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UPCSA



The Right, Rev Lydia Neshangwe : Moderator

The Gift for Our Fear Factor

The world today is ruled by many visible factors like rulers, money, technology or war. One of the invisible and intangible factors that rules over us is fear. Many of us do not classify ourselves as fearful people but our lives are ruled by inner fears that drive us whether we are conscious of it or not. It is for such fears that Isaiah says, "For unto us a child is born."

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6 KJV)

One of our greatest fears is the FEAR OF THE FUTURE or the FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN. The contexts in which we live are no longer predictable, certain or stable. This also leaves us with the FEAR OF LOSS OF CONTROL because the number of things or people within our control is shrinking daily. Related to this is the very common FEAR OF FAILURE, a real experience across the generations. Or even a FEAR FOR OUR HEALTH, a reality for many.

The FEAR OF LOSS is also well lived out fear which includes a FEAR OF POVERTY. On a personal level many suffer from a FEAR OF

INADEQUACY. Then there's the FEAR OF LETTING GO of certain situations, thinking patterns and persons. And the FEAR OF PEOPLE'S OPINIONS, a fear that few are honest enough to admit because it affects even the very best of us. For many who are leaders, the FEAR OF IRRELEVANCE governs their leadership, leading to the temptation for leaders to take the place of God and be the hero of the people.

For those who have had bad experiences, the FEAR OF SHAME can easily govern their life decisions. Related to that is the FEAR OF REJECTION, because rejection at any level is painful.

In response to our fears, in at least four different narratives of the birth of Jesus, angels address the servants of God using the same message: "fear not." The shepherds are instructed to "fear not" for their lives. Mary is instructed to "fear not" the impossible. The priest Zacharias is instructed to "fear not" the unanswered prayer for a child. And Joseph is instructed to "fear not" the unknown.

For every one of our fears, there is a solution, in the form of a gift that we celebrate every Christmas time – the gift of love which comes to us in the form of Jesus. He is described perfectly by Isaiah (9:6) as "the Wonderful Counsellor" who counsels us through our fears. He is "the Mighty God" who is powerful to eradicate our fears. He is "the Everlasting Father" who is enough for us. And He is "the Prince of Peace" who replaces our fears with love. This gift of Christ is so powerful that His love, perfect love, "drives out all fear."

"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18)

This Christmas 2023, receive this precious gift and you will have received freedom. After all, "it is for freedom that Christ has set us free." (Gal 5:1). Make this your turnaround

Christmas, the Christmas where you begin your fearless life. With love

COMMENTARY



Bro Benny Boshielo: Communication Committee

We come to the end of yet another momentous year in the UPCS. The Communications Committee and Presbyterian Link Team take this opportunity to give thanks to our Creator for guiding us to this end. There is much to celebrate in our Denomination. First, we have seen the consolidation of the unity process within the church Fellowships, which have all held very successful conferences this year. This puts paid to the commitment and positive efforts by the leadership and members of these Fellowships. Secondly, we have seen our Denomination walk the talk in fulfilment of one of our strategic guidelines, which speaks to an engendered approach in our work with the election of a female Moderator of the General Assembly, The Right Rev. Lydia Neshangwe. As if that was not enough, we ooze with pride as we thank God, for her further election as the President of the All-Africa Conference of Churches. We wish her well and success as she confronts the challenges facing our continent. However, we remain confident that with her already displayed visionary leadership, the AACC is in good hands. Thirdly, we are indeed happy to see the vision of a trans-national church unfolding in the UPCS. This as we welcome the DRC within the fold of the UPCS. Now we can see and

experience a truly uniting church in action. Once more thank you to the vision of our church leadership and remain hopeful that the Moderator's theme of 'Stronger together' will help to enhance and navigate this noble path.

This is the last edition of the Presbyterian Link for the year 2023. The team has therefore decided that it will focus on telling the story of the 'UPCSA 23' in pictures. So many exciting things were done and achieved in this period, and it is the view of the team that we should leave lasting pictorial visions in the mind of our members as they retire into the Christmas season. However, we will also receive a Christmas message from the Moderator, and also an article which speaks to the 'Sixteen days of activism against gender-based violence' as this was universal focus in the world over. We invite you to enjoy this edition with us. Once more we would like to thank our Editor-in-Chief and General Secretary, Rev, Dr Lungile Mpetseni for the support and guidance which he has provided to the team throughout the year. The fact that with his extremely busy schedule, he was able to attend all our meetings speaks volumes about the commitment of this servant of God to his work. We will remain ever grateful Radebe. Same applies to all members of the team. Thank you to all who contributed articles during the year. May the Good Lord continue to Bless You and give you more wisdom and energy to share. On behalf of the Communications Committee and the Presbyterian Link Team, we wish you a Merry Christmas and yet another fruitful and prosperous year.



Rev, Dr Lungile Mpetsheni - General Secretary

The UPCSA continues to make significant inroads in the ecumenical space in a modest way. It influences, while it is also influenced by other role players and actors towards redefining the positions that the contemporary church should be taking to bring about unity, order and justice in our churches and communities. The Council for World Mission (CWM) refers to this venture as “building life flourishing communities”.

In November 2023, the UPCSA participated in three international ecumenical forums, namely,

- a) CWM Board of Directors that was held in Durban, South Africa, where the Rt Rev Lydia Neshangwe serves as a Moderator and the Rev Dr Mpetsheni as the Chairperson for CWM Africa NPC and, therefore, as a member of the Board;
- b) All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) General Assembly that was held in Abuja, Nigeria where the Rt Rev Lydia Neshangwe was elected as a President; Ms Afika Rwayi was the Chairperson of the Youth Coordinating Committee and presented the

keynote address at the pre-Assembly Youth gathering, and the Rev Dr Mpetsheni served as a member of the Nominations Committee which was responsible for the electoral processes; and

- c) Africa Communion of Reformed Churches General Council which was also held in Abuja, Nigeria, where the Rev Dr Mpetsheni was re-elected as the Secretary and Ms Afika Rwayi as a member of the Executive Committee representing the Youth.

At the national ecumenical forums, the following trends should be appreciated:

- a) **In Zambia:** The Rev Sauros Phaika is the President of the Council of Churches in Zambia. He represented this body at the Assembly of the AACC in Nigeria.
- b) **In Zimbabwe:** The Rt Rev Lydia Neshangwe is the Chairperson of the Advisory Council of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC). The ZCC was instrumental in ensuring that Rt Rev Lydia Neshangwe was elected as the AACC President.
- c) **In South Africa:** The South African Council of Churches (SACC) held its Central Committee on 27-28 November 2023. The Past Moderator Rev SJ Mtetwa, The General Secretary, Rev Dr Lungile Mpetsheni, the President of the Fellowship of Women, Mrs NC Bosiki, and the President of the Fellowship of Youth, Mr Gabriel Mampane represented the UPCSA.

The Rev Dr Mpetsheni is a member of the National Executive Committee of the SACC, the Convener of the Membership Committee, and the member of the Constitutional Amendments Committee.

Rev Kim Brown is the Vice President of the Church Unity Commission (CUC) where she, Rev Dr Kobo, Rev Mkhungo, Rev Zwai Mtyhobile and Rev Dr Mpetsheni are representatives of the UPCSA. Rev Zwai Mtyhobile is a convener of the CUC Doctrine Committee and a coordinator of the South African Chapter of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). Under his coordination, four services have been held to promote the JDDJ and they were in Cape Town in 2021, Durban and Pietermaritzburg in 2022, and in Port Elizabeth in 2023.

The Rev Glynis Goyns and Rev Madoda Mfene represent the UPCSA in the activities of the Southern Africa Faith Communities' Environmental Initiatives (SAFCEI)

d) **Involvement of Presbyteries in Ecumenical Activities:** The participation of our various Presbyteries in ecumenical activities is commendable. The engagement of the Presbytery of Zimbabwe (POZ) in partnerships is outstanding. The POZ enjoys long standing partnerships with the Presbytery of Denver of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Eastern Synod of the United Reformed Church (in England). The Presbytery has benefited from the partnerships in terms of communities' upliftment projects and the development of ministers. The Presbyteries in South Africa are encouraged to participate in the corresponding structures of the SACC and be instrumental in the establishment of the Local Ecumenical Action Networks (LEANs), especially as South Africa is preparing for the 2024 national and provincial elections.

The UPCSA realises the importance of participating in the ecumenical forums to address the dynamic and immense challenges that confront the rest of creation. All in the

UPCSA are being encouraged to play their roles in promoting ecumenism at all the levels.

In the following article, we will delineate the areas that the ecumenical bodies are engaging in.

SOME OF THE AREAS THAT ARE BEING ADDRESSED IN THE ECUMENICAL SPACE

This article shares a catalogue of areas that those who are active in the ecumenical space engage in. It provides a file for all those who would want to be active in the areas of social justice to harvest from. Some of the areas are transversal in many of the ecumenical forums and may not necessarily be repeated. They will appear in the follow order: AACC, WCRC, CWM and WCC. The list appearing here is not exhaustive of all the issues at all. There may be other issues that are not included.

ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES:

1. **African Patriotism:** The AACC convened an All Africa Youth Congress in November 2022 under the theme and slogan "Africa My Home, My Future". The past Assembly of the AACC resolved to escalate that to a campaign towards the inculcation of the value of African patriotism. Through this campaign, the AACC wants to advocate for investing in and empowering young people for economic viability.

2. **Justice and Peace:** The AACC wants to monitor early warning signs of conflicts and engage in peace programs; address the impact of armed conflicts on women and children; and engage the African Union on unconstitutional changes of governments, democracy, and visa-free movement.

3. **Human Rights:** Continue work on human rights, including supporting the capacities of member Churches.

4. **Advocacy at the African Union:** The AACC wants to represent faith-based organizations in advocacy at the African Union and advocate for agenda 2063, silencing the guns, a visa-free Africa, and engage in global agendas.

5. **Ecumenical Formation and Theology:** Recognize the connection between evangelism and ecumenism. Refute false theologies and participate in theological discussions. Launch a master's program for training theologians and leaders.

6. **Creation Care, Environment, and Climate Change:** Accept the Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice. Move from discussing creation care to practical implementation. Explore the link between environmental protection, food security, and alternative energy sources. Incorporate climate change curriculum in educational institutions.

7. **Sexual-Gender Based Violence and Gender Justice:** Adopt the Anti-GBV campaign and focus on the family unit. Take a comprehensive strategy involving various stakeholders. Speak out against institutionalized prejudice and mistreatment of women.

8. **Migration and Trafficking in Persons:** Respond to migration and trafficking in persons, emphasizing prevention and survivor support. Address migration challenges with a family unit dimension.

9. **Sustainable Population:** Examine the theology of reproduction and its impact on climate change. Consider humans as part of creation rather than above it.

10. **Ethical Leadership:** Target youth for ethical leadership curriculum. Nurture

coaching and mentorship programs for the young. Take up the AACC Ecumenical Leadership Master's Programme.

11. **Persons with Disabilities:** Promote disability studies in theological seminaries. Attract people with disabilities into ordained ministry. Support people with disabilities in self-employment.

12. **Church and Community Transformation:** Establish active holistic development/diakonia departments. Focus on teaching youth values of excellence. Prioritize Christian transformation starting with the family.

13. **Deepening a Culture of Peace in Africa:** Use the pulpit to preach peace. Raise a prophetic voice and engage in mediation and reconciliation initiatives.

14. **Economic Justice and Debt Crisis:** Advocate for economic justice and UN tax convention. Engage church leaders in advocating for the UN Tax convention. Localize the Zacchaeus tax campaign. Recognize and address new debt crises in Africa.

15. **Ecological Justice:** Continue raising the voice of faith actors on climate justice.

16. **Pan Africanism and Faith:** Deepen Pan African partnership with mutual representation and leadership engagement. Call for policies supporting small holder farmers and climate change adaptation. Promote a Pan African and Pan African Women of Faith lens in theological education.

WORLD COMMUNION OF REFORMED CHURCHES (WCRC)

The WCRC focuses on the following objectives: Gender Justice, Ecumenism, A Faith based Communion and Empowerment.

It seeks to address the following four verbs:

Discerning, Confessing, Witnessing, and Being Reformed.

It strives to achieve the following five actions: Fostering a just communion; Covenanting for Justice, Doing Theology for Transformation, engaging in God's Mission in the context of crisis, and Working with all partners God provides.

The WCRC encourages the reading and implementation of the following documents:

Accra Confession, Belhar Confession and Sao Paulo Statement towards New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA).
New Programme: Global Reformed Advocacy Platforms on Engagement (GRAPE).

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION (CWM)

The strategic framework of the CWM is about promoting the building of life flourishing communities. Its flagship programme is The Onesimus Project (TOP). The Project has four pillars, namely: Legacies of Slavery, Modern Slavery, Empowerment and Liberation, and Transformative Ecumenism.

CWM has set up a three-pronged funding to be accessed by the member churches towards redressing the injustices of the past, namely, • Reparatory Justice Fund (RJF), • Healing of Memories Fund (HMF), and • Modern Day Slavery Fund (MDSF).

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC)

The WCC resolved to launch a Pilgrimage for Peace, Unity and justice. Each member church should find ways of participating in the campaign. The WCC is occupied with interventions to bring about peace and stability in the world, including the Russo-Ukraine war and Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



ACCEPTANCE SPEECH



*The Right Rev, Lydia Neshangwe
President: All Africa Conference of Churches*

AACC Presidency, November 2023

I give glory to God for my election as the new President of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). On a spiritual level, this is a humbling call from God. On a practical level, this is a great responsibility that I accept in faith. On a personal level, this is an opportunity for me to serve Africa at a broader level.

The summary of my response to my election is, "Here am I Lord, send me." However, I'm aware that the work to which I am being sent is no child's play. The African context in which I will serve is unpredictable. The issues of Africa are complex. The people whom I will serve are diverse. The local and global influences on Africa are multiple.

And so I take on this responsibility relying not on human power, church politics, public opinion or personal ambition, but rather

relying on the transforming power of God to transform our witness and mission, and to transform me as a vessel of the Lord. I encourage us all in the AACC community and beyond to be spirit-driven because the power is in the spirituality. And it is the Spirit of God that can bring an advancement of the gospel and the social changes we need in Africa.



AACC-CETA



Headquarters of All Africa Conference of Churches



Rev,Dr.CN. M'kandawire

Psalm126:1-6ESV

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb! Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! ...

The journey of the Presbyterian church in Zambia began in the year 1923 with the establishment of the first church in Livingstone. The Church was named in memory of the great missionary and explorer by the name of Dr. David Livingstone. David Livingstone Memorial Presbyterian church was established by Presbyterian laymen who were working with the Railway company which was carrying out Cecil Rhodes dream of connecting Africa through railway from Cape to Cairo. It is through the efforts of these faithful Presbyterians that the work was opened first in Livingstone. Just maybe they did not even know that this work was going to have such an impact on the Nation of Zambia. It all started like a small fire which spread through the entire country like a wildfire following the line of rail.

This work has seen the establishing of Presbyterian congregations in Lusaka, Kabwe, the entire Copperbelt, Eastern part of the Country, Siavonga, Mazabuka, Kafue, Chilanga, Kapiri Mposhi, and most recent Solwezi. To co-ordinate this work it led to the constitution of the Synod of Zambia 59 years ago. Under the Synod of Zambia, we have 3

Presbyteries namely Mchinga, Munali and Copperbelt Presbyteries.

In terms of work force, the church in Zambia has seen growth over the years from 1 borrowed minister from UCZ - United Church of Zambia, in the name of Rev. SK. Nkhowani to about 25 ordained ministers. For this we celebrate God's faithfulness.

The centenary celebration was launched in February with a 100-tree planting program. This was led by Munali Presbytery moderator the Rev.K.Mhone. This was followed by several activities like Visitation to people's homes, orphanages, Hospital, street feeding programs, medical clinics to vulnerable communities, donations of clothing and reading glasses etc. All these activities were leading to the month of November 22nd to 26th where the mother of all celebration was to take place on the grounds of David Living Stone Memorial Presbyterian Church.

The celebration was held under the theme "Celebrating 100 years of God's Grace, Impartation, Evangelism and Discipleship, EBENEZER!" 1 Samuel 7:12. This celebration was graced by the presence of the General Assembly Moderator the Rt. Rev. Lydia Neshangwe. The Guest of honour was her



honour the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia Mrs. Mutale Nalumango. Sunday the 26th was the climax of the celebration which started with a match pass and ended with a very powerful word from the General Assembly Moderator on being a game Changer. It all started from Wednesday with buses arriving from Lusaka around 12:00hrs bringing Presbyterians from the whole country of Zambia. On the first day we had the Guest Speaker in the name of Bishop BM Malenga from Living Waters Church international who had to set the tone for celebration. On the first day the focus was celebrating the Youths in the Presbyterian Church. The following day the focus was on Women. The fourth day we were focusing on Men in the church then last but not the least we celebrated the children on the 25th of November. We had other speakers that spoke, encouraging the church as we move forward in the next 100 years. What type of church are we supposed to be? We had the Rev. Dr. Amon Kasambala who spoke on Transforming leadership. Rev. Lili Malenga had a side session with the mothers, dealing with women ministry. The Rev. Thomson Mkandawire spoke on the Vision and Mission of the Presbyterian church in Zambia. All in all, the celebration was a Hugh success to God be all the glory.

Many thanks go to the Session of David Living Stone Memorial Presbyterian Church for hosting such a Hugh event on behalf of the Uniting Presbyterian church Synod of Zambia. For providing leadership and for sharing resources at a time such as this. May the good Lord continue to bless and guide His Church in the next 100 years. **EBENEZER!**





Rev, Dr Amon Kasambala, Moderator Designate

You have heard and have been taught that **Love is a virtue**. When love is a virtue, it goes beyond just spoken words, emotions, or feelings. It becomes a key guiding principle that influences our character, actions and relationships within and outside the denomination. Love as a virtue becomes a foundation upon which we build our wellbeing as a denomination. When love is a virtue for our denomination, it becomes a guiding compass for how we interact and relate to each other. It challenges our commitment to Jesus Christ the Saviour, the Church and fellow believers.

Living the UPCSA value of love therefore calls for the following:

- (1) Showing kindness to the vulnerable, the marginalized and those who have been sidelined in the Church.
- (2) Showing gratitude to God and being grateful for what He continues to do for us as a denomination.
- (3) Building healthy relationships among ourselves in all Councils of the Church - Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods, and the General Assembly.
- (4) Developing a servant heart attitude in all engagements within the denomination.
- (5) Learning to let go of the past hurts – forgiving each other – and allowing the

Spirit of the Lord to do a new thing among us. Living the UPCSA value of love is **an ongoing process** – a process that calls us a denomination and as individual Christians to self-reflect, do some introspection, stop the bus and re-evaluate our commitment to Christ, the Church and fellow believers. And it calls for the Lord's help.

SIXTEEN DAY OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



Rev, Dr Bukelwa Hans



The UPCSA in seeking to establish a just and equitable society for all – men and women established the Gender Desk, in 2018. In 2021, the Assembly, publicly confessed that the practice of patriarchy which promotes unequal relations based on dominance and submission is wrong and publicly commits to re-interpret biblical, cultural, and societal gender relations based on reciprocity and mutual partnership and committed to ensuring equal representation in all church councils.

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (from November 25 to December 10), the Gender Desk runs awareness programs and encourages activism through speaking out, educate, and advocating for change. This is done through webinars, and prayer meetings and observing the weekly Thursdays in Black Campaigns (TIB) The theme for the TIB is "Towards a world without rape and violence." This we observe by wearing all black on Thursdays with the TIB badge. The Gender Desk is trying to source the badges and will inform the denomination when they are available at Central Office. The Gender Desk encourages that all members of the UPCSA to observe these weekly TIB campaigns and also play a role in other gender justice campaigns.

The Gender Desk also ensures work on gender justice is done at congregational level through empowering Presbyteries. Presbyteries are requested to make sure that a Gender-Desk Coordinator is appointed at the level of Presbytery and at congregational levels. Most of the gender justice work is done at congregational level.

A policy on gender justice has been developed and has been accepted in principle by the General Assembly and sent down to Presbyteries for comments. Comments must reach the office of the General Secretary by the 29 February 2024. The Gender Desk encourages all congregations to get a copy of the policy from their Presbytery Clerks or the Clerk of Assembly, Rev Vusi Mkhungo.

A policy on sexual harassment is being developed, and should be ready, hopefully, for presentation to the Executive Commission in 2024

The Gender Desk is also instrumental in making sure that there is gender balance especially with leadership of the church, hence appreciates the decision of Assembly to ensure that the next General Secretary be a woman. The denomination is intentional through the

Gender Desk to make sure that there is gender equity in all councils of the church at all levels.

The Gender Desk encourages all members of the denomination to play a role on gender justice issues thus becoming "Stronger together" as the theme of the Moderator stipulates and to be brave, compassionate, and unwavering in our commitment to ending gender-based violence. In that way we, together, can create a safer and more just society. The congregations can thus become safe spaces for survivors of gender-based violence.

The church, in most instances is the first point of support for survivors of any kind of violence, especially gender-based or domestic violence. The congregations, therefore, should understand the fears and barriers that women face in seeking care as they are mostly subjected to stigma and discrimination. They run to the church where they are expecting to be loved, will not be judged or blamed, treated with respect in words and in action and accompanied towards healing.

In my view, the church should create gender-responsive care towards survivors, in the following ways:

- Re-enforce her value and self-worth as a person created in the image of God, who loves her unconditionally.
- Listen to her, believe her story, take what she says seriously, do not judge her behaviour or blame her for the incident. Show her that the church cares as Jesus said that "if you cared for the least of these you cared for me."
- Treat her with respect and dignity. Make sure that the environment she is in is private and all conversations are confidential. That will build a level of trust.
- Respect her autonomy by providing counselling and information to empower her to make her own

24 HOUR PRAYER SERVICE

decisions towards her healing process. It is important to stress that the members of the church should be careful not to bring their biases and prejudices during the process of support.

In conclusion the following are, for me, key take home messages for our denomination.

- ❖ Let us all put ourselves in the shoes of the survivor so that we can learn to empathize with them, better understand their situation and tailor our support as a church to their situation/ care.
- ❖ The church should try as much as possible to encourage survivors to be involved in all aspects of women-centred care.
- ❖ It is important for the church to be aware of its own beliefs and attitudes towards violence against women and not let that influence how it communicates with and provides care to survivors.
- ❖ Violence against women is never acceptable for any reason.
- ❖ Gender justice issues should be addressed by the church daily and not only during the 16 days of activism. Action by the church is key and will lead to a survivor-led care, which will impact on survivors being part of the campaigns and projects.



The church, led by the Gender Desk, a Sub-Committee of the Church in Society Committee, organized a 24 hour prayer service on the 9-10 December 2023. The prayer service was part of the 16 Days Of Activism Against Gender Based violence. The prayer service commenced on the 9th at 18:00 and was closed by the Moderator of General Assembly on the 20th at 18:00.

During this marathon prayers we had over 130

Presbyterians leading us in prayers, readings of the word and devotions. We commend the Gender Desk and Church in Society Committee for this initiative, as we together pray for the elimination of this violence tendency.



Unto us a Child is born, a Child is Given



Rev Lazarus Sajeni

Reading: Isaiah 9:1-7, Luke 2:11-15

A couple of years ago, one of my sisters Lonlicia, was blessed with a baby boy and she decided to celebrate the birth of her new-born son. She stayed a stone throw away from our parents, that she decided to have the celebrations whilst the baby was resting comfortably at our parents' house. She invited a couple of friends over to celebrate with her, the arrival of her new-born son. It was a, "Baby Welcome" party. She welcomed her guests, and they all had a great time celebrating in song and dance, eating, and drinking. After a while, one of the ladies said, "Well, bring the baby out. Let us see him." My sister then went to get the baby from his room he was nowhere to be found. She started to panic and feel fearful. Suddenly, she remembered that the baby was still at our parents' house, where she had left him. She and the guests had been having so much fun they had forgotten what the party was about in the first place. During the Christmas season, many people get busy with celebration and forget that the birth of Jesus Christ is the reason for the season.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come Let Earth receive her King

Let every heart prepare Him room And Heaven and nature sing

And Heaven and nature sing

And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing....

Christmas carols are almost as closely associated with Christmas as the birth of Jesus Christ itself. Carols have been part of the season of goodwill for centuries. In themselves, these time-honoured songs give a summary of the very essence of Christmas, as people once again gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Christmas time brings performances of various carols with the classic song "Unto Us a Child Is Born." It is also time you hear familiar songs like "Joy to the World" with verses about the same phrase. And this question tends to come into our minds, what does "unto us a child is born" mean?

Isiah 9:6 gives us the phrase: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

This verse, penned down hundreds of years before Jesus' birth, points to Christ as our Lord and Saviour. On Christmas, the day we celebrate the birth of Christ, we sing about this prophecy and celebrate the child that was born, the son that was given.

The prophetic scripture brings both a promise of future blessing and the reality of then-present judgment. The reference to the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali points to the northern kingdom of Israel. At this time, it was already a country under control of Assyria and headed for destruction because of the people's sins. Yet God would one day bring honour to this land, for his Son would live and minister there. There would come a day when the people walking in darkness would see a great light, and the kingdom of heaven would come near.

Matthew 4:15-16, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, The people who were in the dark saw a great light, and to those in the land of the shade of death did the dawn come up.

Indeed, in the future the Messiah will reverse the humiliation and bondage of Israel and usher in an era of peace in which the garments of war will be no more.

Here again we see the “near” and “far” aspects that frequently occur in Old Testament prophecy because Jesus was born two thousand years ago as a child, but the government of the universe has yet to be placed “on his shoulders.” This will happen at his coronation as King of kings and Lord of lords in the millennium.

Notice also the description of Jesus’s kingdom rule: He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness. In other words, his reign will have social and political aspects as much it will have spiritual aspects. This detail has implications for the church today as we seek to live in accordance with God’s perspective.

Many Christians misunderstand these aspects of the kingdom, thereby marginalizing its authority and influence in their lives and in the land. Some have so spiritualized the kingdom, in fact, that its socio-political features have become little more than an ideology lacking modern application. This has led to a sad reduction of the vast socio-ethical implications of the church, creating an organism that offers little power toward transforming society.

The sophisticated nature of the kingdom of God is very real, biblically substantiated, and relevant to the manifestation of the church’s greatest and true potential. Our kingdom activity today should be reflective of, and point to, the ultimate kingdom of Jesus Christ in which he will execute justice for the oppressed and rule righteously over his subjects as Isaiah 10:1-2 highlights:

Cursed are those who make evil decisions, and the writers who make the records of their cruel acts: Who do wrong to the poor in their cause, and take away the right of the crushed among my people, so that they may have the property of widows, and get under their power those who have no father.

The angelic announcement of “peace on earth” repeated now and again at Christmas time is not about quiet peacefulness or merely the absence of hatred between people. It is a declaration of the coming end of hostilities between a holy God and sinful humanity through the atoning work of the Messiah: peace with God. The Son of God came to pay the penalty for our sin and impute to us his righteousness. Only when “we have been declared righteous by faith,” can “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” Romans 5:1 says:

For which reason, because we have righteousness through faith, let us be at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;

Peace among people is only possible when humanity is living at peace with God and submitting to his kingdom rule.

The world will be convinced not so much by what the pulpit teaches as by what the church lives. The preacher announces the theory of the gospel, but the power of the gospel is displayed by how the Christian relates to the needs of those you come in contact with. Is your life right now inviting others to Christ?

Remain blessed.

FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCH CHOIRS PUBLICATION

The first Conference of The Fellowship of Church Choirs and Musicians was held at Erskine Congregation, Mthatha Presbytery from the 25 to 27 August 2023. The conference was opened by the Convener of the Church Fellowships Committee, Rev. T Masikane. Ministers who were present during the opening of the conference were Rev Mthethwa, Rev Mabo, Rev Mshumpela (resident minister), Rev Mkhungo and Rev Letuka

The Conference, attended by 300 delegates, was held under the theme, "Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise". (James 5v13)

The Choirs participated in different sections namely:

Solo

Soprano solo

Alto solo

Tenor solo

Bass solo

Small Section

Double Quartet

Female voices

Male voices

Mixed Choir Section

Large section

This magnificent and spirit filled Conference was opened by the President, Tshediso Lehari, who indicated that this was their first conference as FCCM, previously known as ACCM. The current leadership was 11 months in office since being elected in August 2022. He further thanked the past leadership for bringing growth to the fellowship, namely the late former President, Mrs Kweza and the late Deputy President, Mr Madasi. He highlighted that in the spirit of working together, the DEC representatives managed to attend conferences of all fellowships to present the fraternal greetings

In order to address some of the growth challenges facing the Fellowship, its leadership proposed the following going forward;

- The need to clarify members that we are a church choir and not a competition choir.
- Every member should have hymn books for all the languages in the UPCSA
- The need to formulate clusters to ensure that FCCM structures are available and effective in all Presbyteries e.g. Limpopo, Ethekeini, Trans-Xhariep and part of the Cape.
- Create a good working relationship with other fellowships
- Develop an effective marketing strategy On the 27 August, devotions were led by Rev. Mthethwa, who highlighted the following important aspects:
 - That as FCCM we are sent to Preach the Word through music.
 - That we need to remove the perception that FCCM is only about Xhosa speaking people
 - That we need to host conference in all provinces
 - That we need to learn new songs in Zulu and Sotho.
 - That we must witness Christ as Lord.
 - That we must visibly proclaim the Kingdom of God.
 - That we must consider no longer calling an FCCM conference but rather festival where all different musicians will partake. Also that we must promote different types of music like cultural music, marimba, gospel music, etc. This will in turn promote music within our church and FCCM will definitely grow.

The Office Bearers of the FCCM and their contacts are reflected below;

President : TS Lehari

Secretary: N. Dwaadwa

Treasurer: N. Nohako



Tshediso Lehari - FCCM President



FCCM DENOMINATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

From Left: N. Nohako(Treasurer) G. Moeketsi (Merchandise Convener) N. Mdedetyana (IT Admin) B. Nonxuba (Music Convener) N. Dwadwa (Secretary) N. Mahlanza (Deputy President) T. Lehari (President) N. Nzima (Outreach convener)



Induction of the Moderator of General Assembly

Induction of the Moderator of the General Assembly, *The Right Rev Lydia Neshangwe*



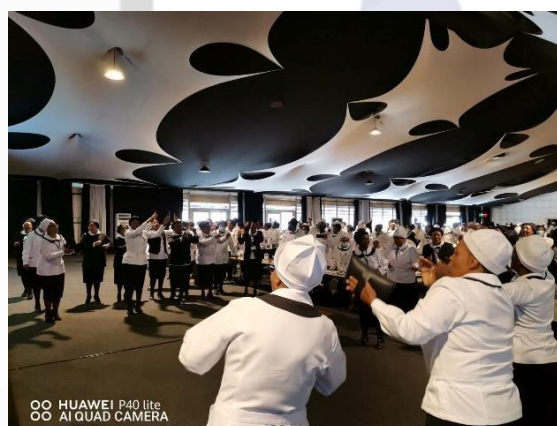
FELLOWSHIP OF MEN

We give thanks to God for the successful Fellowship of Men Denominational council held in June within the **Presbytery of eThekweni**



FELLOWSHIP OF WOMEN

The Fellowship of Women held a successful Denominational conference in August this year. Yet another milestone in the unity of our church. Hearty congratulations to our mothers



THE LICENSING OF LETHABO MABOTJA

Ocassion of the licensing of Lethabo Mabotja in Stuartville, Limpopo. What a lovely ocassion



THE ORDINATION OF REV ESAU PANDELANI

Congratulations to Rev Esau Pandelani on the occasion of his ordination and induction at the Blaauberg Congregation, within the precincts of the Presbytery of Limpopo



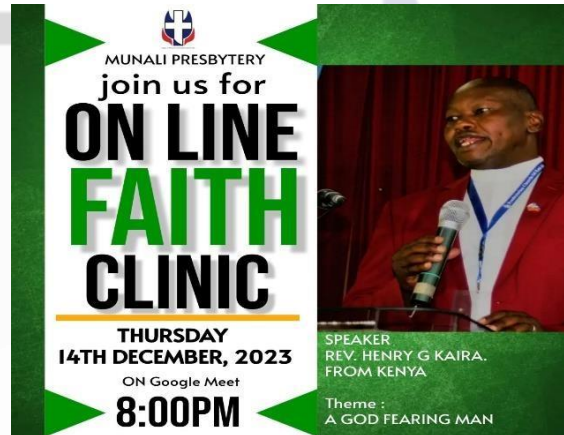
THE FELLOWSHIP OF MEN IN COPPERBELT

The Fellowship of Men in Copperbelt, Zambia, in their Presbyterial Conference. Madodana, here I am, send me.

Munali Presbytery fellowship of Men's conference group photography

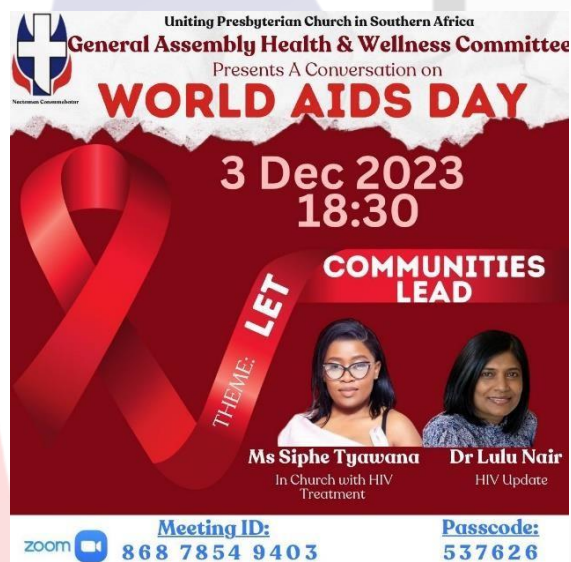


The President of the Pan African Presbyterian Men Fellowships, Rev Henry G Kaira presented a Bible study on the topic 'A God Hearing Man' which was hosted by the Munali Presbytery Fellowship of Men. Rev Kaira is also the Director of Men's Fellowship of the Presbyterian Church in East Africa. This is yet another endeavour of the FOM to help men to find themselves



HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The General Assembly Committee on Health and Wellness presented a Webinar on World Aids Day under the theme 'Let Communities lead'. The conversations were led by Dr Nomzi Zibi-Hlophe, the convener of the General Assembly Committee. Ms Siphe Tyawana and Dr. Lulu Nair made presentations on 'In Church with HIV treatment' and 'HIV update' respectively. This conversation was an eye opener to members and continues to urge society to take the lead in our management of HIV. This was but one of the useful and informative webinars organised in the course of the year by the Health and Wellness Committee. We urge members of the Denomination to take interest and attend these educational sessions.



FAREWELL TO THE LATE REV ZOLA MATUTU

On the occasion of bidding farewell to the late Rev Zola Matutu. Rev Matutu was a Minister of St Peter's Congregation in the Presbytery of Tshwane.



CONSECRATION OF A CHURCH AT GA-MAJA

The occasion of the consecration of a new church building in A small village of Ga-Maja in Stuartville Congregation, with the bounds of the Presbytery of Limpopo. The Moderator of the Presbytery, Rev Molifi presided over the event while Rev Pataki was the preacher. This is the home of Minister Emeritus, Rev AN Maja who is seen here unveiling the plaque. Yet another way to grow the church of Christ in our time.



TRAINING PRESBYTERY COMMISSIONERS IN LIMPOPO

Rev Vusi Mdlalose and Rev Vusi Mkungo
training Presbytery Commissioners in Limpopo



FOM ATTENDING PAPMF CONFERENCE IN GHANA





FOW AND FOM VISIT THE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY IN VENDA



INDUCTION OF REV MOKENG

The induction of Rev Lesego Lawrence Mokeng in Kagiso, EGoli Presbytery. The occasion was blessed by the presence of guests from Presbyteries of Lekoa, Limpopo, Trans Xhariep and Tshwane. We wish Rev Mokeng all the best and success in Kagiso





27th November 2023

TO ALL IN THE UPCSА

Re: Celebrating the Election of the Rt Rev Lydia C Neshangwe as the first Woman President of the All Africa Conference of Churches

"Certainly, I will go with you", said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honour will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." (Judges 4:9 NIV)

The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa welcomes and celebrates the election of the Rt Rev Lydia Neshangwe as the first woman President of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC). The AACC marked its 60th anniversary at its General Assembly that was held in Abuja, Nigeria from 19 to 23 November 2023. We praise and thank God for the appointment which comes at an opportune time, a calling like that of Deborah. We commend the efforts of many who, through their discernment, elected Lydia. The leaders of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches who attend the Assembly will forever be appreciated for their concerted effort and unwavering commitment in nominating and relentlessly supporting the candidacy of Lydia.

Lydia's rise to the offices she now occupies can be attributed to many factors. Within the UPCSА environment, we see it as a culmination of the decision that was taken more than forty years ago, as the two denominations that merged to form the UPCSА, the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, intentionally took the decision in their respective Assemblies to ordain women as ministers. The Presbytery of Zimbabwe deliberately appointed Lydia as its Clerk. By virtue of that appointment, she served as a member of the UPCSА General Assembly's Ecumenical Relationships Committee. The UPCSА appointed her to serve as its representative to the Annual Members Meeting (AMM) of the Council for World Mission (CWM) for a period of four years, 2016 to 2020. Over that

period, she was elected to serve as the Chairperson for two of the meetings. She was later elected as the CWM Moderator in 2020, a position which she will hold until June 2024. The 2021 UPCSА General Assembly elected her, unopposed, as the Moderator Designate and was inducted into the office in June 2023, which she will hold until June 2025. And now, she has become the AACC's sixtieth birthday gift. The term is five years, with a possibility of a re-election for another term, making it ten years, if re-elected.

Lydia's election in all the positions is not just a matter of affirmative action, but of competence. She is conscientious, diligent, and zealous in her work. She outdid herself in the pre-Assembly for Women in Abuja, with her sterling performance. She was appointed a preacher in one of the services on Sunday. She moderated one of the Assembly sessions. The three events sufficed to convince many who did not know her that she is a true leader to a point where she scored a landslide win, in absentia, as she had already left for family and UPCSА business by the time the elections were conducted. Her election brought together the whole continent, particularly the women.

Her election is a challenge to us in the UPCSА. We are called to stand "stronger together" and support her in prayer and in action. It is needless to delineate in this space the many challenges that confront Africa, some of which she will need to address in person. Let us pray without ceasing.

Yours in Christ.

Lungile Mpetsheni
GENERAL SECRETARY

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THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

PRESBYTERY OF DRAKENSBERG MIDLANDS CONGREGATION

Invites You To The

Ordination & Induction

MR. T. D. NZAMA

Philippians 1 verse 6



21 January 2024



**Edendale Lay Centre
21 Machibisa Road
Pietermaritzburg**



09.00am

ENQUIRIES

**Session Clerk
Mr. M.J. Dlamini
071•227•6694**

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