My South African Experience

at

The University of The Western Cape

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by John A. Henschke

Paulette: Highlights of my meeting with Glen and Theo at UWC 4/14/05

1. What has transpired since you were there in 2003:

   A big transformation is beginning to take place within those with whom you worked. Previous to that time, each one of the Ministers [with the youth, church in general, etc.] had perceived their work as being ministering to their parishioners or youth within the confines of their own local church building. The main ministry they saw themselves and their church conducting was to make certain that individuals were: 1. converted to and grounded in their faith; 2. prepared and ready for the “world to come” “life after death” [eternity]; 3. participating actively in the life of the church; 4. attending regularly the meetings / worship / Sunday school / Bible Study / prayer services / board meetings / visitation evangelism to get new people into the church / participated in the social fellowships and dinners. Mainly the ministry was to nurture the membership within the church building walls on religious / Christian subject matter content.

   They did not see themselves as cooperating with other churches within their community. They also did not see their ministry as going out into the community [as an individual church or in cooperation with other denominations] and becoming involved with other groups in the community to address such problems as: violence, crime, drugs, teen pregnancy, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, gangs, security, helping to prepare people to live in the present world, and make an impact for the better in their community.

   After you were there in 2003, and as a result of what you discussed with them, they began to perceive that they needed to change their thinking about their ministry toward going beyond the walls of their church building, beyond their being concerned with only their denomination, becoming concerned with preparing people to live in this present world, and making an impact for the better in their community.

   Theo, being in youth ministry, and now connected in multichurch [not just individual church as he was before] now sees himself as beginning to make a shift in his thinking about his ministry, toward working in the community with other denominations, with other churches, with other civic organizations, NGOs, governmental, voluntary groups. He sees himself as needing to coordinate the cooperative efforts of churches in adjacent multicommunities, to address problems that go far beyond the boundaries of a community or communities, but the broad
scope to a larger metropolitan region including urban and rural settings. Beside the ministry concerns he has previously been involved with in his local church, following is a partial list of the things that he is becoming interested in addressing:

Involving an ever expanding circle of professionals and voluntary citizens in cooperating on addressing such problems as aimlessness, violence, crime, drugs, teen pregnancy, unemployment, poverty, homelessness, gangs, security, life purpose, helping to prepare people to live in the present world, raising the standard of living in the communities, and helping others make an impact for the better in their communities. He realized that this is not a task for him to undertake alone, but he must expand his contacts and involve many other people and organizations.

Theo’s perception also is that it is not the church that always needs to take initiative and responsibility for addressing the problems in the communities. The other organizations [with their unique expertise] very much need to take the initiative at times, and that the church needs to be supportive along with many other groups in the community.

2. What transpired at the meeting, 4/14/05, at UWC?

   I mainly asked questions of them, that resulted in providing the above data in our discussion. If you listen to the tape recording of that time, you will be able to tell the kinds of questions I asked. I also provided to them your five published articles which you sent with me. They indicated that they would read them over, and begin to distribute them among ministers and others in the communities, so that they could discuss them in depth. Thus, they anticipated that they would definitely derive benefit from them in the communities which would help them shape their work in the future. They also felt a need to have an opportunity to take a next step with you in moving this effort forward. They seemed somewhat unclear as to how they could move forward by themselves. Thus, they expressed a desire to have you come and work with them as they contemplated the future of the project. Theo also expressed at the end of our discussion, that the next time you are able to go again to work with them, that you bring John Henschke with you. When he expressed that, I asked him to put it on the tape so that you would know that this was his idea, which he expressed spontaneously. The only reason I could figure out why he asked that I come along, is because of the questions I asked in our discussion. My questions elicited from them things that they had not thought of, in articulating what they had been doing, thinking about the meaning of what they had been about, but also shaping their thoughts and aims for their future ministry from here on, and beginning to make some concrete plans about steps they could take between 4/14/05/ and the next time you could come to UWC and work with them.

   Paulette, I have the tapes here at the office, if you wish to listen to them this week. It is a bit hard to hear some of what is said, since we were in a room that echoed, and their voices were not as strong as mine. If you wish to discuss any of this with me, or you need further information, please let me know. I hope this helps you get what is needed for the July 15, 2005 deadline.

John