

### PASTORS VISIT TSHOLOTSO

At least 16 pastors from Bulawayo and Harare visited Tsholotsho to ascertain the effects of Gukurahundi on the people of this part of Matabeleland. The visit which was organised by Grace to Heal in conjunction with Zimbabwe National Pastor's Conference confirmed to the pastors that Gukurahundi was a reality. They met with the affected community members who related their stories and also had a chance to visit graves of people who became victims of the atrocities.

#### **Coming to terms with the past.**

A special service was held during the visit which was attended by about 200 villagers at a local school. During this heart moving service people shared their experiences and also visited the site of the graves. Eyewitnesses gave testimony about what happened on that fateful day some 23 years ago. For most of them this was the first time they were visiting the site. Unfortunately when the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Company (ZESA), was putting up electricity poles they dug up one of the graves. A lot of tears were shed as the community mourned openly for their departed loved ones. One man gave a testimony about what had happened to him and others at the hands of the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade, he was only in his early teens then. He is the sole survivor from his particular group the rest never made it alive. The pastors from Harare took time to apologies on behalf of the Shonas for what Gukurahundi did to the people.

Tsholotsho is one of the areas that was hard hit by the atrocities which ravaged Matabeleland region during the early 1980's and these were referred to as Gukurahundi. At a particular site located at a school there are two shallow graves containing 5 people each and among those in the graves are teachers.

Since this was in a church service mode words of comfort were shared with the community which was urged to forgive the past in order to move on with their lives which have been at stand still since the early 1980s.

While this service revived the painful and unpleasant memories of the cruelty of 5th Brigade and the government, it also brought relief to many present. The authorities have tried to suppress any mention of this tragic period by claiming that the Unity Accord of 1987 brought reconciliation and healing. As a result people have been afraid to talk openly about this period. For many being able to discuss in public brought about a sense of relief and emancipation one man was overheard saying "we never knew a day would come when we could speak freely about this." One could sense that a heavy burden had been lifted from most of the community members. However, there is a great need for counselling in this area to help the people move on with their lives.

## The lawyer as a minister of reconciliation



*Student lawyers who attended the CLS workshop*

GTH facilitated a workshop for the Christian Legal Society (CLS); which was attended by 20 law students. The workshop which was hosted under the theme “The lawyer as a minister of reconciliation” is the second in the series that was initiated by CLS last year.

They first looked at Conflict and Conflict Resolution and the second addressed the nature and dynamics of violence and

Nonviolence as an alternative system for conflict resolution and social transformation. The discussions were very lively and interesting, and the students are quite aware of what is happening around them. The next stage is to help the students work the theory into practice through simulations and role plays so that the principles of nonviolence can be internalised.

## International Visitor Leadership Programme

**Reported by Dumisani Ngwenya** (Coordinator GTH)

I was fortunate to be one of the 20 people from Africa chosen to go to USA on the International Visitor Leadership Programme from 6 -28 July 2007. The theme of the programme was Conflict Resolution and included visits to Institutions dealing with conflict resolution from the Federal government and state government to various nongovernmental organisations, institutions and universities. It was fascinating to see how much conflict or dispute resolution mechanisms have become so much part of the American society. It is a pity that their foreign policy is not driven by the same spirit. I believe they would achieve more if they were to adopt the mechanism they use back home rather than the force that seems to be their

preferred means of conflict resolution. North Carolina, from there we were divided into smaller teams according to languages. My team went to Akron Ohio; others went to Santa Fe, New Mexico, Tulsa, Oklahoma and Kansas City, Kansas we met again in San Diego, California where we wrapped up our tour.

While all what we saw and heard was educative, one work that stood out was in Akron Ohio where American Jews and Palestinians have formed an organisation called Ishmael and Isaac. They work together to try and better the lives of both Jews and Palestinians in the homelands. It was refreshing to know that in the middle of such hatred and violence there are people from both sides of the divide who can get along with each other.



*Dumisani Ngwenya.*

Each side holds side holds firmly to their political beliefs but they have not allowed that to interfere with their humanness. Our group was made up of lawyers, journalists, politicians, civil servants and peace practitioners who were drawn from countries such as Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, Comoros, Angola, Mozambique, Burundi, Central Africa Republic, Sudan, Guinea Bissau, Niger and Zimbabwe. All in all this was a worthwhile and educative exercise.

## **The Solution to Zimbabwe's problems**

By Pastor Ray Motsi -Senior Pastor  
Bulawayo Baptist church& co-founder GTH

Based on the book of Nehemiah 1v 1-4  
The story of Nehemiah fits in the Zimbabwean scenario. How many of us go to South Africa, Australia and other places through emails, telephone and other means and hear people ask about the welfare of the Zimbabwean people? The walls of Jerusalem have fallen and the gates burnt down.

What are these walls? Walls are a sense of protection, sense of security and a sense of belonging – home. If there are no walls we are open, vulnerable and susceptible to attacks and this is a sign of destruction and lack of life. This also indicates the state of affairs in Zimbabwe. We have been exposed, made vulnerable and disgraced as a nation and as a people and everybody feels this. Gates are a sign of formality, norms or value system. They help us to understand and accept how things are done. There are certain ways in which things ought to be done. If there are no gates, it means the absence of norms and standards; hence you find five different exchange rates which indicate that there is no acceptable way of doing things. We have been reduced to a bunch of refugees, thieves and lawbreakers within our own country and this has translated to our homes and families. All because people

-are trying to survive.

When those in the Diaspora hear about the state of affair in Zimbabwe, they are disappointed, sad and also weep like Nehemiah. If that is the case, how can anybody say things are ok in Zimbabwe? How can we be Christians if we do not say the truth, if we do not feel for those struggling and if we cannot discern the truth from that which is not true? Nehemiah knew what Jerusalem ought to have been because he knew what it was before and what he wanted it to be and so he cried to the Lord. Crying to God was his answer and he sought to do something about the situation in Jerusalem. As Zimbabweans inside or outside, complaining, being angry, hatred alone is not enough. We need to do something about our Jerusalem and the walls that are fallen down and the gates that are broken. Look to God as Nehemiah did.

How can I be a Christian without being concerned about the state of affairs in my country? Let's look to God who can grant us wisdom, vision, courage, strength and a means to deal with our present situation. The plight of Israel depended on God, and so should be our situation.