

A report on the Agathos/Acts 29 boot camps held in January, 2007

By Rob Smith

January was a busy month for Agathos as we held conferences in Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia. I want to share with you the highlights of each conference and the very encouraging results that we are seeing.

The conference in Tanzania was our first activity in that country. We met with about 35 pastors for three days. The conference was hosted by Goshen Bible Church in Dares Salaam and by Covenant Baptist Church from San Diego. Gene Cooke, pastor of Covenant Baptist Church, started Goshen Bible Church and along with Kaleo Church will start an orphan village on five acres that has been purchased for that purpose. This is our first [One Church One Village](#) partnership in Tanzania.

Many excellent contacts were made with local pastors in and around Dares Salaam. Their response to the call to show the love of Christ to the orphans in their community was encouraging. We also developed relationships with leaders from Kenya and are assessing the opportunities to begin One Church One Village relationships in Kenya.

After the conference and an enjoyable day of rest Pastor Cooke and I flew to South Africa. There we picked up four pastors from the [Acts 29 network](#) for a conference in Welkom, South Africa. Pastors Mike Gunn, Jesse Winkler, Dave Fandey, and James Martin joined me and Pastor Cooke for a good time with local South African pastors and future leaders. We enjoyed three days of teaching about the gospel and church planting – and spent time teaching pastors how to apply the gospel in the context of the epic AIDS and orphan crisis that the pastors find themselves in.



The group of pastors that attended the Boot camp in South Africa

Pastors as far away as Uganda joined us at this conference.

After a brief couple of days catching our breath – including a stop at the Cottages at Injasuthi – our pilot orphans village in Loskop, Kwazulu Natal, we flew to Lusaka and drove to the site of our Zambian Conference in Kitwe.

This conference was attended by about 120 pastors – most of them local pastors. We also had pastors from the Congo and Tanzania in attendance. All the Acts29 pastors spoke to these men about how to lead the gospel mission in the context of the crisis they face. On Friday Pastor George Palo (President of Agathos Foundation of Zambia) joined Gene Cooke and I as we challenged the pastors to engage themselves and their churches in the care of orphans in their community.

Zambia has more orphans per capita than any other country in the world. The Zambian government has estimated that 19% of Zambian children are orphaned. This is a staggering 1.1 million orphans – 10% of the entire population of Zambia. We encouraged the pastors to see the responsibility of the local church to reach out to these orphans and to show the love of Christ to these children. As we had done in August in Ndola, we led these pastors through the five acknowledgments of the [Ndola Mandate](#) and called them to a solemn act of repentance and commitment.

We were thrilled and humbled as we saw 120 pastors sign the Ndola Mandate as we ended the conference around the Lord's Supper. The next day all 120 pastors attended a meeting where we shared the vision of One Church One Village. We look forward to a continued relationship with many of these pastors as they reach out to the orphans in their community. It is our prayer that many Agathos villages come forth from the conference.

I ended my time in Zambia by spending it with George Palo reviewing the work we have begun in Zambia. The results of the conference we held in August in Ndola are still bearing much fruit. George – working with Robbie Manda – have a total of 1,500 children in the care of local Ndola churches. This is most encouraging and ten of these churches have qualified to join our One Church One Village initiative. This is most exciting. George reports that another five churches are close to qualifying and that many more are working with Agathos Zambia on their proposals.



A few of the churches that will join the One Church One Village were already housing orphans – this will bring the total number of orphans cared for by churches participating in the One Church One Village initiative in the Ndola area to 2,100. I expect this number to keep growing as the local churches continue to respond to the commitments made as they signed the Ndola Mandate.

We are praying for the same result in Kitwe – which is some 50 miles from Ndola. Imagine thousands of orphans being rescued by the local church in just two cities. God has blessed this approach of regionally drawing the local pastors and church planters to respond to the crisis. The results are so encouraging.

Pastor George has gone to other cities and towns in the area and presented the Ndola Mandate and challenged pastors to engage their church in the crisis. As a result we have a total of 450 pastors that have signed the mandate and committed.

Please pray for following:

- The next round of regional conferences (or boot camps) to be held in August in Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia.

- The national conference of over 1000 Zambian pastors to be held in Lusaka in December.

- Funds. We are very low on funds at the moment. This appears to be a seasonal trend. Pray that many will step up and share in paying for the care of our orphans.

I will close with a touching moment that I humbly enjoyed in Kitwe. I was asked to preach at the Oasis of Hope – a church in Kitwe that is a ministry that includes a clinic and 26 orphans. Just before I got up to preach, two beautiful little girls walked to front of the church. The first quoted James 1:27. The second asked me to stand and presented me with a gift and a card. She then said “Mr. Rob Smith. We love you. Thank you for Agathos and for caring us orphans. May God bless you.”

It was hard for my eyes not to well up as she gave me a card that I will cherish for as long as I live. I was the recipient of thanks and love from a precious little orphaned daughter that deserved to go to every Agathos supporter. Without all of you who give to Agathos, pray for Agathos and volunteer your time to Agathos – we would not be able to see children rescued and given hope for the future. Her heart of thanks belongs to you our faithful supporters.

For the sake of Christ and the little ones that He calls to come to His side,

Rob Smith, President and Founder
Agathos Foundation. International

p.s. See [MBendi](#) Information on Africa for a report on the Ndola EPC.