in prayer in encounter with God both for personal strength and for direction in ministry. Gamedze says " Bhengu was a man of prayer."

La Foy tells how at the 1985 General Conference of the Assemblies of God in Mmabatho, (the last Conference Bhengu attended) Bhengu told how at Bible School he and some students had gone into the chapel to pray until it was late. "they had this experience of speaking in tongues and when it quieted down, they tried to go back to their dormitories quietly because the Bible School did not entertain this. As they tried to get out through the door, someone would burst in tongues again. (Interview: La Foy, 2003:10.01)

Bhengu used tongues to talk to God in private prayer. At an Executive Seminar organised by Conference Crusades for Christ in Plettenburg Bay in September 1976, he asked me "how do those who deny speaking in tongues talk to God in private" " For anyone who speaks in a tongue, does not speak to man but to God. (1 Cor 14:2)

5.3.2 Student of the Word of God:

Bhengu had a profound knowledge of the Bible. He had studied at Dumisa Bible School under the instruction of Mr Suter, nicknamed "the man who loved the Zulus", one of the best teachers of the Word of God, Suter translated Dr. R.A Torrey's book – What the Bible Teaches into perfect Zulu.

Bond reports that Bhengu spoke fondly of Mr Suter "He was a real father to the students an excellent Bible teacher of matured (sic) years and a gentleman in the true sense of the word. I personally loved him above my own father. He was so loving. He called me his son, and his teaching had a charming power to my soul" (Bond 2003:47)

It is obvious that his love of the Word of God was cultivated during his days as a student with Mr Suter. He believed the bible to be the Word of God. It was also the book that God showed him". Jesus appeared and lifted me out. He showed me an opened bible and said; "This is the Word of Life, study this word, and through the words of this book you will break these fetters and free your people from the chains of sin, in which they have been bound for centuries" (Dubb 1976:10 as interpreted in Schlosser 1958:24)

According to Nokwethemba, Bhengu's second wife Bhengu read widely: he read books on politics, anthropology, leadership, business, theology, poetry etc. The boot of His car was always full of books. \he kept books banned in South Africa in Swaziland.

Sanders quotes Muriel Ormond who cautions that a leader should not be content with easy books nor satisfied with reading only his speciality.

> "It is better that we should always tackle something a bit beyond us. We should also aim to read something different- not only the writers with whom we agree, but those with whom we are ready to do battle. And let us not condemn them out of hand because they do not agree with us; their point of view challenges us to examine the truth and to test their views against Scripture. And let us not comment on nor criticize writers of whom we have heard only second- hand, or third hand, without troubling to read their works for ourselves . . . Don't be afraid of new ideas – and don't be carried away with them either" (Muriel Ormond in Sanders 1967: 105)

5.3.3 Family Support:

His first wife Mylet was a pillar of strength to him. He and she had started the work. They had joined the Emmanuel Mission and later the Assemblies of God together.

About her funeral Mary Mullan wrote (no date) " Among those who spoke movingly in tribute to Mrs Bhengu were Chief Mangope of Mafikeng, Botswanaland, T. Maloyi, Chief Mini, Mr Mzutle, - in fact so many it was hard to single them out. Of the Europeans, Bro Bond's word was broken – " a branch has been ripped from the tree. The Lord gave, and

the Lord has taken away". Every tribute paid bore evidence of the lowliness and humility of Mylet Bhengu having brought glory to her Lord. Of the excellent work among women – showing them how to keep the home; care for their families – Of the inspiration and zeal to her husband's Crusade, and the wonderful result – supplying tents , - cash up to R32,000.00 last year help spread the gospel – all procured from the sacrificial gifts and works for the Women.

As Chief Mangope said: "We are the fruits of her labour and prayer. She was a truly gracious hostess, worthy of reconciliation. I count it a great honour to know this family. Thank God for what he has done for me through Sister Bhengu. I was always revived in faith when she talked with me.

Mylet also assisted Bhengu in the writing of the Back to God Crusade reports to the supporters. She wrote to Rev John Mears, Rev and Mrs. Marvin Forseth of Vancouver, Canada and Rev John Petrucelli on 6 Feb, 1976. She often travelled with him in most of his missions here and overseas, especially in the USA, Canada and the UK. When she was away with her husband the children were left in the care of her sister Mabel Dombo Ndlela.

Mylet was a leader in her own right. She helped pioneer the Mothers ministry. She was responsible for teaching, organising and directing the work. As far back as in the early forties, Mylet was already teaching women how to raise their children and honour their husbands. Mkhize tells of how Mylet trained them how to cook, sew garments and respect their husband, brew beer for their non-Christian husbands, with the objective of winning them to Christ. As the result of these teaching Mkhize's husband, woke up from his drunken state and said: "today I want to become a Christian:" He was converted by the good deeds of his wife. Late Ezra Mkhize became one of Bhengu's dynamic, committed pastors and minister of the Word. (Mkhize 2005.01.03)

Interpreting some of the Statements in the Valediction by Bhengu on Mylet

Some of the key phrases in the poem are highlighted to show Bhengu's thinking and how he and Mylet responded to suffering, their calling, commitment to God and tenacity in serving him.

- **The desert, hunger and want were your food**. There were times that they had no food to eat, Bhengu would recount their suffering to his people.
- **Your mate whose mind was made of flint enwrapped in lightning whose horns of faith overcame the bulls of Bashan**. Bhengu had opposition from many directions inside and outside the Assemblies of God, even from his own people at Entumeni who refused him a site to build a home a few years before his death. However, he never lost faith in God.
- **Your portion was humiliation, opposition and poverty**. Jessie Creamer during an interview said: "Bhengu had sold his house in Vryheid and poured all the money into ministry. He had nothing, no wealth, but gave his all to God. He never asked or told anyone about his lack. He would sometime wear a shirt that was torn on the back and would not take off his jacket for fear of exposing his bare back." Jessie and her family would once in a while send him some money for the work of God (Interview: Creamer, 2003.11.19).
- **Soon your beloved friend will join the march on golden streets**. This explains his assurance about going to heaven.

  He is left to rectify his mistake and set God's work in proper order**.** Bhengu always thought there was a better way of doing God's work. He continually sought through prayer and dedication of himself and the team to God to find that better way. One of the reasons why he refused to write a book was the fear that he would not be able to change whatever he had written when God showed him a better way. This he told the researcher in his office in Soweto in May 1985 the year he died, when I encouraged him to write about what God had done through him. In Bhengu's mind the establishment of the Teaching Team was to help rectify his mistakes by setting things in order in the assemblies. He never cringed from admitting his mistakes openly and in public whenever necessary. (Lephoko 2004:15:16)

5.4 BHENGU AND HIS INFLUENCE ON PEOPLE

The second "P" deals with how Bhengu as a leader, led, motivated and encouraged people.

Bhengu and his friends Alfred Gumede and Gideon Buthelezi joined the Assemblies of God primarily because, its structure was such that it allowed for groups and independents to

exercise their ministry without interference from anyone outside that work. Bhengu, Gumede and Buthelezi were mature men who knew what they were looking for in order to do what God had called them to do, more so Bhengu with his special calling to ministry.

In the Assemblies of God Bhengu played a very important role in shaping the direction the church was to follow. This was not easy as La Foy, General Secretary of the Assemblies of God explained.

> "I think first of all he made a tremendous impact, a tremendous mark of respect across the board. The respect for Nicholas Bhengu as the minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ transcended the Assemblies of God far, far beyond that, within the Assemblies of God cross-culturally. He was held in tremendous high esteem and I think he was instrumental to break down a lot of the black-white taboos, because people began to see a black man of God, speaking the truth of God's Word under the unction and the power of the Holy Spirit. And the very old mindset of racism was challenged, not because he challenged them, racism was simply challenged by the demonstration of God in his life. That for me was one of the powerful things that had people sit back and re-think the black-white issue by the simple demonstration of the giftedness of God which was in him. The Assemblies of God to me, when it comes to cross- cultural relationships was far ahead of every other major Pentecostal church in South Africa. It was the only Pentecostal church that did not inscribe racism into the constitution. It was the only Pentecostal church that had one conference, one General Executive elected on one floor. That did not happen because we have different white people in our church. On the contrary we have people who were saved, converted from the same sick society. They came into the church, they were delivered from alcohol immediately but they were never delivered from racism. What made the Assemblies of God so different? I believe it was the stature of Nicholas Bhengu that created respect for people of colour and prevented the application of apartheid to a degree that is applied to any other church. I speak as a minority group as a so-called coloured. And I want to say that if it was not for the stature of Nicholas Bhengu, the Assemblies of God could very well, probably have gone the same way, because we have same sick people in our church, but they could not do it against the man of that stature. For me that

makes the Assemblies of God different. Not the people but Nicholas Bhengu made the difference". (Interview 2003.10.01)

5.4.1 Bhengu and Expatriate Missionaries

Relations between Bhengu and the USA and Canadian Missionaries was a bumpy one especially in late 1950s and the early 1960s when the American missionaries decided to leave the Assemblies of God taking along with them some black churches that had strong bonds with them to form the International Assemblies of God in 1964. This break away was followed by Canadians leaving the Assemblies of God in 1981, Together with some South African white and black churches they formed the Assemblies of God Fellowship.

Regarding his work, Bhengu broached no interference from anyone. He gladly received ministry from whites and missionaries but never allowed them to play leadership roles. They would come on his invitation to minister to the people. He would not allow missionaries to take photos of his work for fear they might send the photos to their supporters in their home countries and pass them off as their work.

The Americans wanted to have the Assemblies of God modelled on the American pattern. This was firmly rejected by both Bhengu and other role players (other missionaries and South African white, black, coloured and Indian) leadership. However they still saw Bhengu as the instigator of this refusal to accept their way of doing things. In addition the Americans felt increasingly isolated from black work. "Experiences like these made the missionaries feel that Nicholas Bhengu was becoming dictatorial and that he wanted them to take a back seat. Any real leadership they had was being challenged (Watt 1992: 62 – 63)

Generally speaking missionaries did not understand Bhengu's vision, which was to unite the work, especially African work. He was concerned that a divided work would not impact the country for God. He worked from the premise that "only Africans can reach Africans" It is this philosophy that missionaries missed. They felt that they were being marginalized and elbowed out of the mission field to which they had been sent. To the contrary he believed they had a role to play to help develop African work through

teaching, provision of administrative skills to the African Church provided leadership was in the hands of Africans.

5.4.2 Call for Missionaries to go home by African Church Leaders

Relationships with missionaries in Africa and elsewhere were to say the least a troubled marriage. Africans have always said that missionaries came under a colonial banner, which meant that missionaries were in some instances part of the conquering imperialist governments. It has often been said that they told the people to pray and whilst the people were looking up to heaven in prayer with Bible in hand missionaries and the colonists took the land from the natives.

Cochrane clearly points out in relation to the situation in South Africa:

> The matrix of forces which characterised colonial conquest and economic penetration did not represent self- conscious missionary ambitions. Yet these forces did enfold the missions and to them, in the stamp of Victorian self-assuredness, they made their contribution. They did so not because they were scheming, half- witted or malicious, but because they were of their time, of their place, in an advantaged position in an expanding political economy increasingly characterised by a capitalist hegemony. (Cochrane 1987:37 [in Saayman 1991:24]).

Some of the missionaries collaborated with oppressive governments in countries where they were labouring. Africans found this kind of behaviour comprehensible including the spirit of paternalism and disregard for cultural norms which in the eyes of the missionary were seen to be sinful.

Gatu's call from poverty and subservience to liberation from foreign control:

> "We cannot build the church in Africa on alms given by overseas churches, nor are we serving the cause of the kingdom by turning all bishops, general secretaries, moderators, presidents, superintendents, into good enthusiastic beggars, by always singing the tune of poverty in the churches of the Third World. The need is

> commitment and a decision to go forward in faith. For Africa has money and personnel …. Let mission be the mission of God in the world, not of the West to the Third World." (Uka 1989:192)

From Kenya also came a call for Africanization: Africa must have African bishops and for the African Church to be in the hands of Africans. Speaking at the Assemblies of God Conference in Witbank on October 10 1955, Bhengu outlined his strategy for mission in Africa in a document The National Church. He pleaded for a united church, an autonomous church that is taught the Bible and accountability in the use of money.

After quoting Mat 28:19 as the basis for his thesis, he proceeded to warn missionaries:

> "I want to teach our men to raise funds and finance every program themselves. I want to bring into one association all the men with an evangelistic ministry to form one Crusade and attack one city after the other together. In the other words the leadership is our task today. Any missionary who desires leadership in Africa will be greatly disappointed in future because of the political set-up of the Union of South Africa. We want to lead our people into the promised land of the Holy Ghost and it is a noble work for the Missionary to train Africans and help them not towards servitude or religious serfdom but towards the glorious liberty of the Sons of God and leadership of their own people we have no desire to lead the White members of our Church but we want to accomplish what no other man will accomplish, in Africa, but the Africans. This applies to all the sections of our population in Africa.
>
> The Field for Missionaries is tremendous. He can work all the way with us and not under us and not over us. The need is for Bible Teachers, Sunday School promoters, Bible Camp leaders and many other activities.
>
> We visualise, therefore, a united Church with autonomous assemblies throughout the country. Assemblies well taught in the doctrines of the Bible, whose monies are kept in order by the elected officers of the Assemblies and books kept in order so that the African leaders will be debarred (sic) from becoming capitalists by taking all the money to themselves. Where the workers are supported by the

> Assemblies and everything goes through the hands and books of the Church. Where there will be scope for White South African students to minister but not to lead; and permanent scope for foreign missionaries, as we shall always need them.

Bhengu never supported the call by the All Africa Conference for a moratorium on missionaries coming to Africa, indeed to South Africa. However to him, the interference in ministry by missionaries or whites was intolerable. This is aptly illustrated by correspondence between himself and Bond regarding the work in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) although the two leaders were friends he did not hesitate to lay it on Bond. Bond was general chairman of the Assemblies of God and one of the four apostolic leaders appointed by James Mullan. The correspondence between the two men is quoted in full.

Bond wrote to Bhengu on the 6th September 1974,

> "Dear Brother Bhengu
> Brother Noel Scheepers has told me something of his discussions with you last Friday, and in particular he stated that the Rhodesian brethren, brother Stegman and I had made J... K... an apostle over the work in Salisbury.
>
> May I ask you most sincerely to accept that nobody has thought (let alone decided) that K... should be an apostle for the work in Salisbury. Your leadership is accepted unequivocally and all anybody (sic) in Rhodesia wishes is to see you firmly in control of the whole work there."

Bhengu's Reply dated 23rd September 1974

> "Dear Brother Bond
> Greetings in His name. It is with a confused mind that I'm writing to answer your letter briefly as I'm on my way to UK.
>
> We have built the African work from nothing and with nothing. We have been highly misunderstood, misconstrued and misrepresented. We've fought until we were emancipated from the quagmire of foreign Missions of different countries and diversified

home policies. We remained with you South African white Christians thinking there is now peace and harmony.

Our policy is clear and above board. We do not and have not changed an iota.

1. We are one body/the church, where there is neither black nor white. In Africa as in all other non-white countries, it is the white Christians who built a thick wall around the white community and also around the church. We had to develop our spiritual concept on this ground. These differences and encapsulations or segments were and still are very harmful to the body of Christ/the church. The political outlook and attitudes, ambivalent and dangerous as they are, affected the church world and resulted in resentment and total rejection of the meaningfulness of the Christian message. God raised me to present the meaningless of the Christian Bible and message to a hostile world. We therefore resolved to preach the Word and condemn all elements which pollute and affect the Gospel of Christ. We admit all saved and sane people irrespective of their colour or attitudes, men of good will and love.

   I do not understand what is happening in the minds of our white brethren. I reiterate that:

   1. We work in the framework agreed upon long ago that we lead our people to evangelise Africa's hostile millions.
   2. We welcome financial assistance from our white brethren but no strings or conditions attached.
   3. We welcome all our white brethren's ministry whole heartedly but reject their interference in administration and leadership. This is decisive and important.
   4. In Salisbury and Bulawayo I did just that, but the trouble may have come from two sources:
      i. African "would be" <u>leaders</u> who carry distorted reports from here to there
      ii. A desire for involvement in all aspects of the African work. (Presumably by the Whites J.B)

This latter we flatly reject. We have valid reasons fro anything we say or do. In the first place the developed race gap can only start to be healed by converting the white Christians who have for generations practised segregation in the church life – this is going to be a very slow process and a long range one.

Secondly we are trying to reach a very hostile society which can be better reached by their own leaders (the unbelievers). The imposition of white brethren can only lead to the end of our effectiveness in the Black Society. We, therefore want your help in these categories:

1. financial assistance to help us speed the gospel of Christ
2. ministry of the Word
3. fellowship (spiritual)
4. liaison between the African church and the white authorities and also between our white assemblies and our churches.

Finally, I say, if this does not appeal to our white brethren - then leave us alone to go it alone in all aspects! We are struggling to reach the hostile masses threatened by the hordes of foreign ideologies at our doorsteps. We are no the verge of the collapse of our spiritual liberties, as events seem to indicate. We absolutely have neither animosity nor bone to pick or axe to grind with our white counterparts what is the panic for? What is it all about?

The fact that Matabeleland became a different district from Masbonaland is a clear indication that white administration is faulty.
The fact that war between K... and M... was entered into the ranks of our white leaders is another proof of this.

The fact that the whites helped financially that I launch a campaign (he is referring to a second campaign he held in Zimbabwe J.B.) in Rhodesia and finally took administration into my hands which has produced peace, harmony and fellowship between K... and M... there is now such fragrance in Rhodesia. Let us do the work God has given to us with neither friction nor interference from anybody.

I hope this will explain everything to you.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Nicholas B.H. Bhengu"

"In replying I thought it best not to attempt to correct any misstatements or illogical ties. My reply was as tactful and placatory as possible. The matter dropped into the background" (Bond 2001: 103 – 106)

It is clear that Bhengu was for a united not a divided church. In the document titled The Northern Transvaal Dissenters he condemned the spirit of division and strife among believers as unthinkable. Bond also tells of a story related by Bhengu to him on his plan to split the church.

"His plan is to get up in the church and lead a group of disaffected people out of the church on Sunday. On Saturday night God appeared to him in a vision "He saw a gigantic pair of legs surmounted by a torso which stretched up into the clouds. The head was hidden by the clouds. He saw himself attacking the legs with a machete and a chopper. He hacked at them so that the blood spurted and the bone was exposed. Then all at once the clouds above him parted. He saw the face. It was face of Jesus Christ. He was hacking at the body of Christ." (Bond 2001: 82 – 83)

In fear of becoming the leader of the split Bhengu disappeared from the station on the Sunday morning of the planned split.

On 11 May 1982 Bhengu wrote to Scheepers:

> "I am writing this letter to correct some rumours coming to my ears that are not true at all".
>
> To me you have been one of the few Christians who have the spirit of humility, love and forgiveness. In all our petty misunderstandings there was never anything of a grave nature. It was mostly caused by reports from people who misinterpreted what you really said and you were prepared to talk it over with me and we forgive one another in the

spirit of Christ. I have never found any hard, haughty or racial pride in our dealings with you in all these years.

I have confidence in you as a Christian gentleman, and dear brother, who has been thoroughly emancipated by the Gospel of Christ from all traces of superiority complex or racism. You, your dear wife and children are and shall always be held very precious by both my wife and I. It grieves me to hear of these rumours, which seek to hurt and break our sweet relationship.

All the black brethren including myself, have not lost confidence in you. We would, as Christians, very much like to work with you on a regional concept as I visualise. I must say it is only between White and White leader and not between White and Black leadership that you find disagreements, hate and disunity, and this had now been passed on to the blacks. We have no axe to grind with all our White brethren or workers. Please keep us out of all the present trouble. Our only fault as you kindly explained to me, is how we use our preponderous vote to throttle the minority and we confess this before God and men. I beg of you not to get despondent. Remember if God called you, you are no more your own. You will never be happy away or outside this call on your life. There are many proofs of God's call in you. Do not be a second Jonah – you will be in trouble! It is not the A.O.G' call, it is God's call. Can people, trials or persecutions extricate you from the will of God? Why do you not wait till God finishes his work in the A.O.G. and see the outcome?

Yours sincerely
Nicholas B.H.Bhengu

Bhengu was accused of bringing about some of the splits in the Assemblies of God he nevertheless bent over backwards to try bringing about healing. This is borne out by a circular dated 20 May 1982 written by Noel Scheepers one of the Regional Leaders that had been appointed by James Mullan. Scheepers wrote "Bro. Bhengu has done all in his power to effect reconciliation in the movement. God will reward him ... I wish to thank him for his love and unity. The past misunderstandings have gone and failed, errors etc. on my part have been forgiven and forgotten"

5.4.3 His understanding of Cultural Dynamics and Needs of People

Bhengu was a Zulu from Entumeni, a heartland of Zululand, and had been brought up in strict Zulu culture. In 1945 his work started taking root among the Xhosa people in Port Elizabeth and later in East London in the Eastern Cape, among people who were steeped in their own cultural traditions and the ritual of circumcision. Bhengu never attempted to criticise or tried to stop this practice. He was able to bring the 'reds' and the schooled together in his church in East London. "The reds are traditionalists and uneducated among the Xhosas. They are suspicious of the schooled. There was even hostility between the two groups before accepting the gospel message preached by Bhengu" Dubb (1976:30).

5.4.4 A remark made by Bhengu at the 1957 Convention

The following statement may sound sarcastic, but to me he was illustrating the power of the gospel to transcend cultural barriers:

> The Xhosa people have a saying that a boy is a dog. With them every uncircumcised person (which would include Bhengu, a Zulu) is a 'boy' and therefore a dog. They say that neither a boy nor a dog can lead men, that is circumcised people. They say a dog cannot be a leader of its own master. But there are dogs which after they have made a kill of a wild beast come to their masters, wagging their tails, jumping about, panting and growling uneasily. The master notices something unusual about his dog, he stands up and the dog begins to run away. The master follows; it leads him to the kill. The dog has led its master! What have they to say today? I as a 'boy' (i.e., an uncircumcised Zulu) have led the 'men' (circumcised Xhosa who predominate in the Cape Province) to such a stage without complaint (Dubb 1976:80).

5.4.5 Chief Mhlambiso of the Amahlubi Tribe Responds to Bhengu's statement

In his reply to Bhengu's statement at the Convention Chief Mhlambiso of the Amahlubi tribe in the Amatola basin said:

> Rev. Bhengu, White ministers and Black ones, together with all the officials, I am grateful for this honour. I thank the Convention and the administration for giving you this church site. I am very pleased to have this pleasure of seeing with my own eyes what this is like. When a finger of God points at someone to be a leader of anything nobody can ever turn or bend it. God pointed at Rev. Bhengu to be a leader of this movement. I envy Rev. Bhengu for his gift of being capable of leading the people convincingly. I am given people to lead and rule. They are very stubborn. They do not listen to me as people listen to Rev. Bhengu. I think he possesses what I lack. He has a gift I do not have. He has God in him – I do not (Dubb 1976:80).

The Chief does not seem to have taken offence at Bhengu's statement that whilst he an uncircumcised (dog) was leading the circumcised (master) the Xhosa people. Bhengu's strongest and loyal following was and is still among the Xhosa people. He spoke Xhosa like a Xhosa and wrote most of his circulars to the church in Xhosa.

5.4.6 Bhengu and the Ecumenism

Bhengu was a never a man for the Assemblies of God, he was larger than that.

In 1976 at Bloemfontein he suggested that the Assemblies of God join the South African Council of Churches to strengthen the Church in South Africa. His aim was to strengthen the spiritual side of SACC whilst in turn they would strengthen the Assemblies of God seeming lack of Social concern in the their work. This was turned down. (interviews La Foy 2003/10/01)

When I was approached to join the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ in 1973, I had approached Bhengu for permission to do so. I was overwhelmed by his support for my move "Campus Crusade for Christ is a good organisation committed to winning people to Christ. I know Dr Bill Bright the founder of that organisation. If I was still young I would join them too". I was not the only minister in the Assemblies of God that he seconded to para-church organisations working interdenominationally; Joe Dambuza was seconded to SCM (Student Christian Movement) Sipho Bhengu, John Ndlovu and Charles Maphosa to Campus Crusade for Christ, Abiel Thiphanyane to Michael Cassidy's Africa Enterprise, etc.

Bhengu also participated in major conferences at SACLA in South Africa, PACLA in Kenya, Lausanne, World Pentecostal Conferences in Sweden, Canada, UK, etc. Regarding his involvement at SACLA David Bosch wrote:

> I first heard about Bhengu and his remarkable ministry when I was a missionary in Transkei in the late fifties and the sixties, but I only came to know him intimately during the 1973 Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism. Since then we were together many times until he passed away. I particularly remember his participation in the committee that organised the South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA), which was held in Pretoria in July 1979. For two years before this we had met monthly to discuss all possible aspects relating to the planning of that mammoth convention. Bhengu attended virtually all the committee meetings. At many critical moments he gave quality guidance to our deliberations, always in his modest quiet way. For me, Bhengu epitomised the Assemblies of God (Watt 1992:12)

Contrary to the statement by Nurnberger and John Tooke referring to denominational representation at the Durban Congress on Mission and Evangelism in 1973. “The only constituencies missing were the Dutch Reformed and the Pentecostals”. (Nurnberger & Tooke (eds) 1988 70)

I know that Bhengu, La Foy, Bond and other leaders from the Assemblies of God were at the Congress. I was also present

In his Back to God Crusade meetings, he would tell his converts that came from churches to go back to their churches, he allowed only those who did not belong to any church. He did not conduct crusade meetings on Sunday mornings, precisely to allow people to attend their church services. (interview Gcwabe 2005/09/?)

In 1978 he travelled with a group of South Africans organised by Africa Enterprise to the World Charismatic Conference in Singapore. I was part of that delegation. In South Africa Bhengu was a member of the organising committee for the South African Charismatic Conferences in 1977 and 1980 both of which were held at the East Rand Show in Johannesburg. The Archbishop of Cape Town, The Rt Rev Bill Burnett chaired both conferences.

Before his death he was scheduled to speak at Campus Crusade for Christ, Explo' 85 in Pretoria. He was at this time been experiencing poor health but deputised Pastor Abel Matroshe to speak in his place.

I quote again the last paragraph of his Farewell Message to the Church to emphasise his commitment to the total Body of Christ reads:

> Build the Church of God. The names of our Churches are our own inventions and not God's! Let the Christians come together as God's children. Build the Nation where you are remembering that you are part of that Nation and you are in it for a specific purpose for God. Pray for all leaders in Africa, support leaders of your Nation and present Christ to them by all means. The Church is the light of the world. The Church is the salt of the earth and the Church should lead the Nation to Peace, Unity and Prosperity.

5.5 WHAT IS BACK TO GOD CRUSADE?

In the document : The Northern Transvaal Dissenters he explains what Back to God is:

> The Back to God Crusade is similar to what is known as Guilds in other churches. It is non-denominational in nature and seeks to spread the Gospel without pressurising converts to discard their churches to join any. That many denominations have derived or gained some kind of changes can be ascribed to the Back to God Crusade. That many homelands in South Africa have great respect and admiration for the Crusade needs no evidence. Back to Back brings the Gospel to the people and brings people Back to God. It further teaches holiness, brotherly love and responsibility irrespective of church affiliation, race, ethnicity, tribe or colour. We aim at building the people so that they build honest, respectable and dependable citizens who build the nations. We abhor divisions and tribalism in the Christian Church.
>
> The Back to God does not recruit people either from denominations or from the splinter groups of the Assemblies of God. We sincerely believe in the Unity of the Body of Christ and we do not believe that we are the only Body of Christ.

5.6 BHENGU DEVELOPS PEOPLE

One of his commitment was to develop people in all sphere of human endeavour. It was for this reason that he started Student Loan Bursary. His aim was to equip youth, particularly Christian young people. He believed that through these efforts the youth would be able to take up positions of influence in the country and in Africa. La Foy says "one of the most powerful things I remember about Bro. Bhengu was that he was not just an interested in other ministries. He also recognised gifts in young men. He once made a statement about himself, "you know there are nine gifts I have seen in my life. At times all nine gifts operate" (interview La Foy 2003/10/01)

According to La Foy Bhengu loved developing ministers. He would find time to counsel, and motivate young ministers from whatever denomination they came from. He never hogged the platform. Writing about the late Evangelist Richard Ngidi, Khathide says "it was in one of these tent revival meetings of Nicholas Bhengu that Ngidi found rest for his soul". Khathide goes on to say

> Bhengu introduced Ngidi to the power of the Holy Spirit. He lectured him on the working of the Holy Spirit. He told him that anyone filled the power of the Holy Spirit was capable of doing works of power. It was this meeting with Bhengu that catapulated Ngindi into evangelistic and healing ministry in which he became the greatest evangelist in the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) (Khathide 1993:10)

One of his dreams was to establish a Central Bible School in Umtata (former Transkei) in which he would train his ministers and other workers. This dream never materialised because of Government red tape and opposition from some leaders in the area. However, in 1987 realising that Bhengu's vision for a Bible School had not come to fruition, I started promoting and mobilising for the school. With the support of the Executive, the Nicholas Bhengu Theological College was born in 1991. The Assemblies of God Movement Executive is now fully in charge of the College.

He also sent men to study overseas viz, Fred Shabalala to Christ for the Nations, Dallas Texas, Benjamin Dube to Toronto, Canada, Geofrey Mkhwanazi to Stokholm, Sweden, etc.

It is also true that he allowed men and women to enter the ministry without theological training. His philosophy was that if God has called and anointed a man or woman who was he to turn that person away. The individual would have received training in the local Assembly, have shown fruit of ministry as well as commitment to the Lord and the Church. They would later be sent to Bible school.

5.7 BHENGU AND PURPOSE – MISSION AND EVANGELISM

The third "P" in this section I will show how Bhengu developed and implemented strategies to prosecute his ministry. Lephoko defines a vision "A vision is a mental picture of a future event taking place" (Lephoko 2001:98). It seems that the vision of seeing many people crying in fear of death drove him to do everything in his power to rescue people from chains of sin and death. (Dubb 1976:10 [translated from Schlosser 1958:24])

He imparted his vision to his followers, challenged and equipped them to go out and win people for Christ. To achieve this he organised Mothers, Fathers, Youth and Girls to raise money for specific purposes.

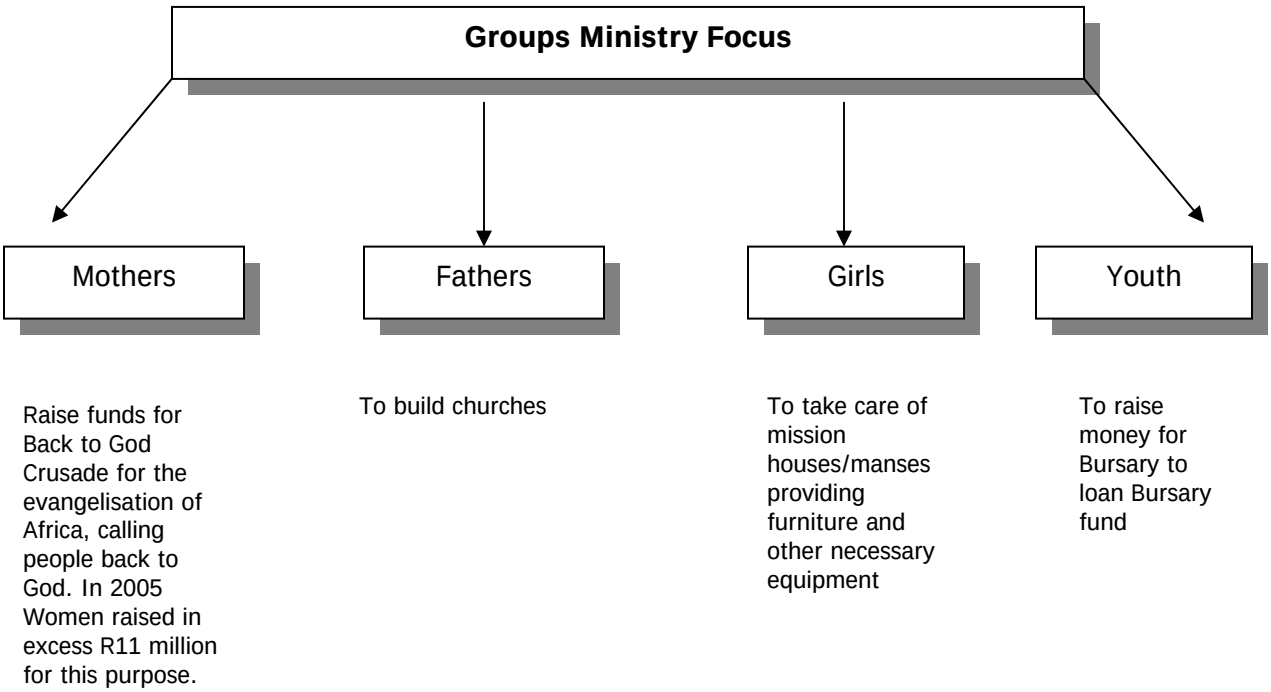


Figure 6

(Lephoko 2005)

All the groups except the youth bring their bags to Annual Conventions held at Thaba Nchu Peace Centre, in Thaba Nchu. Mothers over Easter Holidays, Fathers and Girls, during Christmas weekends. The youth take their bags to Provincial Conventions.

He did not promise them comfort or material gain. People were attracted to Bhengu by the simplicity of his life style and commitment to God's mission as set out in the synoptic gospel. Mat 10:23, Mat 28: 18 – 20, MK 13:10, Luk24: 46-48.

"Luke highlights the subject of Jesus as the sent one, but also Jesus the sending one (Larkin Jr & Williams 1998: 153) Bhengu also sent his followers into the streets, on buses, trains, play and workplace to be witnesses.

He did not only use male evangelists, women were also key in spreading the Good News. Some of the Women planted churches e.g. Benedicta Khamba, Tomato Mateke and many others.
The diagram below illustrates what people will normally work for.

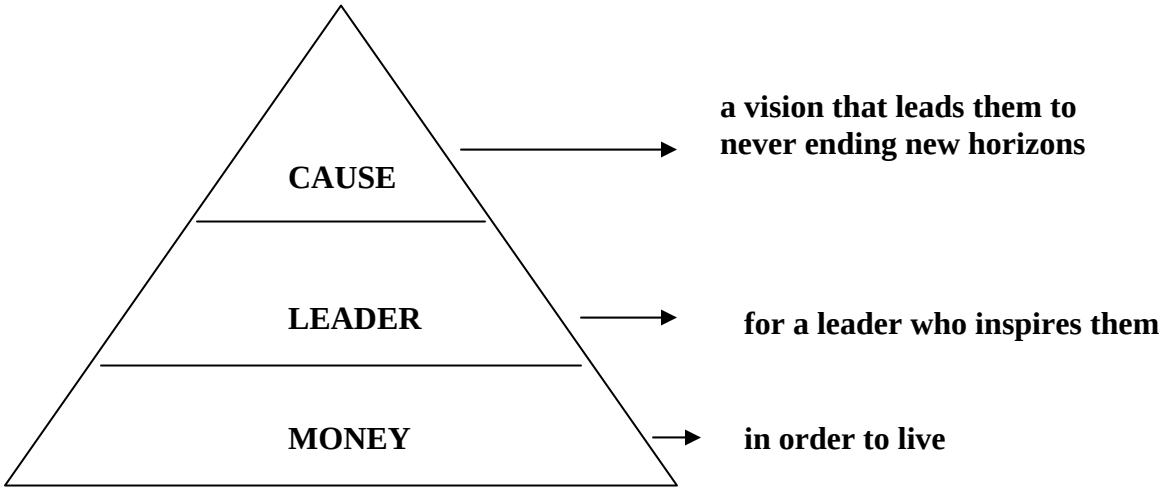


Figure 7
(Lephoko 2005)

Bhengu was not a leader that inspired people only, he was also a leader that gave his people something to live, or die for.

Apart from inspiring the people he gave them a cause to live for bringing people Back to It is living for a cause that has kept his work together, it is this Cause that makes women raise millions of rands for evangelism, and seeing more and more people coming to reach Christ, Churches built, young people sent to tertiary institutions.

This is not to suggest that he wanted his people to live in poverty. He was warning them against the demon of materialism which blinds so many people including well meaning Christian leaders today.

5.8 UNDERLYING THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

5.8.1 The Bible as the Word of God

In the Assemblies of God Statement of the Fundamental Truths under the item "The Bible" it says "We believe the Bible is inspired by God (2 Tm 3:14-17; 2 Pt 1:20-21)". (The Constitution and Rules of Procedure of the Assemblies of God as amended:20). In his Declaration of Faith, Bhengu went further by saying "The supernatural, plenary inspiration of the Scripture, that is inerrant in the original writings, and is the supreme, absolute and final authority in all matters of doctrine, faith and conduct" (Hollenweger 1972:518).

5.8.2 Jesus is God, King and the Only Saviour

In a letter he wrote to me on 12 November 1974, from Selly Oaks Colleges, Birmingham, UK where he was a visiting professor he expressed concern about Liberal Theology:

> Theology is one of the things that killed the early church and has destroyed the faith of many in the Western world; a matured (sic) man only can survive. It is the battle of champions and survival of the fittest. There is more theology but all churches are dreamy and dead! This is a lesson to Africa – Africa awake! They find enough theology to sanction bloody revolution and everything. They find theology to place Jesus Christ at par with Mohammed, Buddha and Confucius, all religions are alright! Africa must reject the Western philosophies! Jesus is God, Jesus is King and Jesus is the only Saviour! He is the only one who rose from the dead! Others all of them came from below but Jesus came from above and is above all, John3: 31.

Once in a sermon he told a story about a hobo who was given a bunch of flowers. She took the flowers home. After putting them on the table she realised the table-cloth and the table were dirty. She started washing the cloth and cleaned the table, cleaned the vase, eventually cleaned the whole house. This he believed was what Jesus in the heart could do for people who receive him as their personal Saviour.

5.8.3 The Role of the Holy Spirit in his Ministry

He thirsted after the Holy Spirit. He encouraged his people to seek the power of the Holy Spirit in ministry. Donda says "Bhengu was empowered by the Holy Spirit and believed in the leadership of the Holy Spirit both in his vision, preaching and teaching. He obeyed the leading of the Spirit" (Interview: Donda 2003.10.10). He was concerned that after his death, preaching would become intellectualised, the wisdom of man would 'replace the Holy Ghost'.

5.8.4 Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues

He did not teach people how to speak in tongues as most Pentecostal preachers do. He told people not to seek gifts but the giver – Jesus Christ. He did not believe in speaking in tongues as initial evidence of being baptised in the Spirit. He thought that would be like putting the Spirit in a box or prescribing to the Spirit how to baptise people. He did however emphasize that some supernatural incident must happen to confirm baptism in the Spirit. It could be bursting in laughter, song, falling to the ground under the power of the Holy Spirit etc. He was also worried by the fact that the lives of some of the people who were crusaders of speaking in tongues did not match their ecstatic utterances. "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is everyone born of the Spirit" (Jn 3: 8). As an evangelist seeking to reach a cross section of the population, he restrained himself from promoting tongues in evangelistic meetings.

5.8.5 Jesus Christ as the only Redeemer and Saviour of Man

The Declaration of Faith by Nicholas Bhengu.

He believed in the Deity of Jesus Christ, that he was begotten of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Salvation was by grace through faith and in the finished work of Christ (Hollenweger 1992:517). He preached Christ the Redeemer with authority. There was an incident in January 1956 during the Nelspruit campaign. The meeting was held in the open under a huge tree. In the audience were whites, blacks, Muslims and police from the local Police Station. In the middle of his sermon he, like a roaring lion seeking whom to devour, shouted "I want no philosopher, but give me Christ, I want no Muhammad, but give me Christ". He challenged the more than five thousands people present. "Is there anyone who challenges me?" There was dead silence, when a man jumped up and shouted "Bhengu is right!" He retorted "it does not bite (this dog) referring to himself it only barks"

5.8.6 Bhengu's Preaching

Bhengu's preaching stood on four legs. (1) His total belief in the Bible as the Word of God. (2) Jesus Christ as the only Redeemer and Saviour of man. (3) His total dependence on Prayer and the Holy Spirit. (4) His understanding of the cultural dynamics and needs of the people he ministered to.

Bhengu never doubted the Bible as the Word of God. Indeed, it was given to him in the vision he saw when he watched the people drowning and called on the Lord. He explains "Jesus appeared and lifted me out. He showed me an open Bible and said: This is the Word of Life; study this Word and through the Words of this Book you will break these fetters and free your people ..." (Dubb 1976:10).

He preached with authority knowing God was behind his Word to bear fruit. One of the verses he quoted was "so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Is 55:11).
In an interview with me Watt put it very succinctly "it was God's anointing on Bhengu that made him a powerful preacher".

Watt's assertion is confirmed by Dr Aaron Gamedze on the secret of Bhengu's power in preaching:

> 1) He was a born again and anointed man of God. 2) He was a man of prayer. 3) He was commissioned- he was called. (He understood his calling very clearly. It was really a gift of the Holy Spirit that was propelling him) Bhengu was not a "show off" person especially in the area of tongues. He understood or used tongues to charge his batteries. Anointing would fall on him as he was delivering his sermon. When he delivered his message, the audience would be swept and fall under the anointing. (interview Gamedze 2003/10/18)

5.9 BHENGU'S PASSION FOR SOULS

He was a master storyteller. All his sermons started with reading a bible text upon which his message was based. He would then tell a story that had relevance to his message but that had its setting among the people. It would be a story that people could relate to.

Like his Master Jesus Christ and St Paul, Bhengu had a passion for souls and the deliverance of people from the bondage of sin and its effects – oppression. He had been called by Jesus "I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Ac 26:18). Bhengu spoke to a need. His messages were down to earth and laced with stories drawn from live situations in communities. Schlosser tells of a story related by Bhengu in a sermon he preached at the 5th World Pentecostal Conference in London:

> There is a tribe in South Africa ... the Masutos. When a woman has a baby she stays indoors for three months. She doesn't go out. This woman I am talking about now, had a baby almost three months old. She was indoors, and the tornado took place. She couldn't leave her baby and run away. She decided to kneel and cover the baby with her body. The bricks passed over her. The roofing iron scraped her body. You know what a tornado does. Her back was ripped open. You could see lungs inside. Still she covered the baby, and she died ... I drove 700 miles to go see the baby whose mother had done such a noble act. Came to the hospital – I wanted to see the baby. I knelt and prayed and thanked God. And this thought came to me – this what Jesus has done for us ... Jesus has passed from death unto life. I just preach this message that is saving souls in Africa today. Jesus! We glorify Jesus! His death ... And while we preach we get a cripple over there he jumps up. He makes a noise; he throws his crutches away; he walks; he runs about; he creates an uproar. We

> didn't pray for him. Jesus healed him; and he shouts; and the people know Jesus heals…. (Hollenweger 1972:131).

The Sunday Times 27 October 1985 reporting the death of Bhengu wrote in a caption "He was world's best soul crusader".

5.10 MIRACLES AUTHENTICATE GOD'S POWER

Spontaneous miracles happened in Bhengu's meetings. He was not a healer, it was Jesus who healed the sick and performed miracles through him. In the Nelspruit campaign of January 1956 a man with a broken back jumped out of a wheelbarrow when Bhengu touched him as people were going through the healing line. Creamer describes Bhengu in this way "He was a simple man.

The question of whether God still performs miracles or not is a vexed one. With some members of the Body Christ claiming that some of the happenings that were common place with the Early Church had ceased once the Bible had been canonised.

Unger, one of the leading evangelical theologians, writes: under the heading Pentecostals claim that all the gifts manifested in the early church ought to be in operation in the church today:

> This is a logical deduction from the doctrine of baptism of the Spirit as a second experience by tongue speaking Pentecostals and Neo- Pentecostals lay special emphasis upon the list of nine gifts enumerated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. They contend that all the nine gifts, including the miraculous sign gifts, are still in the church today and should be exercised when God's people assemble for worship and fellowship.

> The church in general has always maintained, on the basis of scripture and the testimony of history, that the so-called miraculous gifts of healing and tongues, gradually disappeared from the church after the apostolic age when the New Testament was written down and circulated among the churches. Pentecostals, however deny that any of the gifts were temporary and hence suspended.

> The Pentecostal holds that the gifts were never withdrawn by God but were lost as a result of the worldliness and unbelief of the church. Pentecostals like to think that in their movement God is demonstrating what He can do with a church that believes in and exercises all the gifts of the Spirit. (Ungers:1974:135-136)

As a Pentecostal Bhengu believed that God still performs works of miracles today. We have already referred to some of the miracles that happened when Bhengu prayed for the sick. Miracles did not only happen with Bhengu but with others also. Frodsham quotes Maggie"I have seen the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the paralysed rise up and walk; cases where death was inevitable, having been given up by as many as fear of the leading doctors in Johannesburg; the most malignant cases of cancer healed etc" (Frodsham 1946:156)
In Revival in Africa Bhengu gave testimony to the miraculous healing of a crippled man.
"During those remarkable days in East London, God so poured out His Spirit that it was like the Acts of the Apostles all over again". As Bhengu preached a cripple suddenly jumped up, shouted and threw away his crutches as he walked and then ran, there was uproar – it was God at work! (no date)

He did not only believe in miracles, but expected them to happen in his ministry.

5.11 SPECIAL MIRACLES

Although Bhengu did not major in performing miracles, spontaneous miracles happened in Bhengu's meetings. He was not a healer; it was Jesus who healed the sick and performed miracles through him. He preached that Jesus was the healer and that he was a tool in God's hand. Never once did he boast at the success of his preaching and healing ministry.

A special miracle that happened during the second week of Bhengu's arrival in East London was the healing of a young woman who had a hunchback and other bone diseases. She came to the service to hear a message during the healing time, this woman was miraculously healed. She suddenly heard the rattle of her bones stretching up as she straightened up and began to run around praising the Lord. (Interview: Gcwabe 2005.09.18)

In his Nelspruit campaign in January 1956 a man who had broken his back whilst working for the South African Railways (now Spoornet) was brought in to the meeting on a wheelbarrow. The preaching was under powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit. During the healing prayer line a man was brought forward on a wheelbarrow to be prayed for. Bhengu shouted as he touched him, “in the name of Jesus get up and walk”, the man jumped out of the wheelbarrow, and staggered and straightened up and walked. There was a lot of shouting and joy as people witnessed what God had done.

I personally witnessed that miracle. In one of his preachings, two decades later Bhengu related this story and said “Lephoko was there when this happened in Nelspruit”.
He also testified of a miracle that happened whilst attending a conference in Nigeria. There was a crippled man sitting and begging in the street. Bhengu said “ I walked to the man and gave him a coin and walked away. A short distance away from him God said to me ‘are you not my servant, why did you give him money? as a result of the prodding from the Spirit he went back to the man and demanded that the man give him his money back. He then called “ In the name of Jesus rise up and walk” he helped the man to stand up. The man jumped and began to run around with joy, in amazement of his healing.

Bond in his book: For the Record – Reflections on the Assemblies of God relates a story of how Bhengu tried to avoid confronting a demon possessed young girl who had been brought by her parents and was seated right in front of the podium where he was preaching.

He felt no spark of faith to pray for the girl. He was also afraid that if she were not healed the press would pounce on that event to discredit him and God. According to Bond, Bhengu tried to slip out the back door but found it was locked. When he could not get out he sat emotionless not knowing what to do. However he mastered faith:

> As he went down from the platform, there was an expectant hush. The photographers were at the ready. Then the miracle happened. A paroxysm of Godly wrath came upon the man of God. At the top of his voice he shouted out. He cursed the demon in the girl. There was a wail and in the next instant she was on her feet normal, being clutched by her parents. The next morning the newspapers were full of photographs of her being carried shoulder- high from the meeting by members of the crowd. Pandemonium filled the hall. (Bond 2003:79)

Bhengu never rejected medicine despite his phenomenal successful-healing ministry manifested in his campaigns.

It is clear that Bhengu first developed himself, the people, and motivated them to accomplish a purpose, the evangelisation and liberation of Africa from sin, poverty, and oppression.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION - BHENGU'S LEGACY TO MISSION AND EVANGELISM AND THE CHURCH

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines legacy as" something handed down by a predecessor". In this chapter I look at the legacy left by Bhengu to mission, evangelism and the church. In looking back at the life and work of Bhengu, it seems that the hypothesis offered in Chapter One, proved to be correct. In a time of rapid transformation and dramatic socio-political upheaval, Nicholas Bhengu indeed provided strong and inspiring leadership to the churches in South Africa – even beyond the borders of South Africa. His message and his methods were truly relevant to the challenges of his time. His ministry, stretching over a period of more than 50 years has left an indelible mark on the lives of millions of Christians.

His ministry was full of dynamism, and happenings that took place in rapid succession. Like his Master, he was an obedient servant who acted on the beck and call of his Lord. Mk 2:8. He moved from one city, town and village to another "as long as it is day we must do the work of him that sent me" Jn 9:4.

In the early years of his Back to God Crusade campaigns, he would send a telegram to an evangelist running a campaign in a particular area asking him to leave immediately and go to another place where his services were needed. The evangelist would be replaced by another evangelist. Urgency and giftedness of evangelists and the needs of specific campaigns was the hallmark of his operational method.

There is no doubt that Bhengu was an outstanding leader in Africa and overseas. He was the first black Christian leader to use tents for conducting evangelistic campaigns in the country and neighbouring states. From interaction with church leaders outside the Assemblies of God, it is clear that he was also the first black evangelist to explain the gospel to people in simple straight forward manner that people could understand and come to embrace Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord. Without shouting to sinners about sin, he called them to repentance. Donda says "he preached the love of God to the people, God touched them and changed their lives (Interview 2003 2005.01.10).

In evaluating his legacy, it is important to say that it is not possible to do justice to Bhengu's life and ministry in this brief study. John the Evangelist said about the ministry of Christ "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that many may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:30-31). Similarly, without intending to place Bhengu on a par with his Lord, the same can be said with regard to this study of the life and work of Bhengu. He did many other wonderful works of ministry such as, making Jesus and the gospel of Christ an issue, tackling racism and fostering black leadership in the church. He stood his ground under political pressure from all quarters by refusing to take party political sides.

6.1 RELATIONSHIPS IN THE HOME AND EXTENDED FAMILY

He had a healthy relationship with Mylet and the children. He and Mylet brought up the children in fear of God and helped them grow spiritually. As children growing up in the church, they never received preferential treatment above other children. They sat and played with other children. It was inculated into them that all people were created equal.

At conferences he would announce that he had no inheritance in money or assets that he would leave for his children except providing them with education. Both Waxy and Dawn were educated at Inanda Girls Seminary, one of the prestigious mission schools North of Durban. Later Waxy obtained a B Sc degree from UNISA, also UED from UNISA, and a B Ed from the University of Natal. Waxy teaches science to teachers. Mylet also went to Inanda Girls Seminary and was a Captain for the school's Tennis Club in 1936. According to Waxy her photo can still be found in the school's archive.

He also had a ministry to his family. Some members of his family came to Christ through him including Professor Sibusiso Bhengu who was first Minister of Education in the Mandela Administration. Writing to me from Selly Oaks Colleges concerning Professor Bhengu: "my nephew (Sipho's younger brother) has written his thesis for PHD in Switzerland. We are going to have a doctor in our family! And he loves the Lord Jesus. This is a wonder of wonders".

He appreciated the support of his family. He also spoke fondly of his brother Jaconiah.

6.2 BHENGU'S CALL TO MINISTRY

Bhengu experienced a dramatic call to ministry. God showed him people who were drowning in an ocean and spoke to him and showed him the Bible, which God said he would use to "break these fetters and free your people from the chains of sin in which they have been bound for centuries. I wish you to do all this".

His call could be easily compared with Jesus' call to Paul on the road to Damascus, "--- to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Ac.26:18).

It is not my submission, though that every minister, evangelist, pastor, etc should be called to ministry in the same manner. It is critical that the call must be definite and irresistible. Both Bhengu and Paul received with the call a job description. This was also true for Jesus. (Luk 4:18-19)

It was this call and job description that he received from the Lord that governed what he did or did not do. It was this call that led to criticism from the church, and politicians alike, accusing him of standing aloof from active involvement in the political liberation struggle. He complained of being "misunderstood, misinterpreted, misconstrued and abused by reckless men from all sections and sides" (Farewell Message). Luther says the following about calling: "if God does not summon you to work, who are you, you fool, that you dare to take it upon yourself?. A certainty of that calling is necessary for a good
work....(Ebeling:1964:17).

The certainty of calling and what one is called to do is of critical importance. This certainty helps one to stay focused. He related the story of how he was once stopped by a traffic officer. The traffic officer asked him in Afrikaans "Vir wie werk jy (who do you work for), he replied " ek werk vir die grootste Maatskappy- God die Vader, God die Seun, en God die Heilig Gees" (I work for the Largest Corporation – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit)". The Officer let him go " jy is mal loop (you are crazy go!)".
This little story illustrates his certainty of God's calling upon his life.

6.3 BHENGU AND HIS PREACHING

Luther on preaching:

> For speaking for myself, there is no message I would rather receive than that which would relieve me of the duty of preaching. I am so weary of it because of the intolerable burden the Devil and the world place upon me. But the poor souls will not have it. There is also a man, who is called Jesus Christ, who says no. I am ready to follow him, since I am even more beholden to him. We who preach the gospel, say the startling words of one sermon, 'are a highway over which Satan rides'. (Ebeling.1964:45)

Bhengu preached to Kings, university audiences, presidents, politicians in many countries of the world, but still had a message for ordinary people. He used to talk about how his message "hit at those who are at the bottom, those who were in middle (middle class) and those who were at the top of the human ladder".

Bond relates how whilst he was ill on a tour in Malawi he preached:

> I saw something in Nyasaland (now Malawi). This time he had a larger audience of over 200. Again there was no church building, no chairs, no pulpit; Bhengu was then dying of liver cancer though none of us knew about it at the time. He was feeble and distraught with pain. When we dined at the hotel in Lilongwe he would nod over his food, dozing off until one or other of the ministers with us, Fred Shabalala or Brother Shongwe would gently rouse him saying softly " Baba, Baba, here is your food, Baba eat it". Yet when he came to preach he gathered new strength. For me the sight of Bhengu standing on African soil, in the shade of a thorn tree, preaching the word of God to his fellow Africans in Malawi, is unforgettable.(Bond 2003:58)

He preached under the unction and anointing of the Holy Spirit. In the 1956 Nelspruit campaign, preaching on the text Ro 7:24, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death". The building shook with the anointing and at the power of his voice. This kind of power is attested to by Nene who said "whilst he was preaching in a Community Hall in Port Elizabeth in 1945, paint peeled off the wall due to the power of his anointing"(Interview Nene 2005).

6.4 BACK TO GOD CRUSADE

The establishment of Back to God Crusade was strategic for the preaching of the gospel and his plan to proclaim Jesus Christ from Cape to Cairo. Although this dream "from Cape to Cairo" was not fully realised by Bhengu, he did nonetheless preach in some of the major cities of Africa viz Nairobi, Kenya, Lagos, Nigeria and in other countries.

The call to people to go back to God was effectively linked to Back to God Crusade and the slogan "Back to God – Africa for Jesus – Jesus for Africa" on the Back to God Crusade trucks and on campaign handbills, these drew many people to attend his crusades wherever he went.

Bhengu's Back to God campaigns were highly charged with expectations from the sick, crippled, blind, deaf and those seeking to get back to God in order to experience new life in Christ. No monies were collected at the campaigns until people were organised into churches.

The decentralisation of Back to God Crusade teams into regions was a very wise move by Bhengu, eight areas or cities were attacked almost simultaneously with reports coming from these campaigns making it attractive for donors it also motivated Mothers to work harder and raise more money for the Back to God Crusade.

At Mothers Easter Conventions in Bloemfontein and later Thaba Nchu new converts were paraded on the platform in front of thousands of people to give their testimonies of deliverance from sin, and disease and a new life in Christ.

Back to God Crusade campaigns continue to operate today but the lack of proper planning, coordination and commitment by the new crop of evangelists is not producing similar results that were seen during Bhengu's time.

6.5 CHURCH PLANTING AND CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Shabalala did not think it was correct to call Bhengu the "Black Billy Graham of Africa". His argument was that Graham did not plant churches whereas Bhengu did and gave leadership to

those churches. Back to God was and still is the “nozala” the mother that gives birth to churches. A new church is birthed after every campaign.

New churches are set up with local spiritual oversight: pastor, elders and deacons to lead the church. Churches are autonomous and are in no way directed from outside.

The administration of church finances is strictly monitored by the pastor, elders and the DCC office in the region. Churches support their pastor through a Regional Financial Support Pool located in the DCC Offices throughout the country. Assemblies send tithes collected to the DCC offices so that pastors can share equally in the financial support.

Bhengu taught his people to build their own churches. All the more than 5 000 churches were built by the local people without outside help. In a circular “Church Buildings”, Bhengu outlined “How we are going to build the (sic) church buildings on various building sights on offer by gorvenments of the Republic, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, KwaZulu, Gazankkulu, Leboa (sic) Qwaqwa, Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana?”

He suggested a contribution of R1.00 per male and 50c per female per month. It was not forced on the people. He asked “Do you think R1.00 a month is impossible? Just think of all the men saved who love God and also like the salvation of souls and increase in the work”. “Be aware-rise! Saints and act while I am still alive”(no date)

6.6 BHENGU AND MONEY

From interviews conducted with his family, church leaders in his Assemblies, circulars sent by Bhengu, it has been conclusively established that Bhengu never used churches’ money to enrich himself, something he could easily have done with all the money that came from the donors and overseas donations.

He warned against those who after his death would seek to enrich themselves and plunge the church into debt. Bond writes:

> The young Nicholas Bhengu decided that in his lifetime he wanted to have money. In a way, that desire too was granted. He could have become rich had his godly principles not

> prohibited him from exploiting the people and bleeding the churches. He could have used his considerable influence and popularity to make money. Once a businessman proposed that Bhengu lend his name to certain business projects for half of the overall takings. Bhengu refused. The South African government approached him with the proposal that they would pay him a salary if only he would drop his connection with the Assemblies of God to work non- denominationally like Billy Graham the American evangelist. "... Bhengu had no hesitation in refusing the offer". (Bond 2003:65)

It is commonly believed among Christians and non Christians alike that the desire among many evangelists, Christian workers to preach is motivated by greed for money they can make. At revival meetings evangelists give out envelopes to people with the promise that if they gave to the evangelist, God will give them more money and they can get rich and prosper in all spheres of their lives. This Prosperity Doctrine is also preached and promoted in many of the Charismatic Churches (commonly known as Ministries).

6.7 BHENGU AND POLITICS

Because he ministered during the most turbulent period of our history especially in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980"s when South Africa was burning: Sharpville killings, Soweto riots, killing of township councillors, and more repressive laws by the Government, it was expected that his critics would be politicians: to them list lack of support for the liberation struggle was unacceptable. Prof Bhengu says, "my uncle was walking on a tight rope.

Because of his massive influence and following it was not only liberation movements that wanted his corroboration, the South African Government was also gunning for his support. However Bhengu remained focused and committed himself to working and ministering to all people, and the belief that only the gospel would help change the situation as people began to relate to God vertically and to one another horizontally, he developed people by especially the youth with study bursaries, women with income generating skills.

His answer was simple, terse and frank to politicians and to Lawrence Tutu:

> We invite anybody who is a leader; we make no preference for parties. We maintain our neutral position in party politics but honour chiefs and all leaders. This is why I attended

> Chief Botha Sigcau's funeral in Transkei, Mr Biko's funeral in King William's Town and Robert Sobukwe's funeral at Graaf Reinet. So I am a Christian and I adhere to the Bible and to 1 Timothy 2:1-4 which Tutu has doubts about.
>
> We have people from all parts of the world in our churches and we cannot afford the luxury of favouring certain parties and disfavouring others. We are a church catering for spiritual and social welfare of the people and so we do not bark.

6.8 BHENGU AND ECUMENISM

From his own pronouncements we can safely say that he believed in the universality of the Body of Christ. He did not believe that the Assemblies of God or Back to God Crusade were the only legitimate institutions that were doing God's work.

To the Northern Transvaal Dissenters he said "we sincerely believe in the Unity of the Body of Christ and we do not believe that we are the only Body of Christ". He restated his belief in the catholicity of the Church in his Farewell Message by saying:

> Build the church of God. The names of our Churches are our own inventions and not God's. Let the Christians come together as God's children. Build the Nation where you are remembering that you are part of that Nation and you are in it for a specific purpose for God. Pray for all leaders in Africa, support leaders of your Nation and present Christ to them by all means. The church is the light of the world. The church is the salt of the earth and the church should lead the Nation to Peace, Unity and Prosperity.

Bhengu did not only make statements about the unity of the church, he worked for it. He got involved in ecumenical meetings, spoke at inter church gatherings around the world, seconded some of his ministers to work with para- church organisations such as Campus Crusade for Christ, Student Christian Movement etc.

He was able to achieve this unity in the Assemblies of God. He was instrumental in bringing together into one body all the works under missionaries in Southern Africa. In 1967 these churches came under the Assemblies of God Constitution and bye – Laws of the African Interim Conference. These byelaws govern Bhengu's Back to God (Assemblies of God Movement). All

black works including those that were under expatriate missionaries are now Bhengu's work and operate in terms of the African Interim Conference.

6.9 BHENGU'S LEADERSHIP STYLE

From analysis of his leadership style, it is clear that Bhengu changed gears depending on the situation. His style is aptly summarised by Dr Ntshangase "He was using a situational leadership approach. When the situation demanded that he should consult he consulted extensively, and when the situation demanded that he should set himself direct he used the direct approach".

He did indeed consult extensively when dealing with issues of strategy, policy procedure, problem solving and conflict resolution. He would call meetings of men and in an attempt to find solutions to a problem or chart a new course. Some of these meetings would continue for the whole night. He never gave solutions up in trying to find solutions. But in cases where he was certain of his course of action he would give orders and expect people to act upon his instructions. If however the subject of his orders is not able to perform as directed he would discuss the problem with person concerned.

The three Ps (Person, People, and Purpose) summarise the kind of person he was, how he motivated his people to accomplish a specific purpose which for him was to preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo, to that end he developed strategies that would help him realise his goal.

He developed an integrated strategy which included: the spiritual, intellect, social, and political development to address mission and evangelism. He rejected the disintegrated approach.

DISINTERGRATED STRATEGY

THE STRUCTURE BHENGU REJECTED

Figure 8
(Lephoko 2006)

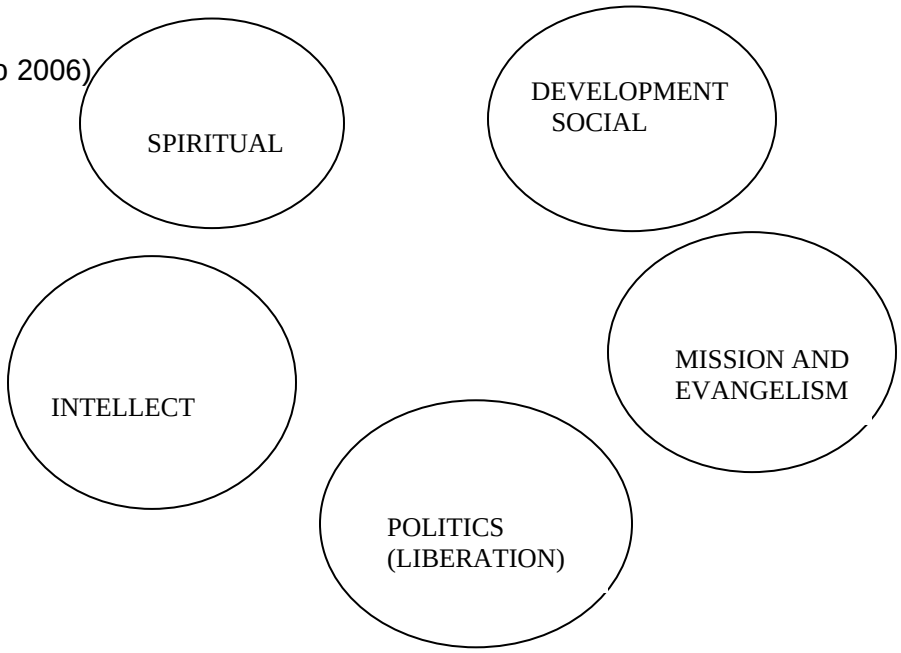
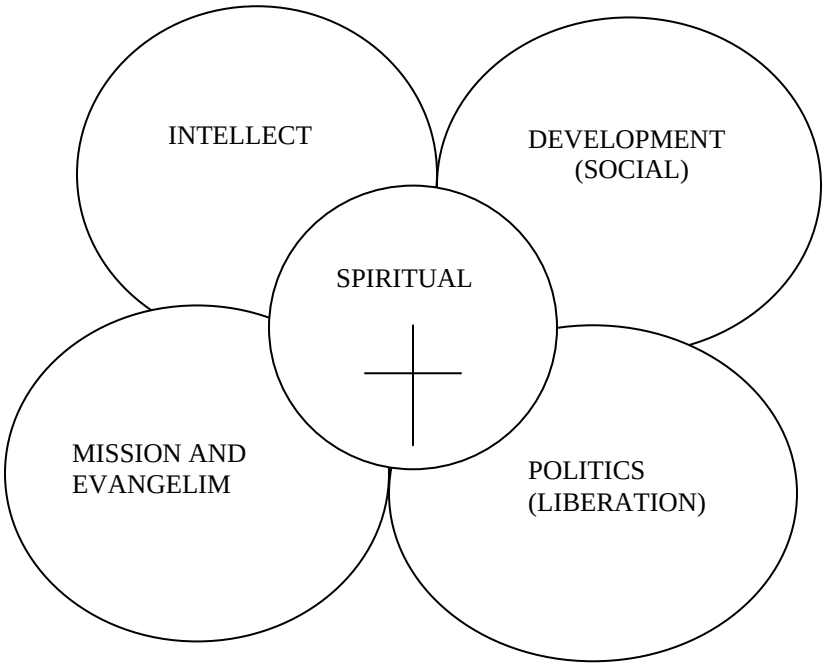


Figure 9
(Lephoko2006)

Bhengu's Integrated strategy



As a leader he was high on task and high on relationships. He was focussed and set himself on accomplishing objectives but also recognising that he needed people in order to achieve his goals.

6.10 EVALUATION OF BHENGU'S MINISTRY, LEADERSHIP STYLE AND LEGACY

I briefly evaluate Bhengu's ministry leadership style and legacy.

6.10.1 Strengths in Bhengu's Work

6.10.1.1 Relationships in the Home and Extended Family

Bhengu had strong ties with his wife Mylet and their children, also with his second wife Nokwethemba. He was committed to winning his children and many of his extended family members to Christ. A difficult thing to do for most pastors.

6.10.1.2 Bhengu – the Strategist and Organiser

It is submitted here that Bhengu worked strategically: in planning, organising, leading and controlling of his movement to accomplish his mission. We have seen how he divided the Crusades, planted churches, developed administrative systems for churches and other structures of his work.

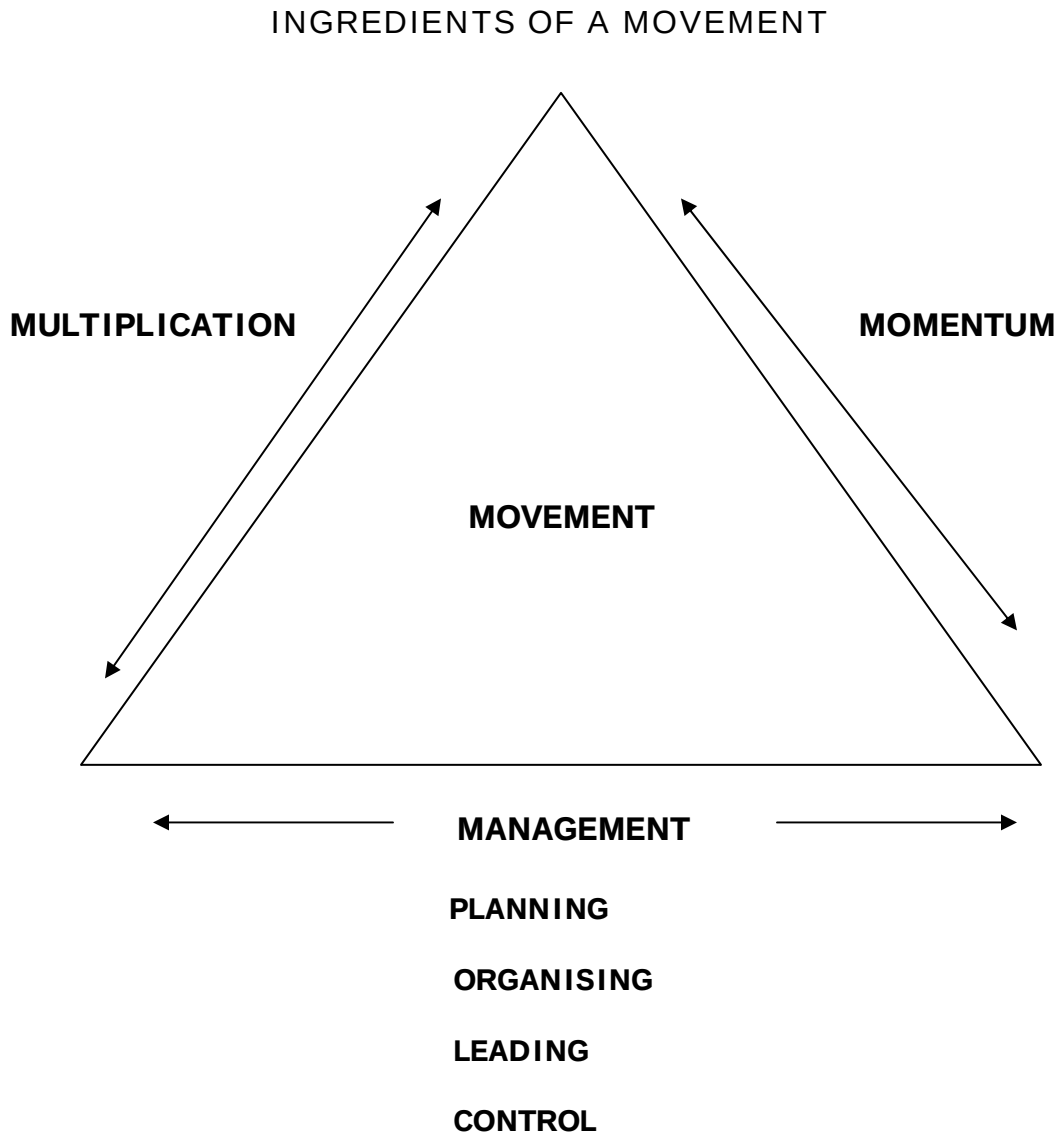


Figure 10
(Lephoko 2006)

His Crusades built momentum; he moved into areas with a big bang with trucks, marked “Back to God - Africa for Jesus- Jesus for Jesus, a choir and a team of evangelists. This drew crowds who came to see an hear the message he preached.

Multiplication was achieved when churches were planted. These churches became the source of support for future mission and evangelistic outreach. He conserved the results of his crusades.

6.10.1.3 Dealing with Political Leaders

He did not succumb to political pressure exerted on him by leaders of the liberation struggle and traditional leaders including the South African Government. As a prophet he stood his ground and proclaimed a message for all.

6.10.1.4 Bhengu's Development of People

Apart from his vision to preach the gospel from Cape to Cairo, he had a deep commitment to educate, train women, and young people to become future leaders with strong Christian background, to that end he established a Bursary Fund and women training programmes.

6.10.1.5 Bhengu and Money

He was a man who committed himself to using money to promote God's work rather than enrich himself. However the current crop of his leadership – Executive have not presented an audited financial statement (not Central Fund) to conference since Bhengu's death despite receiving 10% of all funds i.e. Mothers, Provincial Youth conventions, Girls and Fathers.

6.10.1.6 Weaknesses in Bhengu's Work

Bhengu was human, like all of us he had weaknesses. He was the first to admit that in his valediction to Mylet "soon your beloved will join the march on golden streets, he is left behind to rectify his mistakes and set God's work in proper order...."

Bhengu's Organisational Structure Figure 11 created complexities for the work after his death. All key structures had been reporting to him whilst he was still alive. After his death there was a battle of ascendancy. For example in 1986 the Back to God Crusade Committee took over the work of the Executive at the first Conference after Bhengu's death in Edendale, Pietermaritzburg. "Back to God Crusade Committee claimed that they were the legitimate leaders of Bhengu's work".

At the meeting held on the Conference grounds on June 30, 1986 Pastor Majiya stated:

> In 1976 we sat with Rev Bhengu at Standerton where he stated that he appointed Back to God Committee to take over after his death. This Conference's programme was drawn without us being consulted. Here at home, each section has its programme run independently. Here is the Conference now, "What part do B T G play"

His concerns were also expressed by Pastor J Maboa:

> "As chairman indicated in his opening speech. I insisted that the floor ought to know (sic) the B T G Executive. "He continued: General Executive is out here. Back to God safeguards our black work while it maintains unity. We protect our group's identity. We ought to close our ranks or this great work will fall. He showed concern about opposing (sic) people getting elected into General Executive and wondered how much damage would be caused". "Brethren, we shall be accountable for this work," he said.

Pastor Abel B. Matroshe who was the Secretary of Bhengu's work, a member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God, a member of the Teaching Team and a member of the Back to God Crusade Committee was in hospital at the time and could not attend the Edendale Conference.

Pastor Matroshe was the first to denounce the notion that the Back to God Committee should take up the leadership of the church. He later became a member of the Commission that enquired into the relationship between the Executive and the Back to God Crusade Committee.

It took more than ten years to try and resolve the dispute between Bhengus Executive and Back to God Crusade Committee to decide which body was responsible for running the church. In December 1986 I suggested to the Executive that a commission of inquiry be appointed to look into the matter. A Commission was established in 1986 with the following members: Dan Lephoko; Chairman; J Monnakwe, Secretary; A Matsoshe, J Maboa, and J Donda.

The Commission found no basis for Back to God Crusade Committee's claim to take over the running of the church.

Another structure that claimed supremacy has been the Teaching Team. Teaching Team members claim Bhengu appointed them to run the church after his death.

The debate still rages on although some truce between the Executive and the Teaching Team was arrived at the July 2005 Back to God (Assemblies of God) Conference. Documents such as "Transformation Plan 2005 for the Assemblies of God Movement and the Back to God Crusade, Guiding Discussion Document on the Constitutional Review of the AOGM- BTGC (Mayibuye), Examining Ruins after the Tornado etc, have been debated with vigour by both parties at various Conferences with myself also participating. Appendix 4, Back to God Teaching Team organogram illustrates the point I am making here.

6.10.1.7 Bhengu's Circulars to Churches

One of the major problems was the undated circulars he sent to churches. For example he would send a circular that gave a directive for the centralisation of tithes and later another circular which gave churches the autonomy to keep tithes in the church to support their own pastor only to be withdrawn by another circular.

6.10.1.8 Election of Elders and Deacons to permanent positions

The appointment of Elders and Deacons to life positions is a glaring weakness. Some of the men become turn a deaf ear to concerns of the people by virtue of their permanency. A number of these men are old and ineffective and yet remain in their positions.

6.10.1.9 Absence of Women in Leadership Roles

The absence of women in leadership positions in the church is another. Women are the cornerstone of Bhengu's work, they raise millions of Rand for the Back to God Crusade. Yet they are not represented at the highest decision making level of the organisation e.g. they may not serve as elders or deacons in the church.

In 1997 Mrs Beatrice Qina had been elected to the General Executive, but to step down. Reasons for her decisions are unknown. However both the white and coloured constituencies do elect women into positions of elders and deacons.

6.11 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are taken from Lephoko's M Phil Thesis (2004). They are seen to be relevant to this study and are therefore included herein.

6.11.1. Personal Integrity

Each Christian worker should be certain of their call to ministry. The Church and the work of God should be protected and not exploited for personal gain. Church finances should be used solely for the expansion of God's work and not to enrich pastors under the pretext of being Church Executives who must earn large sums of money whilst ministering among the poorest of the poor. Of course without denying the pastor a reasonably comfortable living wage, which is honorable to God and to all men.

6.11.2. Belief in the Bible as the Word of God

Today the Church of God is divided on whether the Bible is the Word of God or only some portions in the Bible are the Word of God. The success of Bhengu's preaching can, among other things, be ascribed to his unshakable belief in the Bible as the Word of God. One cannot for example imagine a Muslim believing that only some statements in the Koran are truths of Allah's revealed words to the Prophet Muhammed.

6.11.3. Ministers of the Gospel should take an apolitical Stance, not a Party Political Position

Bhengu believed that as a minister of the gospel a preacher had no right to exclude some political leaders and embrace others. He endeavoured to reach them all whatever their parties and strategies were.

6.11.4. Unity of the Church

Bhengu was against splits and breakaways in churches. He would always try to bring about reconciliation to avert severing of the body of Christ. Those who left the Assemblies of God would

probably accuse him of having been the cause of the splits, not deliberately but by his unshakable belief that to be effective all the African work should come under one umbrella, which to those outside meant Bhengu's group. All leaders should all try to work for unity instead of causing divisions over small differences and or personal preferences. They should always be mindful of the fact of the "... Church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Ac 20:28), and that as leaders they will give an account to God
(Heb 13:17).

6.11.5 Elders and Deacons

The election of elders and deacons to life long position should be reviewed as a matter of urgency.

6.11.6 Leadership Roles for Women

I argued that Bhengu did not ordain women as pastors, elders and deacons because the time was not ripe. I believe that if he was still alive today he would most probably had reviewed the practice and allowed women to occupy positions of real influence in the life of the church.

It is recommended that those who are now responsible for leading the church seriously consider creating space for women, who in my view form sixty percent (70%) of church membership.

6.12 FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis has dealt only with some aspects of Bhengu's Mission and Evangelism, Strategies, etc. Other aspects of his ministry will be the subject of further research studies.

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ANNOTATED LIST OF PHOTOCOPIES OF PRIMARY SOURCES

Bhengu, NBH

Assemblies of God – Centralisation of Assemblies' Tithes (no date)
He was giving direction as to how tithes and offerings should be handled.

To all Assemblies' Pastors and District Councils (no date)
Here, he is dealing with the role of the Pastor, and how to solve conflict in the Assemblies.

Assemblies of God – Women's Organisation (1978.11.01)
He sets out the duties of organizers and how they ought to conduct themselves and banking of money.

Centralization of Assemblies Tithes (no date)
He praises those Assemblies who did well. Because centralization had become a burden on the offices he recommends that Assemblies keep tithes until further notice.
Centralisation of Assemblies Tithes. He save his institutions to decentralize tithes.

Letter on the Northern Transvaal Workers (1980.03.28)
He addresses the problems of workers in the Northern Transvaal who wanted to establish their own District Council unilaterally.

Farewell Message to the Church (no date)
He warns against those who seek fame and do not live as he did. He also urges his followers to work for the Unity of the Church and help build the Nation.

A storm in a Tea Cup – Are whites planning for an Exodus in the Assemblies of God to start a New Movement (no date)
He outlines how he met WF Mullan, James E Mullan and HC Phillips in Nelspruit. He is worried that whites were planning to pull out of the Assemblies of God.

Letter to Scheepers (1982.05.11)
Scheepers was responsible for raising funds for the Back to God Crusade in the Eastern Cape. The undated circular about A Storm in a Tea Cup refers to whites that were planning to leave the Assemblies. Scheepers was one such person. Bhengu is appreciative of the work done by Scheepers and reassures him of his support.

Back to God Crusade (1967.11.01)
This circular deals with the organization of Back to God Crusade campaigns. Eight regions are set out with their crusade leaders including the modus operandi.

The Northern Transvaal Dissenters (no date)
He is trying to clarify the role and position of Back to God Crusade. He states that it is like what is known as Guilds in other denominations. People voluntarily applied to be members of the Back to God Crusade. They are free to leave Back to God Crusade and still remain members of the Assemblies of God. (Undated)

The National Church Thesis at Assemblies of God Conference, Witbank (1955.10.10)
He sets out his vision based on Mat 28.19. He sketches the historical background of Christianity in Africa and the role whites should play in helping Africans reach Africans.

Assemblies of God – Back to God Mothers' Convention. (1983 / 1984) Reports/Accounts The report starts with a message by then First Lady of the Republic of Bophuthatswana Mrs. LM Mangope, Patron in Chief. It is followed by a profile of the organization – history, mothers' activities and lists members of Regional Committees.

Letter to Dan Lephoko (1974.12.11)
He responds to a letter I had written to him in September 1974 regarding his request that I edit the Back to God magazine. He apologises for not inviting me to the restructuring meeting of Youth Ministry, but also indicates that writing (PEN WORK) was a gift for me.
In the letter we see that although Bhengu was an international, Spirit anointed leader stoops down and apologises even to those who were at the lower rank in the organization.

Constitution of the Back to God Crusade (no date)
Sets out objects prerogatives and general functioning of the organization.

Bhengu's response to Tutu attack in the Daily Dispatch (1980.05.07)
Bhengu was asked by John Bond who was at the time the General Chairman of the Assemblies of God to respond to Tutu's attack. In this document he outlines his philosophy of ministry toward all people including Homelands leaders, and leaders of Liberation Movements.

Sermon Bhengu preached at PACLA (Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly) Nairobi (1976.12.9-19)
In the document Bhengu portrays Jesus as the only Saviour.
Bhengu's Last Message. He preached in 1985 at Thaba Nchu.

Bond, J

Inscription to Dan Lephoko (2003.09) in a complimentary copy of his book *For the Record – Reflections on the Assemblies of God*.

Bosch, DJ

Salvation: ; A Missiological Perspective (no date)
He traces the missionary movement and the different interpretations on the matter including: The Greek Patristic mission, Salvation in the Western Church, Salvation in the Modern Era. He concludes by saying "The integral character of salvation demands that – the scope of the church's ministry be more comprehensive than has traditionally been the case".

***Daily Dispatch*,** East London

Daily newspaper (Reports on different activities between 1976-1985). It reported mainly about the work in East London: his dealings with political leaders, vision for Africa, etc.

Revival in Africa

It looks at revivals in Zaire, Rwanda, Uganda and "... Africa must get back to God out of which was born" Back to God Crusade. It also refers on how Bhengu had "declared war on sin and crime". http://hometown.aol.com/thewaycm/revival/africa.html

Scheepers, N- 20 May 1982

A circular letter to Eastern Cape Assemblies of God
Scheepers sets out his involvement with the Back to God Crusade for which he raised funds. He also addresses the breakaway by the Assemblies of God Fellowship and Bhengu's efforts to try and heal the rift between the AOG and AFG.

Scheepers, N

The Letter on Back to God Crusade letter head is addressed to: Bond, Cromhout, Hustler, Rawlands and Howe. It gives directives on how donor funds for Back to God Crusade should be handled and processed.

UPTON, GR

The Austin Chauwner Story (*Action Magazine* October 1972)
Upton traces Chauwner's background and his missionary work in Zululand and Mozambique. Chauwner was one of the early founders of the Assemblies of God. I also worked with him and travelled with him and Alfred Gumede to Zimbabwe and Mozambique on a Bible teaching tour to the churches in 1960.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS ON CASSETTE TAPES

The researcher conducted interviews with the following people and recorded their responses on audiocassette tapes.

Bhengu, S (2005.01.04)

Professor Bhengu is Jaconia's son. He was the first Minister of Education in Mandela's Cabinet. Bhengu spent many years in exile before the unbanning of the ANC. He later served as South Africa's Ambassador to Germany.

Creamer, J (2003.10.19)

Creamer met Bhengu in 1943 whilst he was preaching for the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland. She and her two brothers and their wives were converted during an informal gospel presentation in their home by Bhengu.

Donda J (2003.10.10)

Donda was a long serving former member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God. He was former Chairman of Back to God Crusade as well as of the Teaching Team. He recorded on disc tapes Bhengu's Training of the Teaching Team in East London in 1977.

Gamedze, A (2003.10.18)

Gamedze had been associated with Bhengu from the late 1940s in Swaziland. He gives an ecumenical and perspective on Bhengu's work among the Churches in Swaziland and his special relationship with the late King Sobhuza II.

Gcwabe, TA (2005.09.18)

Gcwabe is senior pastor and former member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God. He is also a member of the Teaching Team.

Hynd, S (2003.10.18)

Dr Hynd is a retired Medical Practitioner in Swaziland. He is a member of the Church of the Nazarene and met Bhengu in the early 1940s whilst Bhengu was preaching for the Church of the Nazarene in Swaziland.

La Foy, C (2003.09.22)

La Foy is General Secretary of the Assemblies of God. For more than 30 years he served with Bhengu on the General Executive of the Assemblies of God. He tells how Bhengu encouraged Coloureds and Indians to form themselves into a Group. In the meeting of the General Executive, Bhengu announced "Coloureds and Indians are now Assemblies of God Association" and so it was.

Mdlalose, F (2003.10.12)

Mdlalose is one of the first Girls' Organizers appointed by Bhengu for the Mpumalanga Highveld Region. She talks about the duties of organizers.

Mofokeng, B (2005.01.16)

Mofokeng is a senior pastor in Bhengu's work. He is also a member of the original Teaching Team members appointed and trained by Bhengu in 1977.

Mofokeng, D (2005.01.16)

D Mofokeng is wife of B Mofokeng. She is one of the second crop of Supervisors appointed by Bhengu. She also worked with Mylet.

Nkomonde, VM (2003.09.24 and 2005.01.03)

Nkomonde has been a member of the General Executive of the Assemblies of God for more than 25 years and also serves on the Teaching Team and Back to God Crusade Executive.

Ntshangase, M (2003.09.24 and 2005.01.04)

Ntshangase lives in Pietermaritzburg and had many dealings with Bhengu. He is also a minister of the Assemblies of God. He says "Bhengu exercises a situational leadership style". Ntshangase passed away on 20.12.2005.

Shabalala, FV (2003.10.12)

Shabalala is a senior pastor and former member of the General Executive. He served as Vice Chairman of Back to God Crusade during Bhengu's time. Became the first Chairman of Back to God Crusade after the death of Bhengu until July 2003. Some people thought he was Bhengu's right-hand man.

Tembe, M (2005.04.09)

Tembe is one of the second crop of Supervisors of the Mothers' Ministry appointed by Bhengu. She also worked with Mylet.

Thembani (2004.12.28)

Thembani is one of Bhengu's first converts in Port Elizabeth in 1945. For many years he served as an elder in the New Brighton Assembly.

Vena, F (2003.09.24 and 2005.04.09)

Vena is one the surviving first converts of the Port Elizabeth campaign in 1945. Her story is about how Bhengu arrived and started the work in Port Elizabeth. She is also an organizer in the Mothers' Ministry.

Vilakazi, W and Bhengu, D (2003.07.02 and 2005.01.03)

Waxy Vilakazi and Dawn Bhengu are Bhengu's daughters by Mylet. They gave information regarding relationships between themselves and their parents, they also provided family photos including their parents wedding photo to the parents.

TELEPHONIC INTERVIEWS

Bhengu, S (2004.01.06)

Professor Bhengu is Jaconiah's son, Bhengu's elder brother

Bhengu, N (2003.10.27)

He is professor Bhengu's brother. He provided information on the family tree.

Donda, J (2004.01.10)

Same interviewee on page 139

Fihlela, N (2004.01.07)

He is Regina's son, Bhengu's sister.

Phinda, D (2003.10.31)

He is former pastor of the Assemblies of God, who now lives in Rustenburg and relates the story of Bhengu burying his first daughter on a farm near Rustenburg.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Vilakazi, W (2004.01.09); Bhengu, G (2003.10.02); Wetmore, H (2003.10.28)

Bhengu, G (2003.10.02)

G Bhengu is Jaconiah's son and younger brother to Prof. S Bhengu. He provided te information on the family tree.

Vilakazi, W (2004.01.09 and 2006.01.11)

She gave the written submission on the information about their parents.

Wetmore, H (2003.10.28)

Wetmore was on the Union Bible Institution teaching when Bhengu often sent his workers to be trained at the institution.

GLOSSARY

Assemblies of God Association

Predominantly Coloured and Indian Assemblies of God work

Assemblies of God Group

Predominantly White Assemblies of God work

Assemblies of God Movement

Predominantly African Assemblies of God work

District Council Committee

Means a committee of elected pastors responsible for overseeing the affairs of Assemblies in the Assemblies of God Movement (Back to God) in a particular district.

Education Board

Education Board members are elected by each Provincial Youth Convention and are responsible for allocating education bursaries to college and university students in the provinces or regions.

Fathers

Means married men with or without children.

General District Council

Means a district conference, which is attended by accredited ministers, probational ministers, organisers, elders and delegates from local Assemblies of God Movement (Back to God).

General Executive

Members of the General Executive are responsible for the whole of Assemblies of God. It consists of pastors elected at a biannual General Conference, as stipulated in the Constitution of the Assemblies of God section (a) of the Rules of Procedure.

Girls

Means all unmarried women (excluding widows and divorcees) whether young or old, with or without children.

Mothers Movement (Ministry)

Means ladies Movement of married women, with or without children.

Organisers

Means all those appointed to work among: mothers, fathers, youth, girls and Sunday School to help promote the work within their designated groups, motivating them both spiritually and in fundraising.

Supervisors

Women appointed to supervise both mothers' ministry and in some instances girls' work as well.

Teaching Team

A group of hand picked pastors trained and appointed by NBH Bhengu to teach in the Assemblies of the movement (Back to God Crusade) and appoint elders, deacons and ordain pastors at conferences.

Youth

Means all the youth in the movement including young men and young women.

APPENDIX 1

The Constitution of the Assemblies of God

Section 7-Definitions. (a-f)

This section defines group or association and their powers. We refer specifically to subsections (a) (e) and (f).**Sovereignty**

For the purpose of this Constitution the term "sovereignty" as applied to local Assemblies shall mean the right of any congregation to conduct its domestic affairs without outside interference; except where such an Assembly belongs to a "group" or association" and is governed by the rules of that "group" or "association". (see 7 (e) Page 3), but it shall not mean anything which shall give the local Assembly the right or act in a unilateral way which could affect the Assemblies of God, or such Assembly's qualifications for recognised status.

Group or Association

For the purpose of this Constitution the terms "group" and "association" shall mean that to fulfil the objects and principles to which the members of the Assemblies of God are dedicated. (see Constitution – Article 4) Recognised Assemblies, Associate Assemblies, and Accredited y Ministers can co-operate in a permanently organised way within the Assemblies of God for mutual benefit, ministry, fellowship, and administration. Such

"associations" or "groups" have the right to formulate their own rules, and have the right to make such provisions for the purchase, holding, transfer, or sale or property as the "association" or "group" deems appropriate (see Clause 39 © - page 16).

Domestic Affairs

"Domestic affairs", for Assemblies belonging to a "group" or "association", are defined by that "group" or "association" and shall apply to the Assemblies belonging to that "group" or "association", (see 7 (e) – page 3).

PART IV

Assemblies: Recognition, Sovereignty, Organisation, Discipline and Relationships

In this section we refer to section 38 (a) Organisation of Assemblies, which stipulates as follows: ***Organisation of Assemblies*** The spiritual and temporal leadership of a recognised Assembly is exercised by a local oversight acceptable to the said recognised Assembly. This can be augmented, if the Assembly so desires, by the inclusion of some person or persons of mature spiritual standing, accepted by the Assembly, provided that such person or persons are approved as overseers by the Executive. Such an arrangement concerning augmented oversight, cannot be broken except by a majority vote of the Assembly concerned, taken by the said recognised Assembly in the presence of some person appointed by the Executive or with the consent of the overseer.

APPENDIX 2

MODEL CONSTITUTION FOR RECOGNISED ASSEMBLIES

Assemblies of God Constitution and Bye – Laws African.
Interim Conference (A document formulated by Bhengu to unite all African works)

The following Constitution for a recognized Assembly must be adopted by recognized Assemblies, or it may be modified by the African Conference to meet the domestic needs of any recognized Assembly, subject to it being in agreement with the Constitution and Bye Laws of the Assemblies of God.

1. **NAME**: …… Assembly of God.

2. OBJECT AND PRINCIPLES

a. To promulgate the Gospel of Jesus Christ by all Scriptural means, recognizing the Word of God, the Bible, as its all sufficient rule and guide, and recognizing the Statement of Faith of the Assemblies of God including under the heading "Things commonly Believed Among Us" as based on a correct interpretation of the Word of God.

b. To be part of the Assemblies of God, recognizing the Sovereignty of recognized Assemblies and recognized that the General Conference of the Assemblies of God (which consist of all Accredited and Probationary Ministers and recognized Delegates) or between session, the General Executive elected, convenes to promote fellowship and to assist recognized Assemblies, but not to exercise control over them.

(See section 8 below for definitions)

3. **LEGAL STATUS**

a. The …… Assembly of God is a legal person and can as such in its own name hold property, acquire rights, assume duties and generally act in law.

b. The …… Assembly of God does not have as its object the acquisition of gain for any of its members, and no member has any right, by reason of his membership, to the property of the ……Assembly of God.

4. **MEMBERSHIP**

a. Any person can become a recognised member of the ……Assemblies of God provided that they are admitted as a member by the Assembly acting through the oversight mentioned in 5(b) below.

b. Membership can be terminated when a person through words o conduct, in the opinion of the Assembly acting through the oversight mentioned in 5(b) dissociates himself/herself from the …… Assemblies of God.

5. **POWERS AND PREROGATIVES**

a. General

The ……Assembly of God may exercise any of the powers (consistent with its objectives and principles) of which true corporate body, whose purpose is not the acquisition of gain is capable.

b. **Functioning**

The …… Assembly of God in general shall function through overseers called Elders in conjunction with its scriptural Ministry as indicated in Ephesians 4:11.

c. **Signatures**

The …… Assembly of God in General meeting may provide by resolution for any signature to be used on behalf of the said Assembly without which the said Assembly cannot be legally bound.

d. **Funds**

The …… Assembly of God may collect, solicit, and accept such funds or subscription from members and other believers as may be required for the purposes of the …… Assembly of God.

e. **Remuneration**

The ……Assembly of God may remunerate its officials and any other person who render or have rendered services to it.

f. **Delegation of Powers**

The …… Assembly of God in General Meeting may delegate any of its powers to committees.

6. **WINDING UP**

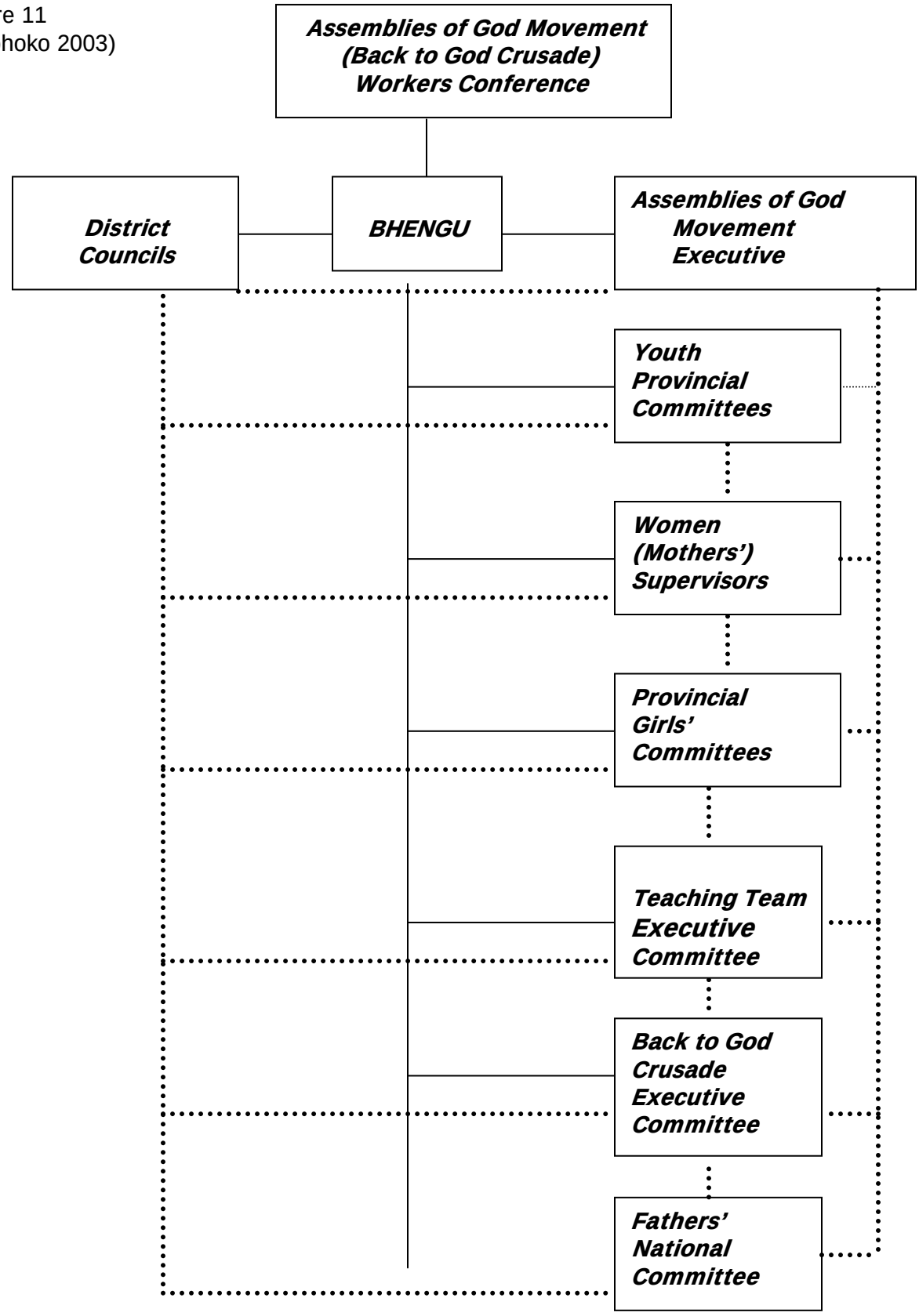
Winding up If upon or dissolution of the ……Assembly of God there remains, after satisfaction of all its debts and liabilities, any property whatsoever, the same shall not be paid or distributed among the members of the Assembly, but shall be given or transferred to some assembly of like faith or some association whose object is to spread the Truth of God's Word to be determined by the members of the Assembly at or before the time of dissolution, and in default thereof, by the African Executive of the Assemblies of God.

7. **AMENDMENTS**

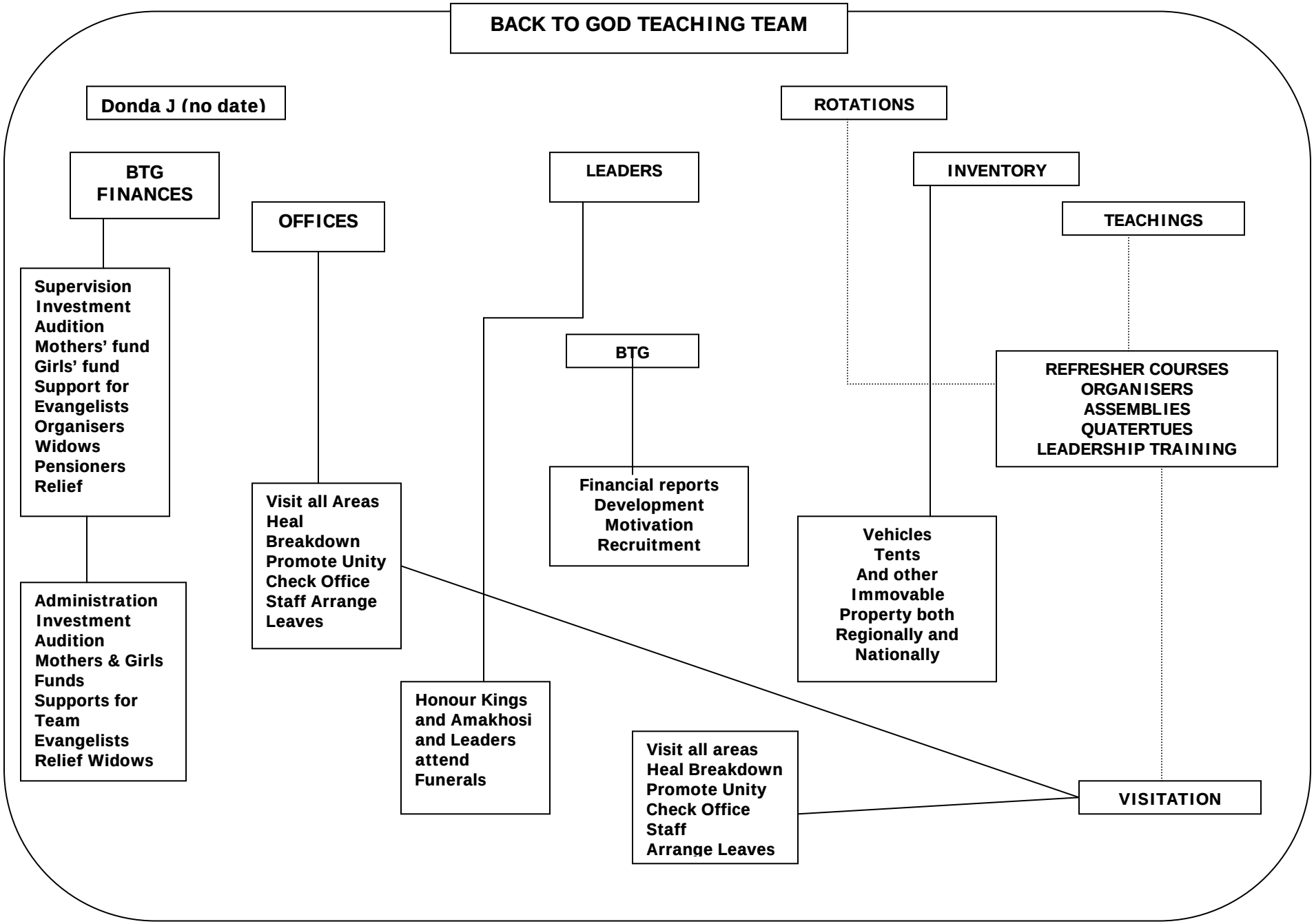
The …… Assembly of God may amend its constitution by a two – thirds majority vote in general meeting, provided the proposed amendments have been submitted to the members of the said Assembly at least three months before the General Meeting which is to consider such proposed amendments, takes place. All such amendments must be ratified by the African Interim Conference.

Appendix 3

figure 11
(Lephoko 2003)



Appendix 4


BACK TO GOD TEACHING TEAM
Donda J (no date)
ROTATIONS
BTG FINANCES
LEADERS
INVENTORY
OFFICES
TEACHINGS
Supervision
Investment
Audition
Mothers' fund
Girls' fund
Support for
Evangelists
Organisers
Widows
Pensioners
Relief
BTG
REFRESHER COURSES
ORGANISERS
ASSEMBLIES
QUATERTUES
LEADERSHIP TRAINING
Financial reports
Development
Motivation
Recruitment
Visit all Areas
Heal
Breakdown
Promote Unity
Check Office
Staff Arrange
Leaves
Vehicles
Tents
And other
Immovable
Property both
Regionally and
Nationally
Administration
Investment
Audition
Mothers & Girls
Funds
Supports for
Team
Evangelists
Relief Widows
Honour Kings
and Amakhosi
and Leaders
attend
Funerals
Visit all areas
Heal Breakdown
Promote Unity
Check Office
Staff
Arrange Leaves
VISITATION