

seemed to have been at least partially warranted when one mission branch, created in a flurry of black convert baptisms, was eventually dissolved because of the types of issues raised by local leaders in the stakes. Similar issues in other branches were also reported.¹⁰³

Finally, on September 6, 1980, Moses Mahlangu and other members of the Soweto group were baptized in Johannesburg. They were not the first black African converts, nor is theirs the only story of perseverance in the face of exceptional obstacles. However, theirs is a story of patience and humility as they waited and kept the faith for many years before being baptized into the church they loved.

But the story is not just theirs. As Benjamin de Wet noted, the priesthood revelation and the baptism of new black members was accepted more willingly by white members in South Africa than was generally expected. Social and cultural prejudices and expectations had to be overcome by everyone involved in a country gripped by racial tension and mutual distrust. Maureen van Zyl, who had given Moses Mahlangu the mission president's address in 1968, recalled that "once the barrier was broken down, a very strong lasting bond was formed between the members. . . . It was difficult at times to remember that there was such a thing as apartheid, but unfortunately, there was."¹⁰⁴

Instrumental in breaking those barriers was the branch established in Soweto on August 9, 1981. Maureen van Zyl's husband, James, became the first branch president, and Frans Lekgwati served as his second counselor. Moses Mahlangu and white member Craig Russel served as counselors to the black elders quorum president, Robert Mathebe. Nearly every presidency in the branch consisted of both black and white members working closely together as a hopeful portent of the coming end of apartheid in South Africa, which would allow for increased cooperation and progress.¹⁰⁵

in the stakes had obviously black African names. In the mission branches that number was about 48.5 percent. If the branches in Zimbabwe are excluded, the percentage of obviously black African names baptized in mission branches in South Africa drops to 36. Ordinance and action record.

103. Steynsburg Branch Annual Historical Reports, 1982–83, CHL; East London South Africa District Annual Historical Reports, 1982–83, 1996, CHL.

104. Maureen van Zyl to Jeffrey Cannon, email, June 10, 2015.

105. Johannesburg 2nd Branch Annual Historical Report, Organization Historical Events, CHL; Johannesburg 2nd Branch Annual Historical Report, Section A—Officers Sustained, October 11, 1981; van Zyl to Cannon, email, June 10, 2015.