

THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

PRESBYTERIAN LINK

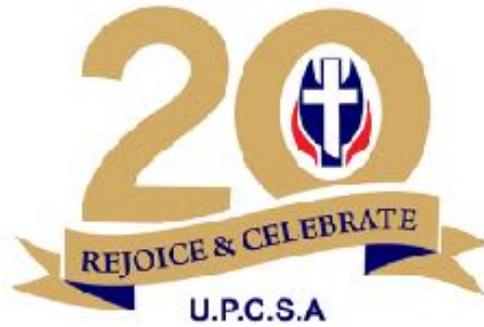
Linking Presbyterians

Dear Friends, We come closer to the time of celebrating 20 year Anniversary of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. Let us give thanks to our awesome God for bringing us this far.

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UPCSA 20 YEAR CELEBRATION

MESSAGE FROM THE CONVENER, THE REV PAUL NESHANGWE, OF THE PRIORITIES AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON UPCSA @20

We are delighted that this year the UPCSA will return to Port Elizabeth where back in 1999 the step of Faith was taken as this denomination became a reality. We have called it a celebration for this is what it is and should be. This Committee has grappled with various questions about this celebration. The questions have arisen from among ourselves, from other Committees, from Presbyteries and Synods as well as from individual members of the UPCSA.

The most prominent of those questions have been: What are we celebrating when we seem to be a far cry from the ideal expected of the body of Christ? Who is celebrating when we are hardly a reconciled community that visibly works together? Is the cost of the celebration justified let alone affordable? What happens in the life of the UPCSA after the celebration?

The Committee neither pretends to have answers that close discussion on these questions nor does it believe discussion on these questions should ever be closed. We believe that it is healthy to struggle with our own failures and imperfections because we have been given the Vision of a reconciled community of people devoted to Jesus. So our celebration is not about having reached the goal but we celebrate the journey of Faith. We

walk by Faith and not by sight so we celebrate that by God's grace the UPCSA is a practical statement of faith.

That practical statement of faith is not only in the coming together of 1999, it is not simply in the fact that we have stayed together when it seemed easier to separate and fragment but it is also in the fact that our celebrating is in itself a statement of intent to follow God further. We celebrate that God who has brought us this far will take us further inspire of our inherent contradictions that are noted. We are mindful of the fact that we are, as described in the bible, hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; troubled, but not destroyed. (ref 2 Corinthians 4:8-9) That is worth celebrating.

We have worked with other Committees, particularly the Finance Committee and the Assembly Business Committee and we are aware that the celebration will be costly in financial terms. We are encouraged to see members and various structures of the denomination making efforts and giving their resources to ensure that God is glorified through this celebration. This cost is going towards our re-aligning, re-positioning as well as re-cognising of who we are and who we are meant to be. The celebration is our way of reflecting on what God has done in and with, to and through us so we become reinvigorated. We are committed to evaluating

the life and work of the UPCSA as well as our use of resources in this celebration.

It is the Committee's conviction that we will come out of this celebration in Port Elizabeth with renewed energy as those who have waited on the Lord. The rest of this report while serving to report that as a Committee we have been diligent to carry out the tasks given to us by the General Assembly of 2018 and our Terms of Reference, also serves to give a glimpse of where we see the UPCSA going beyond the celebration in 2019.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND LOGISTIC ARRANGEMENTS

The 2018 UPCSA General Assembly resolved, inter alia, to host the UPCSA 20th anniversary celebrations within the Presbytery of Central Cape in September 2019. The Priorities and Resources Committee was tasked with a responsibility to drive the process. The Local Organising Committee (LOC) was established by the Presbytery of Central Cape and started to work on the administration and logistics. The LOC is convened by Dr Bukelwa Hans. It is hereby confirmed that the celebrations will take place on the 27th to 29th September 2019. This will be the culmination of a string of activities that will begin on 22 September 2019 where the Moderator will host a lunch for the retired ministers and their spouses. The activities of the week will be as follows:

Phase 1: Executive Commission 23-26 September GAP church

Phase 2: Establishment of New Associations- 26-27 September Nangoza Jebe Hall

Phase 3: Reception 27 September - Nangoza Jebe Hall

Phase 4: 20 Year Anniversary Celebrations - Wolfson Stadium

Phase 5: Sunday Service with Communion - Nangoza Jebe Hall

A website of Nelson Mandela Tourism was sent to all Presbyteries and associations so that they can book for themselves as that period is school holidays but also a busy period for tournaments in Port Elizabeth: www.nmbt.co.za . Please note that, this time of the year, Port Elizabeth hosts a lot of tournaments and therefore the LOC requests that bookings for accommodation are done early. We are hoping to be drafting a welcome letter next month for all invitees.

Invitations have been issued to a wide range of leaders including traditional leaders, ecumenical forums and partners, public and private sectors, and from the civil society. The invited guests, ministers and spouses will join the Moderator of the General Assembly as his guests.

In keeping with the theme of the Moderator of the General Assembly the LOC is working on a "Legacy Project" that will remain an indelible mark that the Presbyterians were in the Central Cape in 2019.

The Moderator will spend time with the elderly members of the denomination (above the age of 70) on Friday midmorning.

ENQUIRIES

Enquiries may be directed to the following:

1. Dr Bukelwa Hans at 0826515070 and email address – stukie@iafrica.com.
2. Rev Lungile Mpetsheni. Contact details: Office: 011 727 3500. Cellphone numbers 0822546679 and 0731383791. Email address: mpetsheni@presbyterian.org.za.

Java Project:

The LOC had asked the Presbytery of Zimbabwe to design a cloth for the celebrations. The cloth is produced in rolls of 50 metres and cost approximately - white 55USD per roll and the other colours between 65 and 70 USD. The colours are French blue, Turquoise blue, Mint yellow and red.

Please send your orders to Christina Kasambara at Central Office (ministry@presbyterian.org.za) 011 7273500.



Stoles:

The LOC, together with Tiyo Soga Presbytery, has designed an ecclesiastical symbol for the 20 year celebration in the form of a reversible stole. The colours available are purple and red or purple, white and red and cost R1300 each.

Shirts:

Golf shirts have been designed and the front and back photo is attached of the golf shirt with the celebration logo at the back and the UPCSA logo at the front. The cost of each golf shirt is R300. The LOC prefers that Presbyteries take the order and deposit the money into the Central Cape Presbytery account as indicated below.



Bank: Standard

Account name: Presbytery of Central Cape

Account no. 080458246

Branch Code:050017

Put the Presbytery name as a reference and email proof of payment to the admin clerk : Ms Louise Jackson ccpresby@gapchurch.co.za

Courier costs will depend how many golf shirts are bought and is not included as part of the R300. It is envisaged that these golf shirts will be worn on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 September at the stadium.



UPCSA 20 YEAR CELEBRATION UPDATE

ABRIDGED PROGRAMME FOR THE CELEBRATIONS

Serial No	Date and Time	Activity	Responsible	Venue	Comments
	a	b	c	d	e
1	27 Sept 14:30 – 15:45	Constitution The Journey of 20 years	Coordinators	Nangoza Jebe (Great Centenary) Hall	This will give milestones (highlights and lowlights)
2	27 Sept 15:45 – 17:45	Symposium on the Church in the 21 st Century	Dr Alan A Boesak to present a lecture	Nangoza Jebe (Great Centenary) Hall	This will be a participatory session – with questions and answers at the end of the lecture.
3	27 Sept 18:00 –	Reception and entertainment	LOC	Nangoza Jebe (Great Centenary) Hall	The ACCM may feature prominently here.
4	28 Sept 09:30 – 17:30	Celebrations including Goodwill messages from ecumenical partners and forums. Presbyteries will feature here. ACCM will feature prominently here.	Moderator of GA will give a message of inspiration to the Presbyterians Priorities and Resources Committee and LOC.	Isaac Wolfson Stadium	We have received confirmations of attendance from our ecumenical partners and leadership of some of the ecumenical bodies.
5	28 Sept 17:30	Associations Street Revival	Associations		
6	28 Sept 21:00	Whole night Revival Service	Associations	Nangoza Jebe (Great Centenary) Hall	
7	29 Sept 09:00	Closing Service with Holy Communion	Moderator of GA assisted by Hosting Presbytery	Nangoza Jebe (Great Centenary) Hall	



FROM THE DESK OF THE MODERATOR OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY THE REV. PETER LANGERMAN

Dear Friends

A long and sad chapter in the life of our denomination ended yesterday as the matter of the UPCSA vs the Rev Prof JLP Wolmarans was resolved through a mediated settlement. While the parties agreed to keep the agreement confidential, they agreed that the following should be publicly released:

*“You are informed that the UPCSA and Prof JLP Wolmarans have settled the disciplinary matter that began after 2014 General Assembly. We acknowledge that the procedures as set out in the Manual of Faith and Order in relation to discipline were not applied correctly nor consistently by the various courts, committees and commissions of the UPCSA that dealt with this matter. The effect thereof was the prolonging of the matter and was the cause of unnecessary and substantial hurt to Prof Wolmarans and his family. Special apology is made to Mrs Wolmarans in this matter for the embarrassment and hurt caused. For this hurt the UPCSA apologizes and undertakes to review the current disciplinary dispensations. Prof JLP Wolmarans and the UPCSA acknowledge that the views expressed in his academic article *En Route to an alternative secular Christianity* are not per se the views of the UPCSA and are part of an exploratory academic discussion.”*

We must record our thanks to the retired Rt Rev Peter Lee who mediated the settlement and to our

Church Representatives, Brent Russel and Jeremy Smith who were prepared to explore this alternate form of dispute resolution that led to this historic agreement being finalized in one day. Please do consider mediation as a route of resolving issues rather than running to the formal processes in the Manual via the ARP or

the Courts. As has been demonstrated, mediation has the capacity to resolve complex disputes constructively and positively in a much shorter time.

This month, I want to focus on the work done by the General Assembly staff at Tiyo Soga House. I was at a meeting of the Church Office Committee and, together with the Convenor of that Committee and the Moderator-Designate, conducted the mid-year performance review of our General Secretary. I came away from that interaction, and the meeting of the Committee, deeply grateful for the caliber of the people who serve us at Tiyo Soga house. These are not perfect people by any means, but they are committed to the Lord Jesus and they love the Church. They serve with passion and dedication and really good humour. I thought it worthy to remind us all that when we changed the profile of the General Secretary, we adopted an approach that saw the General Secretary as the “face of the denomination”. The idea at the time was that the GS should not be an administrative official seated behind a desk in our Central Office. To fulfill this function we created the position of the Clerk of General Assembly. The GS was to be a person who, when he / she was in the office would be the most senior staff person, but who would intentionally not be office bound. The GS is an ambassador of the Church, both internally – by being present at UPCSA events representing the broader denomination – and externally – by being our main ecumenical representative.

Lungile has fulfilled these roles with distinction over the years that he has been in office. As a tribute to his leadership and style, the mood at Tiyo Soga House, once somber and somewhat glum, has been transformed. The new offices are light and airy, and the atmosphere also feels that way. All our staff are pleasant to deal

with, helpful to a fault and eager to assist, whether during office hours or long after their working day has ended. We need to give thanks to God for these dedicated people who serve us so well, often without thanks or acknowledgement.

Last month, I was accused of writing a letter that was predominantly about death. Unfortunately, we have to mark yet another death in the course of the month gone by. The Rev Zolani Agrippa Stuurman passed away and was laid to rest at the end of June. I had two thoughts about this tragic event. The first was something that I tell the students who come to Durbanville from time-to-time, which is that the ministry will kill you. It probably won't kill you quickly or dramatically, but it will kill you over time and the only one who can do anything about it is you. I am completely unimpressed when ministers brag to me about never taking a day off, about not taking annual leave and about having the maximum amount of long leave owed to them. All that tells me is that, at some point, a crisis is coming – a crisis in their overall health and well-being, or a crisis in their person or a crisis in their significant relationships. We have seen a dramatic and concerning increase in the number of ministerial divorces over the last years and this is also a testament to ministers not taking time to work on their marriages and to spend time with their families.

The second thought I had was about the work of ministry. In the old days, the work of ministry was presented as a means of preparing people for a good death. Our commitment to prayer, spiritual direction and Scripture was meant to prepare people to die well. In a culture where talk about death is taboo, we seldom think about death and when we do it is almost always negative. In doing so, we fail to acknowledge the reality and truth of resurrection and what that means for those who fall asleep in Christ.

As you go about ministry in the coming days, please remember that part of what you do is to prepare people to face death with certainty and confidence because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

On the 6th July 2019, a very significant meeting took place between representatives of the Finance Committee and representatives from most of the Presbyteries around the funding of our 20th anniversary celebrations in September. The GS has written to you about the outcome of this meeting, and I will not repeat what he has said here. What I do want to do is extend a heartfelt appeal to all of us to find something to celebrate in September 2019. If you are able to come to PE, please make the effort to be there. If you can't come, please do something to mark the anniversary of our Church. There have been some serious missteps and there have been moments in which we have not acted in line with the demands of the gospel, but there are many things for which we can and should give thanks to God. Please use the opportunity to offer to God your thanks for God's goodness to us.

Finally, I want to thank those of you who wrote to me or spoke to me after my letter of a few months ago about my wife Sally and my mom, Claire. Sally, because of a traumatic event some years ago, suffered a PTSD response in January where she completely lost the ability to speak. In July, while we were on holiday in the Drakensberg, she went for a walk and had a discussion with God in which she demanded her voice back. Having left the house voiceless, she returned with her voice functioning perfectly and for that we give thanks and praise to God who continues to work healing miracles. My mom, having spent almost nine weeks in hospital and having had her right kidney removed, has begun dialysis and is doing really well. She and my dad have moved into a lovely flat in an old-age facility in Durbanville and are very happy in their new home.

Thank you for those who have prayed for me and my family. The 7th July marked one year in office for me as Moderator of the General Assembly and I am so humbled and excited by the signs of life that I see in the denomination. I am loving the opportunity to serve Christ and his people in this position.

Your partner in the gospel
Peter



**FROM THE DESK OF THE
GENERAL SECRETARY
OF THE UPCSA**

THE REV. LUNGILE MPETSHENI

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3 NIV).

Greetings to all the Presbyterians in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The spirit of building a community keeps us moving. We have consistently organised activities to boost the UPCSA profile as *Icawe yabantu* - A people's church. We continue to beseech all the Presbyterians to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

We held a ministers' retreat in February this year under following focal areas:

- Mending the relationships.
- Healing of memories.
- Building a missional church.
- Leadership capacity development.

Colleagues shared so much love and joy, while we also lamented on the pains, brokenness and agonies that some go through in different circumstances. We laughed and wept together as a community. At the end, we left eMseni with full hope that Presbyteries would build up on the foundation that was laid on the four areas of concern. We continue to adjure Presbyteries to pursue this in the spirit of being a sister's/brother's keeper that we are supposed to be. We should render life affirming ministry to the ministers, so that they may provide same to the congregants.

We also held a consultation towards the establishment of Gender Desk and Youth Desk at all the levels of the UPCSA. This action is long overdue, as imbalances, injustices and inequalities have continued for a long time in most of our structures. The Gender Desk and Youth Desk ought to find a prominent places as items in the agendas of all the Councils and the associations of the UPCSA. The participants were equipped to work with the leadership at their respective councils to establish the desks. An appeal is made to all not to postpone the implementation of this plan. We took a resolve that we need to mentor and equip men and women in the church and in the society to be responsible members of the denomination and to be active citizens in our societies.

We are planning a gathering of the Presbyterians in Port Elizabeth, Central Cape Presbytery in September 2019. There are two most pertinent questions that are often asked: What are we celebrating? Who is attending – who is celebrating? The questions emanate from diverse encounters and experiences that some went through, mostly rather than negative positive. We need to work together to answer these questions and to, perhaps, alter the course of history, so that we get a positive narrative of the life and work of the UPCSA. We must work together to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. We celebrate because, in our weakness and unfaithfulness, our God became our strength and remained faithful. We have sailed through many

vicissitudes and inconsistencies. We could have collapsed along the way, but God remained strengthened us, and became our peace and our banner. It is envisaged that Presbyterians, across racial, ethnic, regional, national, gender and other divides will be in Port Elizabeth to celebrate the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. We have a home in the UPCSA – Icawe yabantu – a people’s church. The anniversary celebrations should be seen and used as an opportunity to make progress towards “A reconciled community of Christians” as we focus on:

- Mending the relationships.
- Healing of memories.
- Building a missional church.
- Leadership capacity development, with particular focus on the elders.

In Port Elizabeth, we shall hold the Executive Commission on the 23rd to the 26th September. On the 26th and 27th September, the 4 associations will be established.



The bond of peace can be stronger when we come together and talk about all the issues. We need each other more ever before. We are a community.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Lungile Mpetsheni
General Secretary of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa



**FROM THE DESK
OF THE CLERK
OF GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

**THE REV. VUSI
MKHUNGO**

VISIT TO THE SYNOD OF THE LECSA

The Lesotho Evangelical Church in Southern Africa had its 2019 Synod in Morija, Lesotho from 24 to 28 April 2019 and I was privileged to represent the UPCSA.



It is important to note that both the UPCSA and LECSA signed a Memorandum of Understanding in October 20117 and since the signing of this MoU the partnership and co-operation between the two churches have grown.

At the 2018 General Assembly of the UPCSA we saw some 15 members of the LECSA visiting with for the duration of that particular sitting of the highest council of the UPCSA. The major aim for this visit was to observe and study our consensus system of decision making with the hope of implementing it in their

You can stretch! Failure is the beginning – not the end.

Cpln (Rev) Sibusiso Zungu

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” Gen. 50:20

The famous architect Frank Wright designed many beautiful buildings, homes, and other magnificent structures. Towards the end of his career, a reporter asked him, “Of your many beautiful designs, which one is your favourite?” Without missing a beat, Frank answered, **“My next one.”** He understood the principle of stretching, constantly pressing forward regardless of challenges.

Life is unpredictable and things don't always turn out the way we expect. In as much as we always make plans, we should always have alternative options in case things don't work out as planned. As people, we are not accustomed to failure or make a room for disappointment (even the one planned by individuals divergent to you), so when things don't work out, we get depressed and lose confidence. In such circumstances the Bible tells us that “But Joseph said to them, “Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” [Gen 50:19-20].

Hindrances and challenges are part of the route which build up to success. It is our reaction to such challenges which is most crucial thing on how we get to succeed and achieve our most desired outcome. It's either we keep trying until we succeed or we give up at the first glance of failure. The dictionary defines failure as: “a thing or person that has no success”. However, I define it as: **“the rehearsal to success”**. If you fail or are made

to fail, you are actually rehearsing for success, and you may rehearse more than once before the actual performance. Failure is part of learning process and you should always take something deeper out of it than a sense of self-pity.

Remember the Japanese proverb: “Fall seven times, stand up eight.” We need to gather more strength after each and every fall, and we should be able to rise up with new strength. Make up for a failure by rising every time you fall. Even if you fail 99 times, you should be able to rise 100 times. A wise man once said that someone who has never failed in his life has never tried anything new. Actually, he has failed to start. In failing, we gain a momentum experience, we make mistakes and learn from them, and we become wiser and better prepared. It takes bravery and strength to keep going.

Weeping and giving up doesn't aid in a long run; you need to take action and pick up the pieces. When the man of faith, Job, lost all he ever had, he remained positive and never lost his faith in God. He kept going, and God restored everything that Job had lost. The Bible says Job was wealthier than he had been initially. You may have lost all what you have worked for in Department of Defence. When you fail, what you need is a positive attitude – dust yourself off and make a fresh start. Take all the lessons learnt from failure, arm yourself with knowledge and experience, and rise up again!

In the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

**Presbytery of eThekwini
Elders Retreat organized by the Mission
and Discipleship Cluster and presented by
the Rev. Dr Amon Kasambala held at the
Glenwood Presbyterian Church on
16 March 2019.**

On Saturday 16 March 2019, an Elders retreat/workshop was held for the eThekwini Presbytery at the Glenwood Presbyterian Church organized by eThekwini M@D cluster and sponsored by eThekwini Presbytery Finance.



Lunch was then served and a time of fellowship was enjoyed by all. The Elders returned in the afternoon for the third session which dealt with the Role of Elders and Session.

The programme was well received with overwhelming positive feedback. A follow up workshop is planned for August 2019

It was well attended by 150 serving Elders representing all 29 churches within the Presbytery.

The day started at 09h00 with registration and devotions led by the Moderator the Rev. Niek Wit.

The first session was a leadership workshop facilitated by Rev. Dr Amon Kasambala followed by tea and scones.



**God is my
Boss and I'm the
Employee. I'm
thankful for my
salary called Life,
with benefits
called Blessings.
Amen**

Beauty of Life

This pastor decided to skip church one Sunday morning and go play golf.

He told his assistant he wasn't feeling well. He drove to a golf course in another city, so nobody would know him.

He teed off on the first hole. A huge gust of wind caught his ball, carried it an extra hundred yards and dropped it right in the hole, for a 450 yard hole in one.

An angel looked at God and said "What'd you do that for?"

God smiled and said "Who's he going to tell?"



**"To live by faith in Christ is not the same
as to live by feelings."**

Iain Murray

Disclaimer

The views or opinions presented in the Presbyterian Link may not necessarily represent the official position of the UPCSA.

Submissions

We welcome submissions from anyone. Please submit photos as well. The editors of the Presbyterian Link reserve the right to edit/adapt or decline articles submitted to it. Submissions can be emailed to the.kellys@mweb.co.za

Feedback

We would love to hear from our readers regarding any article.

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