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Jacob Mofokeng and Johan Zerwick at the IAG Church in Sarafina. Photo: Venessa van der Westhuizen

Venessa van der Westhuizen

Jacob Mosolludi Mofokeng's reputation precedes him. Wherever you go in town, his name is either mentioned in admiration or appears on a volunteer list for a good cause. He is admired and loved in Ikageng and Potchefstroom alike.

Today, he is a well-known pastor of the International Assembly of God (IAG) in Sarafina and is reaching out to his community in a positive, loving manner. But his calm and friendly demeanour doesn't reveal the rocky, dusty road – sometimes full of pot-holes – he had to travel in his early days.

Jacob's early years

Jacob was born in Viljoenskroon in the Free State and his family moved to Kroonstad when he started school. He grew up as the fourth in a family of five children and the second boy. His father worked as a miner at Stilfontein but Jacob never had the privilege of growing up with his dad. In fact, he never knew him. When Jacob was in Gr. 10, his mother, the only breadwinner in the family, moved to Cape Town with her employers. The children relocated to Botshabelo and only saw their mother twice a year; in June and December.

Completing education

Life wasn't easy but Mrs Mofokeng encouraged her children to complete their education. "I was a problem child when I was young. Time and again, my mother received calls that I was naughty, stubborn or angry. She only received bad reports about me," Jacob says, smiling. Even though his brother was a policeman, he was once arrested because he and his friends were naughty. "We got whipped. And then a teacher came to the police station and said I needed a

second chance to complete my high school education. I then completed my grades and received my matric."

A reborn spirit

Jacob remembers the date he was spiritually reborn – 15 March 1990. To him, this is a precious date because it was then that his life changed for the better. He had a calling to become a pastor and the IAG Church supported him with his studies.

It was during his studies that he once heard a sermon by Johan Zerwick on Radio Pulpit. Johan is a Setswana lecturer at the North-West University and a ward councillor. Jacob remembers his message very well. It was about culture and Christians who want to stick to their traditions by worshipping both God and their ancestors. "It is wrong. You must leave your traditional culture behind and worship God through Jesus Christ" he remarks.

Called to Potchefstroom

When he was in Bible College, he sometimes heard negative things about Potchefstroom. God laid it upon his heart to start a church in the city. His pastor, Peter Modale, wanted him to move to Thaba Nchu instead as there was an open post there. After a month of contemplation, however, Jacob was certain Potchefstroom was the right place to be. He came here in 1999, after marrying his wife, Jahminah. Together, they set up a new home in an empty garage.

Starting a congregation

The church started small. He asked his landlord for permission to start prayer meetings in their home. They invited people from the neighbourhood and soon the meetings grew to almost 40 members. He soon realised they would have to find another venue to meet and applied for a piece

of land to build a church. He experienced different setbacks because he came from the Free State. Eventually, the congregation found a free stand in Sarafina. The members of the church all donated building material to set up a shack. Today, the church has grown to 200 members. A large enough brick building was later erected where the services are held today.

Meeting Johan Zerwick

While sharing the gospel at a school in Ikageng in his early years in Potchefstroom, Jacob got Johan Zerwick's contact details. The learners knew Johan from his regular school visits when he handed out little Bibles to children who don't have any. The two eventually met and are best friends to this day. Jacob still considers Johan as his mentor. They have the deepest respect for one another and it was Johan who helped Jacob start a crèche near the church. "There are primary and secondary schools in Ikageng but there is a need for pre-schools," Jacob says.

Starting a pre-school

Jacob sacrificed his church offices to start the Ebenezer crèche. They started with eight children and the school now has five teachers who educate 95 children. "We are so blessed with everyone's input. The greater Potchefstroom community, including the North-West University, Duet Church and people like Santie



Pastor Jacob Mofokeng Photo: Provided

Britz, Elsa Coetzee and Johan Zerwick, cherishes the crèche. The list is too long" says Jacob.

For him, it is important for children to get to know God at an early age. "We teach them moral values. They must know that they are on the planet for a purpose", he adds.

Currently, they are expanding their church building to include a training centre and a kitchen. "We want to be involved in training programmes for the youth. A large kitchen will also help to feed the community," he says with lots of optimism.

Free State boy or not, we are truly privileged that Jacob and his family have brought Potch so much hope.