

## Matthew Kuehl

### 2023 ZEMA Annual Report

2023 was the final year of my first term. It was amazing! I found myself more and more involved in ZEBS. I was able to get to know the students in Gauteng better. I was invited to many services. The big change during this past year was the addition of Zimbabwe to the mix. I was able to take 5 trips to Zimbabwe over the course of the year. Meeting new people, visiting people in their homes and in their churches was a joy. I was able to assist in restarting the Bulawayo ZEBS that had been closed since Covid and participate in starting a brand-new school 4 hours away from Bulawayo. This year's report will be mostly stories about my time in Zimbabwe.

One of my trips to Zimbabwe was in response to an invitation to attend and speak at the 100-year anniversary of the largest amaZioni denomination in the country. I traveled by bus in mid-August. Trying the bus was a new experience for me. The border crossings were especially interesting - crossing the South Africa to Zimbabwe border (and vice versa). We had to spend over 4 hours at the border standing outside of the bus. As I had taken "red eye" buses this was all done in the middle of the night. It was fun to see what they did. They took every item of luggage and cargo out of the bus with the passengers not allowed to help. We just watched as they went to town. As these buses run both people and goods, there were a lot of items! Most of the 4 hours was spent watching this interesting display. Then they would walk us slowly to each of the areas where we had to show some paperwork. At one point we were even given a full pat down. Once I arrived at the 100-year celebration things were amazing! Somewhere between 1,000 to 2,000 people attended. It was the most people I had ministered to in one go by a large margin. Many people were asked to speak but they all chose to speak on history. Only I, and one other person, gave a word from the Lord and from the Bible. It was a blessing to speak straight truth. May we pray that the people that needed to hear it did. I then joined in some dancing. We circled the tent quickly going back and forth. It was fun to dance with so many people. My favorite part came at the end of the service. On the walk back from the tent to our car it was just myself and a young man who was put in charge of getting me back. At this point the little road was full of amaZioni chatting and snacking. As I started walking, I started talking to people. I would walk a few steps and start a new conversation. I did this over and over again for around 500 people. Hearing stories, getting to know the people, having a blast. Although I drove my handler crazy as he tried to get me to follow him.

The culmination of all the exciting work in Zimbabwe over the last year was the graduation for the ZEBS students. We held a special service at both schools after the third day of classes. So much joy and excitement! I was hugged by many! At Ngundu we were able to give first year certificates to 20 of the 32 students that had been attending! (That means they attended all 90 lectures and completed the required homework.) The Bulawayo school had 3 people graduate from the program entirely. (That means they attended all 4 years needed, most pre-covid.) I cannot express the joy that came from them. One student as she walked up to receive her graduation diploma was singing but had to stop her joyful song halfway as she had burst into tears when she shook my hand and received her certificate.