

NDAIZANE ALBERT (LUCKY) THABEDE
Resurrection Service, November 17, 2006

BY THE RT. REV. PETER M. BUSS

When a ship sails away across the ocean, it gets smaller and smaller, and finally it disappears over the horizon. Yet it is still there. It has simply passed out of our sight. The country to which it is going will see it when it arrives.

We cannot see Lucky Thabede now because he has passed out of our sight. The earthly body in which he lived in this world had become too frail to contain the vibrant, powerful spirit of the man, and so his spirit left this body. We cannot see him, but others can. He appears now in the spiritual world in a spiritual body which is healthy and strong and which will live forever. His mind was always young and strong. The weaknesses he suffered were weaknesses of the body, and they afflicted his spirit for a while, but that is over now.

What will he feel as he comes awake? Because he was very ill, the first thing he will notice is that he is feeling so much better. He is without pain and weakness, and he can see clearly. Perhaps he will not know right away that



he is in another world, but there will be loving angels around him who will care for him and will tell him quite soon that it is so.

He will not be afraid of this knowledge, for he has always known about the life after death. From the New Church he has

learned what heaven is like, and he has known how he will awaken to eternity and what steps he will go through.

Will he grieve for the separation from his beloved family, who have cared for him so much? He surely will, and he will long to be with his wife Maureen now that his physical ailments are over. But the angels will comfort him—just as his family is comforted by loving friends here. And he will know that his spirit is close to her and to his loved ones.

He will rejoice in his newfound strength and health, and he will explore this spiritual world of which he had learned and taught so much here on earth. He will meet other friends and family who have gone before him, explore the beauty of this perfect world, and begin his journey towards his eternal home in heaven.

So as we gather here to remember him, it is right and necessary that we grieve for his passing. A fine man has left his family too early, and there is much sadness as we think of that. But we cannot grieve for his future. He is alive and well. He has no disease any more. His mind is alert and strong, ready to set to work once more.

For heaven is not a place where you sit still and do nothing. The Lord Himself is not an idle God. He works, day and night, to bring happiness to every one of His children. And He told us, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Heaven will be a happy place forever because forever we will perform useful, kind, loving deeds to others—just as the Lord does for us. That is the secret of heavenly happiness. Each angel there is longing to bring happiness to others, and those others are longing to bring happiness to them, so the happiness of all increases each day.

So the Writings for the New Church say that the happiness of heaven consists in a life of useful service. And they also say that

our happiness here on earth is at its greatest strength when we are using our abilities to make other people happy. And that ability—to work to improve the lives of those around us—that is the joy of heaven.

So to all eternity the angels work to help people out of their unhappiness and to bring them more happiness. They help us here on earth. They help people arriving from this earth to enter into spiritual life. They help each other. They even help the people in hell—trying to make their lives a little less miserable. When we think of Lucky Thabede we cannot help but think of his usefulness throughout his life. For many years he worked in human resources and in personnel management. As a director of personnel for a large company he had the difficult but very important job of representing to the management the needs and wishes of the many workers and of explaining the policies of the company to the workers. I remember how much he cared for the struggles of those who worked in this organization and how hard he tried to improve their lot. There can be no doubt that they were better off for the many times he succeeded in doing this. And there were some times of sorrow when he felt that management did not care enough for the messages he was bringing. But he was fearless in bringing them.

While still working full time, he decided to become a minister of the New Church. He had been the leading layman in the Alexandra Society, but it was without a pastor. So he studied at night for several years, and was ordained over ten years ago. He continued to work full time at his job, and during his lunch hours and in the evenings he would write his sermons, prepare classes for adults and young people, and visit the sick and conduct special services such as funerals, baptisms, and so on. It was a busy, busy time, but when he was asked if it was too much he would insist that working on church work was not stressful he loved it so much.

He was remarkably brave. Some years ago he underwent a major operation for cancer and less than two weeks later he attended a full week of ministers' meetings, participating fully in them. When we asked him how he was, he answered with his trademark statement "No, I'm all right." He didn't want to concentrate on his health; he wanted to get on with the work that needed to be done.

His family remembers him as a pastor for his charity to others. He was always willing to reach out to everyone. He tried to make sure that those who were poor could attend such events as a church week in Durban and often helped them out of his own pocket. He was so good in visiting his parishioners and reaching out to those who had drifted away from the church. If they died, he did not hesitate to offer to conduct their services. It did not matter that they had not been active recently; he cared for them and their families. Under his care the Alexandra Society grew strong once again, and that brought him much satisfaction.

Because of his leadership, the ministers of the Church and the lay leaders recommended that he become the Executive Vice President of the Church in South Africa. It was sad that his health became poor very soon thereafter, because he would have done much good in that job.

His children remember him as a strict and firm father who wanted to ensure that they had the right moral values. For example, if they found some money lying about, he taught them to ask themselves if they knew they had left it there. If not, then it was not theirs to take. He taught them the finer points of telling the truth—not just to avoid telling lies, but not to change a story just a little in order to make their point.

He also realized from an early age that the hopes of South Africa rested on a well-educated black middle class which would one day be running a great many of the political, social, and business affairs of the country. He and Maureen sacrificed a lot to ensure that their children had a fine academic education as

well as a fine moral and spiritual one, and it is greatly to their credit that their children are so well-adjusted, so happy, and so useful themselves.

So Lucky worked in business, in the church, in his home, and in society for the benefit of those he served. So he has really been preparing for many years to be an angel.

But life was not all work. He loved fun also, and had a fine sense of humor. He loved music and singing. He played the clarinet with friends as a young man and continued to play it for many years. He would lead groups in spontaneous singing, and he insisted that they do it right—especially if they sang too slowly or without enough energy.

It was hard to see him so ill for the last few years. He longed to be back at work, to be able to do the things that he considered important. In providence it was not to be so here on earth. But today he begins to perform acts of useful service again. What will he do in heaven? Surely he will hope to serve the Lord as a minister once again—for teaching the truth is needed in heaven as well. Probably he will have a task of helping people who are in need of guidance and support, as he did on earth. One thing we can be sure of: The vibrant, strong spirit that was always his despite sickness and pain is starting to be active again. Under the guidance of the Lord he begins his eternal work. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors (the labors of putting aside earthly desires). But “their works do follow them.” Lucky will follow his love of usefulness to all of eternity.

Ndaizane Albert (Lucky) Thabede. Ordained August 1993; 2nd degree, March, 1997. Served as Pastor to the Alexandra Township Society, South Africa (1993-2003). Executive Vice President, South African Corporation 2001. Lucky is survived by his wife Maureen.