

Free Grace Evangelistic Association

(Mark 16. 15, 2 Timothy 2. 2, James 1. 27)

Registered Charity No. 1139084

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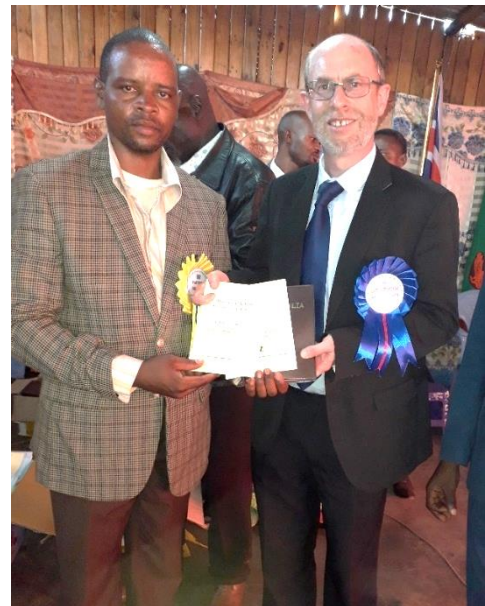
15 May 2019

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Report on the Visit by the FGEA Chairman to Dem Rep Congo and Zambia – April/May 2019

Dear Friends,

I am thankful for the Lord's gracious help and preservation throughout this mission. The very fact that I was able to gain the permissions and visas, and was able to travel at the scheduled date, was a singular answer to prayer. The purpose of the visit was multifaceted, although in all respects the glory of God and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ was prayerfully sought. This included encouragement of the African brethren and strengthening of the work of FGEA locally through teaching on the Word of God, as well as holding formal discussions on Bible translation projects being done in partnership with the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS). There were many opportunities to renew contact and strengthen friendships with the African brethren.



Bible and literature distribution in Dem Rep Congo



I flew out from the UK on 29 April, arriving the following day in Lubumbashi, which is located in the south of the Dem Rep Congo. The Association's recently delivered registration certificate in Lubumbashi was, in God's providence, a great help with the Congolese immigration and security officials. I was given safe and quick passage through the airport with about 30kg of Bibles and literature (mostly in French) for the Congolese brethren. I was met by the FGEA representative, Pasteur Jean Monga (standing on the right), and other brethren from Lubumbashi, after which we travelled to Kakanda in Lualaba province for a conference organised by the local FGEA contact, Pasteur Peter Pongo (standing on the left). The subject for the conference was the vital importance of biblical doctrine.

I was greatly encouraged by the faithfulness and commitment to teaching the Word of God by the small group of FGEA (known by the French acronym "ALEG" in Congo) brethren in Kakanda and Lubumbashi. I was struck that when I arrived for the first time at Kakanda, the conference had already begun with teaching on the Word by Pasteur Pongo, and all in the assembly were giving great attention. My arrival went almost unnoticed, despite the rarity of a European minister visiting this part of Congo. The people were attentive to the Word of God and the ministry. It was most encouraging to see the thirst for the truth and the desire for the "sincere milk of the word." (1 Peter 2 v 2) At the end of the conference, we distributed Swahili Bibles, French Bibles and French literature. This included the first distribution of the French edition of the book "Bible Doctrines Simply Explained" by Mr Ramsbottom. The French translation had been completed by an FGEA member in the UK, and then 1000 copies of the French edition were printed in Lubumbashi.

A big challenge that we face is the great need of Swahili and French Bibles that are sound versions. These are costly, and so only a total of 110 could be purchased in advance of the visit. At the end of the conference, many people still remained without a Bible. This is only the tip of the iceberg, as the Congolese brethren spoke of the great openings there are in other Congolese towns where they have contacts (e.g. Likasi, Kolwezi and Mbuji-Mayi). They also requested for the reprinting of other French literature as there was a great thirst for biblical teaching, instruction and encouragement in the churches. Our cry is that the Lord would appear!

On 3 May, I travelled to Zambia, crossing the border at Kasumbalesa. I was met there by the FGEA Regional Director and Zambian Co-ordinator, Pastor Duwen Musaka. From the border we went the short distance to Chililabombwe for a one-day conference speaking on Bible doctrine. Many African churches are sadly lacking in the solid foundation of the Word, although claiming the power of the Spirit. However, the Bible teaches, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5 v 7) Thus, where there is the true power of the Spirit, there will be the power and influence of the Word. After the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, we read of the new believers that "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine..." (Acts 2 v 42) Without the Word, there can be no true life or light. We emphasised the importance of faithful versions of the scriptures as the foundation of true doctrine. The same truths were declared at other conferences at Kabwe and in a rural area near Lusaka. It was from Lusaka that I flew back to the UK on 7 May.

We received a number of very encouraging testimonies from those present at the meetings in Zambia. A young pastor spoke about how vital true spiritual growth is, and how so much of this is lacking in many churches, although they may claim various "mighty works."



A leading senior minister conveyed the following message to us the day after one of the conferences: "*Kindly bring me the form [i.e. the FGEA Zambia membership form]. I would like to now be part of the organisation, and thanks for inviting me to attend the meeting. I was really blessed. My eyes were really opened wide.*"

Regrettably, it was not possible to do the planned Bible distribution in Zambia. The Trinitarian Bible Society had very generously granted FGEA Zambia a very large grant of KJV Bibles and booklets, totalling over 350 boxes. This was shipped in a container. Although the container had arrived at the Zambian border on 29 April and all clearance papers were in order for the TBS grant, the container also contained other customers' freight (that did not promptly clear customs) and this was severely delaying release of the entire container. Whilst we had some literature and local language Bibles available in stock, the FGEA Zambia brethren decided that no distribution would be done at the conferences, but that full distribution would be made to all registered participants when the TBS Bible shipment arrived. Although this was a disappointment, a rather surprising and truly wonderful thing happened. The people attending the conferences gave greater heed to the teaching and preaching, rather than just waiting for distribution at the end. There were no complaints made by any genuine participants, but all united in prayer for the speedy release of the container and the Lord's blessing on the Word. *[Postscript: A couple of days later the container was released. The shipment of Bibles was delivered to Kabwe on 10 May. The first distribution of Bibles and other literature was made on 13 May to those who attended the Kabwe conference. For this we are very thankful to the Lord.]*

Coinciding with my visit, the FGEA Malawi Co-ordinator, Pastor Elwyn Maliwa, also travelled to be with us in Zambia and to speak at the conferences. This gave opportunity to discuss the work of FGEA in both Malawi and Zambia. We also held a meeting with TBS (via telephone link to the UK) to discuss the Bemba and Chichewa scripture translation projects. This enabled the translators of both projects to meet and then discuss the way forward with TBS. We were all encouraged and believed the meeting was a valuable help to the two projects. We united in prayer for the Lord's help and wisdom to be given in this most vital work.

I would close in thankfulness to God for His many mercies. I would record my gratitude to TBS for their assistance with Bibles and literature on the scriptures, and I would also thank our donors who kindly helped to support the costs of this mission.

With warm Christian regards,

Ian Sadler



Chichewa and Bemba Bible translators