

Project name: Alternative History Project
Date of interview: 2007-06-12
Location of interview: Maandagshoek, Limpopo
Language of interview: Sotho
Name of Interviewer/s: Dale McKinley & Ahmed Veriava
Name of Interviewee/s: Johannes Madikgakge
Name of translator: Emmanuel Mokgoga
Name of transcriber: Moses Moremi
Audio file name: AHP_MAA_MadikgakgeJohannes_20070612a

INTERVIEW WITH JOHANNES MADIKGAKGE.

Dale: Can you please tell us what is your name and your position as a pastor in this community?

Johannes: My name is Johannes Madikgakge. Here at Maandagshoek I'm the bishop of the church of Apostolic church of Christ. Furthermore, you will stop me if you want me to stop for a little. Furthermore I can say on the religious work of us, when we welcome you we then, we are just in struggle, we don't see any change we don't see any changes we are suffering. We are asking our government to assist us so that we can be in churches, you see here, it is like goats sleep there So we were asking government to help us when we talk about government they say it is politics, they are unable to help us with anything they can't help us with church building. If you can look, I suffered, I built this church as it is and it then fell as a whole. I then started again from scratch until it became the way it is now. I'm stuck again I don't have anything to continue with it, I have to struggle again to be able to buy things like woods and roofing to finish the building.

Dale: When did you first become the bishop in the apostolic church?

Johannes: It happened that we were attending with another bishop of ours and he left us and we remained alone and there came another bishop who just pushed us out of the church and he remained with some people who remained. The congregation that I had, said that we don't need another bishop anymore, they then elected me to be their bishop.

Dale: Were you born here in Maandagshoek or did you just come here later?

Johannes: No, I was born in Driekop and then I came here in 1949, that's when I came here at Maandagshoek, I stayed here and grew up and then left to Gauteng and I was going to church and this congregation that I'm with, I opened it in Gauteng until they elected me - but they elected me here at home.

Dale: What made you become a pastor or a member of the church ... and a little bit on how you became a pastor?

Johannes: For this pastoring to exist, I just sit as a person and I just realised that to sit and do nothing is not good, that is when I joined the church. I was with them for many years until they liked me to be a pastor at the church, and from being a pastor that is when they chose me to be their bishop

Dale: You said you became a bishop in Gauteng when you went to work, what kind of work did you do in Gauteng?

Johannes: I started working in Gauteng from 1959, I was in Rustenburg, I left Rustenburg but I was not yet a Christian. In 1960 I was in Benoni and then I looked into life and then I went back to church in 1960.

Dale: What kind of work were you doing then?

Johannes: Basically in the beginning at my work, this current things that they say is team leader they were not existing, there was “vasboy and head vasboy”, I was a section vasboy from Benoni until I reached Witbank

Dale: Can you tell us how it was like ... I mean from being a worker to being a pastor, there must have been something that you saw. What was it like back in the 60s?

Johannes: No, I've seen nothing but for me to be at church that's when my life started to change, to be in another way.

Dale: Can you please tell us what is it that you remember most about becoming a member of the church, was it because of things you experienced or saw around you or didn't like? Some people become religious for particular reasons, so what was the purpose?

Johannes: For why I became a Christian, I will tell the secrets that I was. I was playing boxing, the one that you will find us tying our muscles with belts, and then every Sunday we play we will hit each other and break each other's tooth and other parts. I then looked at it and realised that it was not something that will take someone to life.

Dale: Were you back here in Mandagshoek in the 70s when things began, the struggle after 1976 when things in the country began to be hard politically, you know people were struggling with apartheid state, there were many demonstrations. How were you involved or were you not involved or what was your role as a pastor?

Johannes: No, the role I played only at that time, I was just going and burying the dead people they killed that's all.

Dale: And how did that feel when you were burying young people who had died in the struggle, how did it feel to do that?

Johannes: My spirit was not right with even myself, my heart was painful so much, to look at young children dying, but I didn't know what to do, I just had to bury them.

Dale: So when things, from the late 1980s into the 1990s, when things started to change; the unbanning of the liberation movement and the release of Mandela and things, how did you as the pastor in this community, did you begin to see changes in the way people responded to each other or how was the community responding at that time?

Johannes: My dream was looking and saying maybe we may, things might go well and we may be able to gain or maybe the new government will be useful to us and looking at all the killings and wishing that god help to stop them so that we can live nicely.

Dale: Is there an example that he can give to us that happened in the community at that time in the early 90s that will give us his role at that time as the pastor?

Johannes: Ja! At the time of struggle we tried to go and preach to people so that they can stop fighting like cows and go back to reality and stop fighting, as we are not cows.

Dale: How was that message received in the community?

Johannes: JA! I can't know very well how they took it but at that time I could see many people following me and thought they heard me.

Dale: And when did you first establish the church here in this community, was it at that time or was it later?

Johannes: Here at home there was a church even before.

Dale: How would you describe your congregation, the members that you have, how would you describe them in terms of the kind of people that have come in this church? In other words you might have a church that has a lot of young people or a lot of women. If you were to say my congregation is made up of so and so people that make the congregation?

Johannes: I encourage them by reading them a bible and showing them in language, to say, you see this is life and this is not life and life is here.

Dale: I was not asking what he does with them, I was asking him to describe his congregation, in saying what kind of people come to his church.

Johannes: I have old and young people, I have old people and young people from here to Springs, from Springs to Transkei I have people and in Mapulaneng and almost whole community of ours and even at Boksburg.

Dale: When April 1994 happened, the elections happened and when things started to change and we had the ANC and Mandela was elected as president. As the pastor and your congregation in Maandagshoek how did you feel, what was the spirit at that time?

Johannes: Basically, I saw a very huge happiness at the time the old man was released. I was sleeping during the votes and when I heard the happiness noise I wanted to run thinking people were fighting.

Dale: Was there a special service that you had at your church to celebrate for the elections?

Johannes: JA! Ourselves at the church we did not have a celebration to tell the truth but we were very happy.

Dale: And as the pastor in his congregation he is very much aware of the things going on in the lives of people in this community, knowing them quite well. How, at that point when the changes took place and we had a new government and democracy, would you describe what it is that you as a pastor wanted to happen you're your congregation)?

Johannes: Ja! You see at that time we were looking for ourselves to live all of us, because our children when they went to that side, they did not have accommodation, they would drive them away, they would be arrested and kept in jail. We were happy

with that (i.e. 1994) hoping that maybe it will be better and we will live with our kids, they used to arrest even women and keep them in jail.

Ahmed: And what did you want for you and your church? What did you hope would come for you and your church with freedom?

Johannes: The new government, as we have voted and voted for them, we hope the government would help us in our churches so that they can help us even if not to build us a church but just to help us with other things that we needed.

END OF AHP_MAA_MadigakgeJohannes_20070612a

