

Probationers Conference and visit to Lusaka

March and May 2013

The Probationers' Conference took place in March 2013 at Rocky Valley UPCSA Centre. In addition to the eleven Probationers and two ministers being prepared for admission into the UPCSA, there were some special guests. The Convener of the Ministry Committee of the Church of Scotland, Rev Neil Dougal together with the Secretary of their Ministry Committee, Rev Marjory McPherson stayed with the Probationers at Rocky Valley for the first week. They took part in most sessions and also lead a few imparting valuable information and experiences from their side. This was the first of visits and exchanges which it is hoped will continue to enrich both us and them for the foreseeable future.

In addition, the Moderator and Ministry Convener of the UPCSA, Rt. Rev Rod Botsis and Rev Awedzani Nemaukhwe were able to be with the Probationers for three days. The presence of these significant people conveyed to the Probationers a sense of their own value and importance to the future of the UPCSA and God's ministry. Both the Moderator and Ministry Convener shared with the Probationers from their vast experience of ministry and the importance of one's commitment and determination to serve the Lord, and only the Lord.

By the end of the Conference it had become clear the extent to which the UPCSA is blessed with talented and hardworking people, for at no time did the need arise to call upon people to lead or teach from outside the UPCSA family. Two of our guest speakers, Thando Mpambani and Jaco Bester were



Probationers, joining ministers, Scottish guests, Moderator and Ministry Convener together with guest speaker for the day (Rev Thando Mpambani) and Ministry Secretary at Rocky Valley.

themselves Probationers as recently as 2009. Thando spoke on his experiences in the ministry and the importance of keeping one's focus on God while Jaco lead the Probationers through the historical events that brought about the need for Confessions of Faith and then taught on the structure and contents of the new UPCSA Confession of Faith.

The theme for the regular morning exegesis classes was: "Do not be afraid". These are words that can be found in many and differing situations from the beginning of the bible to the end. For many preparing to go into the ministry, fear in one form or another is a very real prospect and emotion.

On Sunday 10th March the Probationers were hosted by St John's Presbyterian Church in Turffontein. The Probationers were responsible for the Children's address and well as the sermon while our Scottish guest jointly celebrated the Communion by sharing the liturgy. At the end of the service a very valuable time was experienced when we met not only the congregants for tea but also spent an hour with the Session and their Minister, Rev Ndoda Mbuyisa. They shared with us not only the joys but also the challenges facing a congregation going through transition as they are.



Neil Dougal teaching on the changing world we face.



Photo session with Neil and Marjory after the service

Amongst some of the outings that the Probationers did was a visit to Constitutional Hill and the prisons that once held many prominent opponents to Apartheid, including Nelson Mandela during the Rivonia trial. Probationers found the memory of despair evoked by the visit to the prisons and the contrast of hope with the Constitutional Court building next door, built with many of the bricks that were once part of the walls of captivity, very moving. They were able to spend regular and valuable time reflecting over and sharing with one another on what they felt the Lord to be doing.



Contrast of solitary cells and Constitutional Court



Visit to Probationers Joseph Gugushe and Mark Langston

During the week of 15th to 19th April the Ministry Secretary was able to visit two Probationers. **Joseph Gugushe** is serving his probation in the quiet town of Groutville north of Durban. The congregation has kindly rented accommodation for him while his Supervisor and Interim Moderator, Alistair Anquetil himself a Probationer in 2010, is beginning to play a significant role in the formation of other candidates for the ministry. The town in which Joseph was placed happened to be the home of the former President of the ANC and first African Nobel Peace Prize winner, Albert Luthuli. His home in the little town has been turned into a museum which Joseph and the Ministry Secretary were able to visit.



Joseph engaging with a wax replica of Albert Luthuli.



Eddie & Joseph at the front door of Luthuli's home.

Mark Langston has found the move to Adelaide (Eastern Cape) both challenging and stimulating. He and his wife Alison and their two children have fitted in well into this rural town after the activity of living in Johannesburg. Instead of visiting shopping malls he now goes to stock fairs and takes to opportunity to meet not only his former congregants but also many other towns' folk who may or may not have a church connection. His innovative and meaningful services and sermons are having a significant impact on the town.

Visit to Justo Mwale Theological College

May 1st to 5th was a few days packed with meetings and celebratory events. The Moderator and Ministry Convener once again took time to invest in the Students for the Ministry and Probationers of the UPCS. They accompanied the Ministry Secretary to Justo Mwale Theological University College in Lusaka and for 4 days met with our 7 students and their spouses. Thursday 2nd May was the meeting of the College Board where our Moderator and Ministry Convener were presented to the Board. The evening meal, which was organized by the students was graced by the Moderator of the Synod of Zambia, Rev Jane Nyirongo as well as a member of the Ministry Committee who lives in Lusaka, Rev Edward Chirwa. During the evening each person present had a turn to say something about him/herself so that people could know each other as fellow Christians rather than as persons holding various offices in the church. New students at JMTUC were presented with their copy of the Manual of Faith and Order. They were

encouraged to not only read its contents but also to see the Manual as guidelines to leading a congregation in a transparent way so that all members have a sense of ownership and inclusion.



Doctor Mathabatha receiving his Manual.



Biggie Mususa receiving his Manual.

Visit to Probationer Phillip Ng'uni

Friday 3rd May was spent visiting the Probationer Phillip Ng'uni and his wife Bridget who have been placed at Chilanga Congregation with its satellite preaching stations. After some valuable time spent with Phillip and Bridget the group walked over to the church premises and met with the Session Clerk and representatives from the Session. Great appreciation was expressed for the ministry and work that both Phillip and Bridget are doing at Chilanga. Furthermore the time and thought taken by the Moderator and the Ministry Convener to meet with them brought a sense of value to the leaders at Chilanga by making them feel part of the wider church.



Chilanga Elders meeting with Moderator, Convener and Secretary.

Graduation Ceremony at Justo Mwale

Saturday 4th May was the graduation day for which many had patiently waited. The graduation was a pleasant mix of solemnity and spontaneous expressions of joy. The guest speaker was Prof. Tolmie, Dean of the Faculty of Theology of Free State University, with whom JMTUC has a partnership. He spoke on the value of an academic education on a personal, church and societal level. For the first time in the history of the College, a group of 9 candidates graduated with a Master's Degree offered by the College in conjunction with the Free State University.



BTh graduants and spouses (from L to R): Ronald & Yeukai Matandakufa; Edna & Arthur Bowa; Rev Nemauxhwe; Rev Germiquet; Rt. Rev Botsis and Bridget & Phillip Ng'uni

The graduation ceremony also produced an unexpected moment of great joy when Mr James Luhana, a former Chairman of the College Board, was presented to the gathered guests. Mr Luhana is an Elder Emeritus in the Chelstone Congregation. He was equally enthusiastic to be able to meet and greet not only the Moderator of the UPCSA but also its Ministry Convener and Ministry Secretary. Accompanying Mr Luhana was Mr Phiri the President of the MCG in Zambia.



Mr James Luhana (centre) with Mr Phiri (white jacket) flanked by Rev Botsis (Moderator) Rev Nemauxhwe (Ministry Convener) and Rev Germiquet (Ministry Secretary).

James Luhana then invited the three UPCSA representatives to join him the next day for the Youth Service at Chelstone Congregation. Rev Sam Mtonga, the Minister at Chelstone made some quick arrangements and kindly fetched the trio. The Sunday Service, led by the youth members, showed that they had been meaningfully guided and had an understanding of what leading a service entailed. Seeing the enthusiasm and vibrancy of the young people filled the Ministry Secretary with hope for the future of the denomination. Also at the service to greet the UPCSA representatives was 75 year old Evangelist Peter Mwale who himself had graduated as an Evangelist from Justo Mwale three years ago. At that time he had addressed the Probationers of 2009 on personal commitment and also on sustainability in the ministry when many of the expected mod cons do not materialize.