

UPF Sekhukhuneland outreach – 7-18 May 2025

Background

In 2024, we met the 89-year-old Gawie Jordaan and his wife Mariën. The couple has served as missionaries at Lepelle Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa for the past 46 years. Lepelle is one of 10 churches, all which has grown from a small mission station at Mathapisa, established in 1925.

The establishment of this mission station in Limpopo was supported by Ds Alewyn Burger and his wife Janie from Middelburg. Chris Burger is their great-grandson. We followed Chris's roots into Limpopo, overnighting at the parsonage at Matlala mission station (one of the 23 wards of the Lepelle congregation). Gawie shared his nagging worry about the church: He, his fellow pastors and their congregation are all getting old. Where is the young blood that will take over the work?

In 2021, God gave missionary Eben Oberholzer the following word for the church in Sekhukhune: "Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died. And he gave these wells the same names his father had given them. Then Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found a well of fresh water there" (Gen 26:18-19 BSB). The original Hebrew uses a term that means "living water". We knew we had to pray for this vision. Lepelle church urgently needs revival. How could we open the old wells?

God in his wisdom had already provided the means: We learned that the church was planning a big centenary celebration in 2025 and we were invited! What better way to open the old wells than to celebrate 100 years of God's protection and goodness!

The outreach of 17-18 May 2025

On 17 May, 10 Gautengers left Tshwane for Limpopo, all eager and excited to spend 24 hours in that province.

The peacefulness of Sekhukhuneland struck me yet again. The Pedis live in a beautiful land.

Saturday evening, we had a wonderful time of prayer and communion at the parsonage. After supper Gawie (90) and Mariën (in her 80s) shared their testimonies. We youngsters were all encouraged by their stories of serving God faithfully for a lifetime.



10 Gautengers on their way to Limpopo



Supper at the parsonage

Sunday morning started with an impromptu prayer meeting held by Andile and Eddie, while we watched the sun rising over the sleeping land. Oh, that each day could start like this!

When we arrived at Mathapisa at 08:30, their tiny church was spotlessly clean and freshly painted. The congregation had clearly spent a lot of time preparing for the centenary. To our surprise we saw a freshly slaughtered cow - we were going to feast!



Mathapisa Church--ready for the celebration



The church was jam-packed with people

Sagree asked where the children were. She had prepared gift bags for 50 children, but there were only five children at the church.

The congregation came in drips and drabs, everyone dressed in spotless black clothes and snowy white shirts or blouses. In spite of the dusty streets, their shoes were shining and their faces were happy.

Dr Ntšhabeleng chased everyone out into the street. Carli, Gawie's granddaughter, received a burning torch and led the congregation into the churchyard and into the church, symbolising the new generation leading the church into the next 100 years.



From left to right: Reverent Moroaswi, Dr Ntšhabeleng, Chris Burger and Dr Gawie Jordaan.

Chris, as a great-grandson of the Burgers, unveiled the commemorative plaque. He told the congregation about the first German missionaries that came to Sekhukhuneland and then had to flee to Middelburg. There they met Janie Burger. She learned from them about this world here, and she prayed for more than 30 years for the Pedi people, before she could send the first pastor to Mathapisa.

In the meantime, lay preacher Philippus Mantsene taught his people the gospel and walked 200 km to Middelburg, to ask the Burgers for assistance. Janie Burger and her associates in the Transvaal Women's Mission Society gladly provided him with a monthly stipend and a donkey. Later, two

Pedi men, Mr Ntšhabeleng and Mr Moroaswi, walked the 200 km to Middelburg to purchase a bronze bell for their church. Later the day we learned to our delight that the current pastors are the nephew and the great-grandson of these original bell carriers respectively.

In 1925, 100 years ago, Rev. Abraham Rousseau moved here and built a church, school and clinic. Recurring malaria forced him to abandon the mission station, yet God's goodness stayed. That small church has grown into this congregation, and into another nine churches. Truly, God is good.

Singing and dancing, we entered the church. The building seemed to stretch, for more people fitted into the church than I thought would be possible.

Gawie related a short history of the Lepelle church and Mathapisa ward, handed out gifts to Dr Ntšhabeleng and Rev. Moroaswi, and handed out pamphlets with a synopsis of their history. Afterwards, there was an altercation between two men over a single pamphlet. Fortunately we found a spare pamphlet and saved the day.

The UPF team was introduced as “the church of Silverton”. I explained that we are actually a prayer group that God sends out to places to pray, so that He can pour out specific blessings in that place. God sent a word to the church. Eddie read Genesis 26:18-19, and we explained that celebrating 100 years of God’s goodness is opening the old wells. When we remember what God did for us, He will give us living water - new life and a revival. We handed out plaques to Gawie and the two local pastors, commemorating their many years of faithful service in the community. Then we all prayed together, thanking God for what He has done and asking Him what each of us must do in the future.

Eddie shared Joel 3:9-10 “Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, ‘I am strong!’” I confirmed that it is a true word, for I received the same text when reading the bible early that morning. God is warning the church that their fight against the darkness will intensify.

More joyous singing followed. The tiny church shook with the sound. Indeed, God was praised.

Dr Ntšhabeleng preached from Matthew 28:19 - we have to go out and share the gospel. He said that they lived in darkness, but people had come and brought them into the light. In the same way we must spread God’s light in other people’s lives - a simple, profound sermon.

In the meantime, Sagree, Andile and Busi conducted a children’s session. The kids loved the attention and eagerly participated. When Andile gave the altar call, they all prayed to be saved! There were exactly 50 children, so each one could receive a gift bag.

After cutting the cake, we went out for lunch. On one table and with four pots on an open fire, with no running water, those capable women had prepared an excellent lunch for 200 people! I was amazed by their ability to do so much with such simple facilities.



The truly minimalistic church kitchen



The excellent church ladies fed 200 people

We left Mathapisa with hearts overflowing with thankfulness and joy. Indeed; God is good.

Afterwards I learned that reverent Moroawsi was deeply touched by his plaque - to him it meant a lot to be seen by the church in the city.