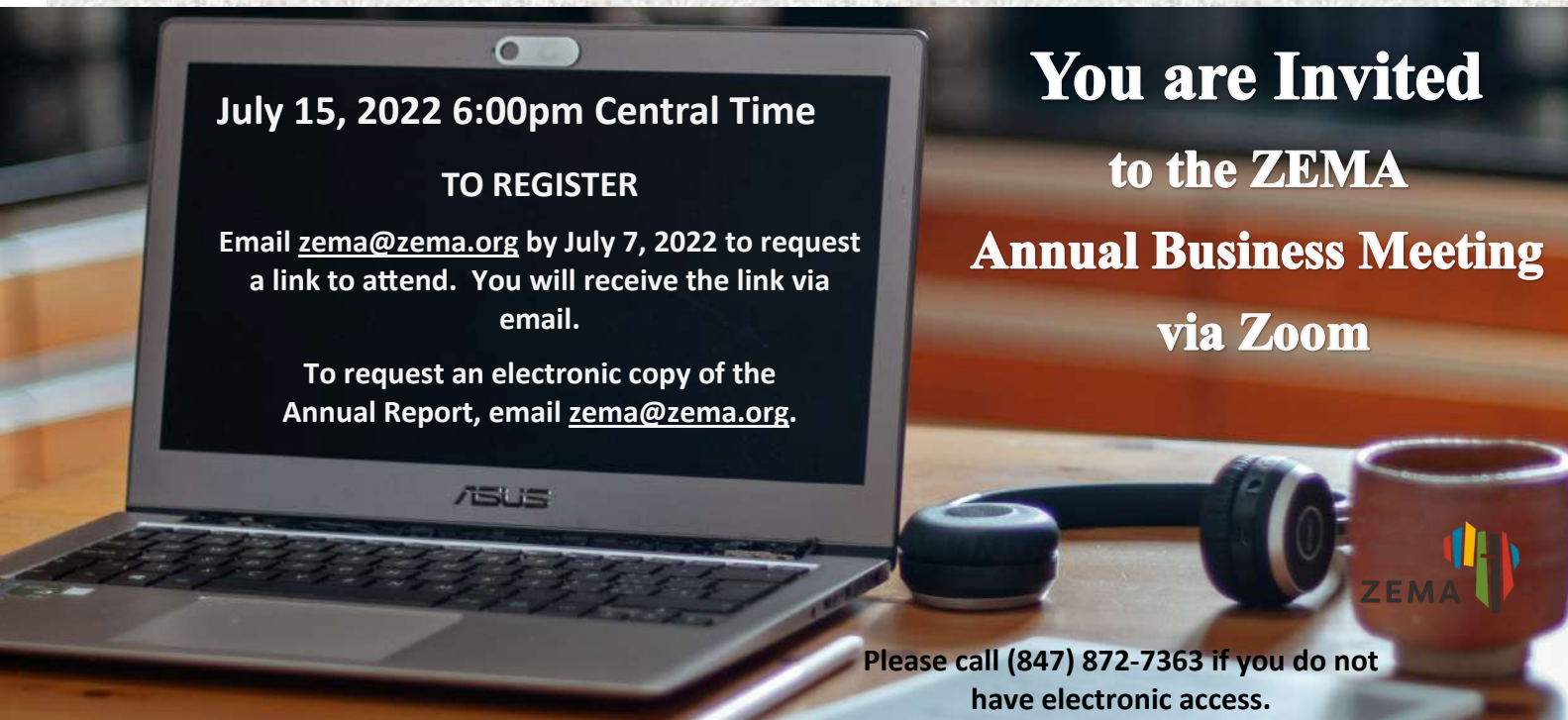


**The ZEMA Annual Business Meeting has been
RESCHEDULED!**



July 15, 2022 6:00pm Central Time
TO REGISTER
Email zema@zema.org by July 7, 2022 to request a link to attend. You will receive the link via email.
To request an electronic copy of the Annual Report, email zema@zema.org.

**You are Invited
to the ZEMA
Annual Business Meeting
via Zoom**

Please call (847) 872-7363 if you do not have electronic access.



PO Box 727
Zion IL 60099
www.zema.org
847-872-7363

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
ZION, IL 60099
PERMIT #148

June 2022 Newsletter



June 2022

Inside This Issue

Pages 2-3

Meet the Newest ZEMA
Missionaries!

Gregory & Sarah Akers

Page 4

Your Invitation to the
Annual Business Meeting

*Focus Newsletter
IS GOING ELECTRONIC!*

We will be sending all future newsletters via email!

If you wish to continue receiving a printed copy, please call the office at 847-872-7363 to make your request.



The rolling hills are beautiful but they are also dark...

The rolling hills of the Eastern Cape are simply majestic. The sun seems to land gently on the green hills, cows roam and feed freely, mud huts are everywhere but spread out with plenty of room for each family to grow their own food. Each person who walks out of their hut is greeted by a view of peace and tranquillity which cannot be rivalled in any city in the world. The AmaXhosa people are friendly and generous. It would be easy to believe God has found pleasure in this place and delights to rain His goodness over it.

But spend some time listening to the stories of the inhabitants of the land and you will find the majestic rolling hills are drowning in a thick spiritual darkness that devastates the souls and even the bodies of many of those who live here. A zealous hungering to please God and an *innate* fear of God have led the people to all kinds of idolatry. Witchdoctors who claim to offer people a way to reach God and gain His favor are highly revered and feared, and the people - poor as they are - spend their few possessions on trying to appease God through sacrifices and offerings.

The misguided spiritual fervor has caused the people to sacrifice to demons, and the effects are visible and obvious. On the one hand, spiritual oppression is enormous as children and adults experience demonic manifestations or visitations. On the other hand, the physical effects play out in sleepless nights, dropping out of school, chilling stories of child rapes and pregnancies, rampant drug abuse, frequent killings, violent robberies, and the terror and anxiety these events leave behind in the people. The rolling hills are beautiful but they are also dark.

Recognize anyone in this picture?



Richard and Geraldine Akers with their Children Christopher, Naomi and Gregory.



Their Story

Gregory and Sarah Akers

Greg grew up in the Eastern Cape, the son of Christian missionaries. He grew up seeing the beauty of the rolling hills, but never really understanding the darkness that hides here until he returned years later with his wife. Greg's personal walk with the Lord began in his late-teens and he felt a strong call to share the goodness he found in the Lord with others. He studied at the Baptist Theological College in Randburg and spent a decade on the pastoral team of his local Church before being called into missions.

Sarah was led to the Lord at a school evangelism event. She has always felt a call to be a voice for the weak and vulnerable. This led her to studying Social Work at the University of Johannesburg before going to work as a counsellor at various drug recovery centers, and finally working for a child protection organization in Randburg.

Greg and Sarah met at the Baptist Theological College in 2011 and were married in 2015. Their journey into mission work has also been a journey into ministry together - finding better ways to serve God as a married unit. When they felt the call to the mission field in 2019, it was largely an answer to a desire to be workers together in this great harvest.

Before they joined ZEMA, they spent a year raising the necessary support, and then two years working for a non-profit on South Africa's South Coast doing skills development for the under-resourced members of nearby communities. This was a testing and proving time for them in many ways as is taught them to depend on the Lord for perseverance, provision, and protection.

"After our time there, we were grateful that ZEMA accepted us onto their team. Our heart's desire was to be fruitful in ministry, specifically, our calling to discipleship and Bible teaching."

Their first two years with ZEMA are designed with purpose to be mentored by a missionary couple, and to learn the language and the culture of the people they will be ministering amongst. They asked to be mentored by Luaan and Susanne Goosen, a couple who have been with ZEMA for over two decades and who Greg got to know a little while growing up, as the Goosens were neighbors and colleagues with his parents. "We were grateful that they decided to take us on, and we moved in April of 2020 to live near the Goosens in East London, a town in the Eastern Cape."

OUR ACTIVITIES

After moving and settling down, our first and hardest task has been learning the language. We have received ample help from various teachers, but one of the main ways to learn is simple exposure. Greg has been going to many Bible Classes where only Xhosa is spoken - and while this is uncomfortable, it is also a great place to ask questions and listen to words and come to know and grow in the language.

Our two young daughters (Rayah is two and a half, and Olivia is a year old), accompany us on all our language lessons and some of our outings, and Rayah is courageously trying to repeat the words (including click-sounds) she hears in these classes.

Sarah spends the bulk of her time looking after our two bundles of energy - a job which she finds much joy in but is often very challenged by. She also goes out weekly with Susanne to a school in King William's Town where they teach Scripture to scores of children who are eager to hear and learn more about God.

If you'd like to know more about our short journey into or with ZEMA, please get into contact with us. We'd love to take you along on the journey with us.

Gr.akers@zemasa.org or s.akers@zemasa.org

WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

Christian ministry is a complicated endeavour. The whole premise of Christian ministry is that I have something I want to share with others, but what are we being called to give / share with others? It is easy to start thinking that we have finances to give (especially when we're in poor communities), skills to share, knowledge to impart, or training to do. Certainly, there is place for these (when administered *carefully*), but we have been challenged by the unmatched value of giving the gospel. Paul said to the Corinthian believers, *"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."* How do we give the gospel message clearly and attractively to those who are drowning in sin?

We have heard story after story of how the simple gospel presentation has transformed individuals, families, schools, and communities. In regions where government and NPOs have worked to right social ills and failed for years, the light of the gospel penetrates to the deeper parts of the hearts of people and transforms them so that behavior is changed in the most significant and miraculous ways.

Therefore, right alongside our language study and getting to know the work of ZEMA, coming to a fuller and deeper understanding of the gospel message is an essential part of these first two years.

We know that this is the journey of learning that started when we came to faith and it will never end.