



Presbyterian Link

Keeping the UPCSA - United

August 2012

New Vision

General Assembly agreed to a new statement of Vision, Mission, Mission Priorities and Values for the UPCSA.

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Mukondi of Diepsloot

Cross cultural mission in a challenging environment.

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All the news from the 2012 General Assembly in Stellenbosch.

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South Africa Must Wake Up! Moderator Urges

Begin within your own family and church if you must but let the love of Jesus in you compel you to help someone who has less than you, someone who is unemployed and someone who is poor. Give something away everyday!

It is one month to the day since the Assembly in Stellenbosch and whatever may have happened in the UPCSA (Inductions of Ministers to their new congregations, new office bearers in Presbyteries, a few funerals, Conveners of the new Committees beginning to draw their teams into action, an excellent PAT intensive and all the glorious work of regular parish life); whatever may have happened outside of South Africa (the Olympics, Syria's slow implosion; the change of leadership in Ghana) all becomes "smaller", less important than the events at Lonmin mine.



I cannot remember when we had a period of National Mourning declared for a week, other than for the death of a President or Prime Minister. Zambia and Zimbabwe brothers and sisters we ask you, once again, to pray for South Africa. As one Afrikaans newspaper headlined today (as I write on 20/08) "South Africa must wake up!"

Continued on page 2.

Welcome to the latest edition of the Presbyterian Link, a free electronic newsletter for members of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

The link is for all congregations across South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This edition will bring you all the news from the General Assembly which took place in Stellenbosch in July 2012. Since then tragic events have overtaken South Africa again and our Moderator reflects on this.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and find it entertaining and informative. Please tell us what you think of the latest edition by email gensec@presbyterian.org.za

Let me try and get a handle on the crisis in which we have landed due to the miners' strike, and the subsequent over 34 deaths, including police personnel. As impossible as it may be to believe I know of one congregation which, on the Sunday following Nelson Mandela's release from prison after 27 years, did not mention a single word of the event. And that church was less than 30 minutes' drive from the place of his release. So I wonder how many of us failed to talk and pray about the events at Lonmin? And how many failed to apply their minds to how we respond?



Picture courtesy of NBC News

My theme from 2 Cor 5:9: Do all you can to please Jesus; we make it our goal to please Jesus forces me to say: each of us, every local congregation and every member must do all they can to uplift the poor where they are. At the heart of the crisis we are in are people tired of working hard and for long hours and remaining poor while around them are others who, because they also work hard, seem to get richer and whose standard of living gets better and better. I ask you wherever you are to be courageous and take a risk of faith and do something about what some call the PUI problems: Poverty, Unemployment and Inequality.

Begin within your own family and church if you must but let the love of Jesus in you compel you to help someone who has less than you, someone who is unemployed and someone who is poor.
Give something away everyday!

I hope to be a Moderator who is accessible and available and will gladly visit whoever invites me provided my diary allows. I will answer all emails and letters but I cannot promise to keep up with every Facebook entry.

I hope to be consistent in urging you to put Jesus first all the time and pushing you to bless the poor.

Think Christianity, take pride in being a Christian and bring glory to Christ.

Much love

Rod: Moderator

A word from the General Secretary

The General Assembly was informed that internal control measures within the Central Office had identified a substantial fraud earlier this year. An investigation had been carried out and the Chief Financial Officer was summarily dismissed in accordance with the UPCSA staffing procedures. A letter has since been sent to all UPCSA ministers and congregations containing information about the fraud and steps being taken following the investigation. We are pleased to report that stringent measures have been implemented to ensure that proper management structures, corporate governance practices and accounting procedures are adhered to and maintained. We are equally pleased to report that measures have been undertaken to ensure the recovery of a substantial portion of the money stolen as soon as possible.

We wish to most sincerely thank you for your understanding and journey with us in addressing this rather unfortunate and unacceptable situation, especially when congregations in the midst of financial struggles and challenges still attempt to remain faithful in the contribution of assessments to the wider church. We realize that the temptation is to ask a lot of questions which may even impact negatively on your desire to contribute financially to the work of the denomination. Please do not allow this incident to cloud your sense of judgment or justify your views of expenditure within the structures of the UPCSA. In the spirit of love and forgiveness let us continue to covenant with one another as we proclaim the good news of salvation and life in Jesus Christ to the world around us.

Recently South Africa faced the situation of unnecessary and unacceptable loss of lives at the Lonmin mine. It is quite unbelievable that a democratic South Africa, for which we fought, has to endure such sad experiences! We pray God's blessings and strength on the families of those who died and hope that all concerned will work towards peaceful and acceptable outcomes. The UPCSA was closely involved with the SACC in addressing this situation.

May God's blessings and peace surround you at all times!

Jerry Pillay

40 Rand for 40 years - Empowerment through Education

Liz White - UPCSA Central Office Bursaries Administrator updates us with news of a successful Presbyterian Education Fund Campaign.

On the Halfway through the “R40 for 40 years” campaign there is a great deal to be thankful for and a great deal still to be done.

All congregations have been sent promotional posters and information about “40 Rand for 40 Years”. A news sheet with personal accounts of how the gift of education has been a blessing in the lives of the authors was distributed at General Assembly and commemorative bookmarks were given to all commissioners.

The inspiring stories in the news sheet will form the basis of the special edition of the Presbyterian Link to be produced before year-end but more testimonies are still required before this can be done.

Fifteen congregations that had not donated in 2011, have taken up the challenge, and made generous contributions to the PEF. Others have pledged their contributions before the end of the year: St Andrew’s, Cape Town is running a three month campaign of weekly retiring offerings which will be donated to the PEF, and St Paul’s,

Marite’s Youth Group has been raising funds to donate as well. It is especially heartening to hear of young people contributing towards a Fund whose purpose is to assist their peers. Well done to you all!!

Close to 100 young people have benefited from the PEF in 2012, about 40% of these are studying at college or university. By the end of 2012 R400, 000 will have been contributed towards their fees, but this is only a fraction of the total tuition cost of nearly R1.2 million which parents must find before they have begun to pay for boarding, books, uniforms and transport.

As at August, 2012, donations to the value of R 203,930 have been received from about 60 congregations, one local women’s group, the Presbytery of eGoli, and about 20 individuals including two donations of R50,000 and R20,000 respectively, and a dozen or so smaller donations amounting to R4,925. A further R 31, 752 has been received from the UPWF. 47 congregations that donated in 2011 have yet to contribute in 2012, but this only brings the total to approximately 110, and there are nearly 490 congregations in the UPCSA. That means 380 still to take up the challenge! Surely we can aim for a total of R1m to invest in the future of our young people.

A word from the new Chief Financial Officer- Geoff Jooste

It is with profound respect for God’s work that I have embarked on the new road in my life. The start of my time as CFO of the UPCSA was not ideal but with God’s grace and great assistance from Andre and Bester in the finance department we are hopefully ready for the auditors to come in and finalise the 2011 financial year. My first tasks have been to ensure that the accounting has been corrected as requested by General Assembly and then to implement new financial controls. This has been ideal as it ties in nicely with the new committee structures also approved at General Assembly. We are very conscious of the responsibility we have at Central Office of providing a cost effective administration of the church’s funds. I am also aware of the ineffective controls at all levels in the denomination and I intend assisting all churches and Presbyteries in providing financial skills to obviate frustration in the entire stewardship process. This will facilitate compliance with the manual on all finance and returns required to be good stewards of God’s work.



New Vision, Mission, Mission Priorities and Values for the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

Looking Forward with Hope!

During the last five months a volunteer consultant from the UK, Brendon Hills has met with over 600 UPCS members from 15 different Presbyteries to consult with them on the future Vision, Mission, Mission Priorities and Values for the denomination. He presented his recommendations to the General Assembly in July.



Brendon meeting staff at a UPCS orphanage in Harare in July.

The General Assembly fully endorsed and adopted the proposals afterwards, Roger Tucker told the Presbyterian Link, at the Assembly: “Brendon has helped us to begin to verbalize the desires of our hearts as servants of Jesus. These he summarized in the vision and values report which has emerged from his discussions with us.” Brendon urged the denomination “To look forward in hope not backwards in fear.”

Of course, work has not stopped at simply preparing a new statement; a two day conference of Committee Conveners held at Benoni in August, has already met to consider how their committees can support the implementation of the new Mission Priorities.

General Assembly Agreed on the following Statement when it met in Stellenbosch.

Who is the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa?

We are a diverse community of reformed Christians led by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, prayerfully seeking the will of God for our lives together and the world.

Our Vision:

To be a reconciled community of Christians exercising a prophetic witness to Christ.

Our Mission:

We will proclaim our Triune God in Southern Africa through:

Bearing witness to the saving love of Jesus Christ

Building vital, reforming congregations for worship, ministry and discipleship

Visibly proclaiming the Kingdom of God through unity, justice, peace and love.

Our Mission Priorities:

We will adopt specific and measurable targets for the denomination against the following priorities and report on progress against these targets to the denomination through the General Assembly:

- Evangelism
- Supporting the development of missional congregations
- Health, wellbeing and securing justice
- Engaging in reconciliation and unity
- Stewardship

Together we have ascertained the following values to guide our behaviour to each other and the world.

- Love
- Holiness
- Scriptural
- Integrity
- Spiritual Growth
- Servanthood

Promoting Mission through worship-

Some thoughts from the Rev.
Neil Meyer

If we are going to become a denomination of missional congregations, then mission needs to be part of everything we do, starting with the way we worship God. Just as Gandhi said “there is no path to peace; peace is the path”, so there is no path to mission - mission is the path.

I was delighted to hear from General Assembly that one of our new denominational Mission Priorities is “Supporting the development of missional congregations”. I’m nervous about words like “missional” though. There are a host of new words to describe the way churches want to be: “seeker-sensitive”, “emerging”, “emergent”, “missional”, and so on. The Mission and Priorities Committee will help us immensely by putting some flesh onto such terms used in the Mission Statement. Nevertheless if the term “missional” means something along the following lines:

- a Church which recognizes the primacy of God’s mission in the world, without abdicating its own calling to participate in God’s mission (in the way that David Bosch articulated it¹);
- a Church which recognizes that ministry and mission take place in and through congregations, and not by committees of Presbytery and/or General Assembly (in the way that the Church of Scotland document “Church Without Walls” expressed it¹); and,
- a Church which recognizes that mission is the task of the whole congregation and not the preserve of ordained clergy and professional “missionaries” (in the way that Lesslie Newbiggin put it¹);

Then that is a mission priority I can get behind.

We will have to spend the next few years uncovering how to make such a priority a reality in every aspect of our life as congregations, Presbyteries and denomination. I have only been asked to reflect on how we do so in worship and I will confine my comments to that topic.

Back in 1948 the legendary Presbyterian liturgist, WD Maxwell, warned against placing the choir in front of the congregation as it “gives the impression of the singers singing to the people as in a concert hall, rather than to the glory of God.

It should, at all costs, be inhibited.” Nevertheless we *did* move the choirs to the front, and later the bands followed, and soon we were building churches with stages, stage-lights, speaker-stacks and movie-screens. But inadvertently when we changed our apses into stages, we also turned our congregations into audiences and we set ourselves up to compete with DSTV, Ster-Kinekor, the PSL, Andrew Lloyd-Webber and Mafikizolo for the hearts of an entertainment-hungry public.

Worship is a dramatic act - no doubt about that. Sunday by Sunday the redemptive drama of the Gospel is reenacted in the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments. What missionality should cause us to question however is this: Who are the actors and who is the audience? As things stand the band is on stage, along with worship-leaders, dancers, youth drama teams and preachers (motivational speakers? stand-up comics?). Congregations are the audience.

There is an argument to be made for God being the only actor in worship and us being the audience. Equally, some might say that we are all the actors and God is our audience. For my money though, if we are to take the mission of God seriously, then God is the primary actor and director of worship, the congregation is the supporting cast and the world is our audience. Of course such a view implies that worship goes far beyond Sunday morning services - but it must at least begin there.

But how do we change an audience into actors? There are many ways to do so. Some congregations (such as Durbanville Presbyterian) have started using John McClure’s Roundtable Pulpit¹ to involve members in the development of the Sunday Sermon. Others (such as Rondebosch United) have opted for William Everett’s Roundtable Worship¹ to involve members in discussion during the service; some have moved towards more liturgical forms of worship such as Taizé services; and still others have decentralized worship into house-fellowships where more informal participation is possible.

Whatever path you choose it is worth experimenting if your goal is to have the whole church involved in mission. If we don’t let our members participate in the drama of the Gospel on Sunday morning, we can hardly expect them to suddenly do so on Monday morning. Watching worship - even excellent worship - prepares you for bearing the Gospel to the world just about as well as watching rugby every weekend with a bag of chips and a bottle of beer prepares you to play in a Super-Rugby final.



Snippets about the new moderator!

What is the new Moderator Rev. Rod Botsis like as a person? Here are a few snippets.

Ø Rod will turn 59 on Heritage Day (24/09)

Ø has 1 wife (Mandy) and 2 daughters (Hannah, 28, who is married to Warwick and Rachel 21)

Ø Mandy works at UCT Medical School as a facilitator in their “Professional training” courses. Hannah works for Human Sciences Research Council and is doing a PhD at Wits. Rachel is studying isiXhosa at UCT.

Ø Rods’ hobby is cooking and he like his own food.

Ø Rod enjoy most sports but especially soccer and basketball.

Ø Rod is often impatient!

Ø Rod relaxes by reading Murder/Detective/Spy novels.

Ø Rod says of himself he is “overweight, overpaid and over blessed!” but

Ø He also says “I love my job and congregation.”

UPCSA HIV and AIDS Programs- A Paradigm shift

Compiled By Buhle Mpofu HIV and AIDS Coordinator

Most of you will be familiar with HIV and AIDS programs that we have been driving as one of the Mission Priorities of the UPCSA for some time now. Not surprisingly, we have always been concerned about overlapping issues such as poverty, unemployment and other health challenges such as cancer, diabetes and many diseases devastating our communities. While the focus on HIV and AIDS ensured that we dedicated much of our time and resources

to this pandemic, it was indeed a limited approach.



Children at a UPCSA supported Community Child Care Project

The vision of an “abundant life” cited in John 10:10 as the purpose for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ attests to the “fullness” of the life that God desires for us, a call for us to design holistic approaches to health and wellness programs, so that we address all the needs of our communities. In

this regard, we welcome the 2012 General Assembly’s decision to re-structure Committees and bring together HIV and AIDS, Gender, Justice and Social Responsibility into a single committee to coordinate a holistic approach to socio-economic and political well-being of our society. Abundant life requires that we respond to all these challenges collectively and not in isolation.

This is one way that our presence in every community can bear witness to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, when we respond, not just to HIV and AIDS, but also get involved in addressing poverty, unemployment, education, corruption, crime and

CHURCH OF THE COVERED DISH by Thom Tapp



“Just to clarify... last Sunday when I preached on the ‘widow’s mite’ I was not suggesting it as your tithe...”

Mukondi of Diepsloot

So just who is the new Moderator Designate Rev. Ramolundi Mukondeleli?

Brendon Hills went to Diepsloot to meet him and find out.

We meet at Diepsloot Shopping Mall, which I am told boasts one of the busiest and most profitable Shoprites in Africa. A mixed development of Township houses and controlled informal settlements (uncontrolled in the reception area), Diepsloot is now home to 200,000 plus people on the North side of Johannesburg and has grown from nothing in the space of no more than a generation. Most outsiders will be aware of the tales of Xenophobia, service delivery failures and the hideouts for criminals who prey on nearby Sandton city. Some may also have heard that development has been held up in a bid to relocate thousands of bullfrogs that live on the edge of the town.



A UPCSA project training young carpenters in Diepsloot

In visiting Mukondi, I found something very different. Mukondi, as he is known to his friends, wanted me to see his community development project based in his Church in the middle of Diepsloot. I follow him through a warren of winding roads; some covered with fast flowing water from yet another “service delivery” failure. Eventually,

we arrive at his base,

which boasts one of the largest pieces of open space anywhere in the area. I was struck by the relaxed atmosphere of daytime Diepsloot which appeared to be a thriving, pulsating and energetic community of people, trying to work out how to live in the most difficult of circumstances. Official development plans always seem five years behind the growth in population. Space is at such a premium some of the people here even have to build their shacks right on the riverbanks, knowing that as soon as the rains come, they will be washed away. One woman drowned recently during a heavy period of rain. Danger is never far, Mukondi points out a house not 500meters away, where one of the well known hardened criminals lives, when he is not under arrest or otherwise in prison.

Mukondi had been enjoying a comparatively sedate desk job in the UPCSA central office back in 2006 where he was the Ministry Secretary. So I start by asking how he came to be here. He told me of his call from St. Mungo’s in nearby Bryanston, a wealthy suburb of Johannesburg, he talked about the church being a wealthy church willing to be led by God, in particular the passage in Matthew 9, where Jesus looks out upon a helpless world and is moved by compassion. “The Leadership team said to me, we are a wealthy community and we find the poverty disturbing and we cannot pretend not to see it any longer. We do not know how to get into Diepsloot and begin to minister. We need someone to come and work with us and help lead us there.” Mukondi was quite clear that he would only accept the call if St. Mungo’s wanted to go beyond mere handouts and was whole hearted about long term community development. The leadership of the church said they did and Mukondi started his ministry there in 2007 with just a desk and a phone and has become a vital link between two very different communities. He mentioned that it took a year before he really began to understand the needs of the community. He is a firm believer in self-help and not sitting back and waiting for the government all the time. He is passionate about the role of the church in helping people to grow and develop.

The reverend is very keen to make clear that he is one member of a church on the front line, with other colleagues with 1000 other members of the Bryanston Congregation playing a vital role in the mission to Diepsloot. He begins to show me around the carpentry skills project. I am introduced to Wilson who has travelled here from Malawi. Wilson came to the church to ask for work. It turned out that he is a trained carpentry tutor in his home country but no one could afford to employ him. Mukondi managed to team him up with a business-man from the home church in Bryanston. Sponsorship for the workshop was obtained from Stanley the tool manufacturer, who provides toolkits for each of the ten apprentices who start on the programme every year; they are allowed to keep them only if they successfully complete the programme. Wilson expands on the place of community self-help, telling me that one of the focuses of the project is making furniture at prices affordable for the local community.

On the way to the sowing class, we pass a homemade font and a rugged pulpit made from reclaimed wood, a perfect example of the kind of community Diepsloot represents.



We meet the sewing class busy learning how to make clothes and curtains, things which would otherwise be unaffordable. The course lasts for six months with most people graduating.

In the far corner of the room an Adult Basic Skills Class is in animated session. Gladys, the tutor is a product of the class herself, graduating from it to undertake further courses and then coming back as a qualified tutor. Living proof that you can do it! Mukondi reminds me of the gap in expectations, most people come to him just wanting a job. Many see CVs and interview preparation as unimportant and it takes a while to convince people how vital basic skills are to escape from unemployment. He is clear his role is not to duplicate. Other basic skills classes in Diepsloot only operate at night. This fills the gap for the many who are afraid to leave their homes at night just to come and learn.

In his office, we move onto wider issues of mission, church governance and politics. I probe him about the xenophobia in Diepsloot and find that unsurprisingly he argues that on the whole South Africans living here benefit from the skills that others bring. He feels that South Africans here in particular need to be encouraged to become more independent especially when it comes to opportunities for being self-employed or running a small business. Part of the diagnosis is the governing powers rightly revamped tender processes to ensure more local involvement. However those bidding for work under the new arrangements were not sufficiently well developed organisations. They struggled to deliver contracts delaying much needed development of community and social infrastructure. So for example, the fight against crime is weakened because the new police station remains half built mired in a contract dispute, three years behind its agreed completion date.

I asked Mukondi what advice he would give to other churches seeking to reach out to marginal and struggling communities. He responded by saying for a start you cannot just come here as a “happy clappy” Christian. You need to have a different orientation if you are to minister here. Morality is a challenge; he asks me how I would deal with a young woman living in a one room house perhaps with four other men all young and unmarried?

“Gone are the days when we can only minister to our own communities, I don’t see any future for the church if we stay black or white, we will be failing God if we do not reach out together.” He then called for the church to rethink how it supports ministry suggesting “when churches like the one at Diepsloot, would struggle to collect R5000 per month, we will disable ourselves if we use as our sole criteria for viability as being the ability of a church to sustain the stipend of a minister.”

We discuss the challenges of ministry here, where not everything or everyone is a success story. Mukondi speaks of one of his more lively carpentry students who began to struggle part way through his course. He was found a few weeks later in his room dead from a suspected drug overdose. When asked about crime and drug taking. He stresses that there is a need to focus on ministry to young people saying, “How can anyone complain about levels of crime when they do nothing to help lift young people out of it.” This is his motivation for the projects involving carpentry, sewing and basic skills. However, the outreach goes further than that. I am shown vegetable plots where young people are taught gardening skills and an additional plot where the carers of orphans can plant additional vegetables to help sustain the needs of their extended families. People can move from being stable to being doomed here in less than three months typically through drugs, alcohol and sometimes through human trafficking.

He sees the work he does to connect Bryanston with Diepsloot as vital for both communities telling me of a woman in St. Mungo’s who was doing her daily devotions whilst on holiday and whilst she was praying felt that God was leading her to care for children in Diepsloot. Now a few months later a homeless young girl is being sustained in the community and helped with her education as a practical response to her own prayer. He says that ministry here can leave you both “stressed and



depressed when you see people dying prematurely on a regular basis it challenges “what you know to be true about God with the personal experience of those struggling around you.”

I ask him what his hope would be for the UPCSA in ten years’ time and what it might look like. He tersely reminded me that it is “the body of Christ and He will do what he wants with it!” Then he speaks directly to the question of unity currently hindering the UPCSA and says that “unless we repent from disunity, our future will not excite and we will make ourselves tired and insensitive to each other. Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus; he did this out of compassion. Disunity makes you insensitive and you lose compassion. You start to look at your friends as enemies and fight for your space.” He then reminds us that the success of the ministry is a united front where 900 or a 1000 people are supporting just 2-3 exposed on the front line.



A community vegetable plot based at the church

Finally, I ask him for his reflections on becoming Moderator Designate. He reminds me of the theme of his acceptance address at the General Assembly in Stellenbosch in July, in which he said he hoped he would have “a small mouth and big ears to listen, especially to what is not being said.” His hope was “that he would assist every member of the church to enjoy belonging to the UPCSA.” The church is full of gifted and talented people and we need to share the burden together. He concluded by reminding me of the old African saying, “if you want to travel fast then travel alone, if you want to travel far travel together.”

I drove alone back through the warren of housing in Diepsloot reflecting on the joy I had seen in its people despite their struggles, and the powerful impact a church can have when it works out how to be a practical prophetic witness to Christ.

Newcastle Congregation wins an award for best outreach programme.

The Newcastle congregation of the UPCSA, situated in Madadeni, won the INDONDO award for the best religious outreach programme at an awards ceremony on 2 August 2012. Their outreach programme is known as INTLANTSI YOBUHLE, and aims to link the Church more closely with the community.

The congregation is currently involved in the dress-a-child campaign, where needy children are identified and they are helped with school uniforms. Feeding schemes in 11 local schools and food parcels for needy families are making a huge difference. The vision is also for a drop-in Centre and a hospice to be established.

Help has not been limited to those in the immediate surrounding area. Recently food parcels and encouragement were given to an extremely needy family in the Vryheid area. The family lives in a remote area, difficult to access but even this was not enough to stop the people from Newcastle UPCSA from helping.



On a mission from God ...the Newcastle Congregation on the road

The project has been well supported by the local congregation, business and committed individuals. Support was also applied for and received from the women of the PC(USA). This help was facilitated by the Rev Douglas Tilton, who is liaison officer of the PC(USA) for the Southern Africa region.

Why become a UPCSA Minister?....

Two ministry students share their thoughts on what qualities are needed for the ministry.

Strauss Joubert: Probationer at St Saints United Church, Somerset East

The Spiritual Qualities Needed for the Ministry.

I was informed that when buying a property, 3 important considerations should be considered, location, location and location.

When I was asked to give my perspective of the spiritual qualities needed for the ministry, I immediately thought Jesus, Jesus and Jesus; having a long relationship with the Father on the grounds of what Jesus did and is still doing for humankind in the power of the Holy Spirit.

With this as source and foundation, consequent spiritual qualities emerge in the committed life like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self - control, (Galatians 15:22) The limit modelled ministry is not doing ministry, but being ministry.

Eddie Germiquet- UPCSA Ministry Secretary adds...

To see academic studies as a vehicle of God's grace.

The greater one's insight into the scriptures the clearer becomes God' grace.

To see the acquiring of academic skills (e.g. Greek and Hebrew) as becoming better instruments in God's hands for God's ministry.

To clearly grasp that the Ministry is not about us but is all about God. Namely:- the Church belongs to God "noting church": the calling received came from God; the people being ministered to are God's people, not "my people"; the message preached must be God's Word not what "I think"; and the Ministry is the Church's Ministry not "my ministry".

To understand that the presence of Christ in a congregation and a church denomination is primarily evidenced by Unity, and that each Minister and Elder has pledged before God and the church to "seek unity and peace," at their Ordination.

Anna Banda; Probationer serving at Mhangura Presbyterian Congregation, Zimbabwe

What are the spiritual qualities that you believe are important in preparing for the ministry?

The spiritual qualities that I believe are important in ministry are:

Honesty

As ministers, we are stewards of God people and God's resources such as money and it takes honesty to faithfully, accountably and responsibly take good care of these things. What I can I can, but what I can't do, I cannot. I will be open to seeking assistance.

Integrity

Integrity will build my personality, my character and my relationship with people I share life with in the community. It will enable me to uphold individual, communal and Christian values with respect.

Trustworthy

As a Minister, I know that people take much risk by entrusting their lives, their resources and situations to me. That level of trust requires me to be a trustworthy Minister. God requires me to be trustworthy and faithful to him, his Word and to the ministry He has called me.

Sincerity

I am persuaded that a Minister who is sincere will live long in ministry. I want to be real and be myself so that God will use me as he intends me to be. Sincerity will help me to do things with all my heart.

Humility

For me humility creates a lot of space for God to use me and receive all the glory through my life and ministry.

Humor

As a Minister, I need time to laugh and share the bright side of life with others even in the hardship of ministry. This is a method of stress management and relaxation.

Consistence

As a minister of word and sacrament, I believe that character building, ministry formation and theological development are qualities that come along with consistence in both action and words.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEWS ROUND

Outgoing Moderator Warns of “abuse of power.”



We constitute to discern the will of God together for our church this week, so declared Rev. Dr. Marchinkowski as he opened the 2012 General Assembly at Stellenbosch United Church in the Western Cape. A full congregation had gathered for the Constituting Service and watched the moving ceremony as the moderator,

one called to be a servant leader, was passed to Rev. Rod Botsis. There was joyous singing of Ndikhokele, o Yehova, ndingumhambi, Nkosi yam.

In his address Rev Marchinkowski drew comparisons between the symbols of royal power in the world and their adoption in the church. He told commissioners that the Gospel is about power, the power to break addiction, narrow-mindedness and to bring forgiveness. Referring to past strengths of the church which had refused to let government dictate, whom should meet, where should meet and whom it could marry, he reminded them that God’s power was self-limiting and that we, too, needed to follow this example.

In a thinly veiled reference to some of the difficult debates in the week ahead at the Assembly, he challenged the UPCSA to consider “whether it change the way it uses power?” and feared that “this week we may be witness to a display of power run a mock.” In contrast, away from the 2012 General Assembly, Rev Marchinkowski drew attention to many “beautiful examples of service being provided by Presbyteries.” He held out hope for the possibility of achieving unity by pointing out that he had witnessed people wearing black jackets and white jackets worshipping the Lord together.

Plea for Greater Presbytery involvement in Church Finances

Doug Anderson the Convener for finance presented the annual finance report. In his speech to the Assembly, he made a plea for Presbyteries to provide greater support and involvement in helping Congregations to manage their finances. Attention was also drawn to qualifications in the churches audited accounts because of the need to develop a proper register of the value of all church buildings. This was echoed in the report on pensions, where commissioners were warned about the significant personal impact on ministers that late payment of pension contributions was making.

General Secretary Presents Possible Options for Church Associations

The opening Session of the Assembly commenced with the report from the General Secretary. Rev Jerry Pillay, who said that around the world churches were grappling with the issue of what does it mean to be reformed today. He contrasted the vibrancy of some parts of the UPCSA experiencing growth and renewal with the struggle for survival in other parts of the denomination, particularly in relation to finance and also in relation to giving youth an adequate leadership role in the church. He was particularly concerned with external relevance feeling that the internal struggle makes it difficult to respond when events happen in the communities around them.

In his report, he also raised the issue of Church Associations, explaining that it was the church itself that needed to solve the unity issues. He was thankful for the way in which those involved had worked together to try and seek unity but regretted that that had not been achieved to date. However, he noted that conflict had become so great in some Presbyteries that they were now dysfunctional with “clashes of views, personality and understanding.” He proposed a commission on faith and culture to assist the church in gaining a better understanding of each other. Having listened to all the views from different parties, over recent months, he proposed five possible options to seek to bring the questions about how Associations will work in the church to a conclusion.

Commissioners reach consensus on external mediation as a way forward for Church Associations Rev. Jerry Pillay told the Presbyterian Link, “that he was pleased that consensus had been reached regarding the need for mediation.”

Whilst many Commissioners were hopeful that this will bring the matter to a conclusion not all felt that way. Other commissioners pointed out the need for all to enter into mediation in the right spirit. They were cautious when asked whether they felt this would really be the case. Others felt that it was important for any outside mediator to understand the importance in African culture of getting the process right and agreed on at the outset.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEWS ROUND CONTINUED A celebration of our transnational church

Commissioners were treated to two excellent presentations concerning the life and work of the church in Zimbabwe and Zambia.

Elder Kwenje, from Zimbabwe, told of the impact that recent tough times were having on families, ministers and the church. There were now only 13 Ministers to cover 36 congregations. However an improvement led through a focus on stewardship is seeing a turnaround.

The significant needs in local communities meant that the UPCSA is offering more to local people through new clinics and health care centers. Schools, orphanages' and farms are already available. Commissioners were keen to know about current life in Zimbabwe including the impact of indigenisation legislation.

Despite a shortage of ministers, poor economic conditions and 14% of the population suffering from HIV, the Assembly was encouraged to hear that many people "were finding solace in Christ."

The presentation from Zambia was no less thought provoking. Rev Sauros Phaika, the Clerk from the Synod of Zambia, took the Assembly through progress in each of the three Presbyteries. He explained how the women's fellowship had been instrumental in founding several new congregations.

Achievements includes, 4352 members attending an annual thanksgiving service. Challenges included a shortage of space and HIV. Never the less a growing membership was engaged in an ambitious building and expansion programme.



The women's fellowship meeting in Zambia the fellowship had also been instrumental in forming new congregations.



Worship at the Kasama Preaching Station in Zambia.

What does it mean to be reformed in the 21st Century?



Professor Russell Botman, Vice Chancellor of Stellenbosch University provided the key note speech at the Wednesday lunch time session talking on a new era of humanity as part of an address on what does it mean to be reformed in the 21st Century. The conference was addressed by many fraternal delegates who had come to join the assembly as representatives of other denominations from the world wide church. Prof. Botman's talk is available as a podcast on the UPCSA website and Facebook page.

Consensus Model to be extended

Commissioners have been growing in confidence in the use of the consensus model for their decision making during the week of the General Assembly. Listening to the "Insakas" dotted around the town of Stellenbosch, there was certainly some lively debate from which better proposals emerged for the Assembly to consider in its decision sessions. Commissioners liked the model so much that in the end they agreed to recommend extending the "principles" of the model to Presbyteries and Sessions for use in their decision making too.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY NEWS ROUND CONTINUED ...

Service for Retiring Ministers

The following ministers were recognized at a special service for retiring ministers:



Rev. Christopher Ian Bernard- who has served the church for 40 years, was called to Saints Presbyterian Church, Centurion until 1989, then became a Chaplain with the SA Defence Force.

Rev. Joan Brummer- is gifted with a gentle spirit and has a passion for God's people and His Church. More importantly she has a passion for Jesus, which will not be diminished by her retirement.

Rev. Badwin Kandinda- A former Moderator of the Synod of Zambia, he commenced his ministry as a lay preacher in 1995. Ordained in 1996, he served the congregation of Chelston.

Rev. Victor Keswa, His ministry displayed an incredible depth of commitment to the faith, and consequently to his service as a minister.

Rev. Len Mart- He served the church with great dignity and was known for helping individuals to reconcile across colour lines.

Rev. Velelo Magaqa- He served many congregations including, Dorrington near Fort Beaufort, John Knox Bokwe near Alice and part time at St Phillips Zwelitsha, Mdantsane, Sada and Craddock, Zola Winterton and the town congregations of Alice and Beaufort.

Rev. Gerald Posthumus- He is a caring minister, a keen pastoral person, always available to do home and hospital visits. Gerald has retired because of ill health.

Rev. Deborah Shawa- Ordained in 2005 and holding a Master's degree from Austin Theological Seminary in the USA and is due to Graduate with a Doctorate in Theology from the University of Pretoria in September of this year.

Rev. Joseph Zibi- when God extended a call to Jo, he never looked back. He remained faithful to his call to this day.



Commemorative plates for retiring Ministers

Worship Committee

Neil Meyer presented the Worship Committee report. He mentioned that he had enjoyed reading a book from the United States, "How to worship as a Presbyterian." He suggested that this would be difficult to do in Southern Africa because of the diversity of worship across the denomination. He was pleased to bring forward new orders for both Holy Communion and Baptism for Commissioners to consider in their listening session. Neil also mentioned that a second edition of "Word and Worship" for next year, the book could be ordered from the Central Office and was likely to be around R200.

Questions included whether there was a possibility of "developing a liturgy for people who are HIV positive." This has not been done but Neil agreed it could be considered. Others enquired about the "timeframe for translating into other languages." Neil told the Assembly there has been some work in translating into Afrikaans because of a volunteer, however, we do need volunteers to translate into other languages." Please contact Neil if you could help translation. He also felt that his Committee had been sensitive to African traditions in developing this worship book.

Dear Mr. President,

THE EDUCATION CRISIS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa wishes to place on record its deep concern about the education crisis in South Africa. For example, we are greatly alarmed by the fact that learners still continue to have classes under trees in the rural areas and in dilapidated buildings lacking appropriate furniture and equipment when billions of rand are squandered and wasted by government officials whose task it is to provide better opportunities for our children. We are also concerned that some educators do not take their responsibilities seriously and fail to do justice in their effort to teach learners. Of greater concern in recent times are: The non-delivery of school text books, especially in Limpopo, and the irresponsible behaviour of some people who dump textbooks which are much needed by our learners.

Indeed, education is the key to the future of all children as they endeavour under extremely adverse conditions to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to set them up for the rest of their lives. South Africa's constitution bears testimony to the latter point as it clearly speaks of the *right* of children to receive an education.

In the light of the obvious crisis in education in South Africa we call on the government to:

- address the situation as a matter of urgency,
- take seriously the plight of our children in their quest to receive a decent and quality education,
- ensure that adequate money is allocated to improve the environmental conditions in which our learners are educated and monitor the expenses related to this endeavour,
- ensure that educators are taking their responsibility to teach seriously,
- address the behaviour of some learners by instilling proper morals, values and discipline,
- bring to book all those who have acted irresponsibly in the issue of non-delivery of school textbooks, and
- demand leadership, management oversight, accountability and immediate reporting on the education crisis from the minister of basic Education, Mrs. Angie Motshekga.

It is our desire as a Church to work with government in addressing the education crisis and we, therefore, avail ourselves for any discussions on how we can work together in the interest of our children and society.

We assure you of our prayers and support as you continue with the huge responsibility of serving the needs of our people and country.



Following a motion at the General Assembly the Moderator and General Secretary have written an open letter to South African President Jacob Zuma expressing the Churches concern over the state Education in South Africa.



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