

New Hope for Africa

The Founding President of ICTE, Bob Frisken, reflects on a recent trip to Africa

My recent trip to Africa to speak at a conference jointly organised by the **Association of Christian Educators in Zimbabwe (ACEZ)** and the **Foundation for Cross-cultural Education (FCE)** held in Gweru Zimbabwe, was a life-changing occasion for Maryanne and me. For me it confirmed the direction that God has been leading my future ministry. For Maryanne, it also brought a challenge to be involved in this ministry and to resign her position at the end of this year as primary coordinator, K to 2, at Toongabbie Christian School.

It is significant that the conference was held in a town close to where so much of the land seizure is occurring in Zimbabwe. We came to the two-week conference to be consultants in curriculum development and for me to give a series of lectures on servant leadership to the Teachers' Conference. But God spoke strongly to us through the conference. There were a number of defining moments where we were deeply challenged.

The first was when the busload of (mostly white) students from the FCE College in Wolseley, South Africa arrived and were met by the mostly black students from the FCE College in Masaiti in Zambia. I thought as I watched them hug and greet each other that here is hope for Africa demonstrated in the love and unity of these young Christian teacher trainees.

The second challenge came in the first week of the curriculum conference. When I noticed that the first year students were not to be involved in the conference I asked the director of FCE, Neels de Jager whether he would like me to conduct a series of lectures for them. His reply was that what they needed most was to learn to pray and so for the first week they spent up to ten hours a day in a school of prayer. I wonder how many of Australian Christian teacher trainees would be prepared to do this. We were all blessed by their prayer and God's power was evident.

The third challenge came when Neels de Jager spoke to me on the second week at the opening of the ACEZ conference. Neels spoke of a prophecy that he had been given in a conference in Cape Town where it was prophesied that through education God would make a road through Africa. He pointed out how urgently people in Africa needed Christian education and he reminded the delegates that they do not depend on overseas help but on the Lord. He spoke of the many Christians that God was raising up in Africa to do this work and gave testimonies of these young people who were training in the FCE colleges where staff and students raise their own support and the students, often desperately poor, regularly see wonderful answers to their prayers. Through Christian schools and colleges like this God is offering new hope to Africa. Everyone was very conscious of the gathering clouds of trouble in Zimbabwe and in a wonderful mark of solidarity and support the conference members gathered around each person from Zimbabwe to pray for him or her.

This trip confirmed that my future ministry lies in promoting Christian education in Australia and the world. I am convinced that ICTE has a vital role to play in this in partnership with other colleges and schools across the region. The shape of this ministry is becoming clearer to me and I was deeply moved when the Lord challenged Maryanne to join me in it. The task of developing Christian education in Australia and the rest of the world has only just begun. God has given Christian schools in Australia insights and approaches that we must share with others. Compared to others in the world we are a rich country and we should use our resources to assist others. We will value your prayer support as we become involved in spreading this new hope which the Lord has given us for this troubled world in which we live. What is this new hope? It is that **He is making way to change the world through Christian education!**