

CHAPTER FOUR - FIRST EFFORTS TO SHARE THE GOSPEL WITH HINDUS AND MUSLIMS IN SOUTH AFRICA

During the period of Indian immigration to South Africa, five churches were involved in spreading the Gospel to the Indian people. They were the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Wesleyan-Methodist, Baptist and Lutheran Churches. Joy Brain comments in her studies of this period that she had not been able to find evidence that the Presbyterian, the Congregational or the Dutch Reformed Churches nor any of the Pentecostal groups were active in the Indian mission field between 1860 and 1911 (Brain, 1983:229). As to the motivation for evangelisation of the Hindu and Muslim immigrants who were generally well satisfied with their religions, we do not concur with Brain that the motivation was the “White settler's unshakable conviction of the superiority of his religious beliefs and of his intellectual and artistic heritage ... in the 19th and early 20th centuries” (Brain, 1983:193). Except for those that were deluded, the small groups of missionaries were motivated by the scriptural injunction to preach the Gospel to all nations.

There are at least two reasons why these five churches were involved. First of all there were converts from India in all of these churches. Secondly, all these churches were involved in Natal among the Zulu people.

Of the five only the Roman Catholic Church catered primarily for those Indians who were already members of that Church or were Syrian Christians of the Roman rite. The other denominations spread the Gospel to all the immigrants - Hindu, Muslim and Christian alike (Brain, 1983:193). None was prepared for the demands that the arrival of the Indian immigrants were to make. Their small numbers in the early days and the general belief that they would return to India on the expiry of their contracts must have underplayed their impact compared with the thousands of Blacks who needed to be reached.

4.1 Roman Catholic Missions to Indians in South Africa

The Roman Catholic Church was the first Christian denomination to start work among the Indian immigrants (Brain, 1983:194). Father Sabon arrived in Natal in 1852. He began to visit Port Natal whenever a ship arrived, contacting Catholic passengers and crewmen. His English was poor and he had time on his hands (Brain, 1975: 34 - 41). He found about 50 Catholics that came on the Truro. Before he left they knelt down before him, asking him for his blessing (Brain, 1983:195). On December 4th 1860 he held his first mass for them (Brain, 1975:124).

Until the arrival of Rev R Stott in 1862, Sabon was the only Christian missionary to concern himself with the needs of the Indian immigrants. Sabon found it necessary to learn Tamil (:195). In January 1861 he wrote that he had mastered the alphabet which has as many as 247 letters. (Brain, 1975:124) In 1867 he established the first Indian school in Durban, importing Tamil literature from Ceylon (Brain, 1982:23). As early as 1861 Sabon had obtained a list of all the Christian Indians. He found 150 Catholics among them. In that same year he performed the first Christian marriage among the Indians. He visited the immigrants along Natal's north and south coast and by 1862 he had as many as 300 to visit. By 1865 Sabon was rather discouraged because the people were now spread in different places in the Colony and many were household servants of the farmers. This meant that he could only reach them in the evenings. Numbers did not increase rapidly since a considerable number of his parishioners returned to India after completing their indentures.

The missionary approach of the Catholic Church emphasised the diaconal responsibility of the Church such as pastoral care, orphanages and the education of the children. Bishop Jollivet's strong views on the importance of Catholic education ensured the opening of schools for Indians. By 1886 the Catholics had schools at Durban, Clairmont (Clairwood), Pietermaritzburg and New Castle (Brain, 1982:24) and later also in Ladysmith (Brain, 1982:199). According to Brain it was never the intention of the Catholic Church in Natal to evangelise the Indian community, but only the Zulu. Currin believes that the reasons for the slow rate of conversion to Catholicism were the conservativeness and exclusiveness of Hindu and Muslim cultures. The Catholics were fortunate in

having the enthusiastic services of the catechists, Shillong and Daniel Pillay (Brain, 1982:22). The language, culture and background were so different that it is difficult to see how they could have benefited from attendance at the same services as the whites (Brain, 1982:40). Nevertheless Currin (1962:206) suggests that the separation was due in part at least to the antagonism among white Catholics towards the Indian immigrants. However, in 1902, when Emmanuel Cathedral was being constructed, a petition was sent to the Bishop. It was signed by 83 Indian Catholics of Durban, in which they specifically requested that they be allowed to continue in their own chapel (Brain, 1982:41).

During Father Sabon's lifetime he had a flourishing Indian mission. Not until 1904 was another Tamil-speaking priest found for Natal, in the person of Father Maingot, who worked from 1889 in Ceylon and who was to spend the rest of his life in Durban working at the Indian parish of St. Anthony. During his ministry missionary activity was extended to Isipingo, Mt Edgecombe, Darnall and Verulam (Brain, 1983:199 - 200).

In 1905 there were 1,040 Indian Catholics in the whole of Natal. In 1977 the figure for the archdiocese of Durban was given as 10,676. The 1970 census recorded Catholics as the largest single denomination among Christian Indians in South Africa, with 12,820 adherents; in the 1980 census they numbered 21,160 (Brain, 1983:201).

The following table plots the growth of Indian Catholics in South Africa:

Date	Circumstances	Total	Source
1860	Truror: Father Sabon	50	Brain, 1983:194
1861	List of Catholics: Sabon	151	Brain, 1983:196
1892	Durban & Pietermaritzburg	550	Brain, 1983:199, 200
1905	Jolivet	1,040	Statistical Yearbook
1970	Colony of Natal: Yearbook	12,820	Census South Africa
1980	Census Catholics	21,160	Census South Africa
1996	National Census	22,526	Christian Handbook

4.2 Protestant Missions to Indians in South Africa

The Methodist Church began in 1861 to reach out to the Indian immigrants when Rev Joseph Jackson distributed tracts among the few Indian servants working in the Verulam district (Brain, 1983:201). An experienced missionary, the Rev Ralph Stott, was brought from Ceylon in 1862 to start a mission. Fluency in Tamil, a working knowledge of the Hindi language, coupled with administrative experience, resulted in an efficient ministry. He visited intensively, house to house, presenting the claims of Christ. He endured many insults and reproaches. Churches erected by Christians were not places to which Indian people would flock. It was only about the time of his retirement in 1877 that Stott built the first Indian Methodist Church in Durban (Hunt, 1956).

Brain notes the interesting fact that Stott from the beginning considered the whole Indian community in Natal as his congregation, distributing tracts and extracts from Scripture, preaching in all the centres of population. In 1863 there were 35 preaching places. By 1886 the number of estates to be called at had risen to 80. Stott seems to have identified only five or six Protestant immigrants and was therefore much more of an evangelist than a pastor. Stott was a man of great determination, totally dedicated to the conversion of the Indian immigrants to the Christian faith. By 1873 Stott who was acutely aware of the lack of educational facilities for the children of the Indian immigrants, had four small day schools under his control. (Brain, 1983:201 - 204).

In 1880 Simon Horner Stott, succeeded his father in the ministry. He was excellently qualified through missionary experience in Ceylon and had knowledge of Tamil. Already in 1865 his father urged the British Conference to send his son to assist with the work in Natal. He arrived the next year but found the work extremely demanding and eventually moved to Verulam to work among the Zulus (Brain, 1983:206 - 208). In 1880 he began a second phase in the history of Indian Methodism in Natal. In 1927 he writes that “the Indian work in Verulam did not succeed well owing probably to the counteracting influence of heathen priests in the neighbourhood.” Someone would be baptized but was warned and never appeared. Indians described conversion as *fell in the faith* (Stott, 1927:116).

The period between 1882 and 1906 was a period of growth and expansion. S H Stott began an energetic missionary drive among the labourers on the North Coast estates. In Pietermaritzburg there was also significant growth. In 1902 John Thomas was ordained, becoming the first Indian to be ordained as a Christian Minister in South Africa. In 1956 the Pietermaritzburg mission had 800 full members and 2,600 adherents (Hunt, 1956).

During his 26 years in the Natal Indian Mission Circuit, S H Stott was responsible for the establishment of a number of day schools in the coastal centres. In 1908 a Brahmin convert to the Christian faith, the Rev Subrahmanyam, arrived in Natal to take charge of the Durban and South Coast Indian Mission. After his departure carefully trained evangelists carried on the missionary work. The Choonoo brothers, Reuben and Arthur, played a prominent part in the mission work of this time. In 1911 when immigration from India ceased, the Methodist Church had firmly rooted Indian missions in Natal. In the census of 1980 the number of Methodist Indians was given as 4,320 (Brain, 1982:209 - 212). The converts were chiefly from the Hindu religion, some from the Muslim faith and one from Buddhism.

In 1865 the Rev Joseph Barker of the Anglican Church opened a day and night school for the children and adults of all coloured labourers on the estates. He felt that a great work is open here for the church. He concluded his report with a request for a missionary with Indian experience to be sent to his district. Attempts at mission by Rev W Baugh in Umlazi and a small mission in Isipingo soon came to an end. In Pietermaritzburg the first work among Indians began as early as 1869 and in 1880 a catechist, Charles David, established a school (Brain, 1983:212 - 213).

In Durban the Rev H F Wittington opened a Day School in Field Street in 1878 and read the service in Tamil for Indian Christians while one of his parishioners conducted a Sunday school. There were only about half a dozen Christian Indian families in Natal. It was, in fact, impossible for the over-worked clergy, most of whom were ignorant of Indian languages, to stretch their resources to cover work among the new settlers from the East (Burnett, 1955:102). Rev J Fairbrother of the Sea Cow Lake parish (St James) undertook missionary work among the Indians in a very limited way because no Indian name appeared in their register.

(Beyers, 1969:401) In 1877, under the inspiration of Rev Wittington, a public meeting was called (for) to consider whether anything could be done for the spiritual and educational needs of the Indians of Durban. The result was the appointment of a standing committee for Indian Missions. Only six years later, and quite unexpectedly, the missionary they had so long sought was found not in India but in Natal when Dr Lancelot Parker Booth offered his services in 1883 (Brain, 1983:214 - 215).

Booth settled in a house situated in an Indian quarter, near the present Alice Street Bridge. From here he directed the Mission in Natal, tended the sick at his dispensary and built the St Aidan's Church nearby in 1887 (Burnett, 1955:103). He worked without a salary for the first two years. John Thomas, an Indian schoolmaster, offered his services to the Church and from these humble beginnings in 1883 the number of schools rose to 9 in the following year. The number of schools increased to 15 in 1886 (Brain, 1983:103 - 104), and in 1889 the first school in the Colony was opened for Indian girls. With money raised in Britain and America a substantial building was erected for St Aidan's School in 1887. An orphanage for boys was opened in Durban by Miss Underwood, and a home for orphaned girls by Miss Saunders (Brain, 1983:215).

In 1890 Booth visited India and recruited two Tamil speaking missionaries, Solomon Vadakan and Simon Peter Vedamuthu. The latter was of especially (of) great assistance to Booth (Brain, 1983:216).

Medical work was a feature of the Anglican Mission in Durban from its inception in 1883. Next to Dr Booth, a second medical missionary, Dr Lillian Jenkins worked in the dispensary, joined later by Dr Robinson (Brain, 1983:216). When Booth resigned in 1900 to take up a position as Dean of St John's and Rector of Umtata (Brain, 1983:218) it was a great loss to St Aidan's. His parting address was signed by Gandhi. In his capacity as secretary of the Board. Gandhi, though not a Christian, was for many years a devout and faithful member of Booth's congregation, and a personal friend as well. The address was signed by 837 Indian members (Wrinch-Shultz, 1983:7, 8).

The hospital was officially opened in 1916 by the Rev CMC Bone (Wrinch-Shultz, 1983:11). His experience in India had taught him the value of a hospital attached to the mission. Miss Cole who started a dispensary in 1915 in Overport, offered to pay the rent of a house opposite the Mission House for three months if the missionary would take it and allow her to turn it into a hospital. Furthermore she offered her services free. Rev Bone accepted with alacrity (Burnett, 1955:144 - 145).

The arrival of Mr Dravian Koilpillai, who was a trained and experienced schoolmaster, enabled the Anglicans to launch a more ambitious scheme in 1904. This was the St Aidan's College that in addition to a higher standard of education, offered a boarding school for 30 boys and a college for the training of teachers. By 1916, 66 teachers had qualified for Government appointments. The College was therefore both a direct and indirect missionary agency (Burnett, 1955:143 - 144).

The Indian Anglican community comprised of about 615 baptised members by 1911. If we consider that many of the original parishioners returned to India or moved to other parts of South Africa, the Christian influence must have been much greater than these figures suggest. In 1980 the number of Indians belonging to the Anglican Church was calculated as 8,900 (Brain, 1983:219 - 220).

The Anglican missions, then, despite the difficulties encountered, probably represented the most active Christian movement among the Indians in the early years up to 1911. They had more schools in different parts of Natal than any other denomination. They offered higher education and the only teachers' training facilities. They were also the only denomination to open a medical dispensary and clinic and probably had more teachers and evangelists brought from India than any other missionary organizations.

The diaconal missionary method was employed in the Anglican approach to the Indians. At a time when there were no schools or hospitals for the Indians, the Anglicans, more than any other denomination, used the opportunity presented. Under difficult circumstances, with very little interest from their white parishioners and little financial support, they set up more schools than any other denomination and provided the only medical facility for Indians. Rev Burnett

notes that ‘the mission to the Indians of Natal seems never to have captured the imagination of our Church people. The tale of the mission is one of great gains, and much achievement, but also of heart-breaking failure to take advantage of opportunities, which would not return, simply because our men and women did not have the means.’

There were constant calls to increase the work all over Natal, but the mission workers were helpless; they could not sally forth to undertake it. It is not surprising that in their frustration they questioned whether the Church people of Natal really believed in the evangelisation of the Indians in their midst (Burnett, 1955:142 - 143).

The work of the Lutheran Church among the Indian community began round about 1896. The Matthews family of Sea View collected a group of fellow Lutherans for services and regular meetings at a place of worship and called this The Indian Lutheran Church. It is believed that most of the 90 adherents were from Kamavaripallam in the Gunter district, where they had been converted by the Hermannsburg Lutheran missionaries. Most of the group arrived between 1900 and 1911 (Brain, 1983:220).

They had for many years occasional contacts with the missionaries of the Norwegian Missionary Society and with the Hermannsburg Missionary Society and particularly with the Röhaver brothers of Harburg who had worked in India and spoke fluent Telegu. Jacob Mathews, one of the sons of the original immigrant, C Matthews, studied at Umpumulo and at Oscarsberg Theological Seminary. In the 1920’s and 1930’s the group began to disintegrate when some left to join the Anglican Church or the Assemblies of God. Some members however remained faithful to the Lutheran Church, and they formed the nucleus of a new missionary effort that began in 1962 under Matthews’s ministry.

The Lutherans were the first denomination to open a church in Chatsworth and later started three other congregations in the Durban district, at Reservoir Hills, Asherville and Phoenix. Missionaries were sent from Norway and Germany to assist in the work. They concentrated particularly on young people (Ims, 1965:9 - 15). According to the statistics tabulated by the Lutheran Church in 1978, their membership in Chatsworth was 366 and 74 in Asherville. They had

two chapels at Chatsworth, one at Asherville, and one at Reservoir Hills and another at Phoenix which were served by five ordained ministers assisted by 43 lay workers (Evangelical Lutheran Church publication as quoted by Brain, 1983:221).

D N Nathaniel in his M.Div. Thesis on the *Origin of the Indian Baptist Church in South Africa, 1900 – 1978* points out that some Indian Baptists from the many British and American mission districts in India arrived in Natal between 1860 and 1900. In the absence of a minister of their own persuasion they joined one of the two Protestant churches in the Colony. It was only in 1900, however, that a large group was identified as originating in the Telegu district where American Baptist missionaries were active (Nathaniel, 1979:10, 225). Although it is not possible to come to an exact estimate of the number of Baptists who arrived in Natal between 1860 and 1889, it is known that a number were scattered throughout the Colony. The first large groups that travelled together and were allocated to the same employer arrived in 1900 and thereafter there was a steady stream of arrivals until 1911.

Year of Arrival	No of Baptist Christians
1900	106
1901	10
1902	2
1903	5
1904	40
1905	10
1906	15
1907	14
1908	88
1909	20
1910	98
1911	35
1900-1911	443

(Brain, 1983:225 - 228)

The group that arrived in 1900 settled on Sir Liege Hullett's Tea Estate at Kearsney. One of the group, D Benjamin, organised services and cared for his parishioners for 3 years (Jacob, 1953:10). Attempts to absorb them into the local Baptist Congregation were unsuccessful. When their leader died, they approached Stott of the Methodist Church for admission. Stott offered to baptise them by immersion if they were anxious to be accepted on this basis. Having obtained the consent of the Baptist Minister in Durban, he accepted them into the Methodist Church. Two years later they returned to the Baptist Church when an Indian Baptist came from India to work in Natal (Stott, 1902:11). The Rev John Rungiah and his family arrived in Natal in June 1903 (Brain, 1983:222).

Rev John Rungiah formed the first Telegu Baptist Church in Natal, consisting of 62 members, in December of that same year. Within the first six years after his arrival he constituted churches at Durban, Verulam, Stanger, Tinley Manor, Amatikulu, Dannhauser, Dundee, Hattingspruit, and at Pietermaritzburg (1964:6 - 9). The method used by the Baptist missionaries was for the ordained minister to pioneer a new church and then leave the development of the new venture in the hands of trained laymen. This was also the pattern followed by Rungiah in Natal. Some of the churches were established with only a few members. Tinley Manor and Nanatikulu had 12 members each at the time of their formation in 1908 and 1909 respectively (Brain, 1983:222 - 224).

On the South Coast a Baptist missionary, the Rev Tomlinson, established churches at Park Rynie and Port Shepstone on behalf of the South African General Mission. After John Rungiah's death in 1915, Tomlinson worked as a guest preacher among the members of the Natal Indian Baptist Association. No Baptist churches were established on the South Coast in terms of an agreement with the SAGM, until 1975. In 1965 there were about 800 church members in this region.

In 1914, after three years of internal dissension, the Indian Baptist Mission divided into two organisations and the rift has persisted to the present time. Rev John Rungiah and his followers formed the Natal Telegu Baptist Association (later known as the Natal Indian Baptist Association); the remaining members, believed to be about 200 in all, continued as the Indian Baptist Mission. A new

church was built in 1915 and became known as the Central Baptist Church. In 1979 their membership was given as 2,961 (Baptist Union Handbook, 1979:9).

The approximate number of Baptists who arrived from India during the period 1900 – 1911 was 443, including women and children. They were a closely-knit and enthusiastic group of Christians who also had the great advantage of belonging to the same linguistic group (Brain, 1983:228).

Brain concludes that no combined large-scale evangelisation of the Indian population of Natal took place between 1860 and 1911. Five denominations, as described above, were active; they were instrumental in providing education for a proportion of the Indian children of school age and the first teacher training facilities at a time when no Government or private education was available; they also provided institutional care for destitute children. The Anglicans gave medical attention and there were Roman Catholic sanatoria in Ladysmith and Estcourt. Brain states that she could find no evidence that the Presbyterian, the Congregational, the Dutch Reformed Church nor any of the Pentecostal groups, were active in the Indian mission field between 1860 and 1911 (:229).

4.3 Dutch Reformed Church's Mission to Indians

Whereas the mission fields of other churches were geographically far a field and this entailed long journeys, often followed by heroic stories and adventures, the situation of the DRC was such that a great deal of their history of missions took place close to home. The borders of the congregation often concurred with the borders of the 'mission field.'

DRC missionaries did travel to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), as was noted in Chapter Two. The Rev M C Vos was stationed there during the 18th century, and the Rev de Klerk and S F Skeen, a century later. But the question now that needs answering is: How did the DRC at its home base, in South Africa involve itself in church planting in the Hindu and Muslim Community?

Since the establishment of the DRC in the Cape (1652) the pastors and members of their congregations had to take note of the arrival of Muslims in their midst. The first arrivals were Malayans from Batavia and were brought by the Dutch to

the Cape (Mahida, 1993:1). They were followed by the Mardyckers from Amboyna (an Indonesian island) who were brought to the Cape to defend the newly established settlement against the indigenous people (Mahida, 1993:2).

Political exiles, slaves and convicts followed them to the Cape. By 1830 there were 8,268 slaves at the Cape, 4,766 of whom were Muslim (Mahida, 1993:2, 5 - 7). By 1840 Islam had 6,435 adherents at Cape Town, one-third of the total population of the Colony.

Rev F N van Niekerk refers to a letter written in 1703 on behalf of the Church Council of Drakenstein to the Presbytery of Amsterdam. In the letter the Council mentioned one person, born from Muslim parents, who confessed his faith before the congregation (1948:1, 2). He became the first known convert from Islamic persuasion in South Africa.

4.3.1. Missions among Muslims in the Cape

Helperus Ritzema van Lier, who arrived in Cape Town in 1786 (Crafford, 1982:22), was deeply devoted to God and the extension of his Kingdom (Marais, 1919:100). His inspiration and missionary zeal provided a turning point for missions in the Cape: nothing less than a revival in missions in general and missions to Muslims in particular. Van Lier learnt the Malaysian language in order to be better equipped to reach the Muslim community (Van Niekerk, 1948:4 - 6).

The first mosque or masjid was constructed in 1794 on property obtained by Coridon of Ceylon. Permission was granted by General Craig. The mosque is situated in Dorp Street, Cape Town. The only church permitted in the Colony, however, was that of the Dutch Reformed Church (Mahida, 1993:12, 13). In view of what was regarded as the planting of a Christian nation at the Cape, the South African Missionary Society “Genootskap” handed a note of protest to the Government in 1800. The British Government were of a different opinion (Van Niekerk, 1948:7, 8) and the mosque remained.

Through the efforts of the SA “Genootskap” and the recommendation of Rev A Faure and Rev J H Beck, William Elliot was appointed in 1801 as

missionary to the Muslim people. Teaching material in the form of a booklet was drawn up and printed in English and in Dutch. Priest Jozef hired out a room in his house for this work and priest Achman provided a room for Malaysian classes. To find the necessary financial support all ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church were asked to become honorary members of the SA “Genootskap.” Tracts in the Malaysian language and 12 teaching documents from the Qur’an “Leerredevoeringe” were requested. These documents appeared in print and with the cooperation of the imams, Rev Beck and Elliot delivered these teachings on the first Wednesday of every month. Elliot’s work ceased in 1828 under disappointing circumstances (Van Niekerk, 1948:912).

In the minutes of the SA “Genootskap” we read the following:

Den Eerw Broeder Elliot berigt met leedwezen te moeten erken dat zijn Eerw. ondervind dat er geene vordering gehaalt word met het onderwerp van de Mohammedanen en dat ze zeer agterhouden zijn, vooral willen ze zich niet? Uitlaten om over het inwendige Godsdienst te spreken, niet tegenstaande echter wenschte zijn Eerw. een school voor hunne kinderen opzettelijk op te rigten (Van Niekerk, 1948:12).

Having fulfilled the necessary requirements the Rev Vogelzang was appointed religious teacher on 4 April 1830 by the Church Council of Cape Town. According to van Niekerk (1948:11), he was much more successful in his ministry to Muslims. As a young man in his stepfather’s shop, he had worked with Muslims. He knew them. He did not argue the Gospel with Muslim imams, knowing full well that this method would not succeed.

Vogelgezang held open-air meetings where ever the people were. He treated Muslims and unbelievers as sinners and preached the Word of God without hesitancy. Criticism followed. On 21 September 1841 *De Zuid Afrikaan* published the following letter from Phelo Veretas: (reported on 21/9/1841 a letter from Phelo Veretas as follows:)

Om tegen Mahomet te raaskaken en hem als een bedrieger uit te krijten, is de deur sluiten tegen uwe eigene poginge ... De Zendeling moet met den Koran beginnen, dien hij zelf eerst moest bestudeeren, met eenen

ijver als of zijne eigene zaligheid daarvan afhing, dan zal hij in staat zijn de waarheden daarin vervat, uitleggen en ongevoeliglijk den weg banen om hun des licht des Evangeliums te doen aannemen (As referred to by Van Niekerk, 1948:13).

The editor of *De Verzamelaar*, 14 Febr. 1843, warned that ...”wij hebben van goeden hand vernomen dat zijn Eerw. aanspraak veel misnoegen verwekt heeft...” (Van Niekerk, 1948:13).

The Cape Town Mail reports on 27 May 1848 that 29 coloured persons were baptised by the Rev Vogelzang in his Chapel in Long Street. Among them were a Muslim family and three other Muslim children. The Chapel was crowded to capacity with many Muslims. The newspaper adds:

Mr Vogelzang, it appears, is exerting a salutary influence amongst these people, and by his kind and disinterested attention to their children, a great number of whom are in his Day and Sunday schools, he is doing much to undermine their prejudices Cape Town Mail (1848:14).

Rev Frans Lion Cachet was deeply touched by the work of Vogelzang at Ebenezer Chapel and desired to continue the work after Vogelzang’s death. The Church Council granted his wish and allowed him to continue the work together with his pastoral responsibility at the Church Cape Town Mail, 1848 (:14).

Rev Cachet’s first convert was a Muslim woman who was given the name Rachel at her baptism. Rev Cachet felt that it was almost as difficult to bring the Gospel to Muslims as to the Jews of Holland. This was partly due to the luke-warmness and carelessness of the Christians among whom they were living Cape Town Mail, 1848 (:15 - 17).

In 1913 it was decided to place the work among Muslims in the hands of the Inland Mission Committee (*Binnenlandse Zending Kommissie*) of the DRC. Three years later a well-qualified person was found in Dr G B A Gerdener. Dr Gerdener had the cooperation of a Persian brother, Gerabadien, who was working on behalf of his own church among Muslims. Dr Gerdener held

conferences for the leaders of the DR Mission Church and preached in these churches to provide information about the Muslims and to warn parishioners against the seduction of their young daughters by Muslim men. Gerabadien used the courts to return such girls to their Christian parents. At the time Cape Town received visits from Dr Daniels of Armenia and the well known Dr Samuel Zwemer who spent his life among Muslims evangelising in Africa and elsewhere (Cape Town Mail, 1848:19 - 21).

The Rev A J Liebenberg soon came from America to assist Dr Gerdener with Muslim evangelism. He was concerned for the needs of these people and made efforts to establish schools for them. According to van Niekerk, Liebenberg closely followed the methods employed by Dr Zwemer (:22 - 24).

Liebenberg also used a reading room where he met with Malay Muslims to deliberate religious and other issues (*Mohammedane Sub-Kommissie*, 1927). The committee considered obtaining their own building for this purpose (*Mohamedane Sub-Kommissie*, 1928). House visitation, and smaller meetings in homes or in the reading room were regarded as the best method to reach Muslims (*Mohamedane Sub-Kommissie*, 1927). The use of tracts and Bibles in English, Afrikaans and Arabic proved to be effective (*Mohamedane Sub-Kommissie*, 1927, 1928, 1931). Liebenberg saw his involvement with the St. Stephens DRC, as an opportunity to reach those members who came under the influence of Islam (:1930).

A C van Wyk, a candidate for the ministry, succeeded A J Liebenberg in the ministry among Muslims. According to the minutes of a meeting of the Muslim Sub-Committee in 1927. (*Mohammedane Sub-Kommissie*) A C van Wyk would make himself available as soon as he had completed his candidate's examination and taken a course of six to eight months in Cairo (*Mohamedane Sub-Kommissie*, 1927).

It was however much later, in 1940, that A C van Wyk could involve himself in the work among the Muslims.

Several others were involved in the DRC mission to Muslims in those early years. Prof J du Plessis conducted an open seminar in the Cape Town City Hall

for a Muslim audience. Van Niekerk sees in this method the influence of Dr Samuel Zwemer who had earlier conducted a meeting in Cape Town (Van Niekerk, 1948:21). Rev P S Latsky (1943) later continued the work of the DRC Muslim Sub-committee.

White congregations were also involved in this work. The Adderley Street Congregation supported the work in the person of W A v d Worm as early as the 1960's. The missionary R D Kretzen, however, was not in favour of a worker among the Muslims because this would overturn the work in his school where several Muslim children received the Christian faith and were catechised for membership in Wynberg (Van Niekerk, 1948:17, 20).

Rev P S Latsky, took over the Church's mission to Muslims on a part-time basis in 1943 (while serving as minister of the St Stephen's DRC). In 1956 the Synod of the Cape DRC took a decision that led to the appointment of Rev D J Pypers in 1960 to minister exclusively to Muslims (Pypers, 1995:1). The request of Synod was that he would give special attention to the Indian Community. In 1966 the NG Sendingkerk accepted responsibility for the ministry amongst the Coloured and Malay Muslims in the Western Cape.

4.3.2 Mission among (during) the Muslims in Transvaal

Work among Muslims in those early years was not limited to Cape Town only. Transvaal was eager to co-operate with the 'Mohammedane Sub-Kommissie' (Cape Town) in view of work among Muslims in the Transvaal (:21). The renewal of missionary interest after the turn of the century 1900 – 1902, in the concentration camps in India, Sri-Lanka, Bermuda and St Helena particularly impacted upon Transvaal. In foreign lands hearts were deeply stirred, for the salvation of the lost in India and Sri-Lanka. Many indicated their willingness to become missionaries when they returned to South Africa (Die Kerkbode, 1901:5, 34, 708).

In the early years little was done in the Transvaal to reach the Muslim people. Interest in reaching Muslims here would only surface much later when the Dutch Reformed Church could call their first missionary to the Indian people of Transvaal in the person of Prof C J A Greyling (in 1955 part-time in 1957 in

full-time capacity). His interest in the Muslims resulted in a doctoral thesis titled, (*Die invloed van strominge in die Islam op die Jesusbeskouing van die Suid-Afrikaanse Moslems*), 1976. It was the experience of most missionaries to the Indian people that little attention could be given to reaching out to the Muslims as the response was by and large from Hindu, not Muslim, people. Others who had laboured as students among the Indian people since 1956, the so-called KJV 'Indiërsending', however, shared Prof. Greyling's interest in the Muslims. Prof J A Naudé wrote his doctoral thesis on *The Name Allah* (1971); several theological students wrote similar papers on Islam for the BD degree and/or candidate minister status. Prof A van Selms, well-known teacher of Semitic Languages at the University of Pretoria, played an important role in encouraging these students to reach Muslims with the Gospel. Rev P J P de Beer and Rev D Bekker, who eventually became ministers of the RCA, studied Arabic with Maulana Razack of the Queen Street Mosque in Pretoria. Both majored in Arabic under Prof van Selms.

Conferences on well-chosen subjects were arranged with Muslim leaders in Pretoria. The conferences were held in the form of a debate with two speakers: One arguing from the Christian point of view, the other from the Muslim point of view. Both Prof van Selms and Prof A H van Zyl (of the Theological Faculty at the University of Pretoria) participated. These meetings were very well attended by Muslims. The sometimes fiery debates that ensued, however, did not foster good relationships with the Muslims, nor did they offer fair opportunities to present the Gospel. They were soon abandoned.

The outreach to Muslims was difficult for various reasons. For many young Afrikaans-speaking people the English language was a problem. The impact of the Group Areas Act (1950) upon the Muslim traders was keenly felt. The young people were seen as agents of the state and their Christian faith was questioned to such an extent that it was hardly possible for them to witness for Christ. They unknowingly represented an attitude that could not be aligned with the gospel message. The first full-time missionary of the RCA to Muslims exclusively, Rev (later Prof) J N J Kritzinger, was only called in 1975 by the RCA of Lenasia to work in the main centres of Transvaal, i.e. Lenasia, Benoni and Pretoria.

4.3.3 Mission among the Muslims in Natal

There is no record of any early involvement of the Dutch Reformed Church with ministry to the Muslims in Natal. Rev J Pretorius, the first missionary of the DRC to the Indian people of Natal, started his work only in 1947. He was overwhelmed by the response of the Hindus as well as the rigours of establishing missions in Pietermaritzburg and Durban. There was hardly time to reach out to Muslims as well. At the inauguration of the first church building in Raisethorpe (Pietermaritzburg) in 1948, Rev Pretorius said that the greatest response to the gospel was among those of Hindu persuasion. They represented approximately 80% of the Indian population of Natal. The Muslim section was less susceptible (SSK Natal 1953:2/104). They required a totally different way of approach and were difficult to reach. He was not aware of any missionary working full-time among Muslims from within the 14 churches of Natal. The Christians that came from India were a relatively small group. Joy Brain in her latest historical and statistical research concludes that the immigrant Christians (1860 – 1911) constituted only 1.4% or 2,150 of the total number of 152,184 immigrants (Brain, 1983:244). Thompson, writing in 1938 about the Indian immigration into Natal 1860 – 1872, places the figure for Christians at 5% (Thompson, 1938:20), which compares fairly well with Brain's 4.6% for that period (Brain, 1983:243).

4.3.4 Mission among the Hindus in Natal

The DRC's initial outreach to Hindus in Natal was of a sporadic nature. In the early days there were those unknown men and women who came into contact with Hindus and witnessed to them about Christ. The first Hindus that came to South Africa landed in Natal in 1860. As indicated in the previous chapter, the attitude of the up-country settlers and their concern about their own rights led to a recommendation to abolish indentured Indian labour in 1887. When in 1894 the number of Indians passed that of the European settlers, the spectre of being swamped caused considerable concern. In 1896 the Indians were deprived of the franchise. In spite of Gandhi's efforts, the South African Government was only interested in Indian labour and was determined not to countenance Indians as citizens in a White man's state (Brian, 1989:333 - 334). Various acts were passed to curtail the rights of Indians. In 1950 this inevitably

led to the infamous Group Areas Act 41, being passed by the Nationalist Government that had come to power in 1948. It was the logical result of previous policies (Brookes, 1956:293).

This backdrop of political upheaval not only negated the Gospel but blocked the potential desire to share the Gospel with Hindus. The members of the Dutch Reformed Church were linked “*nolens volens*” with the so-called Afrikaner Government. Christians that went to visit Indian homes to share the Gospel were looked upon as officials of the Government, police or city councillors! Later when the first church buildings were inaugurated, Hindus (and Muslims) were of the opinion that the buildings were financed by the Government and that the ministers were paid by the Government.

From the perspective of potential outreach workers and Christian witnesses the problem was even more complicated. The fact that the British were responsible for the Anglo-Boer war and its concentration camps and were in charge of India, left the Afrikaners and the Dutch Reformed Church with a feeling of extreme dislike for the English and their language, not to mention the importation of their subjects from India. Both England and India reacted furiously to the passing of the Group Areas Act of 1950, and South Africa stood accused before the United Nations. Many Afrikaners refused to speak English or to do business with Indians. You could preach the gospel in any language, provided that it was not English.

The Dutch Reformed Church in Natal had a very small membership in the early years. The number of congregations in the Durban-Pietermaritzburg area, where approximately 80% of the Indian population resided, had grown to only a few churches and was at the time dwindling in numbers. Consequently little financial support could be rendered for this work. The exposure of the Afrikaner to the Indian was negligible. The result was that the work among the Indian people was neglected. This also explains why it took the DRC such a long time to get officially involved in this mission. Those who did get involved earlier were often frowned upon.

In 1945 Mr B L Mitchell and Mr N J S de Bruin began outreach work in the Raisethorpe area in Pietermaritzburg. They gathered a small informal

congregation. Here Rev M W Theunissen conducted regular services while still involved with mission work among the Zulus. A year later the Natal DRC accepted responsibility for this congregation (Pypers, 1995:2). The congregation comprised almost 100% former Hindus.

Mr de Bruin was a member of the DRC and served for a period with Pastor J F Rowlands of the Full Gospel Church. He did not break his ties with the DRC, and desired that his work would eventually be linked with the DRC. In 1947 his converts were baptized and confirmed as members of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (Pretorius, 1976:1). This was the beginning of the formal mission work of the DRC among the Indian people in South Africa. There was great excitement among the members of the Natal DRC Missions Committee (Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal) as reported in the minutes of 8 August 1946:

Die vergadering aanvaar hierdie werk as komende van die Here...die Kerkraad van Pietermaritzburg sal die werk onderneem met die ondersteuning van die Sinodale Sendingkommissie (SSK NGK Natal, 1946-1964:2/38).

At this point in time the minutes record the desire of the Committee that, because this work is the responsibility of the mission of the Dutch Reformed Church at large, a letter should be written to all the Synodical Missions Committees in the country to obtain their support, financially and otherwise (SSK NGK Natal 1946 – 1964:2/38).

In 1947 a sub-committee was formed to co-ordinate the work among the Indian people. It was decided to build a Church in Raisethorpe (Pietermaritzburg), to provide a place of refuge for the persecuted believers; and to consider the position of Mr N J S de Bruin. The Federal Council of DR Churches decided to request £1 from every congregation for this work. The following year Rev J Pretorius, who was involved in the ministry of the NGKA, was called to pioneer the work among the Indian people of Pietermaritzburg. He became the first missionary to the Indian People on behalf of the DRC. He found the work so difficult that he was on the verge of giving up. He persevered, however, and in 1957 the first congregation of the Indian Reformed Church the IRC (as it was

then called), was established. Rev J Pretorius was elected Chairman of the Convention of the IRC in Pietermaritzburg in 1968 as well as first Moderator of the Church.

Rev D P van Zyl Laurie, missions secretary of the DRC of Natal, took a keen interest in the work and obtained a huge piece of land in Raisethorpe in October 1946 (5,9160 acres for R2,520). He enlisted the help of some young people under the leadership of Mr Fanie van der Walt (Pretorius, 1976:2). They concentrated on Sunday school work and got a number of children from Hindu homes to attend.

It was at this time (1948) that Rev J Pretorius was called as missionary to the Zulu people of Southern Natal and as part-time worker among the Indian and Coloured people. He was received in Pietermaritzburg on 30 January 1948. His area of work stretched from Harding to the Tugela River and included Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

Rev M W Theunissen laid the foundation stone of the church building in 67 Delhi Street, Raisethorpe on 26 September 1949 and shortly after the arrival of Rev J Pretorius, the church, was inaugurated. Members of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (*NG Sendingkerk*) who had moved from Harding into the area, and attended the services at Raisethorpe. At the time a few members of Mr de Bruin's group left the Church. According to Rev Pretorius, Mr de Bruin's followers had joined the DRC with ulterior motives. Some were promised a place to stay on the Church property and to cultivate (green) fresh produce. When this did not materialise, many lost interest in spite of transport provided to the Church services.



Rev Theunissen and colleagues with first converts from Hinduism in Pietermaritzburg

This was a critical moment in the mission of the Church. Some were of the opinion that it would be futile to continue with the work and that it should be left to other churches. Nevertheless, the mission secretary, Rev D P van Zyl Laurie, persevered and in 1957 Rev J Pretorius was called as full-time missionary to the Indian people. When Rev Pretorius accepted the call, Rev D P van Zyl Laurie was deeply moved (Pretorius, 1976:2 - 6).

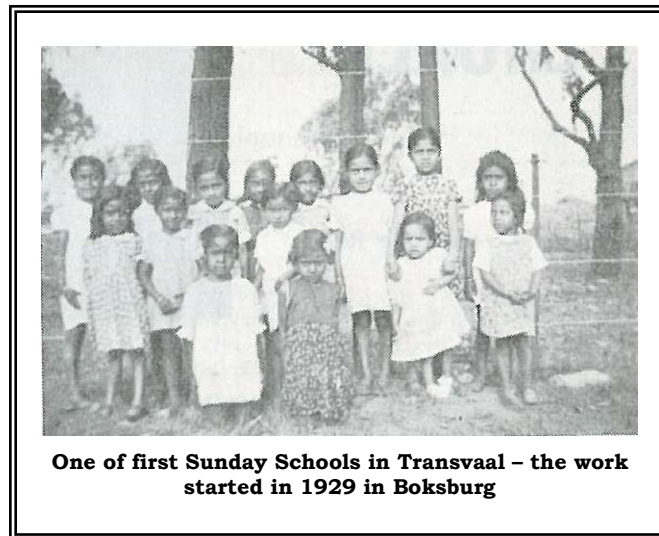
Rev Pretorius wrote that in his work he encountered almost exclusively Hindus. The Muslims were much more difficult to reach and required a totally different approach. In the early years the persecution of Hindus that turned to Christ came mostly from family connections. A lot of pressure was brought to bear upon the converts; rejection and even physical assault took place. If they became Christians for the wrong reasons, they would soon backslide and fall away (Pretorius, 1976:18).

It was in Pietermaritzburg that the importance of dealing with occultism among Hindus surfaced. Through the ministry of Evangelist Albert Murugan, first Evangelist appointed in 1951 to work among the Indians, precious lessons concerning Hindu outreach could be learnt. Upon the conversion and deliverance of Charles Rajah from the power of the spirit of *Dropathi*, a whole family came to Christ (Pretorius, 1976:7). Family members of Ev Murugan subsequently wrote to Rev Pretorius to enquire whether he would require the evangelist's services (Pretorius, 1976:15). When Pretorius acted on the suggestion, Ev Murugan accepted the call and played an important role in helping new converts. Dealing with the occult, became one of the most pressing issues that the RCA, in years to come, would have to handle (cf. Chapter Six, 6.3).

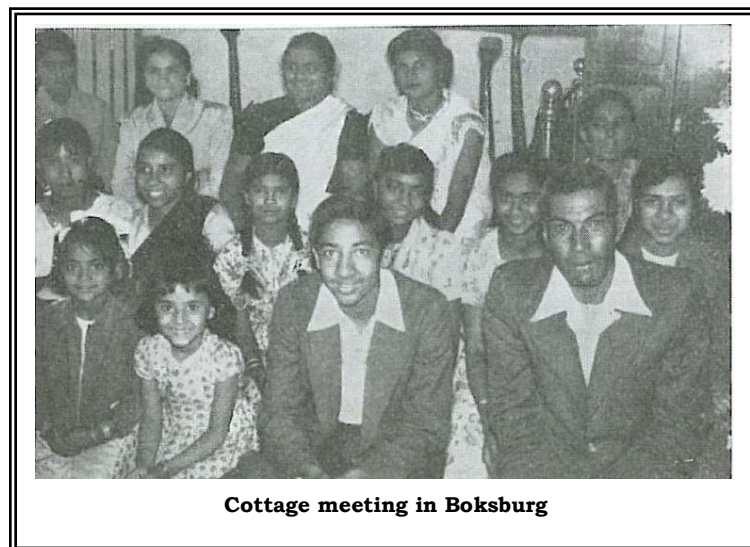
4.3.5 Mission among the Hindus in Transvaal

The beginnings of mission work among Hindus in the Transvaal go much further back than the work in Natal. Miss E Hamman (later Mrs Kelber) attended a conference of the World Student Christian Association in India in 1928 that deeply convinced her of the dire need to reach out to the Indian people of South Africa. On her return she began to conduct open-air services in the Boksburg area. She also started a regular Girls' Club and Sunday school

with the help of her mother and sister. This first Sunday school was opened early in 1931 (NG Kerk Synod Southern-Transvaal, 1957:201).



When the Hammans left, other Christians took over. Gradually these Sunday schools started spreading to other areas in the Johannesburg district.



In 1955 Rev C J A Greyling, (later Prof) was called to take care of the local Dutch Reformed Mission congregation and to give attention to reaching the Hindus and Muslims of Transvaal. On 17 June 1957 he was appointed by a combined committee of the Synods of Southern and Northern Transvaal to work as a full-time missionary among the Indian people of Transvaal. In Pretoria, Mrs H D A du Toit assisted with raising the necessary funds for the work (NGK Suid-Transvaal Sinode, 1959:108 NGK Noord-Transvaal Sinode, 1957:532).



Prof & Mrs H D A du Toit, 2nd & 3rd from the left, at the official opening of the RCA Charisma

Rev C J A Greyling concentrated his efforts in Boksburg, Germiston, Benoni and Pretoria. According to his report to the 1959 Synod of the NGK Southern Transvaal, Rev Greyling obtained a tent and held campaigns in Pretoria, Vereeniging, Springs, Johannesburg, Potchefstroom and in many towns in and around Johannesburg where small groups of believers assisted. On 13 October 1959 four new members were baptised in Boksburg, bringing the total to seven members. There were 45 converts at the time. Youth camps were a successful means of evangelism and many doors and hearts were opened to the gospel (NGK Suid Transvaal Sinode, 1959:109, 295).

One of the first missiological issues that had to be considered in these early days was the need to distinguish between the culture and character of the people on the one hand, and the idolatrous Hindu religion on the other hand. The mistake made in the past to condemn all that was Oriental should not be repeated, was the heartfelt view of Greyling and his helpers (NG Kerk Suid Transvaal Sinode, 1959:109).



In 1956, prior to the full-time appointment of Rev Greyling, the so-called “Kerkjeugvereniging (KJV) Indiërsending” (Church Youth Movement Indian Mission) was established in Pretoria. The work of the DRC among Indians in Pretoria was spear-headed by young people. The minister of the Hartbeesspruit DRC, the Rev J P W de Vries, shared with his youth movement the urgent need for Christian witnesses among the people of the Asiatic Bazaar in Boom Street, Pretoria. He was unaware of any church working among the Indian people there and challenged the youth to reach out to the Indians. In 1955, Dr Oswald J Smith of the Toronto Church in Canada was invited to minister to the members of the Dutch Reformed Church, concentrating on revival and missions. His inspired messages impacted the lives of many young people and prepared the hearts of the youth of the Hartbeesspruit congregation.



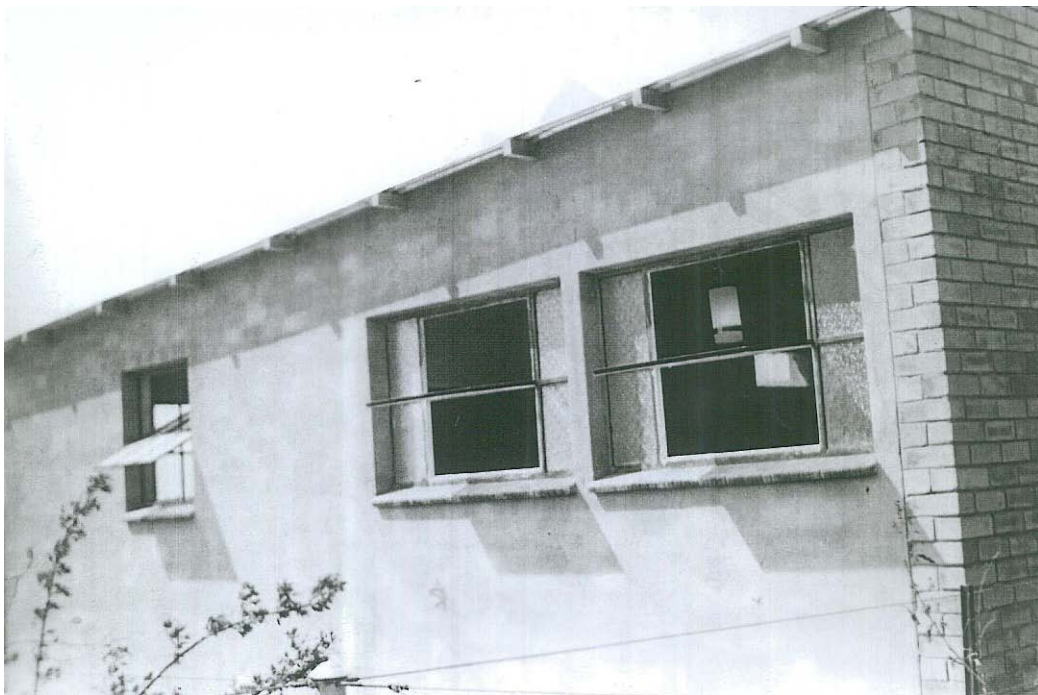
**NGK Hartbeesspruit youth raising funds for the proposed church building in Laudium
(KJV Indiërsending)**

The Chairman of the Missions Committee of the Youth Movement, Mr Gert Reinecke (later Rev) accepted the challenge and on Sunday afternoon 10 June 1956 a group of approximately 10 young people visited Prinsloo Street to reach out to the people there. Some time later they also ventured out to the Asiatic Bazaar. They were soon to be joined by young people from other congregations as well as students from the Pretoria University. The small bunch of volunteers grew eventually to a group of 30 young people that went regularly, on Sunday afternoons, to share the gospel through house visitation and wayside Sunday schools. In good time Rev C J A Greyling joined the outreach in Pretoria and opened the first Sunday school in a home in the Asiatic Bazaar. Open air campaigns were held and a regular Sunday afternoon service was established at a school in the Asiatic Bazaar. The “KJV Indiërsending”, which eventually drew young people from all over Pretoria, was brought under the auspices of the Area Executive of the KJV (later KJA).



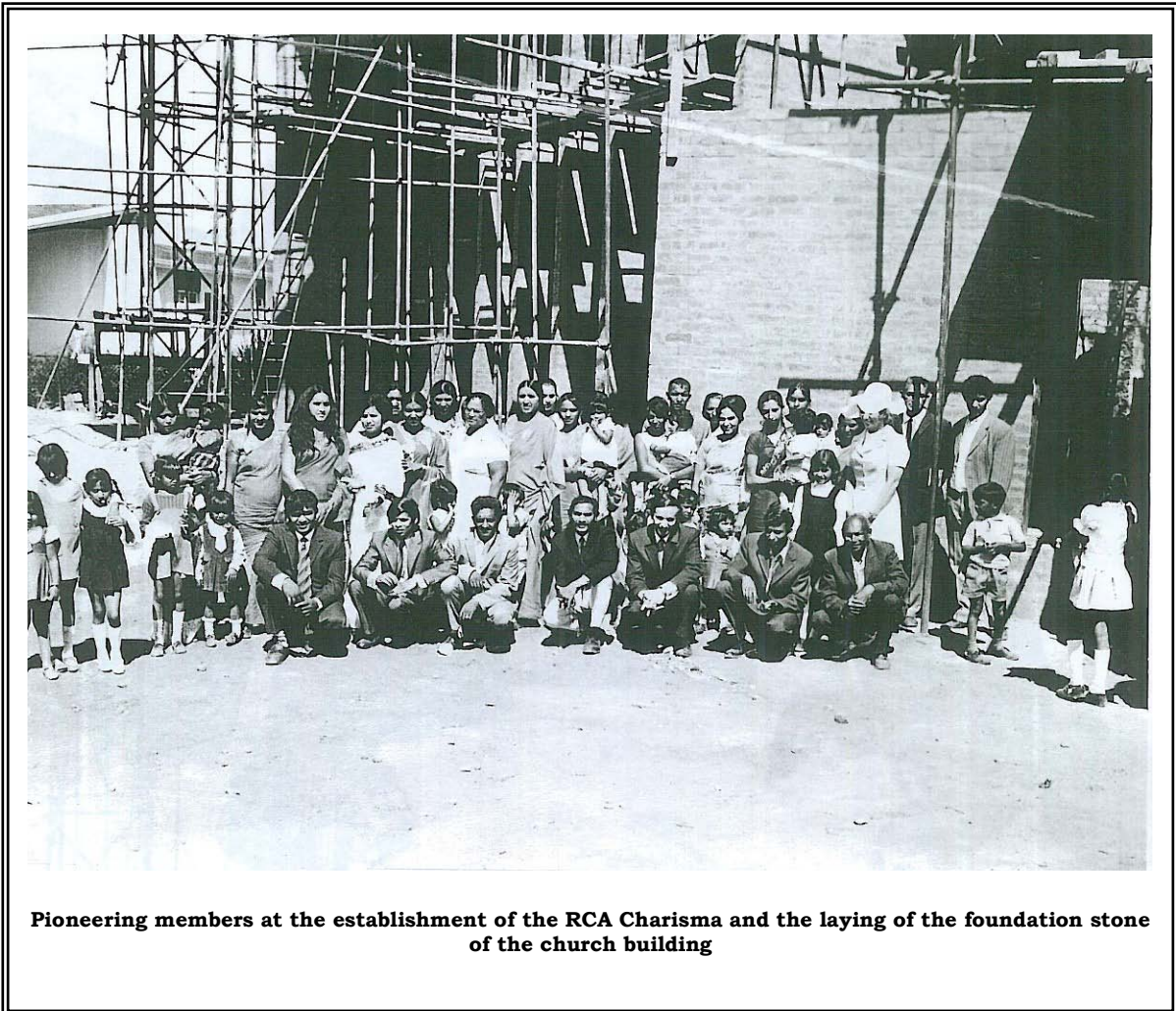
Inspecting the proposed church site In Laudium

Apart from the practical work and the development of a training programme for Hindu outreach, the young people were dreaming of the erection of a church building in the new township of Laudium in Pretoria. At the Synods of Northern and Southern Transvaal it was reported that negotiations were under way for procuring church sites in Claudius (Laudium, Pretoria) and Lenasia (Johannesburg) as early as 1959 (NGK N-Tvl, 1959:182; NGK S-Tvl, 1959:109).



The first church building in Laudium: A garage built on the Evangelist's premises

One of the young people, Mr Johan van Vuuren, came up with the ingenious plan to print and sell Christmas cards to raise funds. The income was earmarked for the work among the Indians and particularly for the building fund. Proceeds could later be used to help support the minister of the Durban - South Congregation, Rev Bunyan Peter.



4.3.6 Mission among the Hindus in other parts of the country

Up to 1960 only sporadic attention was given to the Hindu minority residing in the Cape Peninsula. Then, for the first time in the history of the Cape DRC, a missionary was officially given the task to minister to the Indian Community (Pypers, 1995:1). Rev Pypers pioneered the work with his exceptional pastoral abilities. In 1966 the Dutch Reformed Indian Church (Later Sunthosham) was

established in Rylands. Indian believers as well as members of the DRC assisted and the work spread to Cravenby, Port Elizabeth, East London and Kimberley. The dire need for Indian workers in the field was shared by missionaries countrywide. Rev Pypers was no exception. Towards the end of 1962 he obtained the services of Ev E J Manikkam who was called from Durban-North where he had worked with Rev Pretorius since 1959.

CHAPTER FIVE - A CHURCH BETWEEN THE TEMPLE AND THE MOSQUE: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AFRICA IN SOUTH AFRICA

5.1 The Church between Temple and Mosque: a small but lively community

Having discussed the establishment of the Indian community in South Africa, and having surveyed the accomplishments of a number of Christian denominations among the Indian people, we will now focus on one of the smaller churches in the Indian community; the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA), or as it was initially named: the Indian Reformed Church (IRC) – a church that has had to find its place among the many Hindu temples and the Muslim mosques in South Africa.

A book by J H Bavinck carries the same title as this chapter: *The Church between the Temple and the Mosque*. This chapter, however, deals with the Reformed Church in Africa and underlines the missionary zeal of this Church. The work began in the IRC/RCA as a missionary outreach to the Indian people of South Africa, both Hindus and Muslims.

The official work among the Hindu people was initiated by ordained ministers. When the Church began to train evangelists, the minister and the evangelist worked as a team. In the initial stages of the ministry to Hindus, the evangelists fulfilled a very important task. They would open doors for the minister in so many ways. The result was further growth in the work. The remarkable hospitality offered by Hindu hosts made outreach a joyful experience. Usually the host would insist that the missionary should have a meal with them and then it was curry at its best.

The use of evangelists in the RCA at the time was an absolute necessity. The minister and evangelist team worked well. Minister cum evangelist refers to ONE person fulfilling both roles. The foreign minister and the indigenous evangelist formed a formidable team. The minister and evangelist would spend time in intercessory prayer. Then they would go out to visit the homes that the evangelist

selected. Earlier, evangelists came from other churches, such as the Full Gospel Church and the Methodist Church that laboured among the Indian people. Later, members of the RCA received training as evangelists while they worked among the people. This was true on-the-job training with lectures by the minister as arranged by the Examinations Committee.

In the initial stages of the work church councils would be free to make use of the services of evangelists admitted by the appropriate committee of the Synod. Evangelists not elected for specific offices shall only have advisory representation in meetings of church assemblies (Acta RCA Synod, 1968:36).

The following evangelists were present at the first Synod. They served as elders at the Synod.

Ev K Moodley from Pietermaritzburg (Durban-North)

Ev B Peter from Transvaal (Lenasia)

Ev G S Moodley from Transvaal (Benoni)

Ev R Govender from Transvaal (Pretoria)

Ev J K Naidoo from Durban-South (Chatsworth)

Ev E J Manikkam from Cape Province (Rylands)

Ev A Murugan from Pietermaritzburg was not delegated

Only one elder could represent the congregation
(Acta RCA Synod, 1968:74, 75)

Most of the evangelists were trained by the local ministers in terms of the practical work of outreach, but also through the study material of the Evangelist Course. A two-year certificate course for Evangelists at the University of Durban-Westville was being negotiated by the Liaison Committee of the General Synodical Missions Committee (NGK) and the IRC (Acta Indian Reformed Church Synod, 1970:304). This however became redundant in view of the fact that Synod decided in 1970 to train only ministers (Acta 1970:89): Evangelists were permanent members of Church Council as elders. The Church would only train ministers (Art 20 RCA Church Order).

As the Churches grew in strength and numbers, there were now men and women available in the local congregation to help with the task. In Laudium (Pretoria), for example, there was a team of men and women from the RCA Charisma congregation that were available for outreach. The training in Laudium focussed on Evangelism. A good number of the members of the Charisma Congregation in Laudium made themselves available for outreach, mostly to the Hindu people. The outreach group came from the Hindu world and therefore understood the Hindu people and their religion. They were eventually assisted by young people from all over Pretoria. When the Laudium Township was proclaimed, the enterprise gradually shifted to this area. Several men from this group subsequently became ministers of the Reformed Church in Africa.

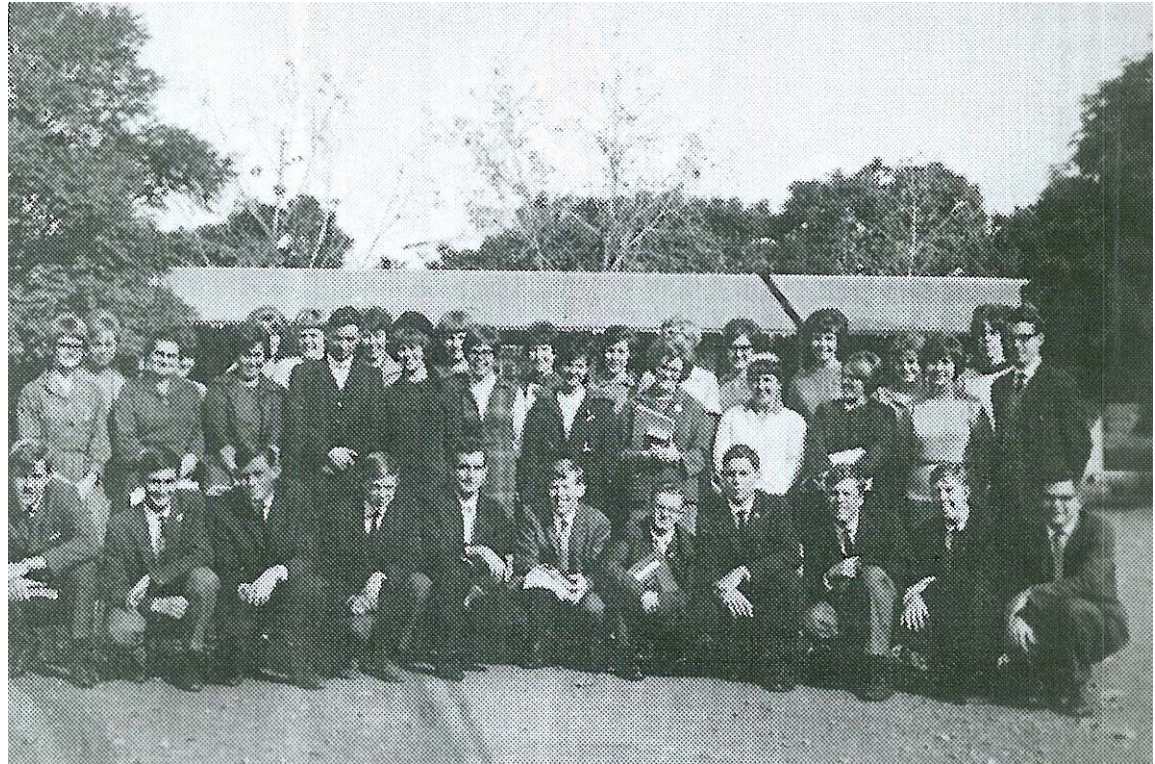
Both men and women from the Dutch Reformed Church in Natal, Transvaal and Cape Province offered their services in reaching out to the Indian people. This happened in the cities where most of the Indians resided, though there were also workers from the Dutch Reformed Church reaching out to Indian communities in smaller towns.

The training was provided by the local ministers of the RCA (then the IRC), where members of the Dutch Reformed Church made themselves available. These men and women were pioneers that reached out to the Indian people long before the Reformed Church was envisaged.

The first leaders of the KJV Indiërsending eventually became ministers and a good number of them, ministers of the Reformed Church in Africa, namely Prof J N J Kritzing, Rev D P Bekker, Dr Douwe Semmelink, Rev T van Niewenhuizen and Rev P J P de Beer. There were also older members of other Dutch Reformed congregations that reached out to Marabastad and later to Laudium. Marabastad had also the exceptional assistance of a missionary, Miss Jo Eringa from Holland, who through the efforts of Prof C J A Greyling, came to settle in Marabastad to reach out to the Indian community. She was a remarkable lady who was deeply loved by the Indians and the youth workers alike.

Right up to the time of writing of this thesis, there are still a good many young people from the DRC involved in Laudium. In other areas it was mostly older

people from the DRC who involved themselves in the work. The Reformed Church in Africa has always enjoyed the much appreciated support of the Dutch Reformed Church.



Youth outreach in Marabastad (Pretoria)

5.2 Establishment of the Indian Reformed Church

In the 1960's when the Indian Reformed Church (as it was then called) was established, the policy of indigenous churches was still in vogue. In the DRC there was an eagerness and urgency to establish churches among all population groups in South Africa. This church would become the 14th younger church in the DRC family. The word 'Indian' in the new name of the Church clearly indicated that it was a church tailor-made for a particular population group. The first ministers of the newly-established church felt keenly about the preservation of Indian culture and regarded westernization and the destruction of their congregants' values and traditions as irreconcilable with the Gospel.

Whereas some participants were eager to establish the Church, many questioned whether such action would not be premature, considering the fact

that the Church consisted only of four small congregations. To this the reply was that the DRC of Natal had also been established with only four congregations many years before.

The process of establishment in 1961 was guided by the General Synod of the DRC, and especially by the General Missions Committee of the DRC. In the early days (1961) the idea was to incorporate the mission among Indians as a separate presbytery into the existing Dutch Reformed Mission Church (Coloureds). This would be the initial step, while the ideal would still remain the establishment of a country-wide united Indian church (Govender, 1973:82).

The establishment of the IRC was not the result of the efforts of missionary organisations but of the Church. It began originally with the voluntary testimony of ordinary members of the Dutch Reformed Church who felt constrained to share the Gospel with Indians, Hindus and Moslems alike. The official Church was often lagging behind, and in certain cases even frowned upon those who were reaching out to a people that they believed should be repatriated to India. In many cases the Church simply did not take notice. In other cases, for example in Pretoria, they had to pay attention: the efforts of the young people forced the Church Youth Movement to officially recognize them as a missionary movement of the Church and to accommodate them as such. Earlier, in Pietermaritzburg in 1946 it was a member of the DRC, Mr N J S de Bruin, who requested the Mission Secretary, Rev D P van Zyl Laurie, to take responsibility for his mission, and for his flock of some fifty adults and children.

Once the Church officially recognised their obligation to reach out to the Indian people, interest in this undertaking spread to all the Provinces of South Africa, including the Orange Free State where, no Indians were allowed at the time. Eventually funds were made available by all synods and within a short period of time (1961) missionaries and evangelists were found in all provinces (excluding the OFS). Within four years (1957 – 1960) full-time missionaries were appointed in Natal, Transvaal and the Cape Province.

In the planning and organization of this venture the mission secretaries and their mission boards took a leading role. In Natal it was the

Rev D P van Zyl Laurie that took the initiative in 1946, to adopt the work of Mr de Bruin and his followers. He and his committee committed themselves to calling someone who on a part-time basis would take care of the Indian work, and being stationed in Pietermaritzburg would be closer to the heartland of the Indian people. In 1948 the choice fell upon Rev J Pretorius. Rev Pretorius knew little about the Indian people but was prepared to undertake the task. He once intimated to Rev de Beer that he had always used the church to start new ventures, first within the DRCA and DRMC and now within the fledgling IRC.

Rev D P van Zyl Laurie was a tremendous encouragement and sometimes admonishment to Rev J Pretorius. Once in 1949 he reacted to a report written by Rev Pretorius as follows:

Die toon van die verslag is nie baie hoopvol nie. Dit kom my voor of u meen dat ons die werk moet staak en op die kleurlinge konsentreer. Van 'n beproefde arbeider soos u, wat al baie harde bene in die bediening gekou het, verwag ons nie so iets nie. Teleurstelling en terugslae moet lei tot ondersoek en tot hernude volharding.

(Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1964:2/104).

Rev J Pretorius said in his reply to the mission secretary that although the facts regarding the work were discouraging and the statistics unnerving, he was not giving up (Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1964:2/104).

The mission secretaries, together with their mission boards, had the huge task of finding financial support for the work among the Indians. This entailed negotiations with those in charge of the work as well as with the mission boards and synods. Problems such as the membership of ministers, the mode of baptism, the length of catechism for the older believers, the necessary regulations to guide the work, the question of the formation of a new church, and the setting up of training for evangelists and ministers surfaced and had to be resolved.

Rev J Haasbroek, Mission Secretary NGK Natal, had the difficult task of coordinating and planning the financial assistance from other synods for the work in Natal, as well as assisting the General Synod in organizing the

convention of the Indian Reformed Church in 1968 in Pietermaritzburg. In his capacity as Mission secretary of Natal where approximately 90% of the Hindu population resided, his task was indeed a major challenge. The precise and transparent way in which he kept the minutes of meetings is of great assistance to researchers.

The mission secretaries of the various DRC Synods of the Transvaal and of the Cape were all inspired by the challenge of reaching out to the Indian people and, together with their mission boards, made their own contribution towards the envisaged 'Indian Reformed Church.'

The procedure laid down by the Natal Mission Board for the establishment of new missions among the Indian people was followed in cooperation and consultation with the Indian Sub-Committee of Natal.

Werkkringe onder Indiërs kan deur plaaslike instansies begin en tot stand gebring word in samewerking en in oorleg met die Indiër-subkommissie van Natal wat tans die funksie van die Ring vervul.

(Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1965).

In those early years before congregations were established the mission boards played a major role. All financial ventures had to be passed by the board. The buying of land, the funds for church buildings and the payment of workers and evangelists had to be handled by the mission boards and the synods they represented. Yet as early as 1946 the Natal Board saw their work, especially in terms of financial commitment, as a country-wide responsibility and decided to write to their counterparts in the other provinces, asking for their moral support and their permission for fundraising in their provinces.

(Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1965)

Major policy decisions were taken at this level. One such issue that was brought to the Board by the Rev J Pretorius in 1956, was the question whether baptism of adults could not be done at the time of conversion with catechism following later. His motivation was the importance of baptism for the convert on account of the mystical value attached to the rite of baptism. The Board decided in favour of this request provided that each candidate should be

considered on merits (Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1965). Following the 1959 Conference of Missionaries this position was reversed and adults could only now be baptised after confession of faith. Eventually the matter was forwarded to the Federal Mission Board for their opinion. Now the question of the mode of baptism as including immersion came into the picture and the Mission Board warned all to treat this matter with the greatest of caution. The issue was finally referred to the General Synod (Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1965). Other matters, such as the drawing up of regulations for the work, the recruitment and training of workers and evangelists, the provision for needy members of the Church, the consideration of educational facilities, etc, were on the table of the Mission Boards.

The moment, however, when the work resulted in the formation of a congregation the responsibility was passed to the church council. The minutes of 15 May 1956 of the Natal Mission Board are self explanatory:

Op grond van die besluit van die Sinode sal die betrokke kerkraad in kennis gestel word dat die beheer van hierdie werk van nou af hulle verantwoordelikheid is. Hierdie beheer sluit die aanstelling van werkkragte in ... Die eiendomme vir daardie werk word kosteloos tot beskikking van genoemde kerkrade gestel ...Die betrokke Kerkrade doen verslag by die Ringe. Van) hierdie verslag word 'n kopie aan die Sendingsektaris gestuur (Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1965).

Initially the work among the Indian people in Pietermaritzburg was to be incorporated in the work of the church council of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. This however did not materialize, according to the Natal Mission Board's minutes of 7 March 1957 (Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1965). As early as 1949 it was decided that the work among the Coloureds was not to be to the disadvantage of the work among the Indians and that services would be arranged separately for the two groups (:1946 – 1965).

Good cooperation existed between the mission boards in the provinces of South Africa. In 1957 the Transvaal Board donated a tent to the Natal Board for

their outreach to the Indians (the Indian work) (Sinodale Sendingkommissie NGK Natal, 1946 – 1965).

Up to 1957 the DRC of Transvaal was responsible for the work among the local Indian community. The Synod of that year decided to take up the evangelising of Indians with greater seriousness and to budget for further expansion (NGK Transvaal Synod, 1957:299). £800 was made available for the work. It was decided to appoint a joint committee for the (NGK Transvaal Synod, 1957:539). When the committee met, substantial funding was made available for the work.

On account of the fact that the Transvaal mission was still in its initial stages, it was decided to combine efforts with Natal and form a liaison committee with Natal. Contact was also made with the churches in the Cape and the OFS (1959:108, 295). The Committee for Indian Mission helped financially to obtain a second missionary for the Transvaal in 1963 (Rev C du P le Roux) as well as a trainee-evangelist (Ev G Sooklingam). They also made it possible to set up a steel structure in Germiston for R2,000.00 to serve as a church building. Serving as representatives of both the Synods of the DRC Southern Transvaal and Northern Transvaal, they negotiated for a third missionary (this time in Northern Transvaal) in the person of Rev Weitz Botes They also succeeded in obtaining church building sites in Lenasia (Johannesburg) and in Claudius (Laudium, Pretoria) (1963:91, 92).

In 1959 the Synod of Northern Transvaal took note of the fact that Rev C J A Greyling was taking care of the Rand, Pretoria and Vereeniging (NGK Northern Transvaal 1959:183). In 1963 the Northern Transvaal Synod expressed their sincere thanks and appreciation to the Lord for the good number of young people that were involved in outreach (Northern Transvaal Synod, 1959:497) and for the enthusiasm of the Church Youth Movement of Pretoria (KJV) in their mission to Indians (Northern Transvaal Synod, 1959:220, 517). The Synod called this movement a 'veerkrachtige en sprankelende loot van die jeugwerk van die Kerk' (:195).

The General Synod of the DRC accepted the principle that the Indian congregations of Transvaal and the Cape be brought in touch with the Natal Congregations and requested the committee for Law and Order to point the way

towards a broader church connection between the various congregations (General Synod NGK, 1966:215). A draft Church Order for the Indian Reformed Church was agreed upon – the English translation being the official document (General Synod NGK, 1966:215, 562). The ASSK was requested to draw up a concept agreement between the DRC and the IRC (General Synod NGK, 1966:215).

The interest shown by the Gereformeerde (Reformed) Church in South Africa led to preliminary discussions with their representatives. The Broad Moderamen of the DRC was requested to draw up an agreement with the Gereformeerde Kerk regarding combined mission work (General Synod NGK, 1966:215).

On 27 August 1968 ministers and delegated elders from four Indian congregations (Pietermaritzburg/Durban North, Durban South, Transvaal and Cape Town) and representatives of the DRC met in the historic little church in Raisethorpe, Pietermaritzburg for the convention of the first Synod. A Church Order and an Agreement with the DRC were adopted (RCA Guidelines on Everyday Life:2).



5.3 The Composition and Role of the Mission Boards

The composition of the mission boards that spearheaded the enterprise, had a definite influence on the way the task was done. The initial work, in most cases, began with the efforts and zeal of members of the Dutch Reformed Church, long before the church officially entered this arena. When the church became officially involved, the necessary machinery had to be created for a much neglected field. A number of bodies on local, regional and national level, accepted responsibility for the task.

5.3.1 The Congregational and Presbytery Missions Committees

The work done by the Congregational and Presbytery Missions Committees was in some cases the first official involvement by the Dutch Reformed Church in this venture. In Pretoria it was the missions committee of the Church Youth Movement (*Kerkjeugvereniging / Kerkjeugaksie*) that initiated efforts to reach the Indian people in the Marabastad and Prinsloo Street area of the Pretoria CBD. When many other young people from neighbouring congregations joined the work, negotiations with the *Kerkjeugvereniging* Northern Transvaal, led to the establishment of the *KJV-Indiërsending*. This body functioned as a subcommittee of the *Gebiedsuniebestuur*, (Regional body) of the KJV.

Church councils found it more difficult to commit themselves to the work so that the researcher was unable to find extensive contributions of Church Council and Presbytery Missions Committees, beyond the receipt of reports regarding outreach to the Indian people. Presbyteries, however, were involved through their representatives on Synodical Missions Committees. In Durban the work was arranged through the Central Missions Board Durban (Sentrale Sending-bestuur Durban [SSBD]), consisting of representatives from church councils. In later years a similar arrangement was made in the Pretoria region.

The work was not easy - as the youth as well as church councils soon realised. There were various debilitating factors that impacted upon the mission among the Indian people with the exception of Durban/Pietermaritzburg. The Indian communities in the rest of the country were relatively small - and the culture

and religions of the Indians were quite unfamiliar to the DRC volunteers. Conversing in English, was for many young Afrikaners quite difficult.

5.3.2 Synodical Mission Committees (Sinodale Sendingkommissies) and Indian Mission Sub-Committees (Indiërsending sub-kommissies)

On Synodical level the Synodical Mission Committees of the various Regional Synods of the DRC were responsible for the work. These committees or their appointed Indian Mission Sub-committees were involved with the planning, funding, calling and ordination/installation of missionaries and evangelists. The sub-committees held regular meetings with report back to their Synodical Mission Committees. Later when the missions were established into congregations the reports also went to the Indian Church Council. At that point in time the work of the Sub-Committees was chiefly related to funding, the erection of church buildings, and advising where required. The work done by these committees was not without tension as is true of any cross-cultural mission. One of the main difficulties was the demand for financial support by the Sub-Committees. In Transvaal and Durban this caused major concern. However, the splendid work done by the committees, together with their key coordinator, the Mission Secretary, cannot be over-estimated. One of the functions of the committees that became more important as the work developed was that of liaison between the DRC Mission and the Indian Mission. Accordingly these Sub-Committees were alternatively called Liaison Committees (Skakelkomitees).

5.3.3 Federal Missions Council (Federale Sendingraad)

The Federal Missions Council held its first meeting in 1942. All the Dutch Reformed Churches were represented at this meeting. The task of the Federal Missions Council included mission policy, planning and coordinating of the work (Federal Missions Council 1942:385). The Indian outreach in its very early days had close contact with this body. In Transvaal, it was the Rand Missions Council (Randse Sendingraad) and the Pretoria Missions Council (Pretoria Sendingraad) that were formed by Synod 1948 and 1954 respectively. The Rand Missions Council often discussed the Indian mission:

Vanaf die begin van die Sendingraad se werksaamhede het die kwessie van die Indiërsending telkemale op die agendas verskyn, en is kommissies van ondersoek benoem (Randse Sendingraad, SSK Natal 1/46:1957).

5.3.4 The Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches (Federale Raad van Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke)

Prior to 1962, when the various Dutch Reformed Churches in the provinces of South Africa united, the Council of Dutch Reformed Churches (Raad van Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke) functioned as the link between the various Dutch Reformed Churches. With the development of the Younger Churches, through the missionary enterprise of the DRC, the need for liaison within the Dutch Reformed Church family was evident. In 1955 the Council of DR Churches decided that a unifying body between the ‘mother church’ and the ‘younger’ churches needed to be established.

In 1960 the Council of Churches of Reformed Confession in Southern Africa (Raad van Kerke van Gereformeerde Belydenis in Suidelike Afrika) was formed so as to include other churches of Reformed Confession. At the next meeting in 1964 the name was changed to the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches to provide for effective communication and advice between the Dutch Reformed Churches.

5.3.5 Liaison Committee for Mission to the Indian People (Skakelkommissie vir Sending onder die Indiërs)

Right from the beginning of the official mission endeavour to the Indian people by the Dutch Reformed Church there were those who advocated the necessity of liaison between the Synodical Missions Committees (SSK’s) of the various Provinces. This would ensure that the fruit of this ministry would develop into one church.

A meeting of the SSKs of Natal and Transvaal was subsequently held on 27 August 1957 when the envisaged Liaison Committee was formed (refer 4.3). OFS and Cape Province joined later.

Op hierdie vergadering is besluit dat 'n "Skakelkommissie van die Sending onder die Indiërs" in lewe geroep word. Die betrokke SSK's het hulle goedkeuring hieraan geheg (SSK Natal, 2/8).

Later the committee was renamed the *Liaison Committee for Muslim and Hindu Mission* (1/42:18/2/63).

At their penultimate meeting on 30th November 1961 the committee took note of the fact that the Natal Synod of the DRC had decided on the formation of a separate Indian Church. The Liaison Committee decided as follows (Haasbroek, 1968):

- Die stigting van een uniale (of Republikeinse) selfstandige Indiërkerk, word as die ideaal in vooruitsig gestel.
- Solank daar egter net 'n paar Indiërgemeentes bestaan, sal daar aansluiting by die Kaapse Sendingkerk (Kleurlinge) gesoek word met die versoek dat die Indiërs as 'n aparte Indiërring in genoemde Kerk opgeneem word.
- Met die oog hierop, word die Natalse Kerk gevra om hulle besluit tot die stigting van 'n aparte Indiërkerk, in hersiening te neem. Dit word aan die Sendingsekretaris van Natal opgedra om hierdie saak voor die betrokke instansies te lê.
- Ook hierdie saak vereis 'n besluit deur die Algemene Sinode en die Federale Sendingraad sal versoek word om dit voor die Algemene Sinode te lê.

The proposal of the Liaison Committee was not acceptable. It lacked ecclesiastical status. The request that this matter be taken up by the Federal Missions Council failed as well. At the meeting of 8 February 1963 note was taken of the decision of the General Synod of 1962 as follows:

Die Hoogerwaarde Sinode besluit om die Sendingwerk onder die Indiërs in die hele Republiek van Suid-Afrika as deel van sy Sendingaksie te aanvaar en dra dit aan sy Algemene Sinodale Sendingkommissie op om weë en middele te vind om die nodige masjinerie daar te stel vir die

behoorlike nakoming van al die verpligtinge in verband met die tans bestaande werk en die uitbreiding daarvan (NGK General Synod 1962: 137, 212, 270).

This was the final meeting of the Liaison Committee in view of the fact that the General Synodical Missions Committee (Algemene Sinodale Sendingkommissie, ASSK) had now become the body responsible for the work.

5.3.6 Sub-Committee for Muslim and Hindu Mission (Sub-kommissie insake Moslem en Hindoe Sending)

On the very same day 18 February 1963, that the Liaison Committee dissolved the new Sub-committee with Rev J J Haasbroek in the chair and Rev C J A Greyling as Secretary, met to take over the work of the previous Liaison Committee. The training of workers remained a priority. The annual conference for workers and the annual meeting of missionaries would continue. The major task of the new committee was the planning of the budget for the work for the period 1964-1965, and the preparation of a Church Order in conceptual form (SSK Natal 1/42:18 February 1963 and Haasbroek, 1968:[sp]).

5.4 The Composition and role of the Pioneering Mission Workers

The first missionaries or trail-blazers called into the Indian work were all white ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. Most had completed their theological studies at the Pretoria University, some at Wellington and one at Stellenbosch. Some served first in a part-time capacity and later in a full-time capacity. The majority however entered the ministry in a full-time capacity. Most missionaries were called into the Indian work as their first occupation. The work was, with a few exceptions, a youthful enterprise done by young people in their twenties. This was also true of most of the lay-workers, particularly the part-time lay-workers. The full-time lay-workers were by contrast mostly older men and women.

The first evangelists, in contrast, were Indian, and mostly older workers coming from churches such as the Full Gospel Church, the Assemblies of God, the Apostolic Faith Mission and the SA General Mission. Others, especially from the Transvaal, were recent converts who received in-house training from the missionaries.

The Reformed Church in Africa is indebted to these early pioneers and to the churches that gave them to this mission. A good relationship always existed between the relatively young RCA and the other churches that had been in the field so much longer.

5.4.1 The first missionary pioneers:-

Missionary	Place	Part Time	Full Time
Rev J Pretorius	Natal	1948	1957
Rev C J A Greyling	Transvaal Johannesburg/Pretoria	1955	1960
Rev D J Pypers	Cape Rylands/Cravenby		1960

Up to 1968 when the Indian Reformed Church was established a number of other missionaries were called, often opening up new fields.

5.4.2 The later Pioneering Missionaries (1959-1983)

Missionary	Place	Full Time
Rev J J B Pretorius	Durban-South	1959 – 1975
Dr C du P le Roux	Germiston/Benoni	1960 – 1983
Rev D P Bekker	Durban-South	1965 – 1984-
Rev W L F Botes	Pretoria	1964 – 1966
Rev P J P de Beer	Pretoria / Durban	1966 – 2004

All of the above missionaries also had pastoral responsibilities in their respective congregations.

5.4.3 Pioneering Evangelists of the RCA (1957 - 1968)

- **Prof C J A Greyling**

Rev C J A Greyling (Chris) was ordained in 1955 as first full time missionary (DRC) to labour among the Indian People of Transvaal. He and his wife Grace worked among the Hindus and Muslims. His ministry of fourteen years in Transvaal centred around the East Rand and Pretoria. From 1969 he continued this ministry in the Cape where he was ordained for mission work among Muslims in Wynberg. He played an important role in the establishment of the Reformed Church in Africa.

His doctoral thesis is titled: *Die invloed van strominge in die Islam op die Jesus beskouing van die Suid-Afrikaanse Moslems*. (D.Th University Stellenbosch, 1976). His passion for the ministry of the Gospel to Muslims never abated and he continued to train believers to reach out to Muslims.

- **Rev D J Pypers**

Rev Danie Pypers was appointed by the NGK in 1960 to reach out to Muslims exclusively, but giving special attention to the Indian community. Rev Dawie Pypers was the first missionary to reach out to the Hindus of Cape Town.

Eventually the Dutch Reformed Indian Church of the Cape Province was founded in Rylands, called RCA Subthosham. Rev Pypers made use of open-air services and suitable film shows. House visitation played a huge role in his ministry. In 1974 as second church building was erected in Cravenby as the work expanded.

In 1976 he relocated to Durban for four blessed years in the ministry of deliverance among the Indian people. He testified to the ministry of divine healing in the power of Christ. Rev Pypers was the first Assessor of the RCA Synod.

- **Dr C du P le Roux**

Dr le Roux was the first Actuary of the RCA. He joined the ministry of Prof C J A Greyling in the East Rand. He was stationed in Germiston (Dawnview). He published a MA thesis, titled *Die Ulama. Hulle rol in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks.* (1978). This was followed by a doctoral thesis titled *Die invloed van strominge in Islam op die Jesus beskouing van die Suid-Afrikaanse Moslems.* This was indeed a groundbreaking work.

- **Rev J Pretorius**

Rev Pretorius was the first missionary, called in 1947 to work among the Indian people of Durban and Pietermaritzburg. He established the first congregation of the RCA in Pietermaritzburg in 1957. Rev Pretorius was used by the church to open up new mission fields. He will be remembered for his role as Chairman of the Meeting when the RCA (then IRC) was officially established. Rev Pretorius was the first Moderator of the RCA (1968). He emphasized the role and value of indigenous evangelists in the ministry of the RCA.

Prior to the establishment of the Indian Reformed Church in 1968 a number of evangelists were appointed. They were all Indian people.

Evangelist	Place
Ev A Murugan	Pietermaritzburg
Ev E J Manikkam (later minister)	Rylands, Cape
Ev G Sooklingam (later minister)	Benoni
Ev K Moodley (later minister)	Sydenham, Durban
Ev G B Peter (later minister)	Benoni / Lenasia
Ev R Govender	Pretoria
Ev S Sukdaven (later minister)	Pietermaritzburg
Ev J K Naidoo (later minister)	Merebank, Durban

The evangelists proved to be a great asset to the work. As co-workers to the missionaries they opened doors to Hindu homes which may otherwise have remained shut to the foreign white missionary. In every place where they were employed growth was seen. The missionaries could teach Christian theology to the evangelists, but the latter taught the missionaries the culture, tradition and religion of the Indian. They brought with them spiritual songs in the vernacular that richly moved and blessed the hearts of those who kept their mother

tongue. The very first evangelist, A Murugan, showed the absolute importance of dealing with the occult and the necessity of the deliverance ministry in this work (Pretorius, 1976:7).

The evangelist's ability to speak at least one of the Indian languages was a great help to reach those who could not understand English. They provided advice on teaching Christian songs in the vernacular. They rendered invaluable service in problem solving in the local churches. They could read their own people and interpret their needs. Most evangelists started as trainee evangelists and then became evangelists after completing their training. Most of them in time became ministers.





5.4.5 Pioneering Lay workers (Lay-Workers) (1946 – 1968)

Some lay-workers started out on a voluntary basis but were later supported financially on a full-time basis.

Lay-workers	Place
Mr N J S de Bruin	Pietermaritzburg Pentrick, Raisethorpe
Mr S V Ramiah	Pietermaritzburg Pentrick, Raisethorpe
Mr A J S van Zyl	Durban Jacobs
Mrs M du Preez	Port Elizabeth
Miss J O Eringa	Pretoria

5.5 Voluntary Workers

In the early years there were many voluntary workers that gave their time and strength to share the Gospel with the Indian community. In Pretoria and Cape Town they consisted mostly of students and other young people, whereas in Pietermaritzburg and in Durban they were more mature. This was also true of voluntary workers in up-country areas as well as in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, East London and Kimberley. In Durban-South, however, there were in the early days many young people that assisted with the work.



In some areas, such as Pretoria, the work was initiated by voluntary workers long before the Church officially rose to the occasion. From the hundreds of young people that laboured temporarily in Pretoria, the following became ministers of the RCA:

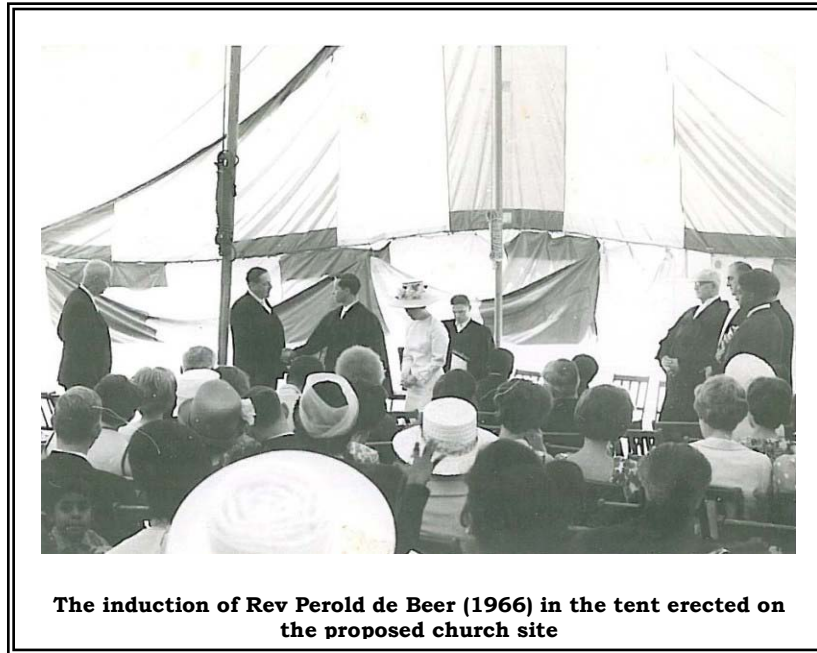
Rev D P Bekker

Rev P J P de Beer

Rev T H van Nieuwenhuizen

Rev (later Dr) L D Semmelink (now Dr)

Rev (later Prof) J N J Kritzinger (now Prof)



5.5.1 Missionary Conferences

Pioneering the work in the 1950's required an understanding of the religions involved, Hinduism and Islam, as well as an understanding of the best possible way to reach the people. Right from the outset contact was made with all involved in the work. This, as we have seen, included Natal, Transvaal and the Cape. Conferences to attend to these matters were held on an annual basis during the early years.

Mission among Hindus and Muslims implied reaching out to people of very strong religious convictions. This task was of a specialised nature that required specialised training and assistance. As early as 1946 when the project officially commenced in Natal the relevant Missions Committee of the DRC Synod worked in conjunction with all the other Synods of the DRC. Initially it meant financial support.

Omdat ons voel dat die werk onder die Indiërs 'n uniale verantwoordelikheid moet wees, veral wat die geldelike las, die aankoop van 'n stukkie grond en die nodige geboue betref, sal 'n skrywe aan die Sendingkommissies van die ander Provinsies geskryf word om hul geldelike steun en toelating vir die insameling van fondse (SSK Natal 2/38:5/8/46).

In 1959, a proposal for an annual conference for missionaries and helpers was adopted. These conferences circulated between Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg/Durban and Cape Town. The conferences provided training for outreach to Hindus and Muslims in South Africa, and united the Indian mission work of the DRC in South Africa.

The SSK of Natal (2/104:6/12/1957) took note of its cordial co-operation with the mission in Transvaal.

Samewerking Tvl. en Provinsies: Die vergadering neem met groot dank en waardering kennis van die basis van hartlike samewerking wat daar veral met Tvl. bereik is t.o.v. Sendingwerk onder die Indiërs.

Proof of this good relationship was the fact that the Transvaal Sub-committee proposed to donate a church tent to their counterparts in Natal.

Earlier, on 27 August 1957, a historic meeting was held in Bloemfontein. Members of the Natal and Transvaal missions committees, together with Rev J Pretorius and C J A Greyling, met to discuss the dire need for cooperation in this mission endeavour (The Cape Province was also invited but could not attend).

It was pointed out that Natal had recently (1957) established a new church among the Indian people without any church affiliation.

Natal het reeds daartoe oorgegaan om 'n nuwe kerk te stig vir die Indiërs, maar tans staan die kerk nog heeltemal buite kerkverband wat juridies 'n onmoontlike posisie is. Om die Indiërs saam met die Kleurlinge te gaan groepeer is ook onprakties. Hier is dit veral die taal wat 'n struikelblok is (SSK Natal 2/104:27/8/1957).

One of the members, Rev G H Oosthuizen, suggested that the whole enterprise be placed under the supervision of the Federal Missions Council. The meeting resolved unanimously to propose to both the bodies, the formation of a liaison committee, consisting of the two executives and the missionaries.

In March 1963 a conference was held in Johannesburg with the well-known Islamist, Dr W A Bijleveld, as guest speaker. His visit was of great encouragement to all who heard him (SSK Natal 2/38:6/9/1962). His lectures were attended by representatives of various denominations. In a report to the Indian Missions Committee in Pretoria (SSK 1/42:21/8/63), the following points were highlighted by Rev C J A Greyling, missionary to the Indian people of Transvaal:



- Die werk onder Moslems is 'n afgeskepte werk.
- Die grootste gedeelte van die wêreld van Islam het Jesus nie verwerp nie, daar hulle Jesus nog nooit leer ken het nie.
- Die Nuwe Testament moet altyd teen die agtergrond van die Ou Testament gepreek word.

The Conference appointed a continuation committee to request official participation in the Islam-in-Africa Project. In this way, information and guidance could be provided to the churches in South Africa, in view of the work among Muslims.

5.6 Training of Ministers

The first missionaries that served in the Indian field were trained at Wellington Bible College and the Theological Faculties, at the University of Stellenbosch and Pretoria. Most of the ministers were trained at Pretoria. In 1968 the position was as follows:

Date	Wellington	Stellenbosch	Pretoria	Total
1968	2	1	3	6

The need for trained Indian ministers was keenly felt, but the opportunities for training were bleak.

During the very early years the small number of Indian ministers doing service in the South African field were trained in India or England. There was no separate institution for Indian theological students in South Africa. In 1908, for example, John Choonoo of the Methodist Church was taken along to India by the Rev Subrahmanyam (born in Madras), to be trained as minister for the South African field (Gerdener, 1958:135).

Pentecostal churches usually provided on-the-job training for their prospective pastors. Eventually they were trained in Bible School.

Ev E J Manikkam was the first Indian candidate to present himself for training for the ministry in the IRC. As he had been trained as pastor of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and then as evangelist of the Indian Reformed Church, he requested ordination in the IRC six months prior to the completion of his course at Unisa. The committee responsible for his training was the sub-committee for Muslim- and Hindu Mission. Both the Actuary of the IRC and the Durban-South church council appealed against the decision of the ASSK to allow Ev Manikkam to be ordained prior to completion of the stipulated course. The Church Order of the IRC, art 9, stipulates the requirement ... *for the minister of the Word a thorough training for and admittance to the ministry by the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Church* (Indian Reformed Church, 1968:33).

A serious discussion followed but on the grounds of art 9 the decision of the ASSK was upheld.

... Colloquium doctum, legitimasie en bevestiging, net soos die opleiding van Indiërwerkkragte rus dus op hierdie stadium, volgens Art. 9 van die Kerkorde, baie duidelik in die hande van die Moederkerk... (Haasbroek, 1970:2).

5.7 Recruitment and training of Evangelists

5.7.1 The Recruitment of Evangelists

The recruitment of evangelists was a crucial issue in the early years. The white missionaries had by and large little knowledge or understanding of the culture and religion of the Hindus and Muslims. English had become the 'lingua franca' of the Indian people. Yet to converse in the language of the heart was a different matter. The first missionaries saw the recruitment of evangelists as absolutely necessary.

The missionaries suffered another difficulty. The political antipathy against the Afrikaner and his church in particular had to be bridged. The Dutch Reformed Church was seen as the state church and had to carry all the negative baggage attached to such a position. When the work started in the late 1940's it coincided with the Afrikaner coming to power in 1948 with its policy of apartheid and all its negative connotations. Many Indian people were under the impression that the missionaries were paid by the state and the state provided the finances for church sites and church buildings. The policy of separate development and the forced removal of people made the work, especially among the intelligentsia, well-nigh impossible.

One of the first prospective candidates recruited in Pietermaritzburg left on the second day probably because of opposition from the Indian community against 'die Boerevolk in die algemeen weens staatkundige wrywing wat daar bestaan' (SSK Natal 2/38:7/9/48). Rev N W Theunissen, secretary of the Indian sub-committee, pictures a dark scenario for the mission:

Op grond van hierdie laaste staan die werk onder die Indiërs voor 'n swart en donker tydperk. Daar word egter besluit, omdat ons in die krag van die Evangelie glo, om onvermoeid met die werk voort te gaan en te soek na 'n ander evangelis (:7/9/48).

The message of the missionaries was questioned on account of the fact that they represented a people that could not offer anything better than the high moral code and religious devotion among Hindus. As some Indians were, by virtue of their birth, assumed to be Hindu, so all whites, Afrikaners and Englishmen alike were regarded as born Christian. On the beaches and in the night clubs of Durban where many ordinary Indian people had to work for a living, they saw how whites behaved and were disgusted. The only way the Gospel could be presented was to make a clear distinction between so-called Christians and born-again Christians.

The born-again evangelist (without the baggage of the white missionary) could offer an open door to the heart of the Hindu and Muslim and introduce the missionary to the people in a much better way than any self-introduction could.

It was also the evangelists that introduced the people in the early years to their beloved Christian lyrics in Tamil, Telegu and Hindi. These songs often opened the hearts of Hindus to the Gospel message.

The recruitment of evangelists in the Transvaal was approached differently. In the Johannesburg area, one of the early converts, Redji Moodley, offered himself for the ministry and was subsequently trained as evangelist. Another convert, Ramsamy Govender, was also trained as evangelist for the Pretoria region.

The third evangelist to apply for the ministry in the Indian Reformed Church, Ev Buyan Peter, was a minister of the Indian Christian Church (South Africa General Mission). His congregation decided unanimously to apply for incorporation into the Indian Reformed Church of Transvaal. The Liaison committee for Moslem and Hindu mission proposed the acceptance of the application. The minister would have to receive *colloquium doctum* and would function in the capacity of an evangelist (SSK Natal 1/42:18/2/63).

Ev G Bunyan Peter hailed from an evangelical reformed background whereas the evangelists in the Natal region were from a Pentecostal background (SSK Natal 1/42:18/2/63).

5.7.2 The Training of Evangelists

The vital issue was not the training of evangelists but the training of missionaries! It was the evangelist that held the key to that training. The annual conference of missionaries underscored the dire need for such training.

The training of evangelists was required for the following purposes:

- A proper theological training in Reformed doctrine. Many of the early evangelists came over from Pentecostal churches.
- A proper training in Presbyterian church policy and administration. The evangelists that came over from other churches were used to a church government that was by-and-large seated in the pastor.
- On-the-job training was a necessity. The work had to be established while theory would go hand in hand with practical experience.
- Appointment to a position would initially be on a temporary basis to ensure that both worker and missionary acknowledged that this was a call from God.
- A Reformed view of the *deliverance ministry*. This very important aspect of reaching Hindus and Muslims for Christ should be delivered from unbiblical practices.
- The training had to be developed on a unitary basis where all missionaries were consulted in setting up the parameters and contents of such training.

As early as 27 August 1957 a meeting was held in Bloemfontein to appraise the cooperation between the Natal and Transvaal Missions. The question of the training of evangelists was high on the agenda.

Hoewel die name van ander inrigtings genoem is, was die eenparige gevoel van die vergadering dat ons self ons evangeliste moet oplei al is dit op 'n deelydse basis in samewerking met die leraars van die Moederkerk. Die saak is na die sendelinge verwys om na verdere bespreking die vergadering van die skakelkomitee verder te lei in die verband.

(SSK Natal 2/104)

The missionaries in the field were given the task to train the prospective evangelists that they recruited to work with them. The importance of a Reformed training was stressed.

Die vergadering sal egter graag sien dat waar en hoe die opleiding ook al geskied, dit sal bydra om die kandidate Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk bewus te maak.

(SSK Natal 2/38:5/5/55)

The curriculum for the training of evangelists was spread over two years. At a meeting of the Missionaries among Muslims and Hindus (Johannesburg 11/1/62), concern was expressed that the lectures were not up to standard. To assist the students it was decided that papers would not be written at the end of the year as in the past. Examinations would be taken on a three-monthly basis preceded by 3 to 4 weeks of in-depth lectures on the subject.

The curriculum for 1962-1963 was divided into three quarters as follows (:1/42)

Quarter 1

1962: Comparative Religion	(Rev C J A Greyling)
Sects	(Rev D J Pypers)

Quarter 2

Church Policy and Administration	(Rev J Pretorius)
Pastoral Theology	(Rev C J A Greyling and (Dr C du P le Roux)

Quarter 3

Dogmatics and Ethics

(Rev C du P le Roux)

Bible History

(Rev J Pretorius)

5.8 Recruitment and Training of Lay Workers and Voluntary Workers

Right from the beginning of the Indian Mission, paid lay workers were used. Some began as voluntary workers that were subsequently recompensed. This was the case in Pietermaritzburg. In Raisethorpe the Dutch Reformed Church in the city conducted small Sunday schools for the white children living in this mainly Indian area. Mr B L Mitchell noticed the interest of the Indian children and the need for a missionary. He met with Mr N W S de Bruin who gathered a small congregation around him (De Beer 1970:4) Rev M W Theunissen was so moved by his work, that shortly afterwards the Synodical Missions Committee employed him as a part-time DRC lay worker and took responsibility for the work. This was in 1946. Mrs Dorothea Stevens was also employed as a teacher and paid by the mission board (SSK 2/38:27/5/48). Later, in 1950, Mr Stephen Ramiah was employed as a teacher (:15/2/59). Some problems were experienced in the appointment of lay workers. Rev Pretorius who was disappointed with the irregular coming and going of lay-workers, writes as follows:



Spiritual workers from Durban RCA visiting Charisma

Maar tot op daardie stadium het nog alle leke hulp van die kant van die Moederkerk in enige deel van ons kerk arbitrêr opgetree; hulle het gekom en gegaan na eie goeddunke (Pretorius 1976:11).

In Pietermaritzburg the following voluntary workers conducted services: in Greyling Street Mrs Moolman; at Sewerage Farm, at Pentrich Mr v d Walt and a number of friends, and in Durban it was Miss Kriel who offered her services (Pretorius in SSK Natal 2/104:29/6/48). Most of the voluntary workers assisted temporarily.

5.9 General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church

The establishment of the General Synod of the DRC in 1962 brought a new sense of unity among the existing Regional Synods of the DRC. This development had a direct bearing upon the life of the Indian Reformed Church. The Indian mission in Natal, Transvaal and Cape Province was never attempted in isolation. The commitment to reach Hindus and Muslims in South Africa, with all the challenges involved with such a venture, inculcated a sense of *koinonia*, togetherness, among all the missionaries. The missionaries' meetings and workers' conferences underlined this absolute need for one another's encouragement, support and advice.

The support, encouragement and financial provision given by the various Synods through their SSK's were indeed laudable, but it could never be compared with the experience of those who were spearheading the work at grassroots level.

The drive in the early years to build a truly indigenous church was shared by both missionaries and SSK's but the servant hood and humility required was seen from a different perspective. The policy of apartheid strained relationships. Some bodies saw the Indians as those people, for most missionaries they were my people.

The advent of the General Synod provided a new platform to combine the work in the various provinces and hasten the formation of one church, the Reformed Church in Africa.

The request of the Liaison Committee for Indian Mission the previous year, 1960, (Haasbroek, 1968:[n.p.]) for the incorporation of the Indian congregations into the Dutch Reformed Mission Church as a separate Indian Presbytery - a cause which was strongly endorsed by Rev J Pretorius - was now wiped from the table.

Vanaf die stigting van die Indiërkerk in Natal was ek van mening, dat die kerk te jonk is om op eie bene te staan en dat dit noodsaaklik is dat dit aansluiting moet hê by een van die bestaande sendingkerke, waarvan die NG Sendingkerk van Kaapland die verkieslikste is. Die gedagte was dat dit die Indiërkerk die geleentheid sou gee om op gesonde grondslag te ontwikkel tot 'n volwaardige kerk, voordat dit op sy eie as kerk sal bestaan.

The 1962 meeting of the General Synod of the DRC spearheaded the direction in which the Indian Mission would develop by accepting the mission among the Indians countrywide as part of its missionary responsibility (:137, 212).

5.10 Establishment of the First Four Congregations

5.10.1 Pietermaritzburg

Rev J Pretorius, first Dutch Reformed Missionary to the Indian community, recognized the value of indigenous evangelists and workers. His previous experience as missionary in the Transkei contributed to this insight. When he accepted the call (Dec. 1947) to minister part-time (attention) to the Indian and Coloured communities, he was still involved with mission to the Zulus of South Natal (Pretorius, 1976:2, 3).

One day Rev Pretorius saw a group of Indian people at the church site in Raisethorpe, walked up to them, and enquired whether they had any knowledge of an evangelist that might be available. He obtained from them the name and address of Evangelist Albert Murugan. An interview was arranged with him and Rev Fourie, Mission Secretary NGK Natal. Ev Murugan was appointed that very same month in 1951 as full-time worker on a temporary basis (Pretorius, 1976:6).

Evangelist Murugan was previously a convert and member of the Congregational Church at Harding. Later he served with the Apostolic Faith Mission. His father was a Hindu priest (Pretorius, 1976:7).

The task was never easy. There were many disappointments along the way. At one point Rev Pretorius was on the verge of giving up. In a letter (dated 27/8/1949), Rev D P Laurie, then Mission Secretary, referred to a gloomy report by Rev Pretorius:

Die toon van u verslag is nie baie hoopvol nie. Dit kom my voor of u meen dat ons die werk moet staak, en op die kleurlinge moet konsentreer. Van 'n beproefde arbeider, soos u, wat al baie harde bene in die bediening gekou het, verwag ons nie so iets nie. Teleurstelling en terugslae moet lei tot ondersoek en tot hernude volharding (D P Laurie, 1949).

In his reply Pretorius included some very disconcerting statistics:

Of a membership of 14, 10 had left.

The attendance figure had dropped from 47 to 7.

The appointment of Ev Murugan, however, changed the situation.

Toe ek op die punt gestaan het om by die kommissie aan te bevel dat ons maar voorlopig eers die werk onder die Indiërs moet beëindig; want selfs vorige navrae onder die Indiërs in die soektog na 'n evangelis, het niks opgelewer nie, was ek op 'n dag in Januarie 1951 weer op die perseel Delhiweg 67... Die aanstelling van evangelis Murugan het 'n nuwe era in ons sending onder die Indiërs ingelei. Van die begin af het hy die werk baie ernstig opgeneem en gou blyke gegee dat hy 'n ervare werker is (Pretorius, 1949:6).

Albert Murugan was taught doctrine, liturgy and church administration by Rev Pretorius. Six years later, in May 1957, upon the establishment of the Indian Reformed Church, the Synod of the NGK of Natal accorded him the status of Evangelist (:7). Rev Pretorius admitted that he had learned a great

deal about the Hindu religion from Ev Murugan. In 1952 he witnessed the conversion of a large Hindu family who, they were delivered from evil spirits and healed (:7).

The Church continued to grow and Rev Pretorius writes regarding this period as follows (:7):

Van die staanspoor af was die werk van evangelis Murugan op Pietermaritzburg baie geseënd. Die aantal bekeerlinge het aangegroei, sodat binne die eerste ses jaar, 46 lidmate voorgestel en 79 groot en klein gedoop is.

Murugan preached in Tamil and English. He was an experienced worker and within a short time brought 11 converts to the Lord. In his report of 17 August 1951 (SSK Natal 2/104) Rev J Pretorius writes:

Ons voel dat daar 'n nuwe stadium in hierdie werk gekom het en is seker daarvan dat dit die wil van die Heer is dat ons kerk onder die Indiërs van Suid Afrika sendingwerk moet doen, en dat baie seker met hierdie werk voortgegaan moet word, en daar is baie geleentheid om dit te doen. Ons gaan in die geloof voort daarmee, en weet: Hy wat ons geroep het, is getrou om dit te doen.

5.10.2 Transvaal

In 1955 the Rev C J A Greyling was selected as the first missionary of the DRC to the Indian People of Transvaal. He was stationed at Johannesburg. Three years later (1960:65) he reported to a Mission congress in Kroonstad that there already were some small groups of Christians in nine different locations on the Rand; 7 communicant members, 220 children in the Sunday schools and 100 attending services. A campaign in Germiston was attended by 160 to 200 adults. The number of children attending children's services was up to 300. At youth camps about 50% of participants were Muslims.

In 1959 Dr C du P le Roux joined Rev Greyling as the second missionary to Transvaal, and was inducted in the pre-fabricated building in Germiston. His area of work was the East Rand and he was stationed in Germiston (SSK 2/8: 1968). In 1964 Rev W Botes was received in Pretoria as the third missionary (SSK 2/8:1968).

On 16 April 1965, the congregation of Transvaal was established and in February 1966 the three missionaries, Rev C J A Greyling, Dr C du P le Roux and Rev W Botes, were inducted as the first ministers of the Indian congregation of Transvaal (:1968).

They were accompanied by two evangelists in Transvaal, Ev B. Peter, assisting Rev Greyling; and Ev G S Moodley, assisting Dr le Roux. Botes in Pretoria was assisted by trainee-evangelist, R L Govender.

The congregation in Transvaal became the second congregation of the Indian Reformed Church. At the time mission work was done in the following areas:

Southern Transvaal	Johannesburg Vereeniging Lenasia Krugersdorp East Rand Germiston Benoni Klerksdorp
Northern Transvaal	Pretoria Marabastad Laudium Lady Selbourne Witbank Middelburg

The statistical position of the congregation Transvaal prior to the establishment of the Synod was as follows:

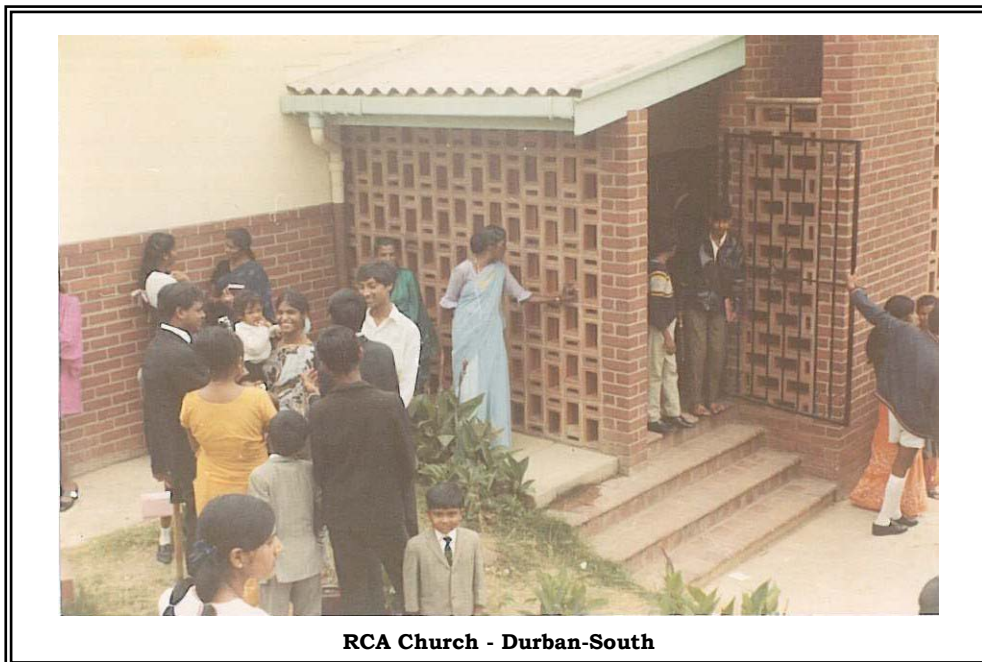
Year	1964/5	1965/6	1966/7
Baptismal Members	571	613	721
Communicant Members	47	-	90
Sunday Schools	22	-	19
Sunday School Pupils	370	-	520
Teachers	30	-	35
Church Council Members	1	2	19
Church Council Properties	-	2	2
Income DRC S/Transvaal	-	R 7,581.91	R 9,646.53
Income DRC N/Transvaal	R 2,958.65	R 8,603.00	R 9,646.00
Expend DRC S/Transvaal	-	R 10,847.72	R 8,318.34
Expend DRC N/Transvaal	-	R 5,240.72	R 8,318.00

(SSK 2/8 1968)

5.10.3 Durban South (Est. 1965)

The work of the first congregation of the Indian Reformed Church of Natal, Durban South (established in 1957) was spread over a vast area. It included Durban-South, Pietermaritzburg and Durban-North. As early as 1954 the Presbytery of the DRC Natal decided to call a missionary for the Black people in Durban. This person would also be responsible for part-time work among the Indian community. Rev R J J van Vuuren accepted the call in 1955 (Pretorius, 1976:10).

At that stage Mr I van Zyl had a number of converts in his care. Rev van Vuuren catechized them and they were baptised and confirmed some time later. Mr van Zyl was appointed clerk of the first Church Council of the IRC of Natal that was established in 1957.



Rev J Pretorius asked Mr van Zyl in 1954 to assist with the work in Durban. However, in 1957, having consulted with the Indian sub-committee, he informed Mr van Zyl in writing, that on account of the policy of the Church to use indigenous workers, his services would no longer be required. This caused an uproar from the majority of the Church Council as well as the Indian sub-committee (:11). Taking into account, that as early as 1948, Rev Pretorius felt that an evangelist should be appointed for the Jacobs and Wentworth area, one can understand his concern (SSK Natal 2/104: 14/8/48). Rev Pretorius pointed out that his experience with lay-workers in the field proved that they acted arbitrarily but admitted that his own action was a tactical error and that he owed Mr van Zyl much appreciation for the good work done in the early days. Mr van Zyl left the congregation, taking a third of the members with him.

A troubled time followed, resulting in the demand of the Central Missions Council of Durban 'Sentrale Sendingbestuur van Durban' (SSBD) for its own missionary in Durban.



Jeshurun Church Building in Avoca (Durban)
Erected in 1902, from where several missionaries were sent out locally and abroad

An important development was the appointment of Trainee-Evangelist James K Naidoo for Durban. He had heard of the need, and with the permission of the Full Gospel Church (a requirement of the IRC) and some training in the doctrine of the IRC, he started work in November 1958 (:12). When the Church council met on 22 November 1958, Evangelist J K Naidoo was appointed Clerk of Council.

The following year Mission Candidate J J B Pretorius accepted a call to Durban and on 16 May 1959, in the church building in Jacobs Road, he was inducted a co-minister of the Indian Reformed Church of Natal. He left two years later for Molteno 'for health reasons.' (Minutes, RCA 2:20/5/61) after a difficult ministry in what Rev J Pretorius called a two-headed congregation 'tweekoppige gemeente' (Pretorius, 1976:14). A year before his departure, Rev J Pretorius moved that the possibility of forming another congregation be investigated (RCA Minutes, RCA 2:27/8/60). Taking note of the unpleasantness and discord

and the lack of co-operation between the two branches of the congregation, and the absence of any prospect that they would ever work together, the Church Council resolved that at the next meeting they would investigate the possibility of dividing the congregation into two.

The Council of Elders (investigating committee) suggested that the Missions Committee appoint a missionary-supervisor to have oversight of the work and act as liaison (RCA 2:5/11/60). Their recommendation not to divide the congregation into two served on the following grounds: 'numerically insufficient' ... 'low financial strength...' 'lack of spiritual integrity' (RCA 2:5/11/60). The vote for or against the establishment of a new congregation was equally divided between the council members of the two areas: Durban-South 5 for: and Pietermaritzburg/Durban-North 5 against (:20/11/60).

The converts in the Clairwood area, met in a little shop in Jacobs Road which was leased from a Muslim shop owner. This was the area where many of the 1860 contract labourers had settled (Pretorius, 1976:14). A very good site (188 Jacobs Road was bought from the Durban Corporation and here the first proper church building for the Durban-South area was completed in 1959. A home for the Evangelist was built on the site as well (Pretorius, 1960:2, 3).

The Indian Reformed Church in Natal realised that the calling of a minister in the place of Rev J J B Pretorius, would have to wait for the right time, when a new congregation could be established in Durban-South (Pretorius, 1976:16).

In the meantime the Clairwood Jacobs area had become increasingly industrialised while the centre of Indian housing moved to the sprawling Chatsworth city. The Natal Synodical Missions Committee suggested on October 7, 1964 that the property in 188 Jacobs Road, be sold in aid of a church to be built as a first priority on the church site at 46 Warangal Road (Minutes SSK 2/4:8). A loan of R18,000.00 was to be negotiated with the General Missions Committee. Financial assistance was to be made available for the vacant missionary/minister's post in Durban-South (:4).

Prop D P Bekker was appointed in April 1965 as a part-time worker in the Durban-South area while funds were still awaited for the post.

Subsequently, on 24 April 1965, the second Indian congregation was established for the Southern part of Durban, and the South Coast, and named Durban South.

At the SSK meeting the two church councils met to discuss the church visitation and Christian life of the congregations. Historically this could be regarded as the first Presbytery meeting of the Indian Reformed Church (Report SSK 2:Nov 1966).

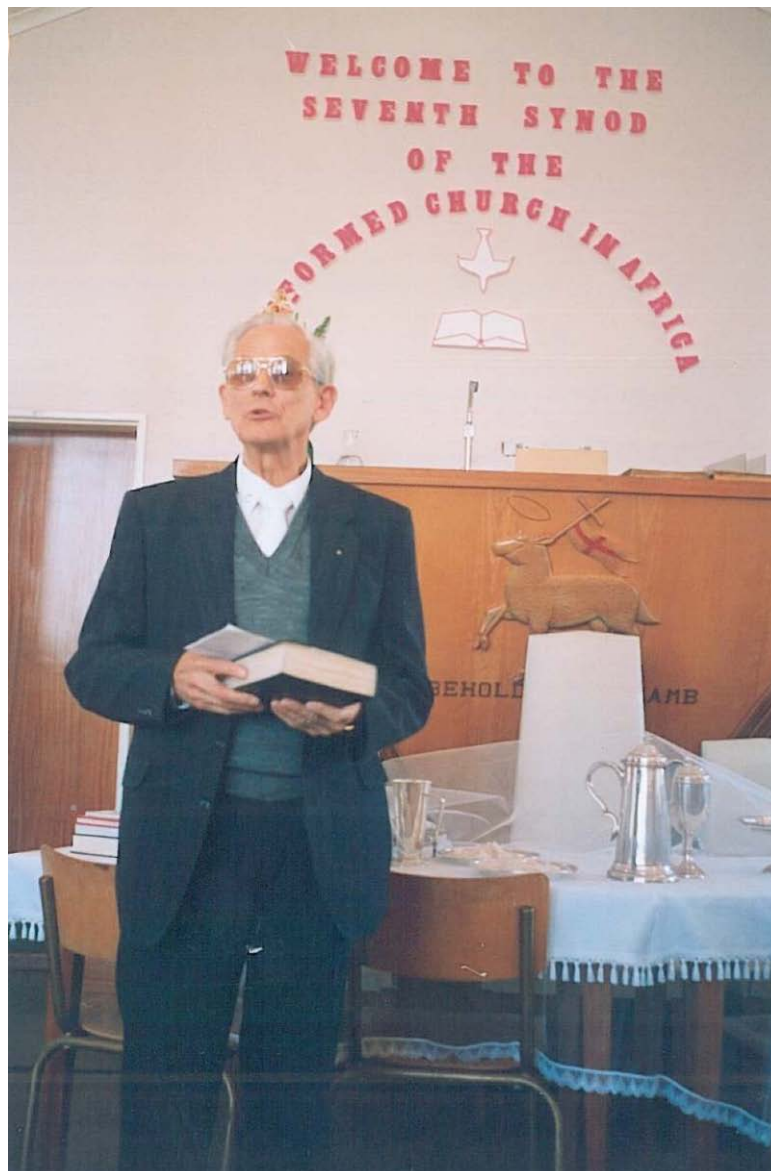
On 12 May 1965, the SSK of Natal called Prop D P Bekker as missionary for Durban South. He was ordained and inducted on 20 June. (:Nov 1966).

5.10.4 Cape Province (1966)

Way back in 1916 the DRC of the Cape Province appointed Dr G B A Gerdener to minister to the Muslim Community of Cape Town. He was succeeded by Rev A C van Wyk in 1940. In 1943 Rev P S Latsky of the St Stephen's DRC took over this work as part-time minister but after a decision of the 1956 DRC Cape Province Synod, Rev D J Pypers was appointed in 1960 to minister to Muslims exclusively. He was specifically requested to give special attention to the Indian community (Pypers [sa]:1).

In 1966 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (*NG Sendingkerk*) accepted responsibility for the Coloured and Malay Muslims in the Western Cape, leaving the DRC responsible for the ministry to Indian Muslims (:1).

Initially a number of voluntary workers of the DRC joined the outreach to Muslim Malays in Rylands. A report from Mrs I Erasmus and Miss A van Niekerk and J van Zyl in 1965 mentions children's Christian clubs in Cape Town and Phillipe where especially Muslim children were reached (RCA 47:1975). They were also involved with the work begun in Rylands where they conducted the Sunday school. At that time the membership of this mission was only 12.



**Rev Dawie Pypers at the RCA – Cape Province.
He had a passion for reaching the Muslims and accepted a challenge
from the Muslims to a debate with Achmad Deedat regarding
Christian Faith versus Islam.**

The voluntary workers believed that children presented a good point of contact to reach the Muslim parents, though the children were often penalised by their elders for attending what was called the 'Children's Circle' (*Kinderkring*). They used this name instead of *Sunday school*, to avoid persecution from the parents (RCA 47:1964 Report J van Zyl). Other voluntary workers were Miss R Olivier, Q du Toit and I Gilfillan.

On 2 October 1965 the first Church building of the Indian Reformed Church in the Cape was inaugurated. On this occasion the first 12 members of the fledgling congregation were confirmed (RCA 47:1965 Report). A year later, in 1966, a congregation was established in Rylands, to become the fourth congregation of the Indian Reformed Church.

The need for Indian workers was felt by all the missionaries and by the end of 1962 Rev Pypers obtained the services of Evangelist E J Manikkam who was called from Durban North where he had worked with Rev Pretorius since 1959. In addition to Rylands, the mission also spread to Cravenby. In 1965 work amongst Cape Muslims expanded when a group of young people started a ministry to Muslims in Port Elizabeth. Later Mrs Magda du Preez was to work full time in this ministry (Pypers, 1995:1).

5.11. Mission Endeavour and Church Policy in a Challenging Environment

The political environment was not at all conducive to mission endeavour, especially while the carriers of the Gospel were white and linked with the policy of the Government at the time. The integrity of the white missionaries was obviously questioned. The fact that the DRC was so closely aligned with the policy of separate development closed many doors to the missionaries. The forced removal of Indians affected the work adversely. The writer recalls how he, as a student reaching out to the Indian people in Prinsloo Street, Pretoria, was overwhelmed with searching political questions that made the preaching well-nigh impossible. This could very well be the reason why younger voluntary workers preferred to work with children.

The difficult situation challenged all involved to rethink their political viewpoints and theological position. How do you respond to a simple question, such as, 'Sir, can I come to church with you next Sunday while you know that people of colour will not be allowed in your white church.'

5.11.1 Mission Policy

The early missionaries were driven by a desire to present the Gospel clearly and forcefully to the *neglected* section of the population of South Africa. The challenges that they faced were enormous. Their church at the time, the DRC, became to a large extent, the church of the Afrikaner nation, instead of what Alan Paton calls the 'Church-of-Christ' (De Gruchy:ix). Their appearance on the Indian scene was looked upon as an intrusion. There were even those that hid when the missionary came to visit, thinking that it might be the police (sic!). For the average Indian, the Afrikaner missionary represented a political reality that was both hurtful and painful. The whole scenario of apartheid in all its ramifications glared at them: not welcome in South Africa; go back to India; not welcome in so-called white suburbs; business opportunities curtailed; forced removals, etc.

The mission policy employed initially by the average missionary followed closely the policy of the Dutch Reformed Church regarding the formation of an indigenous church. The link between this theological policy and the political aspirations of separate development, were never clearly defined or acknowledged. The tension between being the Church-of-Christ and the Church-of-the-nation was keenly felt by most; others unfortunately ignored it or asserted that it did not exist. For the missionary in the Indian field this tension could never be totally ignored. The true missionary saw the Indian people as 'his people' and often felt rejected by the people of his own nation. He realised that the supreme loyalty must be to Christ, not to the nation.

The policy of indigenous churches, however, already had serious ramifications for the church. The churches, that developed, before mission work began among the Indians, while facilitating the growth of indigenous congregations, had 'divided' the church along *racial* lines (De Gruchy:9).

The strong influence of the Scottish ministers in the Dutch Reformed Church with their pietistic and evangelical theology continued in the DRC. Andrew Murray, the amazing revivals experienced during his ministry and particularly his mission strategy, infused many with the zeal to become missionaries. They would not allow political issues to eclipse their calling to preach the Gospel.

They would not exchange the pulpit for the platform; neither would they fail to prophetically denounce injustice and racial prejudice as counteracting the Gospel. The writer agrees with De Grunchy's view:

In our discussion of the Church in SA we have seen both the need for and the danger of this relationship between Christian faith and culture. The Church exists under God for people. It cannot exist for people if it refuses to speak their language or relate to their existential situation, their fears and their aspirations. At the same time, the Church does not exist to serve culture, it exists for people, and its primary loyalty is to Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. (De Grunchy, 1986:209)

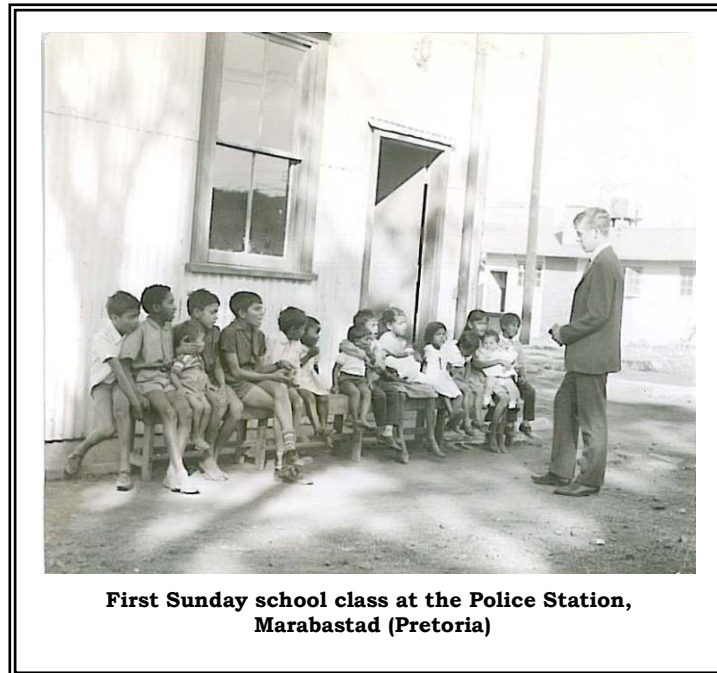
When the mission of the DRC to the Indian began in earnest in the 1950's apartheid legislation was being introduced and implemented at full speed, as bill after bill was adopted, followed by an array of security laws. The Native Laws Amendment Bill of 1957, which made it very difficult for Blacks to attend worship in churches in white areas, brought strong reaction from all the churches (including the DRC). The uprising at Sharpeville (March 1960) where 69 Blacks were killed, ushered in a new era of racial discord and protest. The position of the DRC in terms of human relations was spelt out in the policy document, *Human Relations in South Africa (1966)* and *Human Relations and the South African Scene in the Light of Scripture (1974)*, both adopted by the General Synod (1966 and 1974).

Though there is much in these documents that most churches will agree with, the bottom-line is a scriptural justification of the policy of separate development provided that racial discrimination and injustice are rejected in principle. The role of the DRC in this matter was to insist that the policy be implemented in a just manner.

5.11.2 Outreach

Various methods of evangelisation were employed by the missionaries and the evangelists. The first step was to find a proper venue. In the early days an old shop was used in the Transvaal ministry; a police station in the Pretoria region. In most cases gatherings were initially organized in a home or a yard between

some houses or in a school classroom, usually without any cost involved. In Avoca the work started in a small derelict warehouse belonging to the South African Railways.



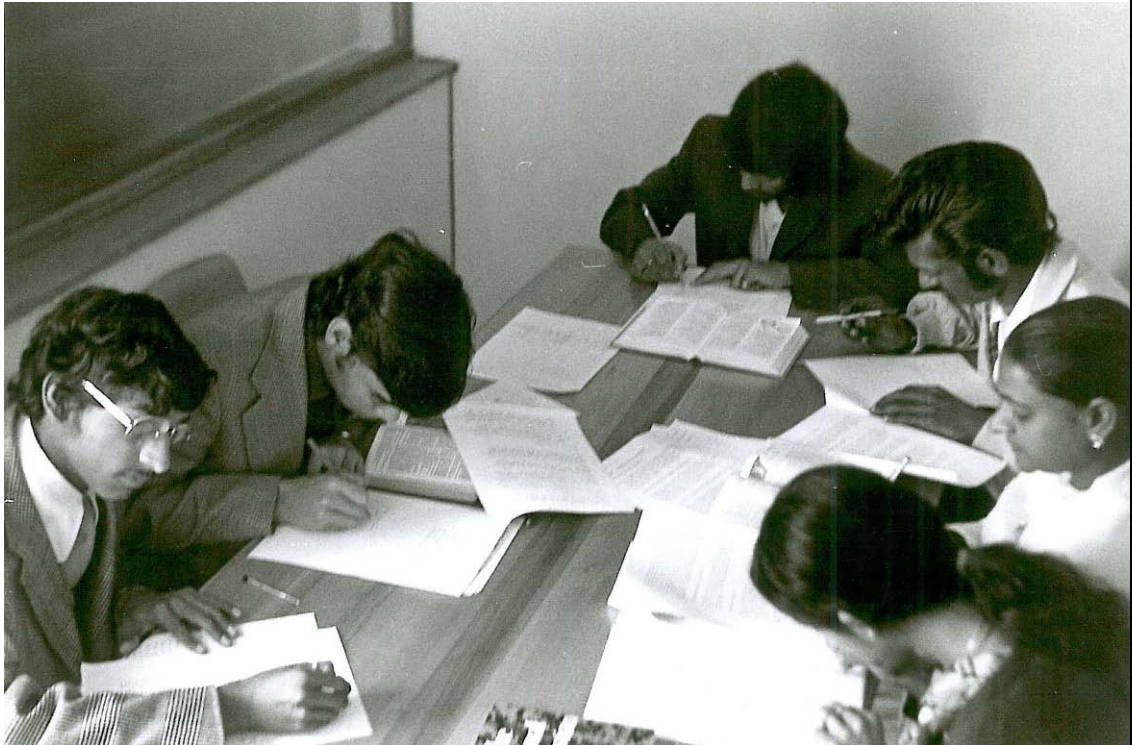


The first wedding held in the Andrew Anthony School in Laudium used for church services

The first meetings were evangelistic open-air meetings with spirited singing and a preacher who called people to conversion. Rev C J A Greyling obtained a tent to conduct campaigns in Boksburg, Pretoria, and other areas. The tent was later donated to the mission in Durban. The campaigns were well attended and there were usually a number of decisions for Christ. Mostly Hindu people attended with a few interested Muslims. Even after regular Sunday church services commenced, the campaign continued as an effective tool for evangelism.

Tract distribution was given high priority. For Muslims, especially, tracts supplied by the Scripture Gift Missions (SGM) containing only verses from Scripture were used.

The missionaries, evangelists, and helpers concentrated on personal evangelism. Teams of two or three would visit contacts established during campaigns or knock on doors. Voluntary part-time workers visited on one evening of the week or on Sunday afternoons.



Training of members for their ministry in RCA Charisma

On-the-job training was done by the missionaries. In Pretoria an adapted version of the Evangelism Explosion III the (EEIII) approach was used. A good knowledge of the Hindu and Muslim religion was a *sine qua non*.

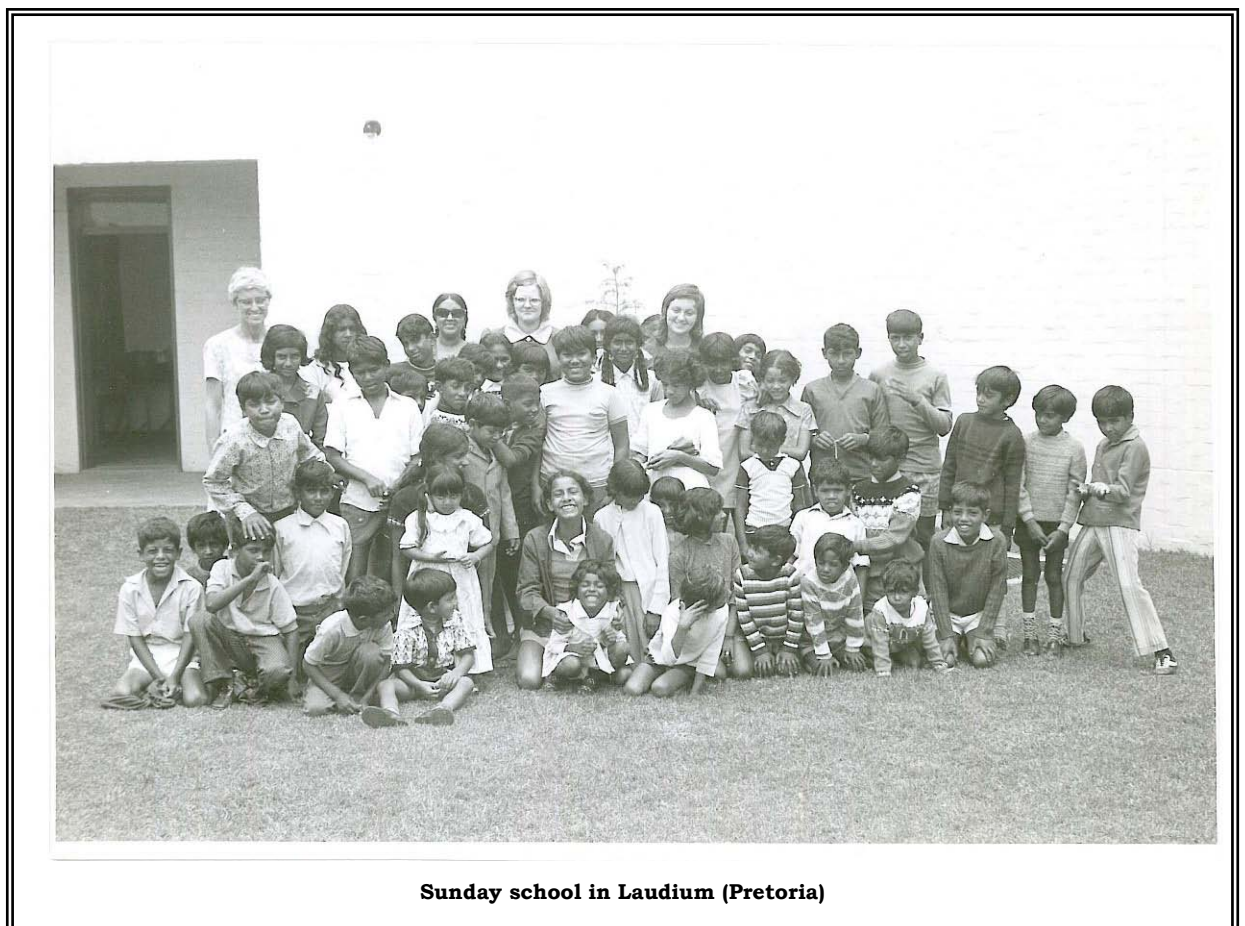


**New outreach workers inducted by the Church Council
after training in RCA Charisma**

5.11.3 Preaching

The preaching was in English except in the case of certain evangelists, such as Ev A Murugan who spoke Tamil well. Sunday services would be conducted entirely in English. The danger of using the vernacular was that it could cause disruption especially where the converts were both Hindi and Telegu speaking.

The preaching of the Word, whether at a campaign or at a Sunday service was always challenging. No church among the Indian people can grow unless the Word in all its fullness, through the power of the Holy Spirit makes a definite appeal upon the hearer. The early preachers realised that unless people had an encounter with the Lord Jesus, there would be no church the next day.



Priority was given to the pure Word as well as the Word-become-flesh. The missionary, evangelist and voluntary worker had to portray Christ through their lives. A preacher with a doubtful reputation would not survive in this work.



5.11.4 Teaching

Sunday schools were the main foundation stones upon which the church was built. Quite apart from the usual Sunday school at the church building, several so-called wayside Sunday schools were organized. With the help of a number of part-time voluntary youth workers - there were up to fifteen in Pretoria such wayside Sunday schools were held all over Laudium, reaching up to 200 children in various homes or under trees in the suburb on Sunday afternoons. Most of the children were Hindus or Muslims.

A major problem was to find applicable textbooks for the teachers. Buying books was initially beyond the means of the churches. Later a schedule for lessons was prepared and copies made available to all the different churches.

Sunday school teachers were trained through the South African National Sunday School Association, (SANSSA) or by the Sunday school superintendent. The teaching in the catechism classes was based on the Heidelberg Catechism.

Some ministers wrote their own textbooks. The duration of catechetical training for adult converts varied and caused some debate that eventually surfaced at the General Synod of the DRC.

5.11.5 Discipline and Church Policy

In a Hindu and Muslim environment Christians are watched critically. In fact, new converts that do not live up to what they preach are scrutinized through a magnifying glass. Indeed, the measure of persecution and ostracism that the new believer may suffer from the community has often been the seed of the church. Those suffering were drawn to Christ in a way that enhanced their testimony and life.

From the onset, maintaining church discipline was a very delicate aspect of the work. Being in the very eye of the community, the Church had to exercise discipline, painful though it was for both parties, in order that the name of Christ would not be put to shame. In the early days disciplinary action would be publicly mentioned at the church service, calling for prayer and support.

5.11.6 Policy of the Dutch Reformed Church

Some very difficult issues in terms of Church policy had to be dealt with in the early years. How do you deal with a request from a Christian father requiring marriageable Christian young men for his daughters? The Council of Pietermaritzburg decided that ‘they cannot undertake such a responsibility as of a marriage bureau. It involves risks, if matrimonial trouble rises afterwards’ (RCA 2:11/5/63).

Dealing with complaints, the policy was *that all complaints against anyone must be addressed to the church council in the first place.* (RCA 2:13/2/65).

When there was penitence after a transgression, the person was restored to the fellowship (RCA 2:11/5/63). In cases of a serious nature the person had to appear before the council, at other times the minister or a committee would be given the task of interviewing the person involved. In

one case we read of ‘permanent discipline’ where a Christian sister accepted the Muslim faith. (RCA 2:21/7/1962).

An unhappy brother who threatened to return to Hinduism and tell the Hindu priests ‘that Christians were all wrong, withdrew’ his letter of complaint after extensive brotherly counselling. (RCA 2:23/3/1965).

Discipline exercised by another church was respected when the person involved applied for a position in the IRC. (RCA 2:21/7/62).

Initially, in Natal, the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church’s mission to the Zulus as compiled by Rev J Pretorius was used, as the work among the Indians was at that time part of the mission to the Zulus (Pretorius, 1976:18, 9). The Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (*NG Sendingkerk*) was used in the Cape Province. In Transvaal the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) was used in addition to that of the NG Sendingkerk. In the minutes of the Indian Reformed congregation, Pietermaritzburg, it is recorded that the Mother Church, was drafting a new constitution for the ‘Indian Reformed Church. This was as early as 1958 (RCA 2:22/11/58).

When the idea of a separate Indian church was mooted, some felt that the mission should be incorporated into the NG Sendingkerk (Haasbroek, 1968:2). In 1956 the Synodical Missions Committee of Natal (SSK NGK) noted ‘dat vir die huidige altans en moontlik vir onafsiembare tyd nog, die Sendingkerk die aangewese tuiste vir die Indiërgemeente kan wees’ (2/38:25/5/1956). Once the stage was set for the formation of the Indian Reformed Church the General Synod’s Mission Committee appointed the Sub-Committee for Indian Mission in 1963 to draw up the necessary Draft Constitution or Church Order (Minutes ASSK: 13/2/1963).

The church policy of the DRMC and DRC gave substance to the life and work of the fledgling Indian Reformed Church. In a Pentecostal environment, the church government provided the good order required in the congregations. The

evangelists that came from Pentecostal churches experienced it as a blessing that prevented the church from splitting.

5.11.7 Commitment, Charity and Christian Service

A reading of the reports of church councils and mission boards reveals a high level of commitment of members to their new-found faith. Along with the commitment, especially in the case of new converts, a willingness to do the Lord's work is apparent.

Their service was, apart from outreach work, primarily linked to the local congregations - for understandable reasons. The awareness that Christian service is not limited to the household of the believers was slow in developing. They were keen to participate in fundraising projects but slow in providing for the poor and the destitute. The mission boards and the missionaries, however, did respond to the needs of the Indian community.

In Pietermaritzburg the Mission Board obtained a huge piece of land at Raisethorpe with the express purpose of providing for destitute families. (A section was set apart for the envisaged church building). However, the idea of settling families there only materialized in the initial stages of the work.

The policy of an all encompassing approach that was so popular in mission circles at the time did not seem to take root in the early stages. Rev Pretorius investigated the possibility of starting a mission school for Indian children. The Director of Education in Natal however advised him that mission schools in Indian communities were unlikely to succeed, because the Hindu and Muslim parents would not be willing to have their children taught in a Christian school (1976:5). Churches such as the Anglican and Roman Catholic, however, were very successful in providing mission schools in the early days.

However, in all the missions and congregations teaching was offered to those who could not read or write. In Durban-North, Ev K Moodley attempted a Tamil school (RCA 2:11/5/63).

Some congregations however, did organize soup kitchens to help the poor in the community. Caring for other groups such as the coloured and the black communities did not appear on the agenda in the early days.

The fight for survival, where so many odds were against the fledgling church in a Hindu and Muslim environment, caused the church to be focused on expansion by bringing in converts through the proclamation of the Word.

5.11.8 Fellowship and Ecumenical Awareness

The Indian Reformed Church and the mission that preceded it, did not function oblivious of other churches. Concerning the IRC in Natal in 1960 Rev J Pretorius writes as follows:

Dit is ook jammer dat met die toename van die verskillende kerke in so 'n beperkte digbevolkte Indiërgebied, soos in Natal, daar geen beplanning van enige aard is nie en dat oorvleueling vryelik plaasvind. Met al die vyandige gevoelens onderling tussen die verskillende genootskappe, het dit 'n baie nadelige uitwerking gehad op die Christelike saak as 'n geheel onder die Indiërs. Dit is baie wenslik dat die kerke hierdie aangeleentheid so gou moontlik onder die oë sal sien en nouer samewerking sal soek, soos dit in die geval is in Indië.

Meer as enige ander bevolkingsgroep staan hulle baie gevoelig teenoor enige vorm van verdeeldheid en versplintering, en as die kerke die bande van simpatieke benadering en samewerking nouer kon saamtrek sal dit die Christelike saak in die geheel baie bevoordeel onder die Indiërs (1960:[s]).

Right from the start invitations were received to join one or other ministers' fraternal. In a report of the Indian Reformed Congregation, Pietermaritzburg-Durban, that served on 12 September 1963 before the Synodical Missions Committee, DRC Natal, it appears that the congregation was one of the founding members of the Interdenominational Fellowship of Indian Christian Churches. The following churches were represented at this remarkable meeting on 4 June 1963 (SSK Natal:2/2).

1. Assemblies of God, Bethesda Tabernacle
2. Full Gospel Church, Bethesda Temple
3. Dutch Reformed Church (NGK)
4. Apostolic Faith Mission
5. Methodist Church of South Africa
6. Indian Baptist Mission
7. Lutheran Church
8. Evangelical Alliance Mission
9. South Africa General Mission
10. Presbyterian Church
11. Church of the Nazarene
12. Reformed Church in Africa

The meeting was opened by the Rev J F Rowlands, the renowned pastor and founder of Bethesda Temple (Full Gospel Church). He formulated the purpose of the fellowship as follows:

Our aim must be in the practical field, and not doctrinal, for doctrinal differences are not our concern. We must formulate our purpose, to enable the different churches to do more co-operative work in the interest of the whole Christian church, but not to interfere with the teachings of the different churches. A union was not being sought but rather a unity, so that a system of discipline and church structure could be formed (:2/2).

In the constitution it was clearly stated that they would work for the common good of the whole Christian church and that the member churches of the Fellowship would recognise each other's work and interest, proselytizing would be strongly discouraged, and the overlapping of evangelistic campaigns would be avoided as far as possible.

In Pretoria, fellowship with the pastors of other churches working in the field was sought; only much later did a ministers' fraternal develop where co-operation was sought in prayer and in combined campaigns.

Combined church services with the Dutch Reformed Church Mission were held sporadically in Natal and in the Cape Province. Fellowship with members of the DRC and the DRMC was encouraged by way of invitation or involvement in the mission. There was admittedly little fellowship between the IRC and the other churches of the Dutch Reformed family.

5.11.9 Worship

The joy of the new-found faith was particularly expressed through Gospel singing. The first hymns sung in Pietermaritzburg were those composed in the revivals of Sankey, Wesley and Moody, namely *Redemption Songs*. Later the church would use the *Psalter Hymnal* (RCA 2:12/12/70) and eventually develop their own hymn book.

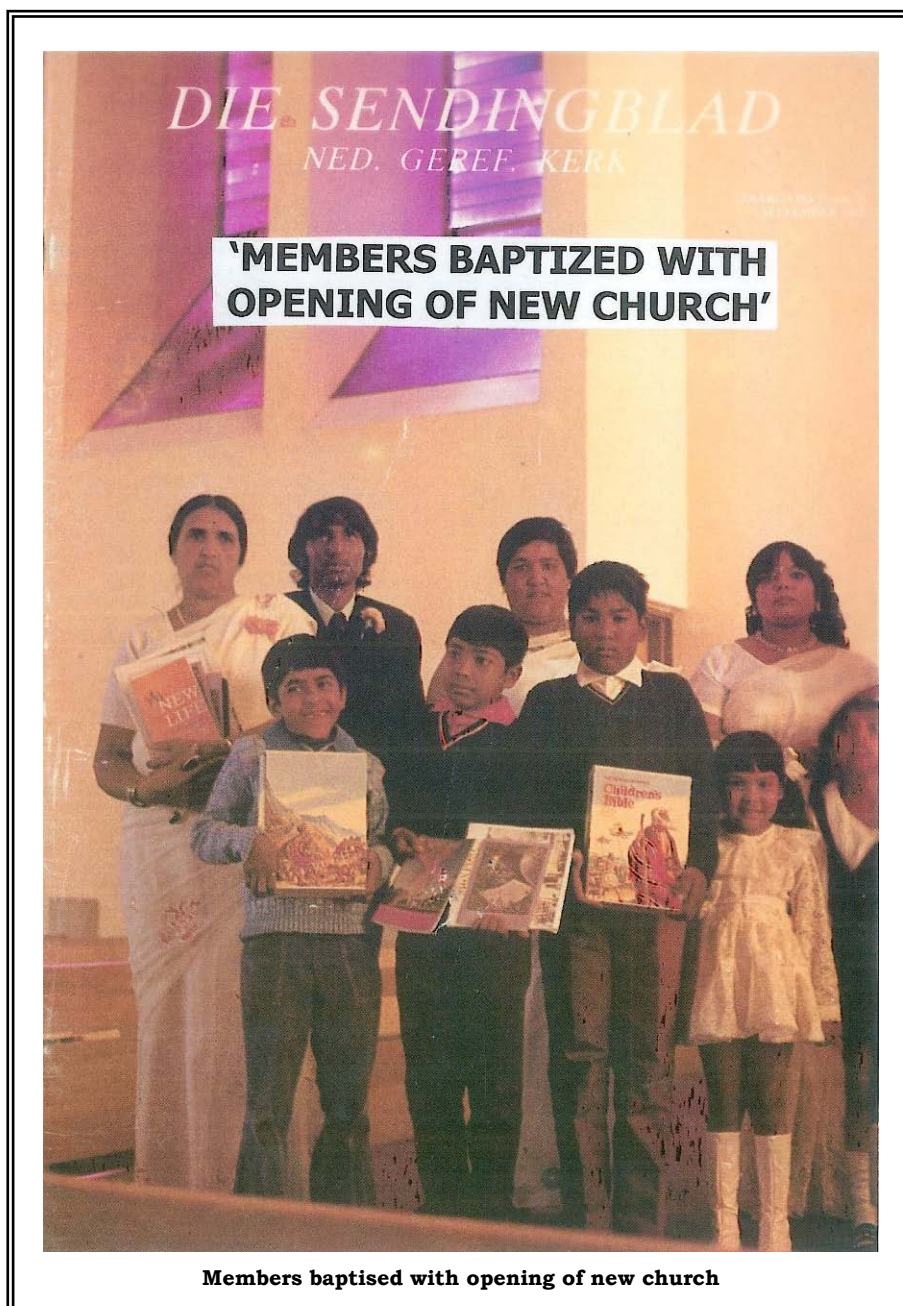
Initially the liturgy of the service was basically the same as was customary in the DRC. This would change dramatically in later years, especially in the area of worship in song. The singing of carols by candlelight in the church during advent became a common feature in the RCA (RCA 2:1/12/62). In the early days Rev J J B Pretorius reported that a lantern service preceded by testimonies of new converts was well attended, the church overflowing (SSK Natal 2/50:1959). Carols by candlelight were also sung in the community and became an annual outreach event during Christmas.

5.11.10 Baptism

Two very important doctrinal issues had to be resolved concerning the two sacraments: how to reconcile two totally different backgrounds – Western and Oriental. The first issue was that of baptism. The SSK (Synodical Missions Committee) of Natal reasoned that consideration should be given to the mystical nature of the Indian people's background, and that the merits of baptism directly following conversion should be carefully considered. The confirmation could then possibly follow after catechism (SSK Natal 2/38: 25/5/56).

In August 1959 the SSK reported as follows regarding the explanation given by Rev J Pretorius:

Dit blyk uit wat Eerw Pretorius gesê het dat die doop vir Indiërs baie meer inhou as net die teken van die verbond. Dit is terselfdertyd die finale breuk met sy ou godsdiens. Daarom moet die doop nie te lank uitgestel word nie – al moet die katkisasie en voorstelling as lidmate dan eers later geskied. Ook hierdie saak word vir verdere deeglike bespreking na die sendelinge verwys (:27/8/57).



In a report dated 16 August 1959, Rev J Pretorius expresses the opinion that 'we are losing members because we do not immerse them at baptism'. Ev Murugan disclosed that they had already lost 13 adult believers in this way (SSK Natal 2/50). This time, when the SSK discussed the issue of immersion, the committee pleaded for the most careful consideration in view of the precedent that had already been created by baptism immediately after conversion. The committee decided to refer this whole issue to the Federal Missions Council (Federale Sendingraad) (:6/12/57).

In 1962 when the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (DRC) met in Pretoria for their first General Synod, a detailed study report 'Die Doop van bekeerlinge onder die Indiërs' was tabled (:108 - 114). The Synod decided that adult baptism was to follow catechism.

Die Sinode besluit dat wat die doop van volwasse bekeerlinge uit die Indiërdeel van ons bevolking betref daar gehou moet word aan die Skrifgegronde gebruik wat dwars deur ons Kerk in swang is naamlik dat die doop eers bedien sal word na deeglike kategetiese onderrig en hartlike belydenis van geloof en dan wel op die gewone wyse (1962:249).



The question of no catechism prior to baptism of believers was gradually laid to rest in the fledgling IRC, but the mode of baptism by ‘immersion’ in addition to ‘sprinkling or pouring of water’ was later accepted by the Reformed Church in Africa.

The request of the missionaries was based on the following arguments. Passages in Acts that account for immediate baptism; the Hindu background; baptism as a final break with the old life; the influence of Pentecostal churches ‘Doperse sektes’ [sic] (:108, 9).

The Synod pointed out clearly that you could not separate confirmation (confession of faith) from baptism. Baptism of believers always followed the confession of faith and not the other way round. Neither might the table of the Lord be barred from the baptised believer in view of further catechism (:112, 3).

To sum up: A preliminary confession of faith followed later by a major confession in view of the communion was a practice not found anywhere in Reformed Church history or law, and would invalidate the meaning of baptism. The report insisted that the Young Church should lay the foundations properly but also admitted that such catechism might be shorter than one year in view of the long process of preaching and teaching that was required to win converts from Hinduism. Their desire to be baptised immediately, left the impression that their understanding of baptism might not be sound. The practice of immersion, though mentioned in the Formulary of Baptism, left the same impression. It furthermore seemed as if they attached greater significance to the element of water than just that of a sign (:113, 114).

Following the decision of General Synod, the SSK of Natal decided to appoint a committee (excluding members of the local Indian congregation) to study the report and decision of the General Synod with ‘gravamen’ and refer it to the SSK and if required to the General Missions Committee for appeal to General Synod (2/39:19/9/63). The matter did not go any further.

5.11.11 The Lord's Supper

A second debate was on the proper way of celebrating communion. The issue that had to be dealt with was whether pure grape juice could be used instead of wine. This matter was never studied in detail.

At a meeting of the Pietermaritzburg Church Council of 16 May 1964 the Ev J Naidoo informed the meeting that some members of the Durban South branch were appealing to him to recommend to Council the use of pure grape juice.

Being converts from Hinduism in which religion the deities are appeased with offerings of strong drink they felt after conversion it was not right to partake of alcoholic wine (RCA 2).



Holy Communion at the establishment of Charisma:
From left to right:-Dr C du P le Roux , (Minister of RCA Transvaal) Prof H D A du Toit, (Theological Faculty)
Rev Perold de Beer, (Minister of Charisma)
Dr J P Theron (Mission Secretary)



A motion to this effect was moved by S Pillay and Ev K Naidoo and passed by the Council.

A decision to this effect was never taken on Synodical level by the IRC or later by the RCA, but the use of grape juice instead of alcoholic wine became common practice in the church.

5.12 Missiological Perspectives (1946-1968)

In the latter half of the 20th century much attention had been given to the scope and the content of the Church's missionary task. Reacting against the one-sidedness of both the American Social Gospel as well as the traditional evangelical view that mission primarily consisted of *preaching* the gospel, of concentrating mainly on the conversion of non-believers, one theologian after the other called for a more comprehensive definition of our missionary task. J C Hoekendijk, Herndrik Kraemer, Visser Hooft, Max Warren, and many others

called for a comprehensive approach, combining the threefold mandate of mission to include *kerugma*, *konoinia* and *diakonia*. At the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council (1952) there was consensus that the Church's witness should be "given by proclamation, fellowship and service" (Meiring, 1986:105). In South Africa there was general agreement on this, and in his writings David Bosch often referred to the comprehensive task of the church, using these subdivisions (1991:409ff). Kritzinger, Meiring and Saayman (1994:36ff) also used the categories of *kerugma*, *diakonia*, and *koinonia* in their treatise on the missionary task of the church, adding a fourth rubric: *leitourgia* (worshipping God).

The Greek word *kerugma* denotes the proclamation of the Gospel through preaching, teaching, witnessing, literature, theological education, etc. The content of the *kerugma* is the good news is that "God, Creator and Lord of the universe, has personally intervened in human history and has done so supremely through the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth who is the Lord of history, Savior and Liberator" (Bosch 1991:412).

The Greek word *diakonia* may be translated as service or ministry. The diaconal dimension of mission therefore refers to the various forms of ministry that Jesus calls us, following his example, crossing the many frontiers in the world in the form of a servant. The total need of the world, of all its' people, must be confronted with the gospel of love (Kritzinger, et al, 1994:37).

The Greek word *koinonia* (fellowship) refers to the missionary task of establishing the community of believers, to the planting and nurturing of the church across the globe, as well as to ecumenical relations between different denominations and Christian communities worldwide.

The Greek word *leitourgia* denotes the Church's responsibility to worship God and to glorify his Name by our obedience and by our faithful witnessing. In the final instance we are not called to witness only for the benefit of men and women who have to hear the good news of Christ, but to honor God (cf Rom 1:5;12:1). Mission becomes is nothing less than our hymn of praise!

5.12.1 *Kerugma* Dimension

In the early years the preaching of the Word took centre stage. The missionary with the help of evangelists and lay workers would go into the community doing personal evangelism. Campaigns and tract distribution were part of the drive to make the Gospel known. Right from the outset a venue was found to begin services not only for when 'two or three are gathered in my Name' (Mt 18:20) but for unbelievers that were seekers. The preaching was, as a rule, making a clear appeal to those present to turn to Jesus as the only answer to their spiritual needs. Tract distribution was used to underline this call to conversion. Concurrent with the preaching of the Word, teaching was provided through catechism, Christian book and tract distribution and Bible study.

Conversion implied also the deliverance from bondage and here the evangelists were of great help to assist in the setting free of those that were bound or possessed by evil spirits. For the missionary, this was by and large foreign territory and a learning experience. The missionaries that theologically denied the reality of this scriptural phenomenon made very little impact in this part of the ministry. A 'conversion' that was superficial caused disruption because men and women who had not been set free were brought into the church. The Church learnt to live by the conviction: 'If the Son has set you free you will be free indeed'. (Jn 8:36)

The impact of the IRC was, in terms of the work done by the Protestant mainline churches, significant, yet given the tremendous input of money and effort in this ministry one would have expected a greater response. Rev Pretorius (1960) refers to the situation in a report in 1960, comparing the IRC with the Methodist Church who after a 100 years of mission work had not yet gained 1,000 members, whereas the Full Gospel Church with its Bethesda mission (since 1931), a totally indigenous undertaking, counted more than 13,000 members.

The Indian Reformed Church began in 1946 in an almost 'post-Christian climate' in Pietermaritzburg-Durban where Pentecostal churches were extremely successful. Many of the first members of the DR mission were 'backslidden' members of other churches (mostly Pentecostal). This in itself was

not a healthy situation (1960). Many came for the wrong reasons and the Indian Reformed Church had to learn the hard way not to build on foundations laid by others. In the Cape Province and in Transvaal, where the Indian population was smaller, the response was equally slow. Spade work had to be done from day one.

In Natal and Transvaal a very high premium was placed on campaigns alternated with individuals who came of their own volition to seek a new life. Many contacts that could be followed up later were made in this way. Most of the people attending those campaigns were of Hindu and Muslim persuasion. The Hindus often responded to the invitation to accept 'Jesus Christ as Saviour' but without intending to leave their Hindu faith at all. They were only adding Christ to their Hindu pantheon.

Missionaries quickly learnt to preach the message in such a way that people would respond to the Word through the work of the Holy Spirit – the message being as sharp as 'a two-edged sword' and clear as a 'trumpet call'. The sacrifice that their response might lead to was clearly spelt out.

Rev J Pretorius mentions some ways to ascertain whether a conversion was genuine: a willingness to suffer persecution; a willingness to break with the Hindu gods, images and pictures; a strong desire for baptism (1960:5). It goes without saying that there should be real repentance and a turning away from a life of sin, addiction and demonic oppression and possession.

Though the work of the Indian Reformed Church was concentrated in the cities, efforts were made to spread the Word to the outlying districts. Rev Pretorius (SSK 2/104:16/8/59) visited the following areas: Colenso, Ladysmith, New Castle, Howick, Nels-rust, Wartburg and Windy Hill. In the Transvaal the church often followed the movement of the congregants: from Boksburg to Springs, Germiston, Benoni and other areas. In Pretoria activities moved from Prinsloo Street to Marabastad and Laudium as well as outlying districts such as Witbank and Middelburg where regular outreaches were conducted.

One of the most successful ways to preach and teach the Word proved to be the cottage meetings. These meetings were used as an opportunity to reach out as the believers shared their faith in the home of someone interested in the Gospel. As the new family experienced the 'Word become flesh', their hearts were strangely warmed and many could testify that such a cottage meeting was the beginning of their life with Christ.

The Sunday schools were equally effective in reaching children. In addition to the members' children, a number of children from unattached Hindu families always attended. The so-called Wayside Sunday Schools, attended by Hindu- and Muslim children became an effective tool for evangelism.

The *kerugma* dimension of mission was right from the start the primary dimension of the outreach to the Indian community. The first missionaries attached a very high premium to the power of the Word. At times, however, the very important emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit was neglected, as was evident in the lack of discernment in terms of the deliverance of the demon-possessed or the healing of the sick.

The congregations that developed were vacillating between what Hendriks (2004:45, 46) calls the 'institute' and the 'proclamation' church model. This is also understandable in a situation where the missionary became a father-figure to the first converts. His word became law and in the absence of elders no one could really or effectively question him (except the Mission Board that for all practical purposes stood outside the situation). The attitude of the first converts was that of submission to his leadership. The communication of the Gospel was a one-directional affair from 'above'. This strong institutional model where church law played an important role helped the mission to weather the storm. At the same time the proclamation model, typical of the Dutch Reformed Church, developed a tremendous respect and awe for the Word of God as the norm for the life of the believer and the fledgling congregation. The beginnings of the Indian Reformed Church were strongly evangelical. The *kerugma* dimension was at the heart of the mission. In some cases this one-sided emphasis led to a neglect of the social needs of the members.

5.12.2 *Diakonia* Dimension

The second dimension of mission is *diakonia*, demonstrating the love of Christ to others, serving the needs of the community.

The first converts of the Indian Reformed Church came mostly from the poorer communities, even from the poorest of the poor. No missionary could shut his eyes to the glaring need of the people. Some missionaries were so overwhelmed by the need that they assisted people from their own pockets. A picture of this perilous situation and the way some responded to it is reflected in what Rev J Pretorius reports in 1955 (SSK Natal 2/104:15/2/55):

Op Sewerage Farm het veral Mev Moolman werksaam gewees... Mev Moolman het haar veral toegelê op huisbesoek, en op wat sy vir die armstes gedoen het... Soms is eetware uitgedeel, maar veral stukkies klere aan die behoeftigste Sondagskoolkindertjies... Hulle het 'n ouerige sinkgeboutjie van die korporasie te leen gekry ... en Mnr van der Walt het 'n klompie leë kassies aan ons gegee vir sitplekkies (SSK Natal 2/104:15/2/55).

Many of these children were so poor that they could not attend Sunday school. A great percentage of these people were living below the bread line. Many were jobless. In a report on the situation in Durban South, Rev D P Bekker (SSK 2/104:1965) describes the attitude among the people in the church as one of caring and love. Rev J J B Pretorius (SSK Natal 2/50:Aug 1959) mentions that his first funeral was of a baby that died of malnutrition.

The Pietermaritzburg Church Council resolved to negotiate lower premiums for burial policies and to set up a fund to help cover funeral expenses (RCA 2:15/8/59). Most missions and congregations in the early days established funds for charitable assistance. Rev J Pretorius (SSK Natal 2/104:19/8/50) reports that the missions committee approved the division of a section of the huge site in Raisethorpe into blocks for Indian families. Three-roomed cottages of wood and clay would also be provided would also provide three room cottages of wood and clay at £15. Attempts were made to provide for schooling on the Raisethorpe site but these were met with so many difficulties,

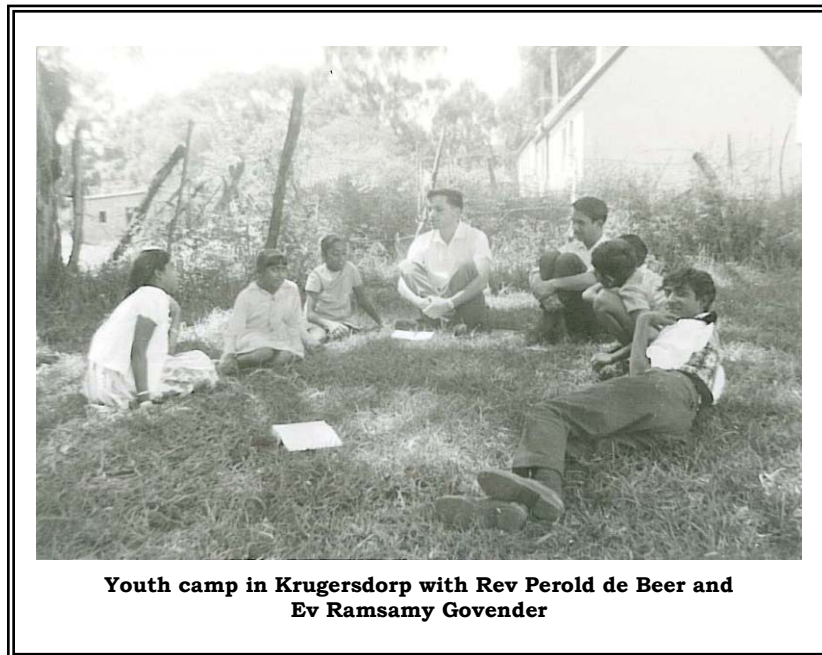
in terms of funding, the proper teachers, and the support of the education department, that little was achieved (:14/8/48). Apart from an attempt by Ev K Moodley (RCA 2:11/5/63) to start a Tamil School in Durban-North, the researcher found no mention of schools being established. However there were in several areas reading classes for the illiterate. In 1954 Ev Manikkam was appointed to the post of prison chaplain on behalf of the IRC, a position for which Ev Murugan had also applied (SSK Natal, 2/38:19/5/54). Assistance in many other forms was given by the missionaries and the first church councils: loans, charitable assistance, assistance to find work for the jobless, filling out required forms for the Department of Interior, taking people to hospital, and assistance with the drawing up of wills.

A critical assessment of the *diakonia* dimension of missions to the Indian people reveals a willingness on the part of the missionaries to meet the needs of the people. However the usual methods of service evangelism such as the provision of schools and hospitals were simply not functional. Those churches that entered the field much earlier were much more successful. The Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the Methodist Church provided schools and hospital facilities for a substantial number of Indian people. The Roman Catholics established the first Indian school in 1867 and many others followed. Rev Stott of the Methodist Church had several day-schools under his care but it was the Anglicans that provided apart from schools, the St Aidan's Teachers Training College and the only medical facility at the time: St Aidan's Hospital (Refer section 3.1, 2.3.2 of this Chapter). By the time the Dutch Reformed Church entered this field, governmental plans were already underway to nationalise the schools.

It is difficult to assess the quality or quantity of the ministry of caring for one another in the local missions or congregations. Most of the caring was done by the missionaries, evangelists, pastors and the council, but there were those individuals who gave themselves fully in the ministry. In times of bereavement and sickness the number of church members who provided care was exceptionally high. The more significant question here is: 'How deep did the Gospel go?'

5.12.3 *Koinonia* Dimension

The third dimension of mission concerns *koinonia*, the building of the fellowship of believers. Caring for one another became an immediate concern in the IRC.



The Indian community, especially in the early days, was without a doubt the most close-knit community in South Africa. In those days divorces were unknown and family life, also the extended family unit, was held in great esteem. Obviously religious differences dictated the limits of community and in a lesser degree, those of the family.

The Hindu that became a believer and suffered expulsion from his family looked to the Church to provide the 'family of God'. This opened up a whole new life for the convert: the members of the church became his real family. The first generation believers had *koinonia* as a given.

Often the fruit of the Gospel was that whole families eventually became believers. The result of this would as a rule be that *koinonia* was replaced by the family unit and other converts would find themselves shunned by the family. This often happened when a church consisted of just one or two families.



RCA Charisma on camp

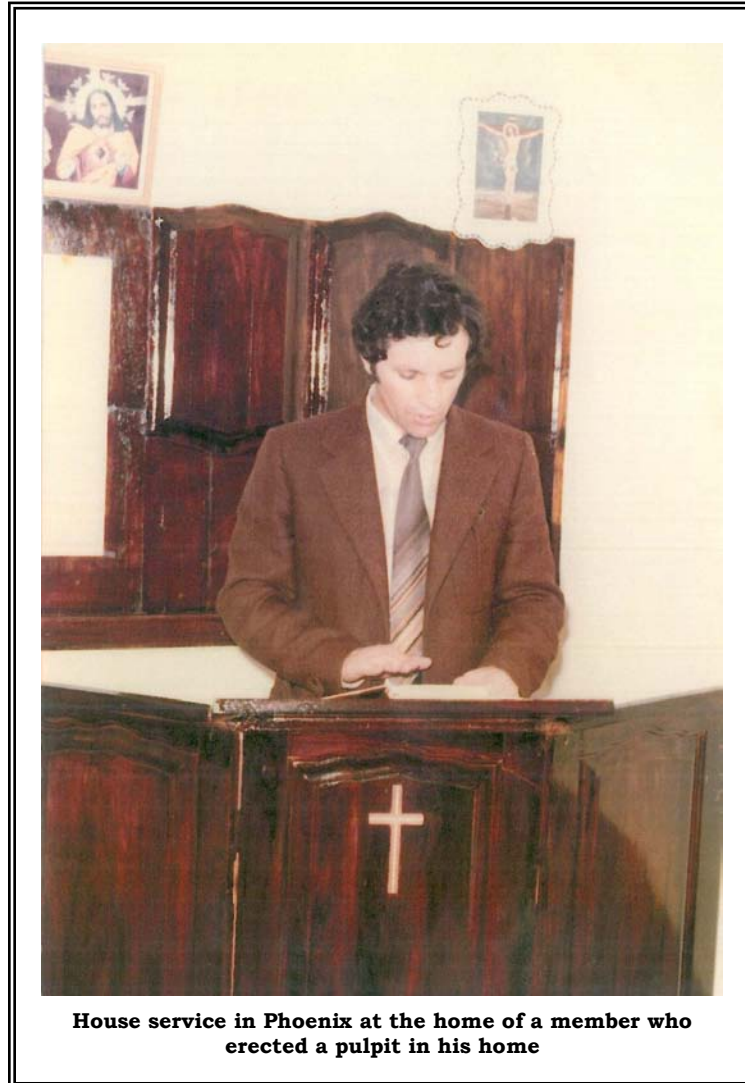
The final difficulty that arose in terms of *koinonia* was the role of the missionary/pastor. In the fledgling IRC the expectation of the new converts soon overwhelmed the missionary to such an extent that he was forced to focus on his pastoral responsibilities. As the evangelist spearheaded the outreach, the missionary's role rather rapidly changed to that of a pastor. This meant that the church quickly developed into a 'pastor's church', the so-called 'shepherd-flock-model'.

One of the more positive aspects of the Indian Reformed Church was the small group gatherings, the cottage meetings or house fellowships. Here the opportunity presented itself to interact, to share and to care for one another.



Ladies closing function of the Congregation Jeshurun

In most places some form of ecumenical fraternity existed. The RCA congregations usually participated in these bodies. The activities of the churches were shared and opportunities to work together realised in a number of cases. In the Pietermaritzburg-Durban area Rev J Pretorius and the leadership were part of the Interdenominational Fellowship of Indian Christian Churches from its inception in 1963.

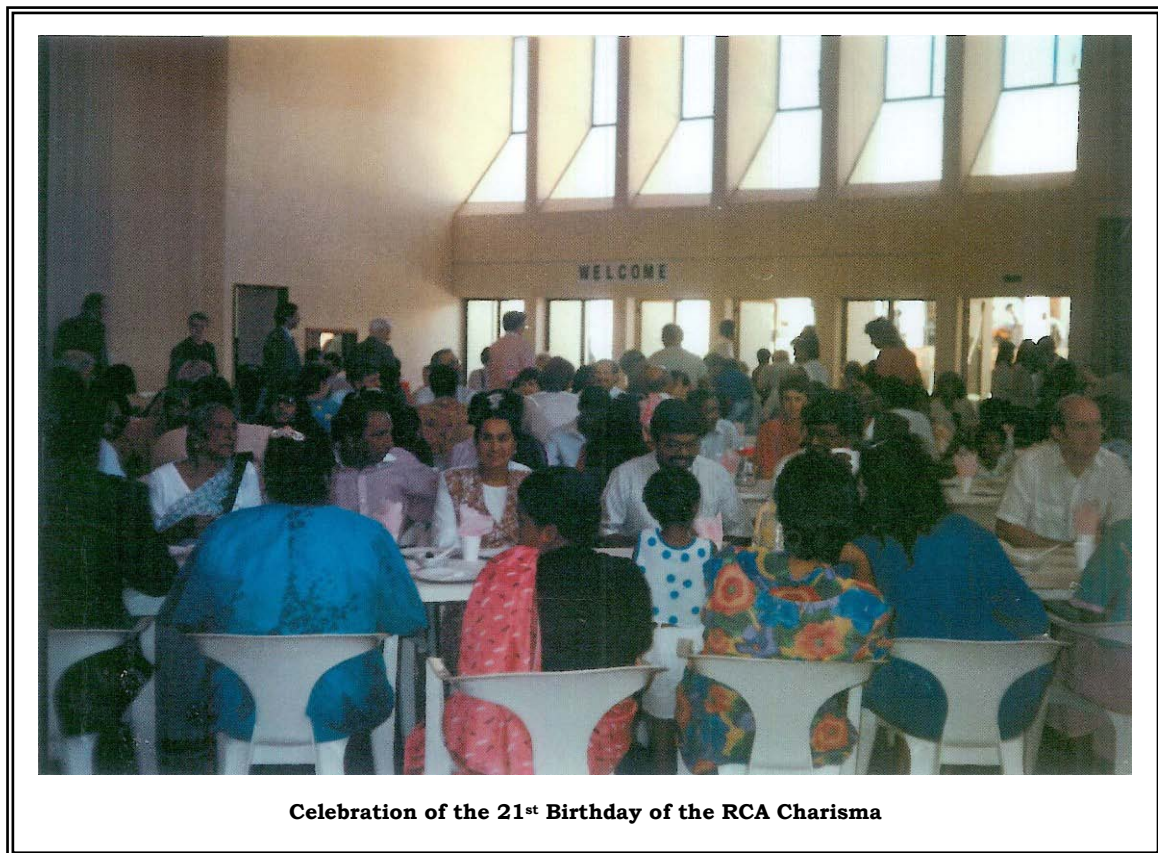


Such cooperation was necessary to curtail the danger of churches working in opposition to one another.

....Dat nouere samewerking tussen die verskillende kerke wat sendingwerk onder die Indiërs doen moet wees t.o.v. die praktiese kant van die werk, ten einde te voorkom dat die kerke met oorvleuelde belange in die stedelike gebiede teen mekaar werk (SSK Natal, SSK 2/3: 12/9/63).

It is noteworthy that the renowned Pastor J F Rowlands opened the door of his Fellowship of Indian Christian Churches to other denominations. There was always an amicable relationship between the Bethesda Full Gospel Church and the Indian Reformed Church. The fact that a few workers from Bethesda

became evangelists in the IRC did not harm this relationship. Neither did the difference in doctrine affect the ecumenical relationship.



For the Indian people the existence of many churches have always been an enigma. Coming from the Hindu world with its inclusive character, they find the exclusiveness of churches quite unacceptable.

The divisions in the South African society and the policy of apartheid were not officially addressed in the early years, but petty apartheid, especially when practised by members of the Dutch Reformed Church, caused much pain and upheaval in the Christian community. Missionaries and evangelists in the IRC did not defend such behaviour but clearly condemned it as contrary to God's Word and as a flagrant disregard for the mission to which God called his church.

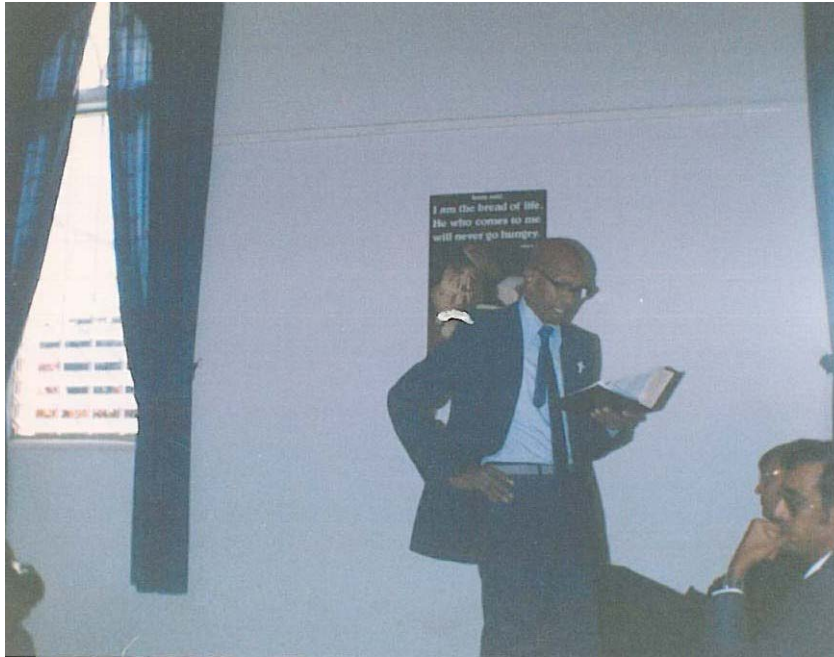


RCA Members on tour in Israel



Cottage Meeting in Charisma (Pretoria)

The first hymn book used was 'Redemption Songs'. This book included among all the favourite hymns of Wesley, Sankey, Moody and others, also choruses that allowed for a much more uninhibited form of worship. Songs in the vernacular, Tamil and Telugu lyrics were very popular in the early days.



Ev Sunker, leading a prayer meeting at RCA church in Avoca (Durban-North)

5.12.4 *Leitourgia* Dimension

The final dimension of mission, is *leitourgia* – leading the Church in the worship of God.

Membership of the first IRC congregations was rather small. This opened up the opportunity for a less structured church model. When the church grew the small group continued in the form of house fellowships or cottage meetings. At these smaller meetings the guitar and clarinet were used, whereas the Sunday service was accompanied by piano or organ.

Ev James Naidoo was a popular Gospel singer when he joined the IRC and Ev K Moodley, an excellent accordion player. The missionaries realised the importance of allowing indigenous forms of worship. Spontaneous forms of praise, worship, confession, testimony and prayer developed. The joy of the Lord, the exuberance of worship, permeated many of these early meetings. This was especially true of the campaigns and the Pentecost services. The Sunday service was more structured, depending on the position taken by the missionary or pastor.

Speaking in tongues took place and missionaries would encourage members rather to practise their gift at home. Ev K Moodley, during times of prayer, would utter agreement to the prayer. The missionary would react negatively by knocking on the table for order!

(Interview Ev K Moodley:1990).

The researcher had the opportunity to attend a service of the IRC at Jacobs Road Church in Durban in 1959. The Church was packed to capacity and the devotion and worship of the congregation was unbelievably moving.

The importance of worship and the need for a proper liturgy, and hymnbook, were regarded as critical. At the first Synod of the IRC that met in 1968 (:102) the issue of a new hymnbook was high on the agenda – as was the need for a common liturgy for worship for the congregations of the IRC (:101).

The background of these proposals was the unwritten fact that the congregations came into contact with the Pentecostal world, especially in Pietermaritzburg-Durban, and that the Reformed doctrine had to be spelt out in terms of worship and liturgy.

On a deeper level, the *Leitourgia* dimension of mission also refers to the total mission of the churches – everything done by the missionaries, clergy and laity to proclaim and to demonstrate the love of God to a world in need, to build his church among the nations is offered as the church's worship of God, its living sacrifice to its Lord and Saviour. In a small but significant way the IRC did contribute to the final aim of mission, namely the glorification of God's Name.