

ANOTHER DIMENSION

AUGUST 2025

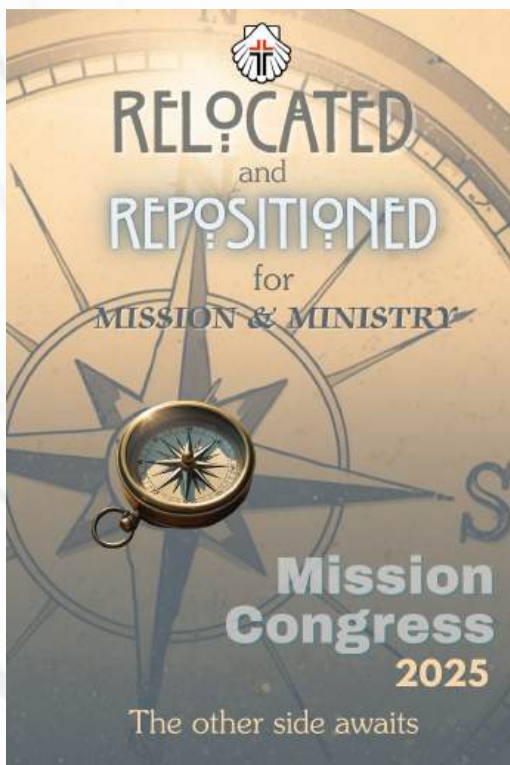


The Methodist Church
of Southern Africa

PILGRIMAGE OF RENEWAL CULMINATES IN BENONI GATHERING

BENONI – More than 500 delegates and observers from across Southern Africa will converge at Northfield Methodist Church in Benoni from 15-17 September 2025 for the Methodist Church of Southern Africa's (MCSA) Mission Congress.

The Congress marks the culmination of the Church's Pilgrimage of Renewal—a two-year journey of prayer, reflection, repentance, and recommitment to God's mission. Launched in response to what church leaders describe as the "deep cries of our people" and the changing spiritual and social realities of the region, the pilgrimage has drawn participation from clergy and laity across the six countries of the Connexion.



Presiding Bishop Rev. Pumla Nzimande, who was officially tasked by Conference 2024 to lead the process, described the pilgrimage as "a return to our first love, a recovery of the soul of Methodism, and a bold reimagining of our witness in these challenging times."

A Heritage of Pilgrimage

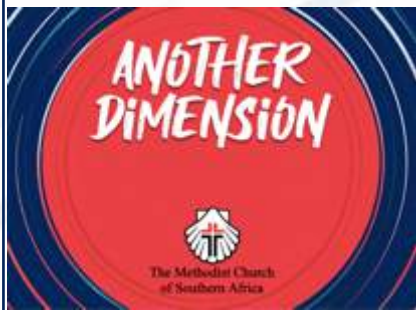
Mission Congress 2025 is rooted in a long history of prophetic and transformative moments in MCSA life. From the 1958 resolution declaring a commitment to a "One and Undivided Church" during apartheid, to the "Obedience '81" movement confronting racial injustice, to the landmark Mission Congresses of 2004 and 2016, Methodists have repeatedly sought renewal in response to the Spirit's call.

This year's Congress, held under the theme "Relocated and Repositioned for Ministry and Mission: The Other Side Awaits," invites delegates to leave behind institutional complacency and step into a renewed, transformative future.

Continues on page 2

Special Points of Interest:

- Mission Congress 2025 FAQs (page 2)
- Mission Congress Programme (page 4)
- Conference Intro and Programme (pages 4)
- The Presiding Bishop's Pilgrimage (page 6)
- Listen To A Bedouin Woman's Prayer In The Midst Of Palestinian Genocide (page 11)
- Sanibonani: KZNCC Declares Umlalazi Municipality A Blue Community (page 12)
- The Sacred Earth (page 13)
- Celebrating Our Women In Sports – Athletics (page 15)
- Letters To The Editor (page 16)



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A Sacred Space for Discernment

The three-day programme will combine worship, testimony, dialogue, and strategic planning. Each day will build on a journey motif:

- Day 1 (15 Sept): Remember Your Identity in Christ – opening service, keynote by the Presiding Bishop, and reflection on Connexional submissions.
- Day 2 (16 Sept): Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind – dialogue, teaching, and group discernment to inspire bold shifts in ministry.
- Day 3 (17 Sept): The Other Side Awaits – a closing service of covenant renewal, communion, and commissioning into a new season of mission.

Inputs from Circuits, Districts, and Mission Groups collected over the past two years were analysed, synthesised into themes, and presented for engagement. A team of trained facilitators and rapporteurs will guide conversations to ensure every voice is heard and that the Congress outcomes are shaped collectively.

Looking Ahead

Organisers say the Mission Congress will not only be inspirational but also action-driven. The outcomes will be consolidated into a Plan of Action and presented to the 2025 Conference for adoption. The plan will

include practical priorities for the next decade, along with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure accountability.

A Mission Congress Review Team will be established to track implementation, gather feedback, and report annually to Conference. Various Connexional structures—including the Communications Unit, Mission Unit, and DEWCOM—will develop resources to sustain momentum beyond the Congress.

“The real test of this pilgrimage,” said Rev. Waqu, “will not be in the event itself, but in how faithfully we live out what the Spirit has revealed in the years that follow.”

A Call to All Methodists

The MCSA leadership has issued a call for the entire Connexion to enter into prayer and holy expectation. While only 500 participants will attend in person, the Congress will be livestreamed to ensure broad access and participation.

“God is inviting us with bold faith to cross over into what God is now doing,” the Presiding Bishop affirmed. “The other side awaits—and we must step forward with courage, humility, and faithfulness.”

MISSION CONGRESS 2025 – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

What is the Mission Congress 2025?

The Mission Congress is a sacred gathering of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), bringing together clergy, laity, and observers from across the Connexion. It is the culmination of the Pilgrimage of Renewal—a journey of prayer, reflection, repentance, and recommitment to God’s mission in Southern Africa. Data from Connexional submissions was analysed and synthesised into key themes that will guide discussions.

What is the Pilgrimage of Renewal?

The Pilgrimage of Renewal is a church-wide journey of spiritual renewal aimed at:

- Returning to our first love in Christ
- Recovering the soul of Methodism
- Reimagining our witness to the Gospel in today’s world

It has included:

- Connexional Executive Bosberaad (Feb 2024)
- Focused Synod discussions (2024–2025)
- Prayer Waves led by Districts and Mission Groups
- Days of the People of God in Circuits and Districts
- Izivivane (memorial stones)
- Faith and Life resources for small groups
- Contextual Bible Studies (Ujamaa Centre, UKZN)
- A DEWCOM resource: Pilgrimage of Renewal—A Theological and Spiritual Companion to the Third Mission Congress

Continues on page 3

Why is pilgrimage part of Methodist heritage?

The 2025 Mission Congress continues a long tradition of transformative church gatherings, including:

- 1958: One and Undivided Church—prophetic stand against apartheid
- 1970: Commission on the Renewal of the Church—call to inclusivity and renewal
- 1981: Obedience '81—engagement against racial injustice
- 1990s: Journey to the New Land—vision of healing and justice
- 2004 & 2016: Mission Congress I & II—rearticulating MCSA's missional identity
- 2019-2020: Creation of new mission Districts to expand Methodist witness

What is the purpose of the Mission Congress?

The Mission Congress will:

- Reflect on the Pilgrimage of Renewal
- Receive inputs from Circuits and Districts
- Discern emerging mission priorities
- Develop an action plan with clear commitments
- Establish monitoring, evaluation, and reporting frameworks
- Inspire leaders and members for prophetic and sacramental living

What is the theme of Mission Congress 2025?

“Relocated and Repositioned for Ministry and Mission: The Other Side Awaits”

This theme calls the Methodist people to move beyond comfort zones, stagnation, and apathy, stepping boldly into God's transformative mission.

Where and when will it take place?

Venue: Northfield Methodist Church, Benoni

Dates: 15–17 September 2025

Who is responsible for travel, accommodation, and registration?

- Districts will coordinate delegate travel.
- Accommodation has been arranged for delegates at the Garden Court OR Tambo
- Districts are also responsible for registering their delegates and observers.

What will the programme look like?

The programme is designed as a safe space for worship, prayer, learning, and holy conferencing. It includes plenary sessions, commissions, and collective engagement based on submissions received over the past two years.

Daily Focus:

- Day 1 (15 Sept): ***Remember Your Identity in Christ*** – opening service, keynote, reflection, lament, confession, healing
- Day 2 (16 Sept): ***Be Transformed by the Renewing of Your Mind*** – teaching, dialogue, discerning groups, transformation
- Day 3 (17 Sept): ***The Other Side Awaits*** – covenant renewal, communion, closing commissioning service

How will the Congress be facilitated?

- Professional facilitators, scribes, and a listening committee will guide discussions.

- Outcomes will be processed into resolutions and submitted to the 2025 Conference.

Who will participate?

About 500 Delegates and Observers from across the Connexion. Efforts will be made to ensure diversity across race, gender, age, language, geography, and ministries. The Congress will also be livestreamed for wider participation, with online reflections welcomed. Delegates and Observers will be expected to participate meaningfully in group work; share their knowledge; share what they would discern for the life of the church and how can it be carried forward.

How can the rest of the Connexion participate?

The main sessions will be livestreamed to the [MCSA Facebook page](#) ((20+) Facebook) and YouTube Channel (The Methodist Church of Southern Africa Connexion), the [MCSA TikTok page](#), as well as the MCSA website: www.methodist.org.za

What are the expected outcomes?

- A clear missional direction for the next decade
- Practical mission priorities for the Connexion
- Renewed covenantal identity as a movement of holiness, justice, and mission

What happens after the Congress?

The outcomes will be submitted to Conference 2025 for adoption, and translated into a Plan of Action with:

- Implementation strategies
- Monitoring and evaluation systems
- Reporting mechanisms

A Mission Congress Review Team will oversee implementation, provide resources, gather feedback, and report annually to Conference.

How can Methodists continue the Pilgrimage after Congress?

Districts, Circuits, and Mission Groups are encouraged to sustain renewal through:

- Continued Prayer Waves
- Pit Stops for reflection and recommitment
- Padkos (resources for the journey)

What is the call to the Methodist people?

God is inviting the Methodist people into:

- Deep listening and fervent prayer
- Bold faith to cross over into God's new work
- A renewed relevance, witness, and service to Christ in Southern Africa and beyond

Mission Congress 2025 is not the end of the journey—it is a threshold into a Spirit-led future.



MISSION CONGRESS PROGRAMME

MONDAY – REMEMBER YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Registration	08h30 – 10h30
Gathering (Worship)	10H30 - 10h50
Opening Service	11H00 - 12H00
Housekeeping and Orientation	12H00 – 12H30
Listening (Zodwa Mookeng)	12H30 – 13H00
Lunch	13H00 – 14H00
Worship	14H00 – 14H15
Discernment Groups (Mission Congress Themes) – Input	14H15 – 14H45
Discernment Groups	14H45 – 15H45
Tea	15H45 – 16H15
Testimonies (Thanksgiving, Confession, and Lamentation)	16H15 – 17H15
Collective Discernment	17H15 – 18H00
Epilogue	18H00 – 18H30
Dinner	18H30

TUESDAY – BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND

Devotion	08H30 – 09H15
Keynote Speaker	09H15 – 10H00
Panel Discussion	10H00 – 11H00
Tea	11H00 – 11H30
Discernment Groups	11H30 – 13H00
Lunch	13H00 – 14H00
Worship	14H00 – 14H15
Discernment Groups	14H15 – 15H30
Tea	15H30 – 16H00
Collective Discernment	16H00 – 18H00
Epilogue	18H00 – 18H30
Dinner	18H30

WEDNESDAY – THE OTHER SIDE AWAITS...HERE I AM LORD, SEND ME!

Devotions	08H00 – 08H45
Panel Discussion	08H45 – 09H45
Moment of Commitment	09H45 – 10H30
Fellowship Tea	10H30 – 11H00
Discernment Committee Report	11H00 – 12H00
Commissioning of Delegates Service	12H00 – 13H00
Lunch and Departure	13H00

WELCOME TO THE 135TH METHODIST CONFERENCE, 2025

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It is with profound joy and heartfelt gratitude that we welcome you to the 135th Methodist Conference of 2025. We are deeply honoured and blessed to host both the Conference and the Mission Congress here in the Highveld and Eswatini District.

We are thrilled to gather for this holy conferencing—an opportunity to worship, learn, discern, and grow together. During these days, we will hear from inspiring voices, engage in meaningful conversations, and connect with one another in fellowship and faith.

A special word of welcome goes to our Presiding Bishop, whose spiritual leadership and faithful guidance

continue to uplift and inspire our church. We are truly privileged to host you in this sacred moment of our journey.

On behalf of the HESWA District, I extend a warm and heartfelt welcome to all Conference delegates, speakers, and honoured guests from across our Connexion. May this time together be filled with wisdom, renewal, and a deepened sense of God's calling upon us. Let us approach this gathering with humility, openness, and a willingness to listen to the voice of God and to one another.

May our proceedings be guided by the Holy Spirit—our conversations marked by grace, our decisions shaped by courage, and our fellowship enriched by love. As we seek God's will together, may we leave this Conference empowered to serve our communities with justice, compassion, and hope.

We pray that the 2025 Conference will be a season of holy listening, courageous decision-making, and transformative fellowship. May we draw closer to God and to one another, and may we witness the amazing things God is doing in and through us.

Once again, welcome to the 135th Methodist Conference. Let us walk together in His love and Spirit as we gather in His name.


Blessings,
Rev. Sondile
H. Nkwanyana
Bishop,
Highveld and
Eswatini
District



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Wednesday 17 th	Thursday 18 th	Friday 19 th	Saturday 20 th	Sunday 21 st
08h30 – 13h00: Mission Congress Northfield Methodist Church 08h00 – 12h00: Registration at Garden Court Airport Hotel, Kempton Park 15h00: Opening Session Thokoza Methodist Church, Corner Mnguni and Khumalo Streets, Thokoza. Welcome: Hosts, Rev. Sondile Nkwanyana and Mrs Nombasa Hlati Roll Call Constitution of the Conference Permission to be present 15h45: Administration and Connexional Committee Appointments 17h00: Presentation of Stations in District Groups	08h00: Worship and Bible Study Rev. Mzwandile Molo 09h00: Discussion on the Presiding Bishop's Address 09h30: Lay President's Report 10h15: Discussion on the Lay President's Report 10h30 Tea 11h00: General Secretary's Report 11h45: EMMU Report 12h15: SMMS Reports 12h30: Question and Answer Session 13h00: Lunch 14h00: Mission Unit Report 14h20: General Treasurer's Report Question and Answer Session 15h00 Tea 15h30: Children and Youth Unit 15h50: Communications Unit 16h10: Human Resources Unit 16h25: DEWCOM Report 16:45: Question and Answer Session 17h30: Dinner Garden Court Airport Hotel 18h15: Buses depart from Garden Court Airport Hotel 19h00: Memorial Service Preacher: Rev. Ivan Abrahams at Northfield Methodist Church, cnr Aerodrome Dr and Webb St, Benoni	08h00: Bible Study and Worship Rev. Mzwandile Molo 09h00: Final Presentation of Stations 10h00 Tea 10h30: Relocated and Repositioned for Mission and Ministry: Presentation of the Mission Congress Discernment Statement 11h30: Introduction to Commissions From Discernment to Commitment... The Other Side Awaits 13h00: Lunch 14h00: Resolutions Commissions 15h30 Tea 16h00: Resolutions Commissions 18h00: Dinner Garden Court Airport Hotel 19h00: Celebrating Mission Flighting of District Presentations Adjournment	07h00: Ordinands and Bishop's Photo Session 08h00: Worship including The Reception Full Connexion First Reading on the Strategic Direction 09h30: Ecumenical Guests Ecumenical Affairs Report Reports on Men's and Women's Work The Orders 10h45 Tea 11h15: From Discernment to Commitment... The Other Side Awaits Resolutions Committee Report 13h00: Lunch 14h00: From Discernment to Commitment... The Other Side Awaits Resolutions Committee Report 15h30 Tea 16h00: Adoption of Reports Strategic Direction Presentation Unfinished Business Concluding Ceremonies 17h00: Dinner	09h00: Ordination Service at the Beulah Park International Conference Centre Preacher: Presiding Bishop: Rev. Pumla P N Nzimande

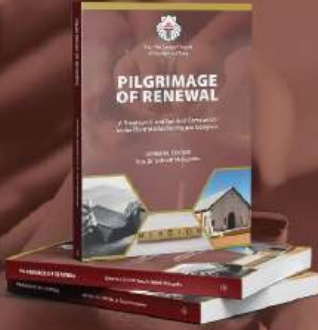
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The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa & Doctrine, Ethics & Worship Committee

A PILGRIMAGE OF RENEWAL
One Mission, Many Voices Speaking and Listening Together



PILGRIMAGE OF RENEWAL
A Theological and Spiritual Companion to the Third Methodist Mission Congress
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CONTENTS

Foreword by Rev. Pumla Nzimande (Presiding Bishop)

Introduction The Pilgrimage of Renewal in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa – A Wesleyan approach that honours African spirituality and context Rev. Sva Waqu

1. Remembering the journey – milestones of renewal Mr Xhanti Thobela Mhlubulwana
2. Pilgrimage as a spiritual practice – A sacred journey of encounter, transformation, and covenant renewal in biblical narrative and African tradition. Rev. Roxanne Steyn
3. Cultivating the spirituality of listening and discernment Rev. Lovuyo Sife
4. African Christian community Mrs Jessie Paremore-Hikwa
5. The concept of Church – Who are we Mr Peter Frow
6. The Ecclesia as sacred space and public witness Rev. Obusitawe Tirayabone
7. The heart of renewal Rev. Dr Sidwell Mokgothu
8. Leadership on the Pilgrimage – rekindling the Methodist ethos and fire Rev. Dr Vusi M. Vilakati
9. The Mission Congress as holy confencing Rev. Michel W Hansrod
10. Children and youth as pilgrims Rev. Phazile Koekoe
11. Psalms of Ascent – singing on the way Rev. Dr Matshadesha Molale
12. Grief and grieving during a pilgrimage Rev. Nozipho Moineka
13. Isivivane – building memorial altars with stones Rev. Mogomotsi Dintwiling
14. Pilgrimage beyond the Mission Congress Rev. Ralph Algham

THE PRESIDING BISHOP'S PILGRIMAGE: DRINKING FROM DEEP WELLS A PILGRIMAGE OF LISTENING AND LEARNING

In this year of Mission Congress 2025, the Presiding Bishop, Rev Pumla Nzimande, undertook a sacred journey of discernment by visiting all the former Presidents and Presiding Bishops of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA).

This pilgrimage was marked by learning, deep sharing, and attentive listening—drawing from the rich wells of wisdom, experience, and knowledge that our forebears continue to embody. They reflected on the joys and challenges of leadership, the centrality of placing people at the heart of

mission, and the need to adapt faithfully to ever-changing contexts.

What follows are a few highlights from these visits. Longer videos are available on YouTube (The Methodist Church of Southern Africa Connexion) and on our official Facebook page (The Methodist Church of Southern Africa).

THE VOICE OF THE PROPHET: THUS SAYS THE LORD

"Apartheid would have ended earlier if not for the cowards in the pulpit..." declared Rev. Prof Peter Storey, former President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), and anti-apartheid activist, during a meeting with the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, at his home in Cape Town.

Reflecting on those turbulent years, he added: "The best gift the apartheid government gave us was to throw us out of influence with government. At that moment, we were set free to become a prophetic voice, rather than a compromised one."

With passion and conviction, Rev. Prof Storey recalled the bold steps taken by churches in the struggle against apartheid. He lauded the ecumenical witness of that time, noting that it was the Church acting as the body of

Christ—speaking with one voice to the world.

Turning to the present, and in anticipation of the upcoming Mission Congress, he offered a striking challenge:

"The Church is only the Church when it is engaging the world—the rest is just dressing up for the dance. Jesus spent 90% of his time with the people."

Rev. Prof Storey lamented the current state of both society and the Church: "I have struggled with waiting while we live in a corrupt society, marked by hubris, self-seeking leaders, and a lack of compassion—yet our Church has remained silent. Why have we become quiet? We have something vital to give the world. We have always been the

Church that serves the poor."

In response, the Presiding Bishop shared the ongoing work of the Church through ecumenical bodies across the Connexion, noting the evolving face of prophetic witness and action today.

The two leaders spent time in deep conversation about leadership, mission, and their personal journeys of faith. Prof Storey gifted the PB with his book, *I Beg to Differ*, and a paper that he wrote on God and Caesar.

Their meeting concluded in a spirit of worship, sealed with prayer and Holy Communion.

This year, Rev. Prof Storey celebrates 63 years in ministry, a living testament to a life committed to prophetic witness.



MINISTRY AND MISSION IN BOOTS AND OVERALLS

“The Church should be like a socialist movement that works through and with the people,” reflected Rev. Ziphozihle Siwa, past Presiding Bishop of the MCSA, during a visit with the current Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, at his picturesque rural home in Ngcabasa.

Rev. Siwa spoke candidly about the shifting nature of leadership. “Apartheid was devastating—it broke communities apart—but it also became fertile ground for leadership to emerge. Many did not choose leadership; rather, leadership chose them as a response to the pressures of the time. Freedom, however, diminished that instinctive leadership. Now leadership is taught in classrooms rather than forged in the lived realities of struggle.”

He emphasised the importance of contextual ministry, describing it as a practice of asking deep, probing questions to understand a community, engaging with their proposed solutions, refining them, and delivering outcomes that are owned and embraced by the people themselves.

Mrs. Siwa strongly affirmed this, adding that mission must always be relational: anyone pursuing it must first seek to understand the people—their lives, culture, and context.

Rev. Siwa prayed for a day when diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Church move beyond legislation to become a living movement, rooted in grassroots action and carried through every part of the Connexion.

Drawing from his current life as a farmer, he used the metaphor of “cow-dip conversations” to describe mission: meeting people where they are, in the ordinariness of daily life, rather than waiting for them to enter church doors. Mission, he insisted, means being present with the people.

The gathering was enriched by stories of ministry in both rural and urban Circuits, and the central role of inculturation in ensuring that Christianity is not imposed, but rather understood and lived authentically within diverse cultures.

The visit concluded with the sharing of Holy Communion, lifting the promise and hope encapsulated in the beloved Xhosa Hymn 18:

*Thixo ulilanga lethu
uyakhanya phezu kwethu;
umphfumlo ungabona;
apho ohambela khona.*

*Thixo ulikhakha lethu;
asoyiki iintshaba zethu;
zonke ziyasongwa nguwe;
soza ngokonwaba kuwe.*



A HISTORIC CELEBRATION AT HEIDELBERG METHODIST CHURCH

Today, Presiding Bishop Rev. Pumla Nzimande joined the Heidelberg Methodist Church in marking 130 years of faithful witness and ministry!

Built in 1895, this beloved sanctuary has stood as a beacon of God’s light for generations. Rev. K. Mantini, the 40th minister to serve here, continues this legacy of faith.

As part of the celebration, the Presiding Bishop unveiled a Memorial Stone honouring all the ministers who have faithfully served the Society since 1890—years before the church building was erected.

Joined by the HESWA District Bishop,

the District Lay Leader, and the wider Circuit family, the day was a joyful moment to honour the past, celebrate the present, and embrace the future of God’s mission.

Heidelberg Methodist Church remains a living testimony of God’s grace, power, and enduring presence in His people’s lives.



WE HAVE AN ANCHOR THAT KEEPS THE SOUL

In a meeting filled with faith and fellowship, the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, spent meaningful time with former President of the MCSA, Rev. Dr. Donald Veysie, and his wife of 69 years, Pam.

At 95, Rev. Dr. Veysie remains sharp of mind and spirit, complemented by Pam's gracious wit. Together, they shared treasured stories and reflections from their years of mission service at Mahamba Mission in Swaziland, Natal, and Johannesburg.

As leaders who ministered faithfully during the challenges of apartheid, they spoke with conviction about the enduring importance of unity and community. They encouraged the Presiding Bishop to pursue mission that responds to the pressing needs of today, with Rev. Dr. Veysie offering words of inspiration: "Never give up; never stop; never give up—keep going."



Dr. Veysie also highlighted the vital contribution of his wife, Pam, in sustaining and shaping his ministry. She was a uniform-wearing member of the Women's Manyano and continues, at 90, to be a faithful member of the Women's Auxiliary.

Their youngest son, Rev. Peter Veysie, was present and recalled how God confirmed his own call to ministry through his father, as well as the trials his parents endured for standing courageously against apartheid.

The Presiding Bishop shared in Holy Communion with the family and invited Rev. Peter to help his parents inscribe their names on a stone for the Isivevane at Mission Congress 2025.

The visit concluded on a deeply moving note as they joined together in singing Rev. Dr. Veysie's favourite hymn, *We Have an Anchor*, with Pam accompanying on the piano—a fitting reminder of faith that sustains across generations.



We Have An Anchor
Priscilla J Owens (1882)
1 Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift, or firm remain?
[Refrain]
We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.

2 It is safely moored; 'twill the storm withstand,
for 'tis well-secured by the Savior's hand.
Though the tempest rage and the wild winds blow,
not an angry wave shall our boat o'erflow.
[Refrain]

3 When our eyes behold through the gath'ring night
the city of gold, our harbor bright,
we shall anchor fast by the heav'nly shore,
with the storms all past forevermore.
[Refrain]

BUILDING ON THE LEGACY OF VISIONARIES

"Mission is the life-blood of the Church—a fusion of faith and action." These words capture the heart of this morning's conversation between the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, and former Presiding Bishop, Rev. Mvume Dandala.

Reflecting on the demands of his time in ministry, Rev. Dandala emphasised that there was no other way to respond to the needs of the day except through mission. He shared rich memories from his early probation years in the

1970s, his tenure as Mission Department Secretary, and later as Presiding Bishop.

Through vivid anecdotes, he painted a picture of mission work sustained by deep trust in God and a steadfast conviction that their calling was not only to preach the Word but also to transform lives. The Malihambe Mission was a highlight. He recalled his father's words, which became a lifelong anchor: though ministry would never make him wealthy,

it would grant him a satisfaction far greater than riches—and the Lord would always provide.

The two leaders reflected together on the challenges and joys of leadership, and on the importance of Mission Congress 2025 as a moment for the Church to take stock and recalibrate. The day concluded with the Presiding Bishop sharing in Holy Communion, sealing hours of meaningful conversation and deep connection.



SITTING AT THE FEET OF ELDERS

This morning, the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, spent a treasured moment “at the feet” of Rev. Jack Scholtz, former Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and his beautiful wife of 62 years, fondly known as Mama Joan by many in the Connexion.

Their conversation reflected on leadership in changing and challenging times and the Church’s call to renewal.

As the Mission Congress approaches, Rev. Scholtz emphasised the importance of moral regeneration and returning to the basics—seeking both personal and social holiness—as the heart of our witness in the world. He applauded the choice of phrase: ‘A Pilgrimage of Renewal’, stating that the process that the MCSA has embarked on is a journey not an event; a journey that will require intentionality in our walk with God and how we

show up in the world.

The Presiding Bishop was blessed with several books, two of which were written by the former President of Conference and one by his son, the Rev. Roger Scholtz.

Rev. Scholtz shared a message for Mission Congress 2025 which will be shared on social media in due course.

Both the former President and his wife then wrote their names on a small stone for inclusion in the Connexional Isivivane at Mission Congress 2025.

The Presiding Bishop then shared Holy Communion with the Scholtz’s and prayed for them.



A LIFETIME OF VISIONARY, FAITH-FILLED LEADERSHIP

“As we head towards Mission Congress 2025, the process of decolonisation must continue as we develop our own narratives—embracing our heritage while charting new paths for the growth of Methodism in Africa and beyond.”

This profound reflection was shared by Rev. Ivan Abrahams, former General Secretary of the World Methodist Council and former Presiding Bishop of the MCSA, during a pastoral visit with the current Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande at his home in Cape Town.

Reaffirming a conviction he has voiced before, Rev. Abrahams insisted that political liberation alone is not enough: “There remains a need for a second liberation—the morality of the soul—so that we reconnect to our Methodist spiritual moorings.”

Drawing from his experiences with Obedience ’81, A Journey to a New Land, and other Mission Congresses,

he reflected on the significance of these markers and memorials in shaping the church’s journey. Yet, he cautioned that this pilgrimage of renewal must not be nostalgic: “The church must look to the future and rise to the challenges of the day.”

With his wide-ranging leadership across the Connexion and the global church, Rev. Abrahams emphasised the need for Methodism to deepen its role within civil society. He encouraged the church to leverage partnerships with resourceful organisations, positioning itself as a trusted and preferred provider of social and development services.

A lifelong champion for social justice, he spoke movingly about the spiritual and social costs of racial injustice, recalling the struggles on the Cape Flats and the forced removals in District Six. The unfinished work of restoring dignity and rebuilding broken communities, he insisted, must remain central to the church’s mission.

Reflecting on his tenure as Bishop in Namibia, he urged the Connexion to remain sensitive to the distinct needs of the sovereign states within its fold. He further called for the church to make full use of its presence in boardrooms and parliaments, boldly influencing policy and driving systemic change.

As a respected voice in interfaith and ecumenical engagement, Rev. Abrahams underlined the importance of forging partnerships with other faiths and denominations, embracing a collaborative approach to address the pressing issues facing communities today.

The meeting was marked by candid sharing—joys and struggles of leadership across different contexts—culminating in the sacred fellowship of the Lord’s Table.

Continues on page 10

And in a delightful close to a rich encounter, Rev. Abrahams welcomed the Presiding Bishop into his personal library, generously inviting her to choose any books she wished. She, of course, took full advantage 🤗🤗



A NEW EXECUTIVE FOR THE WA



Congratulations to the newly inducted General President of the Women's Auxiliary, Mrs Elizabeth Margaret Wynne Kok.

The 109th Connexional Meetings of the Women's Auxiliary were held from 27-30 August 2025 at the Trinity Methodist Church Linden in the Central District.

The new MCSA Women's Auxiliary General Executive was inducted by the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande. Mrs Beth Kok takes over from Mrs Diane Pretorius as the General President.

We hold the General President and her executive in our prayers as they serve God's people.



LISTEN TO A BEDOUIN WOMAN'S PRAYER: IN THE MIDST OF PALESTINIAN GENOCIDE:

"Beware of a Strong Woman."

Alia Mleihat, 27, a Bedouin woman from Al-Mouarrajat area in the Jordan Valley, part of the occupied West Bank, said that she wants the world to know about the plight of Palestinians, and the difficulties endured every day. Alia's motto in life is: beware of a strong woman. She wrote the following poem in Arabic about the impending demolition of her home. The poem was translated to English by George Sahhar, advocacy officer, for the World Council of Churches' Jerusalem Liaison Office and the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program for Palestine and Israel. While this poem was written in July 2024, it will remain foremost in human memory for all who hold the genocide against the Palestinian people with even a modicum of respect for their survival.

I will talk to you about my life...
While I lack safety, security, home, freedom, or even a smile...
While I yearn for a life...
And while, in a few days, I will say goodbye to my home...
To every corner of my home...
To the memories...
Laughter...
Tears...
Dreams...
The years I spent here...
To my childhood...
My friends...
To the jasmines, chamomiles, and wild thyme...
I will say goodbye to the stones where I played...
To the village courtyard...
To the smell of my home...
To family gatherings...
Pain will be in my heart forever...
I will say goodbye to the soil...
To the walls...
My home will be demolished...
The judge decided to destroy my parents' hard labour; our dreams and memories...
The judge decided; and with no mercy...
The judge forgot that we built a home through sweat...
Through hard work over many years...
Now the world in front of my eyes is dark...
There is no justice and no peace...
I wake up every morning on demolition, displacement, and torture...
I end my day on fear and ethnic cleansing...
I forgot the singing voice of Fairouz...
The Bedouin Duhiyya dance...
Folk music...
Instead, I hear the noise of bullets...
I weep for myself. Is anyone listening to me?...
Is anyone answering my call?...
I ask the judge: is this justice?...
I will stand tall in front of the judge. I will tell the judge about my homeland...
About my sadness...
My tears...
I have no choice...
Nevertheless, I remain alive...

**Posted by Emeritus (Rev.) Keith Anthony Vermeulen in acknowledgement of the World Council of Churches' Jerusalem Liaison Office and Ecumenical Accompaniment Program for Palestine and Israel which is considered to be WCC's "flagship project" on the Arab-Israeli conflict.*

KZNCC DECLARES UMLALAZI MUNICIPALITY A BLUE COMMUNITY FOLLOWING WATER ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

By Rev. Michael Vorster

On February 18, the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC), under the Blue Communities Africa Water Project, visited the uMlalazi Municipality in Eshowe to assess progress in water accessibility. The visit aimed to understand how the community transitioned from having no access to water to now having a more stable—though not yet perfect—water supply system.

Following the municipal visit, the team engaged with the residents of Esibizane, a community within Eshowe, to hear their firsthand experiences. Both the municipality and the community expressed that while water is not available 100% of the time, the situation has significantly improved compared to the past. The Deputy Mayor explained that the municipality operates on a structured water distribution schedule, ensuring that different areas receive water on designated days. Additionally, open communication between the municipality and the community has played a crucial role in managing expectations and addressing challenges.

A Positive Shift: No Water Strikes Since 2019:

One of the most notable outcomes of these improvements is that no water-related protests have taken place in uMlalazi since 2019. This indicates a growing trust between the community and local government, as well as a collective effort to ensure that water remains accessible despite existing limitations.

uMlalazi Municipality Declared a Blue Community:

After evaluating the progress, KZNCC officially declared uMlalazi a "Blue Community" under the Blue Communities Africa Water Project. This designation recognises municipalities that align with five key principles of sustainable and equitable water management:

Equal Access to Water – Ensuring that all residents, regardless of their social or economic status, have access to clean and safe water.

Sustainable Water Management – Implementing long-term strategies to maintain and protect water resources.

Recognition of Water as a Common Good – Viewing water as a shared resource rather than a commodity for profit.

Transparent Environmental and Administrative Management – Encouraging accountability in both environmental policies and governance related to water services.

Wastewater Management – Ensuring proper treatment and disposal of wastewater to prevent pollution and protect natural water sources.

A Step in the Right Direction:

Although there is still room for improvement, the progress made in Eshowe and surrounding areas is a testament to what can be achieved through structured planning, community engagement, and responsible governance. The KZNCC Blue Communities Africa Water Project will continue to work

alongside the municipality and residents to further enhance water accessibility and sustainability in the region.

This milestone serves as an encouraging example for other communities facing similar challenges, demonstrating that with commitment and collaboration, significant progress is possible.

In August 2025 KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC) awarded the Blue Community certificate to Inkosi Vela Shange, Induna Mandlakhe Mdimma, and Councilor Zanele Biyela at a community ward meeting in uMlalazi Municipality.

There are five African countries selected to participate in the Blue Communities global project. Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and South Africa. This network is expanding into other African countries. Should your organisation and/or church wish to participate in the Africa Blue Communities project, go the website: [Blue Communities Africa](https://www.bluecommunitiesafrica.org)



THE SACRED EARTH

By Rev. Maurice Fearn

God's studio and our pantry for body and spirit.

Many people, housed in crowded cities, getting their supplies from supermarkets where their minds and eyes are assaulted daily by electronic wizardry, find themselves totally detached from Nature—and deprived of the nourishment for mind and spirit that Nature so richly provides.

Jacob, Moses, and Jesus experienced God's presence in wilderness, desert, and mountain. The Earth is our original place of worship, play, and encounter with God. It is also the 'pantry' for our human survival. Teilhard de Chardin observed: "This world, this palpable world we are wont to treat with boredom and the disrespect with which we habitually regard places with no sacred association for us, is in truth a holy place, and we did not know it." Yet Scripture teaches us that "God made the earth" (Genesis 1:1) and "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1). God is present in creation's constant evolution.

Some early theologians taught that we were given two sacred books: the first being nature in which God is revealed, the second the Holy Bible. Today we need to reset our theology to see the connection between our spirituality and the environment. St Bernard of Clairvaux said to his students: "Believe me you will find more lessons in the woods than in books. Tree and stones will teach you what you cannot learn from masters." A contemporary writer, Christine Valters Paintner, echoes this: "To witness creation as a sacred act is to come to know God as the Great Artist more intimately."

But we are destroying creation's canvas. We rape and exploit the earth. We pollute its waters and air. We would not think of defacing, staining, or shredding the written Bible, yet by deliberately denuding the forests and hunting species to extinction, we are destroying our first bible and our 'pantry'. People who were once regarded as primitive and uneducated have in their indigenous traditions a far greater respect than many others for the environment and the earth, recognising their dependence on it. Wells, trees, rocks, and mountains are treated as sacred—places where heaven and earth meet. Festivals are observed and prayers offered to honour creation. In the county of Derbyshire in England, annual well-dressings are held to give thanks for water available at the wells throughout the county. Each year Nature's flora is gathered and pressed into wet clay to form pictures and religious designs as part of a ceremony. In this tradition, people recognise their dependence on a Power beyond themselves.

We readily pray: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). Take a piece of bread and look at it, smell it, taste it—a basic necessity produced from mother Earth, dependent on the co-ordination of soil, light, air, water, and seed. The world of Nature is a theophany—a manifestation of God. The planet Earth, with its regular seasons, resources, treasures, creatures, and life-blood, is a gift of God for our use, sustenance, and pleasure, yet we are the only creatures that

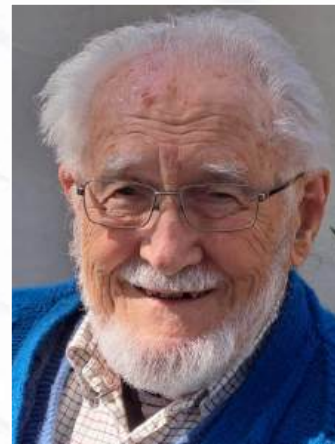
ill-treat it, neglecting our responsibility as its stewards. The place we stand on, and depend on, is holy ground—but it has become our dumping ground. We need to recover a theology of our environmental interconnectedness, ecological care and social responsibility based on God's providential wisdom. It in lies hope for the security of future generations. We can begin in a small way by recycling, by supporting NGOs promoting renewable energy and protecting the environment. When we go shopping, let us look beyond the attractive packaging (a human product) and remember those things inside the packaging that have their origin in the miraculous providence and life-giving energy of God. What if we sometimes walk around the aisles as we would around a cathedral, mindful of God's presence and power, looking beyond the product and the provider to the Producer?

From desert to mountain, from East to West, from river to beach, there are places of spectacular beauty, endless variety, and kaleidoscopic colour—a wonderful world for our enjoyment. We may not be able to travel to exotic, scenic spots, but we can ask God to open our eyes to the subtle beauty of the ordinary around us each day. On the way to the shopping mall, or the office, we can take notice of new life springing up through a crack in pavement, or the light shimmering on the leaves of a tree, or the flight of birds startled by our appearance, or the ever-changing patterns of the clouds in the sky. All these form the backdrop to God's theatre of ceaseless creative activity.

Nazareth and its surroundings provided Jesus with lily, vine, bird, insect, and tree as messengers of God. These visuals provided him with a rich interior landscape of mystery, joy, and wonder. "Books and talks and articles about Nature are little more than—dinner bells. Nothing can take the place of absolute contact, of seeing and feeding at God's dinner table for oneself." (John Muir)

There is an old Hasidic story of a Rabbi who, when coming before God's judgement, was asked: "Did you enjoy my creation?" What would be our reply to such a question? "Sorry, Lord, we destroyed it." If we do enjoy its benefits and delights, then surely it makes sense to care for it with love.

****We are profoundly grateful to the Fearn family for allowing us to continue publishing Rev. Maurice Fearn's writings, ensuring that his words—filled with wisdom and faith—continue to inspire and guide others. His life's work was dedicated to ministry, and through his articles, his voice lives on, touching hearts and shaping lives. Thank you for honouring his legacy in this way.***



MISSION CONGRESS 2025



A Pilgrimage of Renewal: The Journey to Mission Congress 2025 Prayer Wave Plan

"A Sweeping Wave of Renewal"
Ezekiel 36:25-27 & Acts 2:2-4

As per the initial programme of the Connexional Prayer Wave, the next wave will be praying for:

- Mission Groups,
- Mission Congress,
- CE and Conference,
- Ordinands.

Monday 11 August 2025 - 7-8pm	Connexional Local Preachers Association
Monday 18 August 2025 - 7-8pm	Connexional YMG
Monday 25 August 2025 - 7-8pm	Connexional YWM & Women Association
Monday 01 September 2025 - 7-8pm	Connexional WM & Women Auxiliary
Monday 08 September 2025 - 7-8pm	Connexional Wesley Guild & Women Fellowship
Saturday 13 September 2025 - 7-8pm	Connexional Order of Evangelism

Join us on Zoom:
Meeting ID: 819 2517 8153
Password: 289039

This is more than a programme—it is a spiritual movement. Let us rise as a praying Church, believing that as we align our hearts with God's vision, we will see transformation across our communities, our church, and our continent.

WA DIARIES FOR 2026 AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

The Women's Auxiliary in the Central District of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa presents this diary, in aid of Methodist Funded Ministries and the Benevolent Fund (for the Aged).

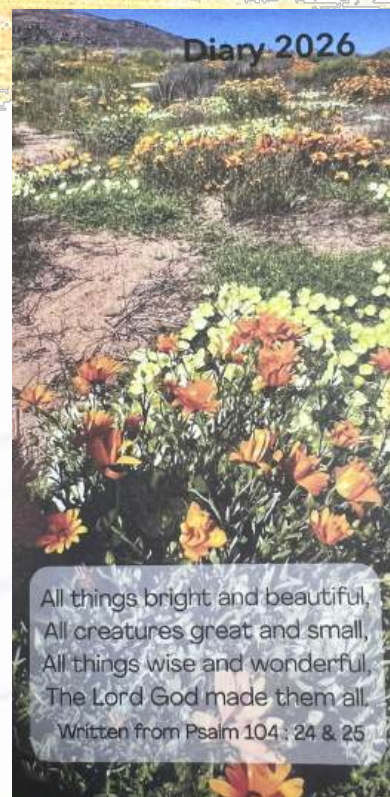
Women's Auxiliary motto:
"To know Christ and to make him known."

Prayer for South Africa.

Heavenly Father, we gather in your presence with hearts full of gratitude for Your grace and mercy. We lift up our country and its leaders to You, asking for wisdom, integrity and compassion as they guide us through these challenging times. We remember the poor, the oppressed, and the sick. Surround them with people of compassion and love so that their load may be lightened. Please guide us in all that we do as we walk in your truth.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Further copies of this diary are available from:

Beth Kok: 083 449 6333 / Tel: 011 693 4247
Email: bethkok@mweb.co.za / helena@comprint.co.za



CELEBRATING OUR WOMEN IN SPORTS – ATHLETICS: SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCE

I started running at the South African Army Gym to clear my mind, and I quickly found it to be therapeutic. Running 10km daily gives me inner peace and energy, which helps me work under pressure. Through this practice, I've learned how deeply interconnected our mental, physical, and social well-being truly is. My proudest achievement was earning a bronze medal at the Comrades Marathon with a time of 10h45min—a full hour improvement from my previous run.

As women, we often face challenges like finding safe training times and partners. I've adapted to running in the afternoon for safety, which taught me to be strong and self-reliant. To stay motivated, I focus on understanding my coaching programme and adapting it to my schedule. Most importantly, I strive to inspire younger runners as a fit 50-year-old—they even call me the “fittest Chaplain.”

I've invited women from different provinces to join me, encouraging them to take it easy with 5km a day. We formed a WhatsApp group for support, where everyone posts their runs and photos to motivate each other. Our slogan is “we run for change.” Being part of the Athletics SA National Defence Force club has also been transformative, giving me the desire to grow and become a better person with the constant support of our coaches.

Although busy schedules can make it hard to connect with other women in the club, I'm inspired by a 70-year-old Gogo from Cheetahs AC in Mthatha who reminds me that age is just a number. It's important to have a suitable programme and involve your family in your running journey. My next big goal is to defend my bronze medal in the 2026 Comrades Marathon. I'll begin qualifying races in October, build endurance in December, and—above all—pray for God's presence throughout the journey.

Article and pictures by || Chaplain
Pumeza Zombe || 1 Military Hospital

#SANDF
#WomenInSports
#WomensMonth2025



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PRESIDING BISHOP'S JOURNEY TOWARDS THE MISSION CONGRESS

By Rev. Dr. Vusi Vilakati

As the Methodist Church of Southern Africa prepares for the upcoming Mission Congress, the Presiding Bishop has taken an important step. She has visited those who once served as Presidents of Conference, now known as Presiding Bishops, who carried the same responsibility she now holds. These visits are pastoral, as she affirms them as people of faith and service. They are also presidential, as she listens to their reflections and draws on their wisdom for the journey ahead.

This is not a gesture often seen, at least not publicly. It may well be that such visits have happened in the past, but what makes this moment significant is that it has become visible to the wider church. The gesture carries weight because it is known and shared. It is

more than respect for history. It is an act of leadership that values memory, honours service, and opens space for renewal.

There are leadership habits here worth noticing. By listening to those who carried the office before her, the Presiding Bishop models the discipline of gathering wisdom. By affirming past leaders publicly, she practices gratitude and strengthens the church's identity. By connecting generations, she ensures that the present is not cut off from the past but is enriched by it. By making these visits visible, she shows that leadership can inspire by example. And by going in person to the homes of others, she practices humility, reminding us that authority is strengthened by respect and presence.

Theologically, this action reminds us that the church is one body, where memory itself becomes part of mission. Spiritually, it shows attentiveness to God's way of being with people. Pastorally, it recognises the dignity and wisdom of leaders in different seasons of life. Together, these habits show us that renewal begins not only in strategy but in faithful relationships.

As the Congress approaches, this journey is a sign of hope. It gathers the past, honours the present, and helps to shape the future. We affirm it, we celebrate it, and we encourage it, for it reminds us that renewal is possible when leadership is humble, connected, and faithful.

IT'S PAINFUL TO BE A LEADER

By Bongani Patrick Ngaki

I was once caught in a painful saga while serving as a Society Steward. A situation arose in the Mission Group: an elderly woman, who was frail and often brought to church by a hired car, was denied her uniform because she had fallen behind on her subscriptions.

When I tried to intervene, the executive of the Mission Group stood firmly by their rules. A meeting was convened, attended by myself as Society Steward and joined by a Circuit Steward, in hopes of resolving the matter. Yet the executive would not budge.

But something remarkable happened. When the old lady eventually passed on, it was the ordinary members who stepped in. They ordered the occasion with dignity, identifying themselves with the deceased, and when the time came to bid her the final farewell, she was dressed in the regalia of the mission group. I could not help but think: *How would her family have felt if she had been buried without it (Ibizova njani usapho lwakhe ukuba bekungekho bantu abanxibileyo)?*

Not long after, another troubling story came. An old man—mentally challenged, but beloved for his dancing whenever we sang *Siyakudumisa Thixo*—was said to have been “removed” to another Circuit. But upon following up, we learned the truth: he had been literally handed a removal letter, without his consent or understanding. The other Circuit knew nothing about him. When he died, he was buried without the Mission Group regalia. A man who once filled our worship with joy had not been given a send-off worthy of a Christian soldier.

And yet another case arose—another member almost denied the same dignity. This time, Elders of the church (though not Society Stewards) pleaded with the Reverend. By grace, the decision was overturned, and the man was finally buried as a true soldier of the cross.

Through these experiences, I came to realise how painful it is to be a leader. You see the struggles of members—some weighed down by sickness, others crushed by poverty—yet rules demand

strict pledges and subscriptions. The heart of leadership is torn between enforcing obligations and showing compassion.

The Lesson:
Leadership in the Church is not about uniforms or subscriptions alone. It is about remembering that every soul is precious before God. Sometimes, rules can choke out mercy—but mercy is what Christ Himself commanded us to live by.

So I learned that being a leader means carrying both the weight of rules and the cry of compassion. And when in doubt, I now choose compassion—for in the end, when we stand before God, it will not be the uniform that speaks for us, but the love we showed to one another.



WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN SEPTEMBER – YOUTH MONTH

September	04-01 Oct	Ecumenical Season of Creation	
September	13	Constitution of Conference Commissions	Virtual
September	15-20	Connexional Executive, 136 th MCSA Annual Conference and Mission Congress 2025	Highveld and eSwatini District
September	18-20	Ordinands' Retreat	Highveld and eSwatini District
September	21	MCSA Ordination Service	Highveld and eSwatini District
September	27	Connexional Women's Fellowship Youth Summit – Business Festival for all Districts	Central District
September	27-29	Connexional Men's League Triennial	Northern Free State and Lesotho District

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY

Ordinary Time	Liturgical Colour: Green
Proper 19C – 14 September, 2025 Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28 OR Exodus 32:7-14 – Psalm 14 OR Psalm 51:1-10 – 1 Timothy 1:12-17 – Luke 15:1-10	
Proper 20C – 21 September, 2025 Jeremiah 8:18-9:1 OR Amos 8:4-7 – Psalm 79:1-9 OR Psalm 113 – 1 Timothy 2:1-7 – Luke 16:1-13	
Proper 21C – 28 September, 2025 Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15 OR Amos 6:1a, 4-7 – Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16 OR Psalm 146 – 1 Timothy 6:6-19 – Luke 16:19-31	
Proper 22C – 05 October, 2025 Lamentations 1:1-6 OR Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4 – Lamentations 3:19-26 OR Psalm 37:1-9 – 2 Timothy 1:1-14 – Luke 17:5-10	
Proper 23C – 12 October, 2025 Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 OR 2 Kings 5:1-3, 7-15c – Psalm 66:1-12 OR Psalm 111 – 2 Timothy 2:8-15 – Luke 17:11-19	
Proper 24C – 19 October, 2025 Jeremiah 31:27-34 OR Genesis 32:22-31 – Psalm 119:97-104 OR Psalm 121 – 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 – Luke 18:1-8	

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Wesley Parker
Rev. Mesh Makole

*Loving, God, who brought us to birth,
help us to live as those who are prepared for death.
Enable us to obey Your call to receive the baton and run the race set before us.
Thank you Lord Jesus that You are the author and finisher of our race.
Amen*

