Background details of Pietermaritzburg in the context of the “Choose-Zikhethle” Mission

There are nine provinces in South Africa, with an estimated 50.8 million people living in the country. Of these, national average statistics show that almost 80% are black African, 9% are White, a further 9% are Coloured (mixed race) and approximately 2% are Indian/Asian.

Different parts of the country vary in terms of the concentration of racial groups. In KwaZulu-Natal province, there are around 86% black Africans, 8% Indians, 4% Whites and only 2% Coloured people. This concentration changes within the city of Pietermaritzburg itself, where there are only about 44% black African citizens (around half of the concentration reflected by the national average), whilst 8% of the population is Coloured (comparable to the national average). There are many more white people (19%, which is double the national average) and Indian people (29%, which represents more than eleven times the average national concentration) in KZN than the national average reflects.

With the varying race groups comes a variety of religions. Overall, almost 80% of South Africans are Christian. A further 15% report that they do not have any religion, whilst 1.5% practice Islam, 1.4% are undecided on their religion and Hindus make up 1.2% of the country’s population. A total of 0.3% practice African traditional religions, 0.2% practice Judaism and people with other beliefs make up 0.6% of the population.

The city of Pietermaritzburg is unique in that with the higher concentrations of Indians/Asians come higher concentrations of Hindus and Muslims. Further to this, whilst many black African people are Christian, there are also many cases where this is mixed with ancestral worship. As such, besides the undecided and those who have no religion, a large focus of the “Choose-Zikhethle” Mission falls on
reaching the large Hindu and Muslim communities, as well as those ascribing to African traditional beliefs either totally or mixed with Christianity.

This reflects a great need for evangelism in the city, as well as presenting some unique challenges. In South Africa as a whole, there are very high levels of unemployment. This impacts on levels of crime and it is necessary to understand the risk that the evangelists and the AE teams take when going into the field. This is a specific prayer need – protection for the staff, as well as for the equipment needed for the event. There is also prayer needed for logistical challenges which could be faced – the need for buses, taxis and cars to transport equipment, as well as to bring people to the rallies in their numbers. There is a need for prayer for communications within and between teams, IT, the internet connections, social media, publications and advertising.

Being winter and with recent cold weather and snowfalls in surrounding areas, there is a need for prayer for mild weather that will allow people to venture outdoors and be comfortable to travel to and attend the planned events.

Language is also a barrier, as many of the evangelists who will be preaching during the mission will not be able to speak isiZulu/isiXhosa, the lingua franca of the majority of most black Africans resident in Pietermaritzburg. There is a need for prayer for issues of communication, that those who need to hear the call of God, through the evangelists, will have their ears supernaturally opened to Him.

Issues which affect the youth in particular in Pietermaritzburg include alcohol and drug abuse, gangsterism and involvement in violent crime, promiscuity, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS transmission. There are also high levels of despondency and hopelessness amongst the youth, because of low matric pass rates, the previously mentioned high unemployment rate and the current economic crisis. We need to pray that these issues will not be barriers to accepting Christ, but that these issues will be used by the evangelists to reach out to the youth, inspiring many to turn to Christ, in order to see change in these areas.

Social issues amongst families in the city include families in crisis as a result of domestic violence, high divorce rates, children who have lost either one or both parents due to HIV/AIDS and absent fathers/ lack of male role models.

Issues found in businesses and government departments in the city include corruption, nepotism, and poor service delivery. The marketplace is an important target for the mission and thus, there is an urgent prayer need for business in the city of Pietermaritzburg, specifically that key members of local government and powerful players in the business arena will be led to Christ during this mission and that these Christian values will filter through into the workplace. In this way, sustainable change will be able to take place in the city.

Within churches in Pietermaritzburg, some of the key challenges which are being faced and overcome are those of division due to different denominations and the need for more passionate people in the city willing to serve their communities through the church.
**Details of Pietermaritzburg city zones**

The city of Pietermaritzburg is situated in the Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. The estimated population of the city is around 800,000 residents. It is recognised as one of the most well-preserved Victorian cities in the country. It is well placed between Durban to the south, the Drakensberg and Johannesburg to the north and is the administrative capital of KZN. It is known as the “city of choice”. Certain zones were identified for the purposes of the “Choose-Zikhethle” Mission. Some of these zones have been highlighted on the map of Pietermaritzburg, below. They have also been categorised in terms of the demographics of people living in these areas.

**Majority high income, all races (historically, areas with predominantly white residents):** Chase valley, Hilton (outside of Pietermaritzburg)

**Majority middle class communities of all races:** Scottsville (especially popular for university students), Hayfields, Ashburton (outskirts of the city)

**Majority low income, Black African communities (some areas include townships/informal settlements):** Sobantu, France, Caluza, Grange, Imbali, Edendale, Willowfontein, Azalea, Sweetwaters, Panorama, Napierville, Slangspruit, Copesville, Azalea, City central (town)

**Majority low to middle class, Coloured (mixed race) communities:** Woodlands, Glenwood, Eastwood, Cinderella Park

**Majority low to middle to upper class Indian communities (including some small black African and Coloured communities):** Northdale