

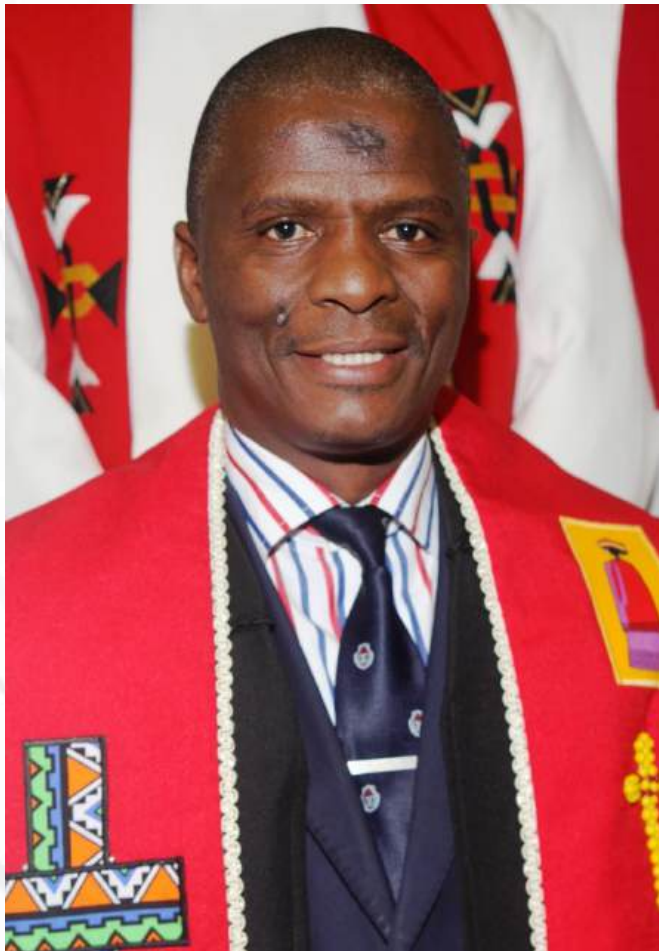
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OCTOBER 2025



The Methodist Church
of Southern Africa

THE MCSA CELEBRATES THE LIFE OF FORMER LAY PRESIDENT, MR FUNGILE DOTWANA



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) has been left devastated by the sudden passing of one of its most respected leaders, Mr Fungile Dotwana, who died on 5 October 2025. Widely admired for his wisdom, humility, and unwavering commitment to justice and faith, Mr Dotwana's death sent shockwaves across the Connexion. Tributes poured in from clergy, laity, and civic leaders alike, remembering a man who dedicated his life to service — both to the Church and the nation.

Born on 14 November 1961 in Gungululu Administrative Area, Tsolo, Eastern Cape, Mr Dotwana was the third of seven children and the first son of Mr Mark Dotwana and Mrs Nomawonga Ndamase-Dotwana. His academic journey, marked by perseverance and excellence, reflected the tenacity that defined his entire life. After completing his schooling at Nyangilizwe Senior Secondary School, he went on to the University of Fort Hare, where he obtained a B.Juris degree in 1984 despite disruptions caused by student unrest. He later earned his LLB (1993) and LLM (1997) from the University of South Africa.

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EDITOR / COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

Bonginkosi Moyo-Bango

bongi@mco.org.za

PHOTOGRAPHS

Supplied

DESIGNER

Jenine Pretorius

quirkyslothdesign@gmail.com

ADVERTISING

bongi@mco.org.za

011 615 1616

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Throughout his distinguished career in the Department of Justice, Mr Dotwana served in various senior capacities — including Control Prosecutor, Magistrate, Senior Magistrate, Regional Magistrate, and Acting Judge of the High Court — in offices across the Eastern Cape. From 2006 to 2007, he served as Chief Director: Traditional Affairs in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Traditional Affairs in Bhisho. Colleagues remember him as a man of principle, a steadfast leader who upheld integrity and fairness in every role he undertook.

But it was perhaps within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa that Mr Dotwana's leadership shone most brightly. A lifelong Methodist, he served as Class Leader, Society Steward, Circuit Steward, District Lay Leader, and Local Preacher, before being elected Lay President of Conference, a position he held for two terms, serving a total of six years. His tenure was marked by ground-breaking reforms, including his passionate advocacy for the inclusion and advancement of women in ministry and leadership.

As a member of the Connexional Executive, Structures Committee, Revision Committee, and the Connexional Mediation Panel, he was instrumental in guiding the Church through complex governance and transformation processes. He also served on the Governing Council of Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary, where his influence helped shape future generations of clergy.



Beyond the Church, Mr Dotwana was revered among his people as Ngubeszwe, leader of the AbaMbo Nation, where he championed economic and youth development initiatives in the Gungululu area.

Mr Dotwana's life was anchored by family and faith. He was married for 47 years to Mrs Nonkosi Rawana-Dotwana (MamBhele), his partner in faith and service. Together they raised five children — Zukile, Lwandile, Takazelwa, Okuhle, and Ntando — and were blessed with eight grandchildren.

In reflecting on his passing, an MCSA statement described him as "a visionary leader who combined intellect, humility, and deep faith; a man who gave himself fully to the service of God, the Church, and the people."

Mr Dotwana's legacy is one of service, justice, and unwavering devotion. His life embodied the Methodist call to social holiness — faith expressed in action, justice rooted in love.

A Legacy of Faith and Integrity

In her sermon at the funeral, the Presiding Bishop Rev. Pumla Nzimande described Mr. Fungile Dotwana as a remarkable leader—one who served with spiritual maturity, humility, and unwavering principle in every sphere of life: the Church, the community, and the nation. She likened his passing to the loss of an "institutional archive" — a data base of wisdom, experience, and faith that grounded the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. His life, she said, was a testimony of one who "acknowledged God in the boardroom, in the courtroom, and in the Church." Even in positions of influence, he remained a humble servant who chose to sit at the feet of Jesus, using his knowledge and faith to illuminate the path of others.

The Deeper the Pain, the Deeper the Prayer

Drawing from Psalm 42, Bishop Nzimande comforted the Dotwana family with the words, "The deeper the pain, the deeper the prayer." She compared the family's grief to David's wilderness experience, reminding them that when life no longer makes sense, believers must look to God, who remains the fountain of living water. Using the image of the thirsty deer, she called the mourners to draw strength from God's presence and to remember that divine power is most revealed in times of chaos and sorrow. "When the waves rise," she preached, "do not be crushed by the pressure — fill yourselves with the living water that gives life and peace."

He is survived by his wife, children, grandchildren, and siblings.

May his soul rest in eternal peace. Rhadebe, Bhungane, Ngelengele, Mthimkhulu — Lala ngxoxolo.



LPA INDUCTION MARKS NEW ERA: “YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN DIVINE AUTHORITY TO BREAK DOWN WALLS”

The 10th Triennial Convention of the Local Preachers Association (LPA) was a moment of celebration and renewal for the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). Delegates gathered to witness the induction of the new executive, led by the first female General President, Rev. Edith Moema, marking a historic milestone in the life of the Church.

In a powerful sermon titled “You Have Been Given Divine Authority to Break Down Walls,” the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande drew from Joshua 6 to remind preachers that they are repositioned for mission in a world facing spiritual, ethical, economic, and social barriers.

The message called on preachers to act as God’s agents of transformation—“to march beyond boundaries” and confront the modern “walls of Jericho” such as corruption, inequality, moral decay, and the erosion of community.

“We have been given divine authority to break down these walls,” Rev. Nzimande declared. “Every time you stand to preach, you speak over homes, over injustice, over hopelessness — proclaiming life in the name of Christ.”

The outgoing executive was commended for their faithful service, particularly for

leading a project that provided a flood-affected family with a new home—“a tangible sign of the Gospel in action.”

As Rev. Moema and her team begin their term, the Presiding Bishop urged them to follow Joshua’s example:

- Reposition for mission by being present in every sector of society;
- Listen to God’s voice rather than worldly methods; and
- March together in unity so that

internal walls between clergy and laity, men and women, may also fall.

Using the image of the shofar (ram’s horn), the sermon concluded with a reminder that “God will provide” for those who are available and obedient to His call.

“Lead this army,” the PB charged, “to shake the gates of hell, break down walls, and establish the Kingdom of Heaven.”



NEW GENERAL PRESIDENT OF LPA ELECTED

Congratulations to Mr Vuyisile Mbombela on his election as the next General President of the Local Preachers Association.

We pray God’s blessings over him as he prepares to take on the mantle of leadership.



REPOSITIONED FOR MISSION: PRESSING BEYOND BOUNDARIES

Highlights from the General President's Address at the 10th LPA Triennial Convention, Limpopo District, Mphahlele Circuit

The 10th Triennial Convention of the Local Preachers Association (LPA) of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa was a deeply spiritual and historic gathering held in the Limpopo District, Mphahlele Circuit. Delegates, leaders, and friends of the Connexion gathered under the inspiring theme: "Repositioned for Mission: Pressing Beyond Boundaries."

In her inaugural address as General President, the first woman clergy to hold this position, Rev. Moema expressed profound gratitude and humility for the trust placed in her leadership. "This milestone," she said, "is not for personal glory, but a sacred trust to serve God's people faithfully. It is a testimony to the gracious and inclusive movement of God's Spirit within our Church — a Spirit that breaks down barriers, affirms every gift, and empowers all who are called to serve."

The address began with a recognition of the socio-political and economic challenges confronting the Connexion — inequality, unemployment, poverty, and social unrest — and reminded the Church of its prophetic calling to offer hope, justice, and transformation. "The Church must not only preach the gospel," Rev. Moema urged, "but also stand as a prophetic presence, serving communities in practical and transformative ways."

Honouring Past Leadership

The General President extended heartfelt appreciation to Rev. Boyce and his Executive for leading the Association "with grace, wisdom, and faithfulness," and paid tribute to former General Presidents Messrs. Jakavula, Nkosi, and Hlatshwayo, whose commitment and vision shaped the LPA's enduring legacy. "Each generation," she said, "has been anointed for its time and task — and now, the same Spirit rests upon us as we step forward in service."

Pressing Beyond Boundaries

Drawing from Philippians 3:13-14, she emphasised that the LPA, like the Apostle Paul, must continue to "press on toward the goal" — moving beyond past achievements and challenges to embrace God's forward-moving plan. "To be repositioned," she explained, "is to realign our focus and renew our commitment to serve God's mission faithfully. It means leaving behind outdated methods and distractions that limit our ministry. We are called to be agents of peace, healing, and reconciliation."

The second part of the theme — Pressing Beyond Boundaries — was presented as a call to courage and innovation. "Boundaries," she noted, "may be cultural, social, geographical, or even personal. Pressing beyond them requires faith and trust in God's Spirit to lead us into spaces where the gospel is most needed."

A Three-Year Platform of Work



The General President outlined a three-year missional roadmap for the LPA:

2025/2026 — Repositioned by God's Call

A year dedicated to spiritual renewal through prayer, study, and reflection. "Like Isaiah, we respond, 'Here am I. Send me!'" she said. The focus will be on realigning preaching and pastoral ministry to be Christ-centred and Spirit-led.

2026/2027 — Strengthened for the Journey

Inspired by Isaiah 40:31, this year calls for building supportive networks, investing in spiritual and emotional well-being, and enhancing pastoral and leadership skills. The LPA will contribute between R20,000 and R40,000 annually to the School of Methodist Ministry Studies (SMMS), supporting preacher education and formation.

2027/2028 — Crossing New Frontiers

Rooted in Joshua 1:9, this phase calls for bold engagement with marginalised communities, youth, and new ministry contexts. "We must step beyond comfort zones," she challenged, "collaborating across Districts and organisations to bring transformative impact wherever God leads."

A Spirit-Led Mission

Closing her address, the General President reminded delegates that the call of a local preacher is "not merely functional, but profoundly theological and Spirit-led." She called on all preachers to be "stewards of God's Word, instruments of His Spirit, and witnesses to the transformative power of Christ."

Her final words captured the essence of Methodist mission:

"Go not where you are needed, but where you are most needed — for the world is our parish."

THE SETH MOKITIMI METHODIST SEMINARY: A SANCTUARY OF DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION

By *Mkhonzeni Fumba*

Having spent two years at the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) and now preparing for my third and final year, I can truly describe my experience as being in a sanctuary of discernment, self-discovery, preparation, and formation.

The Seminary has been for me a sacred space — set apart from the busyness and distractions of the world, and even from the daily rhythms of Church life. Being called into ministry requires more than academic readiness; it calls for a deepening of faith and a profound theological understanding. In this sacred environment, I have found not just an institution of learning but a spiritual home — a place to pause, reflect, and grow in the grace and knowledge of God.

At the heart of our academic training, formation programme, and community life lies the practice of discernment — away from the noise and demands of everyday life. Here, I have experienced God's gentle invitation to listen deeply, to wrestle with the hard questions of vocation, and to seek clarity about my purpose in God's vineyard.

Life at the Seminary fosters intentional prayer, spiritual direction, and meaningful conversations with peers as we explore how and where God is calling each of us. It has been a journey filled with self-discovery, excitement, and revelation — through theological study, moments of conviction, and encounters with God's grace. Our daily devotions in the Chapel of Christ the Servant have become sacred moments of connection and renewal.

Through this journey, I have discovered my gifts and acknowledged my limitations. I have come to know myself more fully as a member of the Body of Christ — called to serve with humility and integrity. Beyond intellectual growth, the Seminary has been a space where my character is shaped and refined: through mentorship, accountability, and the challenges of communal living. These experiences continue to teach me patience, resilience, compassion, and courage — virtues essential for faithful ministry.

Of course, the journey has not been without its challenges. There have been moments of loneliness, emptiness, and the temptation to give up — especially when missing loved ones or feeling overwhelmed. Yet, I have drawn strength from John Wesley's teaching that God's call is an invitation to participate in God's ongoing work — a lifelong process of discernment and spiritual discipline. In these moments, I have found comfort in the Seminary community — in family, peers, lecturers, and staff — who walk this journey together.

Seminary life has taught me that ministry is never built in isolation. We are called to be each other's keepers — to collaborate, support, and uplift one another. This sense of unity and shared purpose embodies one of our Seminary's deepest values: Unity in the Body of Christ.

As I look ahead to my final year, I pray that my time at SMMS will not simply culminate in a degree, but in a life anchored in calling, character, and conviction. I hope to leave the Seminary with a sound theological foundation and a spirit attuned to God's will — ready to serve faithfully in the diverse and ever-changing contexts of our Connexion and world.



In truth, the Seminary has been far more than a school — it has been a sanctuary for discernment and formation, offering quietness, guidance, and grounding for a life of faithful service. As my intake prepares to enter our final year, I pray that it be a season of relocation and repositioning for mission and ministry — a time of deeper exploration, formation, and readiness for the work that lies ahead.

May the forming of transforming leaders for the Church and the nation continue — for the other side awaits.

SETH MOKITIMI METHODIST SEMINARY APPLICATIONS: 2026



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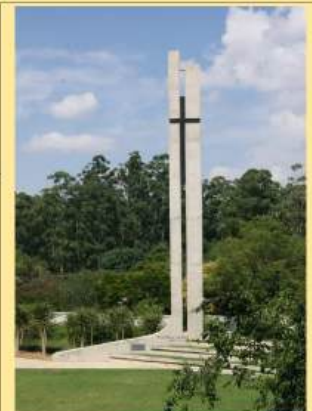
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15 NOVEMBER 2025



Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) is an accredited institute of higher learning, registered with the Department of Education (South Africa) as a Private Higher Education Institution under the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997) - Registration Certificate Number: 2010/HE08/02

MCSA PARTICIPATES IN JOINT DECLARATION ON THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION SERVICE 2025

On Sunday 19 October the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) joined ecumenical partners for a significant service commemorating the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), hosted by the Church Unity Commission at the Northrand Lutheran Church (NELCSA) in Bryanston.

The MCSA was represented by the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, Bishop of the Central District, Rev. Faith Whitby, and Rev. Raymond Keet. Their presence highlighted the Methodist Church's deep commitment to Christian unity and its ongoing journey of dialogue with other churches. Rev. Sikawu Makubalo was present as both a Methodist and the Secretary of the Church Unity Commission.

The service brought together leaders and representatives from various Christian denominations to give thanks for the JDDJ, first signed in 1999 between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation, and later affirmed by the Methodist, Reformed, and Anglican communions worldwide. The declaration marked a turning point in ecumenical relations, bridging centuries-old divisions on the doctrine of justification by faith.

The keynote address was delivered by Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, former General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, who reflected on the continuing significance of the JDDJ in shaping relationships between churches and its witness to the world. He emphasised friendship a prophetic means leading to unity.

The sermon was preached by Bishop Theodor Jäckel of NELCSA, who called the gathered churches to live out the reconciled faith affirmed in the JDDJ through visible expressions of cooperation, justice, and witness emphasising the gift of grace freely accessible to all.



CALLED, EMPOWERED, AND SENT:

Reflections from the Local Preachers Association Triennial Bible Studies

By Rev Madika 'Dix' Sibeko



The Bible studies that ran over two days, were based on Luke 9:1-2, 10-17 under the theme: *"Called, Empowered by the Spirit, and Sent to Serve."*

When hundreds of Methodist Local Preachers from across the six countries of our Connexion gathered for the 10th Connexional Triennial Convention under the theme *"Repositioned for Mission: Pressing Beyond Boundaries,"* they did not simply come to meet — they came to be renewed.

Leading the two Bible Studies at this historic gathering, Rev. Madika Sibeko began with a simple yet powerful image: *"One day, I mistakenly used my daughter's spectacles. Though the frame was the same, I could not see clearly — everything was distorted."*

She reminded delegates that the same is true for Scripture and mission: *"If we do not use the right lenses — the lenses of the Holy Spirit — we will misread both the text and the times."*

Day 1: Called, Empowered, and Sent

The first Bible Study drew from Luke 9:1-2; 10-17, the story of Jesus calling, empowering, and sending the twelve disciples — and later feeding the five thousand.

"Repositioning," Rev. Sibeko explained, "means allowing God to change our posture, our perspective, and our purpose." It is about shifting from comfort to courage, from maintaining church life to embodying God's mission in the world.

She reminded delegates that John Wesley's declaration — "The world is my parish" — was not just a slogan but a challenge to step beyond boundaries of geography, gender, and class. "We are heirs of a gospel that feeds the hungry, heals the broken, and restores the excluded," she said.

A World in Need of Repositioned Disciples

Reading the world through Wesley's eyes, the Bible Study named the moral and spiritual crises across the six nations of the Methodist Connexion: South Africa: moral decay, corruption, and gender-based violence that call for a prophetic,



Rev. Subeko pictured here with her daughter Nthabiseng.

healing Church. Mozambique: where communities have been displaced by conflict — a call to be peacemakers and restorers of hope. Botswana: youth unemployment and spiritual apathy — a challenge to form leaders grounded in justice and service. Lesotho: political instability and inequality — a space where the Church must model inclusivity and justice. Namibia: a country dogged by drought and economic struggle — a summons to faithful stewardship and sustainability, and Eswatini: the longing for justice and democratic freedom — the Church must speak truth to power with courage and love.

Globally, Rev. Sibeko noted, the world groans under political tensions, wars, and inequality. "The world desperately needs a Church that repositions itself to participate in Missio Dei — God's mission of healing, justice, and peace."

Reading Behind the Text

Exploring Luke's Gospel, the study highlighted the contrast between the Kingdom of God and the empires of the world. In a time when Rome dominated politically and economically, Jesus proclaimed a Kingdom of compassion and justice. His feeding of the five thousand was not just a miracle of multiplication, but a "sign of divine protest against inequality — a declaration that all should eat."

Culturally, Jesus defied purity systems that excluded women, Samaritans, and the sick. "He broke every barrier of exclusion," Rev. Sibeko said. "Jesus is the epitome of mission that crosses boundaries."

The session closed with reflection questions:

- What does it mean for me to be repositioned in ministry today?
- Which boundaries is God calling me to cross?
- How can I intentionally include those often left out — youth, women, or the marginalised?

"When the Church crosses boundaries, revival begins."

Continues on page 8

When the Church breaks silence, healing begins. When the Church moves with compassion, transformation begins."

Day 2: Repositioned to Serve

Picking up from the first session, the second Bible Study explored what it means to be called, empowered, and sent in today's Church.

The preacher outlined three movements found in Luke 9:

1. Jesus called — a divine invitation to purpose.
2. Jesus gave — empowerment through the Holy Spirit.
3. Jesus sent — commissioning to serve with compassion.

"Whom God calls, God equips," Rev. Sibeko reminded the preachers. "The power that Jesus gave was not to dominate, but to serve. Empowerment is not privilege — it is responsibility, accountability, and purpose."

Jesus' command, "You give them something to eat," was presented as a radical call to compassion. "The disciples wanted to send the crowd away, but Jesus repositioned them from spectators to servants. Mission is compassion in action."

Empowered to Cross Boundaries

The preacher challenged delegates to see themselves as modern-day disciples who are called to bring light into confusion and compassion into competition. Disciples empowered by the Holy Spirit to confront injustice and restore dignity. And thirdly, disciples commissioned to go where others fear to go — to those excluded, silenced, or forgotten.

She reflected, "To be repositioned for mission is not to occupy a higher seat, but to embody a deeper service. The reign of God is revealed where authority becomes service, leadership uplifts the lowly, and the wounded become healers."

The image of the twelve baskets of leftover bread became the central metaphor for overflowing grace:

"Each basket symbolises a ministry that continues beyond boundaries. We are basket-bearers — blessed to bless, healed to heal, empowered to empower."

Reflection and Challenge

The two-day Bible Study series concluded with a charge: Will you say yes again to God's mission even when tired? Will you trust His power more than your position? Will you go where comfort ends and compassion begins?

As the hymn "A Charge to Keep I Have" echoed through the hall, Rev. Sibeko offered the final benediction:

"May the twelve baskets of abundance remind us that God's grace is always more than enough — not to keep, but to be shared beyond boundaries with compassion."



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."

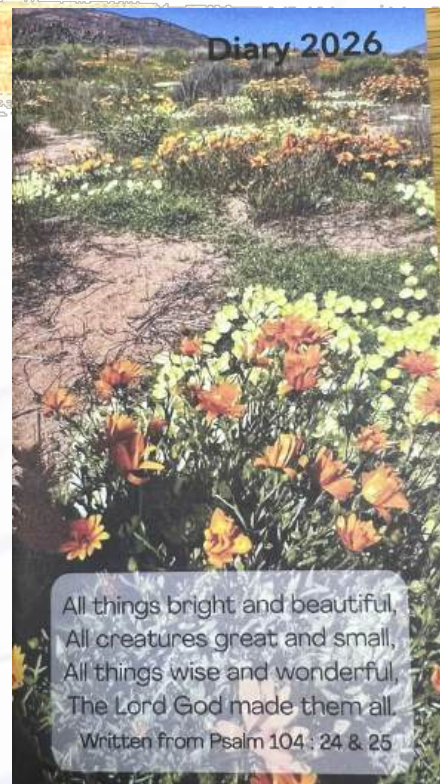
Prayer for South Africa.

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
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YOUTH CHOIR ENCOUNTER PROJECT IN GABORONE:

Building Harmony Across Borders

By the MCSA Connexional Youth Choir Team

From 17-19 October, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) Youth Choir embarked on a remarkable journey to Gaborone, Botswana, for the Youth Choir Encounter Project — a weekend of music, faith, and friendship that united young Methodists across borders.

How It All Began

Formed in 2019 as part of a partnership between the Mission Units of the MCSA and the Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche (EmK) in Germany, the Youth Choir brings together passionate young singers from various Circuits and Districts around Gauteng. Under the direction of Mr. Armstrong Masiane and Mrs. Annekathrin Buchold (German Mission Partner), the choir has grown into a vibrant community of about 25 members who rehearse monthly and perform in annual concerts.

Their mission goes beyond music — to inspire, empower, and engage other young people across the Connexion to grow in faith through song.

The connection with Botswana was nurtured through Ms. Gwen Kgabi, District Music Coordinator in the Molopo District, who has long championed youth engagement through music. After attending the Youth Choir's 2023 concert in Jabavu, Ms. Kgabi invited the group to bring their energy and experience to Gaborone — and so, the idea of a Youth Choir Encounter was born.

The Experience

Nineteen choristers, accompanied by their conductors and supporters from the Alberton Circuit, made the journey to Gaborone. The warm welcome by Ms. Kgabi, the Gaborone Youth Choir committee, and host families set the tone for a weekend filled with music and fellowship.

Saturday began with a devotion led by Preacher David Mabutho, who encouraged the youth to “take up the drum and lead the way,” echoing the courage of Miriam in Scripture. The day continued with combined rehearsals that blended voices and cultures into one harmonious sound.

The youth also held a lively discussion on why young people sing in church, the

challenges they face, and their vision for the future of worship. A highlight of the day was a special session with Botswana composer Ms. Omphemetse Chimbombi, who led the choir in performing her original song *Elo’p ke kai*.

That evening, the combined choirs held a joint concert in Gaborone (Extension 12), celebrating not competition but connection. Even the youngest participant — just nine years old — stayed joyfully engaged until late in the evening!

On Sunday, the MCSA Youth Choir participated in both the English and vernacular services, experiencing the richness of worship in different languages and traditions before heading home with hearts full of gratitude.

Lessons and Reflections

The trip was a resounding success and a testament to what can be achieved through collaboration, faith, and music. The MCSA Youth Choir extends heartfelt thanks to Ms. Gwen Kgabi, Superintendent Morokane, the Gaborone Circuit, and all the families and supporters who made the weekend possible.

As organisers reflected, “Our communication and coordination can always improve, but this was a rewarding beginning.” Plans are already underway for the Gaborone Circuit Youth Choir to visit Maun in December, continuing the spirit of exchange.

Why Youth Music Matters

Youth music work is more than just rehearsals and performances — it’s a ministry of belonging and growth. Through choir participation, young people find their voices, confidence, and faith. They learn to listen, lead, and connect deeply with

others and with God.

As conductor Annekathrin Buchold shared:

“Working with young people in music means creating spaces where questions are welcome, where faith is explored, and where both old hymns and new expressions can live side by side. Authentic worship cannot be rehearsed — it must be lived.”

Voices from the Journey

“The experience was truly unforgettable. I learnt so much about the culture and beauty of Botswana and the power of music to bring people together. I hope this is the beginning of many more adventures to come. My dream is to one day lead this choir as its conductor.”

— Z., 17 years old, HesWa District

Looking Ahead

The Youth Choir Encounter Project has shown that when young people are given space to sing, serve, and share, faith becomes real and vibrant. Music has the power to unite across borders and generations — reminding us that, indeed, to God be the Glory!



SANIBONANI: SO WE ENTER MOSES MABHIDA STADIUM

By Rev. Michael Vorster

"I tell you, if these are silent, the stones will cry out." (Luke 9)

So we enter Moses Mabhida Stadium on 10th October 2025. Before this we had to navigate our way through congested and sometimes gridlocked traffic: we were on our way to the South Africa vs Zimbabwe Soccer World Cup qualifier. We parked a distance away. As we walked toward the stadium with hundreds of others, we hear, "Ooooooh" — have they scored? Then "Aaah" — must be a near miss.

The stadium is packed. We eventually find three seats — Daughter; Son-in law, and Dad — and as we sit down, the halftime whistle blows.

The second half begins. Wave after wave of onslaught in Zimbabwe's half. South Africa's 'Bafana' have control of the game. Again, the striker gremlin of South African Soccer takes charge. One shot hits the upright, another goes way over the posts, then another to the left. Goals continue to evade where they are supposed to go. This was the crowd that needed Bafana to win. The 55000 spectators came to see SA win, not draw or loose. Nevertheless, the atmosphere was electrifying.

Once or twice Zimbabwe burst through on the counter and thanks to our goalkeeper, Rowan Williams, the two attempts were brilliantly saved. The crowd breathed a sigh of relief. Rowan is arguably one of the best goalkeepers in the world.

We needed to win, given the Lesotho debacle, to qualify. The end whistle blows and SA and Zimbabwe draw 0-0. We still stood a chance to qualify if we beat Rwanda and Nigeria beats Benin. Thanks be, we beat Rwanda 3-0 and Nigeria were victorious over Benin. (I heard if one wants to follow SA in the USA where the World cup is being hosted; it will set you back about R800 000 if you follow SA to the round of thirty-two.)

As I looked at the spectators next to us, in front of us, and around the stadium, I noticed the absence of Bafana supporters' jerseys. Many wore the Springbok jersey instead, or the jersey of their preferred soccer club. At the Sa vs Zim game, I decided not to wear any soccer jersey and wore a black T-shirt. I usually, no matter the game or sporting code, always wear my Swallows Jersey — a team that no longer exists. I live in hope. Perhaps if I had worn my Swallows jersey, South Africa may have won!

All this left me with some questions:
Do South Africans only support winning teams whatever the sporting code?

Is it not unfair to compare the Soccer World Cup to the Rugby World Cup? The path to qualify for soccer is much harder. There are two hundred countries that play soccer. To be in the top thirty is a huge achievement. Bafana are currently 55th in world ratings. Nigeria is 49th. The African World Cup qualifiers are horrendous. They need to play twice as many games than their European counterparts.



Rugby has a much easier path to qualify and win. One hundred countries play rugby and are members of World Rugby, the governing body of the sport of rugby union. In my opinion there are only about six nations who are serious contenders for the World Cup.

Do not get me wrong, I celebrate these Springbok victories. I think Siya Xolisi is the best rugby captain ever — both nationally and internationally. One is pleased with their achievements.

For me there is no reason why Bafana Bafana should not be in the top 25 in world soccer rankings. There is no excuse that we should not be dominating continental soccer — much like Sundowns, who are title winners' season after season, dominates the PSL.

SA soccer should always set the bar for African soccer — always be in the top three and the team to beat. This is not a pipe-dream, I think it is achievable. But some of the glaring obstacles need to be removed.

Okay, you may be thinking, "What has any of this got to do with the Christian way?" Remember, the Sanibonani articles are written to challenge us to reflect theologically and spiritually about everything and anything. The premise of this is that God is in all, best expressed in Colossians 1:15-20:

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, **for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers — all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.** He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.*

For me, as we pay attention to the composition and demographics of the attendance at both soccer and rugby, is this not a challenge to the church as a whole and particularly to the MCSA?

He answered, *"I tell you, if these are silent, the stones will cry out."* (Luke 9)

When people of God forget who they are and ignore the possibilities which God places before us, then God will find another route, find other spaces, even innate objects like stones. This shows that God is not restricted to the confines of those who confess 'Jesus is Lord.' Because we are disturbingly reminded in Matthew 7:46-47: *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord', and do not do what I tell you?"*

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I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them."

Has the MCSA forgotten God's project of becoming one and undivided? As I gaze across the packed stadium of soccer supporters, there is a public display of togetherness, even for those fleeting 90 minutes — or in the case of rugby, 80 minutes. Is this not a glimmer of what God's project is about? When we score, we all shout, whistle, sing, and vuvuzelas blast out. When we have near misses, we all go 'Oh no' and in unison go 'aaah', placing our hands on our foreheads. When we lose, we all look dejected and a glum atmosphere ensues, with conversations of what the coach should have done. At these national sporting events, our emotions are in unison — a collective frustration and disappointment when we lose, or a collective feeling of euphoria and gladness when we win.

We are together in that fleeting moment. Is this not a God-moment showing what is possible?

Yet when we see MCSA public events — Conference, Ordination, District Phezukomkhono — look who attends. Is this not a God-moment for public witness to what is possible? Is this not supposed to be where we show off what the nation could be? Should we not, in these public spaces, be at the cutting edge of becoming an alternative, relational people, showing that another world is possible?

Are soccer and rugby, with many who have a beer in hand, doing a much better job? Is this the space where God shows what is possible?

"I tell you, if these are silent, the stones will cry out!"

THE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE

By Rev. Maurice Fearn

We are heading into the season of Advent, approaching Christmas. Christmas is a time of wonder, and among its significant wonders, wrapped in this world-changing, life-changing event this: "The sacred and the secular are one single fabric of life. The incarnation means that matter really matters."

The significant difference between Christianity and other religions is that God chose to materialise in a way different to his creation. We think there is a great chasm between ourselves and God. This is shaped by our concept or idea of God. God is beyond the comprehension of our human consciousness and mind. We cannot see or measure God's dimension; therefore, what are we but mortals with limited life span and understanding?

The mystery of Christmas is that, in Jesus, God is connecting matter and spirit, human flesh and divinity. This event is more than a story or a carol; it is a threshold between earth and heaven, between what we are, and what, through God's love, we can become. God, in his mercy and grace, crosses what we imagined to be a great divide created by our sinful nature and action. Christmas is more than a 'bridge' — it is the assurance that what God did in Jesus he wants to do in us. If you think I am exaggerating in fanciful imagination, then why do we sing 'Be born in us today', or 'Widest extremes to join', or 'Cast out our sin and enter in'? The whole New Testament shouts out that God's presence is all around us. We would not exist, if it were not so.

A colleague used to plead in all his public prayers that all those in the congregation would be brought into an awareness of

God's presence during the service. It is a reality we often fail to notice. Every place — wherever we are, with all its ordinariness — can become holy ground. Thomas Merton experienced it on a busy street corner. Mother Theresa found it among the bodies of the dying. Dorothy Day met it on the side-streets of New York. Art, music, poem, story — all spark an awareness of God's unseen, intangible presence. You may also have sensed it in the receiving of Holy Communion.

Think about your own sense of presence. It is indefinable, but you recognise it. When you are in company with others, you know whether they are 'present' or preoccupied. You are conscious of your own shortcomings too when, though physically present, in thought you are miles away — and may be abruptly requested to pay attention. Even paying attention may not be all that is required: in presence you give yourself entirely to the other.

So the Eternal Presence breaks through at Christmas in a form to be seen. Jacob at a river, Moses in the desert, Isaiah in the temple, Elijah in a cave — all experienced the Eternal in unseen form. We cannot command it to happen. We can only be open to it when it does. It is God's gift of Godself to us. It is the gift that keeps on giving, not for selected people, but for everyone. It is a gift that can come to us in community, or in solitude.

Wonder opens a window to mystery, beauty, discovery, enchantment, reverence. Why is there anything at all? Why is a thing what it is? Why do certain things delight or repulse? Why do you

have certain abilities and others do not?

Children, poets, artists, writers find wonder in the simplest things — a leaf, a frog, a butterfly, a dew drop, a star, the morning mist. Natural things and a sense of something wonderful become a source of appreciation and prayer. Presence, like sunshine, cannot be captured in a bottle. "Presence" says John O'Donohue, "is something you sense and know, but cannot grasp".

When someone comes to visit you and gives of themselves to you, you value their presence. It is special, unique, and creates all manner of opportunities, nuances, openings, sharing, and learning. Christmas brings to you a sense of God's presence, made real in the flesh of a new-born Son. How significant is that!

****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.***



WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN NOVEMBER

November	05	Local Preachers' Department District Secretaries' Consultation	Virtual
November	05	Finance Unit Executive	Virtual
November	06-09	Connexional Music Association Triennial Convention	Mokala-Montle District
November	07	Human Resource Unit Board Meeting	MCO
November	08	Connexional Men's League Connexional Executive Meeting	TBC
November	11	Connexional Unit Leaders, Organisation Heads and Bishops' Meeting	Virtual
November	12	Connexional Chaplaincy Committee Meeting	Physical
November	12-14	Connexional Chaplaincy Retreat	TBC
November	19-21	Bishops' Meeting	TBC
November	20	Connexional Trust Properties Meeting	Virtual
November	28-30	Lay President and District Lay Leaders' Leadership Development and Retreat	TBC
November	30	1 st Sunday of Advent	

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY

Ordinary Time	Liturgical Colour: Green
Proper 26C – 02 November, 2025 Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4 OR Isaiah 1:10-18 – Psalm 119:137-144 OR Psalm 32:1-7 – 2 Thessalians 1:1-4, 11-12 – Luke 19:1-10	
Proper 27C – 09 November, 2025 Haggai 1:15b-2:9 OR Job 19:23-27a – Psalm 145:1-5, 17-21 OR Psalm 98 OR Psalm 17:1-9 – 2 Thessalians 2:1-5, 13-17 – Luke 20:27-38	
Proper 28C – 16 November, 2025 Isaiah 65:17-25 OR Malachi 4:1-2a – Isaiah 12 OR Psalm 98 – 2 Thessalians 3:6-13 – Luke 21:5-19	
Christ the King / Reign of Christ C – 23 November, 2025 Jeremiah 23:1-6 – Luke 1:68-79 OR Psalm 46 – Colossians 1:11-20 – Luke 23:33-43	
Advent	Liturgical Colour: Purple
Advent Sunday A – 30 November, 2025 Isaiah 2:1-5 – Psalm 122 – Romans 13:11-14 – Matthew 24:36-44	
Advent 2A – 07 December, 2025 Isaiah 11:1-10 – Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 – Romans 15:4-13 – Matthew 3:1-12	
Advent 3A – 14 December, 2025 Isaiah 35:1-10 – Psalm 146:5-10 OR Luke 1:47-55 – James 5:7-10 OR Romans 1:1-7 – Matthew 1:18-25	

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Basil Murray
Rev. Donovan H D Scrooby

*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*

