



The Methodist Church
of Southern Africa

Another Dimension

JUNE 2026



GOD CALLED, AND SHE SAID YES: Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary Marks 50 Years Of Women Shaping God's Mission

For one remarkable week, the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS) became more than a place of theological formation. It became a sacred space of remembrance, celebration, lament, challenge, and hope as women from across the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) and beyond led every aspect of the Seminary's annual Vocation Intensive Week.

Held under the theme "God Called, and She Said Yes", the week marked the golden jubilee of the ordination of women in the MCSA, celebrating fifty years since the ordination of the Rev. Constance Oosthuizen in 1976.

From opening worship to the closing challenge, the programme intentionally placed women's voices, scholarship, leadership, and spirituality at the centre of theological reflection. Worship was led by women. Morning and evening prayers were led by women seminarians. Keynote lectures were delivered by pioneering church leaders, theologians and academics whose collective message was unmistakable: while there

is much to celebrate, God's work of transforming the Church is far from complete.

A celebration rooted in Scripture—and reality

The week opened with an inspiring sermon by Rev. Carol Walsh, one of the pioneering women ministers whose own ministry spans more than four decades.

Preaching from Joel 2 and Galatians 3, Walsh reminded seminarians that God's vision has always included women. From creation to Pentecost, God's Spirit has consistently called both daughters and sons. Reflecting on her own ministry, she celebrated the courage of the women who refused to abandon their calling despite hostility, petitions against them, public humiliation, and discrimination.

Yet she challenged the Church not to mistake progress for completion.

"The stained-glass ceiling has cracks in it—it is not yet truly broken."

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Walsh called on the Church to move beyond symbolic celebration towards genuine repentance, accountability, and transformation, insisting that the credibility of the Church's witness depends upon how it treats women within its own household.

"We do not want empty words and praise. We want change and vision."

Day two saw the LGBTIAQ Connexional Task Team alongside IAM facilitating part of the SMMS Vocation Week. The time explored the intersections of sexism and LGBTIAQ struggles holding the lived experiences of women and queer Methodists as the centre of the knowledge creation process. The week unearthed the rich history of women and queer contributions to black liberation theology through the work of Audrey Lourde, Delores Williams, Musa Dube, and the legacy of the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians; a history that is often obscured in the narratives of black theological thought in South Africa. They celebrated the legacy of women in the MCSA, affirming the ongoing, often courageous work for Gender Justice in the denomination.

Celebration—or lamentation? Perhaps both.

The theological centrepiece of the week came in the keynote address by Presiding Bishop Rev. Pumla Nzimande, who framed the entire anniversary around one provocative question: *"Is this a celebration—or a lamentation?"* Her answer was neither. It was both.

Drawing from the resurrection story of Mary Magdalene, the Presiding Bishop described the lived reality of women as deeply paradoxical—a journey marked simultaneously by triumph and struggle. Women, she argued, continue to live in contradiction: Equal, yet unequal; accepted, yet not fully embraced; progressing, yet still resisting exclusion; celebrating, while still lamenting.

Using Mary Magdalene as the "Apostle to the Apostles," Nzimande challenged centuries of theological misrepresentation that reduced one of Christianity's most important witnesses to a caricature. Instead, she reclaimed Mary as the first preacher of the resurrection—the first person commissioned by the risen Christ.

"History will erase or villainise a woman. We must reclaim herstory."

Her challenge extended beyond women alone. She called for allies—modern-day "Levis"—who, like the disciple in the Gospel of Mary, refuse to remain silent when women are opposed.

"May this seminary become a place where Levis are formed—people who will stand against discrimination until justice rolls like a river."

If Nzimande challenged the Church to recognise its paradoxes, the Rt Rev. Dr Vincentia Kgabe, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Pretoria, challenged it to imagine an entirely different future.

Her lecture, *Beyond the Patriarchal Altar: A Feminist and Womanist Theological Reconstruction of Women's Ordination and Leadership as Ecclesial Transformation*, argued that fifty years of women's ordination should no longer be about proving whether women belong in ministry. History has already answered that question.

Instead, she argued, the Church must now ask what happens when women's leadership is allowed to transform the Church itself. Drawing on feminist and womanist theology, she insisted that ordination is not simply about inclusion. It is about ecclesial transformation.

"The question is no longer whether women belong in ministry. The question is what the Church becomes when women exercise leadership as full participants in God's mission."

She challenged inherited patriarchal assumptions embedded within theology, biblical interpretation, and institutional culture, arguing that the Church must move from domination to discipleship, from hierarchy to mutuality, and from privilege to shared ministry.

"The Kingdom of God is richer when every voice is heard, stronger when every gift is welcomed, and more faithful when every calling is affirmed."

The week also heard powerful contributions from Dr Rowanne Marie, President of the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS), who reflected on women's leadership within patriarchal institutions through the biblical figure of Sheerah, and Dr Cheri Hugo, whose practical session challenged institutions to create spaces grounded in justice, hope, and flourishing.

"... institutions are systems...carefully designed environments that shape how we think, move, belong, succeed and sometimes struggle. And so nothing about institutions is natural; everything is designed, and what is designed can be reimaged..."

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Hugo further challenged the seminarians' understanding of power: ***"If institutions teach us anything, they teach us that power matters. Power shapes who speaks. Power shapes who decides. Power shapes who is visible. Power shapes whose ideas are recognised and whose contributions remain unseen. Yet when we speak about power, we often imagine it as something formal. A title. A position. A promotion..."***

Dr Rowanne Marie situated the Jubilee within the wider witness of the MCSA, honouring the Church's contribution to education, healthcare, the struggle against apartheid and nation building, while acknowledging that gender justice remains unfinished. She reminded seminarians that Christian leadership begins not with authority, but with discipleship and service: "The call to leadership and influence is fundamentally a call to serve."

She then turned to the gap between society's perceptions of women leaders and the reality of their calling. Leadership is still too often framed in masculine terms such as strength, dominance, and assertiveness, while women are confined to assumptions about compassion, emotion, and support. These stereotypes, she argued, create barriers long before women enter formal positions of leadership.

To explore this tension, Dr Marie placed two biblical women in conversation: the unnamed woman of Song of Songs 1:6, who laments, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard I have not kept," and Sheerah of 1 Chronicles 7:22–24, the only woman in the Old Testament explicitly remembered as a builder of cities.

The first figure represented women whose labour sustains institutions while their own flourishing is neglected; the second embodied the possibility of women building communities, hope, and futures despite patriarchal constraint.

By naming Uzzan-Sheerah as a place whose meaning can be heard as "Listen to Sheerah," Dr Marie urged the Seminary community to attend to women whose leadership has too often been overlooked.

"When perception said no, Sheerah's reality said yes."

Rather than allowing culture, tradition, or religious expectations to define her vocation, Sheerah embraced God's

calling and became a builder of communities, hope, and the future.

Drawing from childhood memories of learning the building trade alongside her father, Dr Marie offered four lessons for leadership: dig deep foundations of character, faith, and resilience; be patient with the process of transformation; never discard the rejected stones; and do not be afraid to get your hands dirty in servant leadership.

Reflecting on her own call to lead SMMS, she acknowledged seasons of wrestling, self-doubt, and uncertainty, but testified that God's calling sustained her commitment to serve. She concluded by calling the Seminary community beyond limiting perceptions and towards the liberating reality of God's call.

"When perceptions say no, reality says yes. When perceptions say you cannot, reality says you can. When perceptions say it is impossible, reality says it is possible. And with God's help, I too can say yes to the call."

Her message carried the week's central conviction forward: women are not simply being included in the Church's life; they are already helping to build it.

A Jubilee that calls for release

Thursday's Communion Service and rededication of the Prayer Garden, led by Rev. Dr Purity Malinga, the MCSA's first woman Presiding Bishop, returned to the biblical meaning of Jubilee. For Malinga, the fiftieth anniversary was far more than an opportunity to remember history. It was God's invitation to reset relationships.

Drawing on Acts 11 and Peter's encounter with Cornelius, she reminded the Seminary that whenever the Church attempts to decide who belongs and who does not, the Holy Spirit has already moved ahead.

"No one can stand in God's way."

She celebrated pioneers, honoured supportive male allies, and recognised the significant progress made over fifty years. Yet she also lamented the persistence of patriarchal prejudice, discrimination, and violence within the Church. The Jubilee, she argued, demands repentance as much as celebration.

"Unless we are prepared to unlearn patriarchal prejudice against women, we will continue to oppose the mission of God."

Calling every Methodist Society, Circuit, and District into deeper reflection, Malinga urged the church to see the Jubilee as a Kairos moment—a time to release one another, restore relationships, and begin again.

Looking Beyond the Jubilee to the Next Fifty Years

The final keynote challenged the Seminary community not simply to celebrate fifty years of women's ordination, but to ask what faithfulness will require over the next fifty years.

Drawing deeply on Scripture, Methodist tradition, and African feminist theology, Rev. Yvette Moses, Bishop of the Cape of Good Hope District, argued that the first fifty years had largely been about opening the doors, while the next fifty must be about transforming the house.

Reflecting on her own journey as one of the early generations of ordained women—ordained 33 years ago and, according to Church records, the 25th woman ordained in the MCSA—she shared stories of affirmation alongside painful experiences of sexism, exclusion, and the constant pressure to prove herself in leadership.

"Representation does not mean transformation."

While celebrating milestones such as the election of women bishops and increasing representation in church leadership, she cautioned that patriarchal attitudes remain deeply embedded within Church culture.

Using the story of Queen Vashti in the Book of Esther, Bishop Moses described what she called a "theology of holy refusal"—the courage to say no to systems that diminish human dignity.

"The next fifty years will require new acts of holy refusal. We must refuse tokenism. We must refuse symbolic inclusion without structural change."

She challenged seminarians to become transformational leaders who refuse to normalise cultures that marginalise women, whether in stationing, appointments, leadership elections, or everyday relationships within the Church.

Turning to Methodist heritage, Bishop Moses reclaimed Susanna Wesley not simply as the mother of John and Charles Wesley, but as one of Methodism's earliest theologians and spiritual leaders.

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“Leadership emerges from giftedness and vocation rather than gender.”

Drawing on the work of African theologians such as Dr Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Dr Miranda Pillay, she argued that the Church's task is no longer to debate whether women can be ordained, but to ensure that women can exercise leadership without being undermined, excluded, or treated as exceptions.

Looking ahead, Bishop Moses proposed four priorities for the Church over the next half century: moving from inclusion to genuine institutional transformation; intentionally developing women theologians and scholars; creating gender-just pathways for leadership through mentorship and accountability; and strengthening the Church's prophetic witness against gender-based violence, poverty, inequality, and environmental injustice.

She reminded the Seminarians that women's ordination cannot be celebrated inside church buildings while women continue to suffer violence and injustice beyond them.

In her closing challenge, Bishop Moses invited the Seminary community to imagine a Church transformed by the full participation of all God's people.

“The question is not whether women can lead. We can and we do.”

And she left the gathering with a vision that resonated throughout the week's celebrations:

“The more profound question is: What kind of Church becomes possible when women and men together embody the fullness of God's calling?”

She prayed that future generations would look back on this Jubilee not merely as a commemoration of fifty years of women's ordination, but as the moment when the Methodist Church of Southern Africa committed itself to building the next fifty years—a Church where gifts matter more than gender, justice reflects discipleship, leadership mirrors the inclusive ministry of Christ, and every person can answer God's call without limitation.

During the week, Rev. Lauren Matthews and the I Am team also equipped participants with practical tools for reading Scripture through feminist lenses, demonstrating that biblical interpretation itself is a vital arena of transformation.

More than an anniversary

Throughout the week, worship, prayer, conversation, and theological reflection continually returned to one conviction. This Jubilee is not simply about commemorating the first women who broke barriers. It is about forming a new generation of leaders—women and men together—who will build a Church that

reflects God's vision of justice, dignity, and shared discipleship.

The rededication of the Rev. Constance Oosthuisen (the first woman ordained in 1976) and Rev. Purity Malinga (the first woman inducted as bishop in 1999) Prayer Garden became a powerful symbol of that commitment, repositioning not only a memorial stone but also the Church's memory of the women whose faithfulness has shaped its story. A new plaque in the Chapel recognising the Jubilee was unveiled and dedicated by Rev. Purity Malinga assisted by the Dean of the Chapel, Rev. Michel Hansrod, and the President of the Seminary, Dr Rowanne Marie.

As the seminarians departed for their two-week break, they carried with them more than lecture notes. They carried a challenge to continue to say “yes” to God's call; to become allies for justice; to widen the doors even further for those whom God continues to call (and, where necessary, remove them).

“Being the first is not enough. Transformation happens when the second arrives. And the third.” Dr Cheri Hugo

As speaker after speaker reminded the seminarians throughout the week, the Holy Spirit is still moving. The Spirit is still calling.

And no one can stand in God's way!!



CALLED TO THE MISSION OF GOD, COMMITTED TO HIS SERVICE

The Clarkebury District Wesley Guild successfully hosted a Mission Weekend from 5–7 June 2026 in the Tsitsana Katkop Circuit under the theme, “Called to the Mission of God, Committed to His Service.” More than a spiritual gathering or a social outreach programme, the weekend was a living expression of God’s mission in action. It reminded participants that mission belongs to God and that Christians are called to participate in His work of love, compassion, reconciliation, restoration, transformation, and justice. As followers of Christ, we affirm that mission begins with God, and our calling is to respond by serving others and addressing the needs of our communities.

Throughout the weekend, the Wesley Guild sought to build bridges between the Church and the community, between faith and action, and between hope and opportunity. Through practical acts of service, lives were touched, dignity was restored, and sustainable community development initiatives were established.

A significant focus of the outreach was Siyamthanda Home for the Disabled, situated in Mdeni Location within the Tsitsana Administrative Area. The objective was to improve the living conditions of the residents while creating a more dignified, secure, and sustainable environment. Members of the mission team repainted both the interior and exterior of the facility, giving the home a fresh and welcoming appearance. Renovations included the installation of new doors and the replacement of broken windows, significantly improving the safety, comfort, and dignity of the residents.

Recognising the importance of food security, the team fenced a 25 x 25 metre vegetable garden to protect crops from livestock and other damage. Within the newly enclosed garden, potatoes, beetroot, and peppers were planted to promote sustainable food production, improve nutrition, and reduce food costs for the home.

Further improvements included the installation of a new entrance gate to enhance security and accessibility, as well as the construction of three flushable toilets to improve sanitation, hygiene, and the overall quality of life for the residents.

The Wesley Guild also shared God’s love through gifts of blankets and dignity packs containing essential toiletries. These were distributed to residents of Siyamthanda Home as well as vulnerable individuals within the surrounding community. In addition, the team visited eight vulnerable households in Mdeni Location, where blankets and hygiene

packs were presented to provide warmth and practical support during the winter season. These visits created opportunities to pray with families, offer words of encouragement and strengthen the relationship between the Church and the community. The distribution of these items became a tangible expression of Christ’s compassion and the Church’s commitment to serving those in need.

One of the most significant and sustainable legacies of the Mission Weekend was the establishment of the Tsitsana Katkop Internet Café. Designed to empower young people through employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, the project will also benefit the wider community by providing affordable access to internet, printing and other digital services closer to home, reducing the need to travel to neighbouring towns. To launch the initiative, the Wesley Guild donated four laptops, two printers, an internet router and a box of printing paper. The Internet Café is expected to assist learners, students, job seekers and entrepreneurs while contributing to the digital development of the community.

The Mission Weekend also invested in economic sustainability through the donation of a grass-cutting machine, together with petrol and two-stroke oil, to the Tsitsana Katkop Circuit. This equipment will support an income-generating initiative in which members of the Circuit provide grass-cutting services within the local community. Income generated from the project will help sustain the ministry of the Circuit, support future mission initiatives, and create opportunities for community participation and economic empowerment.

The impact of the Mission Weekend extended far beyond the completion of individual projects. Living conditions at Siyamthanda Home were significantly improved through renovations, enhanced sanitation, and strengthened security. The establishment of the vegetable garden laid the foundation for improved food security and long-term self-sufficiency, while the distribution of blankets and dignity packs restored hope and dignity to vulnerable families. The Internet Café and grass-cutting project introduced sustainable economic opportunities that will continue to benefit both the Circuit and the surrounding community for years to come.

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Building bridges through service: Clarkebury Wesley Guild members restoring Siyamthanda Home for the Disabled

The 2026 Mission Weekend demonstrated that God's mission is holistic, embracing the spiritual, social, economic, and developmental needs of communities. Through practical acts of service, the Clarkebury District Wesley Guild built bridges of hope, dignity, empowerment, and opportunity within the Tsitsana Katkop Circuit.

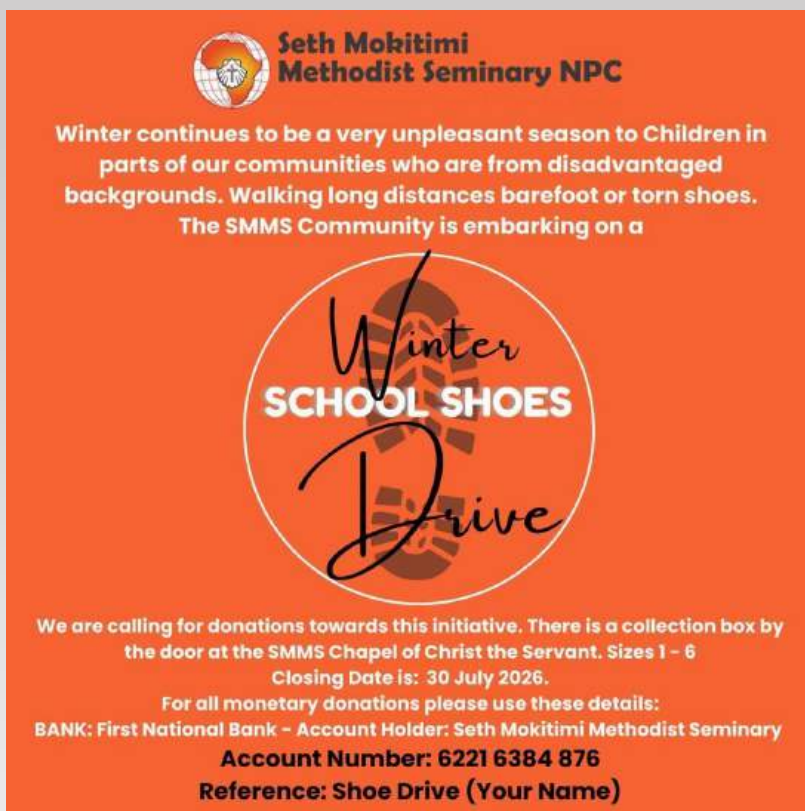
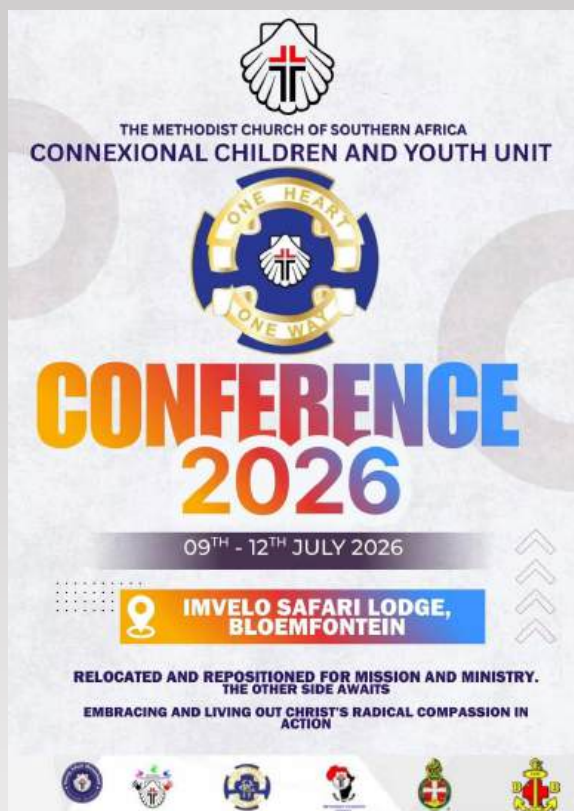
As we continue to be repositioned for God's mission, we remain committed to participating in His work by serving humanity and transforming communities. This Mission Weekend stands as a powerful testimony that when God's people respond faithfully to His call, lives are transformed, communities are strengthened, and the love of Christ becomes visible in practical and lasting ways.

We give thanks to God for the generosity of our donors, the dedication of volunteers, the leadership of the Church, the commitment of Wesley Guild members and the partnership of community stakeholders who made this Mission Weekend possible. May the fruits of this work continue to bear witness to God's love, grace and transforming power for many years to come.

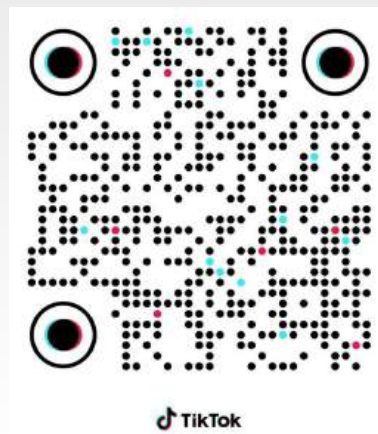


Technology for transformation: Equipment donated for Tsitsana Katkop Youth

WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO



CONNECT WITH THE MCSA



HEALTH, HIV/AIDS, AND MASA DESK EPUP TRAINING

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa is committed to promoting access to, and adherence to, chronic medication through its External Pick-Up Points (EPUPs) located within the King Sabata Dalindyebo, Ingquza Hill, Mhlontlo, and Nyandeni Local Municipalities in the OR Tambo District Municipality. Across the seven EPUP centres, dedicated personnel ensure that medication is properly received, accurately captured, and safely dispensed to the rightful patients through the CCMDD Synch System.

For purposes of capacitating the staff, a training session was conducted by the Mission Unit—Health, HIV/AIDS, and MASA Desk at Port St John's from 8–10 May 2026.

For effective service-delivery in our EPUPs, stakeholder collaborations and future partnerships were strengthened. Collaborating with government departments (Department of Health and Department of Education) and non-governmental organisations (TBHIV Care and Khethimpilo) made this more successful. This was vital in maximising our reach, strengthening our collective impact, and advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG3.3 (End the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases, and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases, and other communicable diseases) and SDG3.5 (Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol).

The Superintendent of Itombo Circuit, Rev. Bavu led the opening devotions, reminding us that we are the ambassadors of God's grace to His people. The Department of Health, represented by Mr. Sivile Milisa, shared best practices in running functional EPUPs, expectations of DoH when conducting monitoring visits to out centres, and also the new ART Guidelines where patients may be given treatment on a 6-month basis.

Ms Nandipha Vuntu from TBHIV Care showed the trainees how to navigate the CCMDD Synch, capturing, issuing, and updating the system to process medication getting to clients and reporting thereafter. She also shared the process towards the establishment of an EPUP centre and possible partnership towards expansion.

Khethimpilo, a non-government organisation was represented by Ms Nandipha Cokoto. She capacitated the trainees on demand-creation, engaging with local leaders, and selling the vision. She stressed the importance of mapping of local resources so that we identify possible stakeholders to work with. Also stressed was the importance of confidentiality when working with clients.

The Department of Education was represented by Mr. Nkalweni and Ms Nyusela, social workers working with schools in providing psychosocial support services. From the Dept. of Education we learnt that drugs affect learners from primary school as opposed to popular belief that it is a high school social ill. Learners from as young as 13 years are already using substances. They highlighted, amongst many issues, the lack of parental involvement in the school affairs and how much the church can be vocal in encouraging parents to be part of school engagements.

Funding from Global Ministries and EMK-Weltmission made the training possible. The venue was branded with an MCSA

wall banner and each EPUP received a pull-up banner. EPUP staff received different sets of uniform and regalia to enhance cleanliness and promote visibility. The 7 centres have 8 staff members; St Elizabeth EPUP has 2 staff members because it serves the largest community members. These centres are managed by 1 Programme Manager who supervises, monitors, and reports on the work of EPUPs on a monthly basis.

External Pick-Up Point (EPUP) centers in King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality are Killion Dandala EPUP in Mthatha, Lutholi EPUP at Sibangweni A/A, and Wesleyville EPUP at Qokolweni A/A. At Ingquza Hill Municipality is the Hlwahlwazi EPUP in Flagstaff and St Elizabeth EPUP in Lusikisiki. Found in Mhlontlo Local Municipality is the Mvumelwano EPUP at Shawbury in Qumbu, and at Nyandeni Local Municipality, King Victor Poto Memorial EPUP is located at Makhotyana A/A in Libode.



Director of MU with stakeholders and EPUP staff



Mission Unit and stakeholders



A LIFE WELL PLANTED: EJD Visits 89-Year-Old Methodist Veteran During Father's Day

—By **Tebogo Oepeng** (*Environmental Justice Desk*)
Mokala-Montle District

During Father's Day month, the Environmental Justice Desk (EJD) had the privilege of visiting an extraordinary servant of God, Mr. Magwidini Chaliti, an 89-year-old member of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa residing in Rocklands, Bloemfontein.

The visit was both inspiring and enriching. Despite his age, Ntate Chaliti remains energetic, positive, and deeply committed to living a purposeful life. During our conversation, he vividly recalled the day he accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour during Easter in 1956 at St John's Methodist Church. From that moment, his spiritual journey flourished, and he later became a full member of the Church.

At the age of 21, he joined the Young Men's Guild (YMG), where he faithfully served the Church. His dedication led to his calling into the Local Preachers' Association (LPA) in 1971, a ministry he continues to cherish.

Although he qualifies to enjoy retirement at home, Ntate Chaliti believes in remaining active. Every morning, he rises with determination and purpose, just like those heading to work. He currently serves as a car guard near the Bloemfontein Court, opposite the Roman Catholic Church, demonstrating that age should never prevent one from contributing meaningfully to society.

One of the delightful discoveries during our visit was his passion for soccer. During the current football competitions,

he remains glued to his television set, following the matches with enthusiasm and excitement.

When asked about the secret behind his strength, longevity, and positive outlook on life, Ntate Chaliti pointed to the Word of God. He highlighted Genesis 1, Psalm 1, and John 15 as Scriptures that continue to guide and sustain him. He also shared his favourite Methodist hymn, Hymn 178 in Xhosa, which has encouraged him throughout his spiritual journey.

What particularly resonated with the Environmental Justice Desk was his love for God's creation. His home is surrounded by various trees, including a flourishing lemon tree, and he maintains a backyard garden with great care. His commitment to planting and nurturing trees reflects the Environmental Justice Desk's mission of caring for creation and promoting environmental stewardship.

Ntate Chaliti also echoed the concerns being raised by the Church regarding climate change and environmental degradation. Reflecting on the past, he observed that seasons were once clearly distinguishable. Today, however, changing weather patterns make it increasingly difficult to tell one season from another. His observations remind us that caring for God's creation is not merely an environmental issue but a spiritual responsibility entrusted to every believer.

Reflecting on Father's Day, Ntate Chaliti

shared a heartfelt message to fathers everywhere. He encouraged them to love God wholeheartedly and remain committed to Him in all circumstances. He further urged fathers to respect themselves and lead by example because their children are constantly watching and learning from them. According to him, a father's character, conduct, and faith leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

The Environmental Justice Desk left this visit deeply inspired by a man whose life remains firmly rooted in faith, service, and care for creation. Ntate Magwidini Chaliti stands as a living testimony that a life dedicated to God continues to bear fruit, regardless of age.

Like the tree described in Psalm 1, planted by streams of water and bearing fruit in season, Ntate Chaliti continues to inspire the Church, his community, and generations to come. Indeed, his is a life well planted.

"Indeed, his is a life well planted."



TURNING THE DISTRICT GREEN: Environmental Justice Desk Inspires Action At The 144th District Synod

—By **Tebogo Oepeng** (*Environmental Justice Desk*)
Mokala-Montle District

The Environmental Justice Desk (EJD) continues to make a meaningful impact across the Mokala-Montle District as it advances the Church's commitment to environmental stewardship, climate justice, and sustainable development.

Recently, the Environmental Justice Desk participated in the 144th Annual District Synod hosted by Diamond

Fields Circuit 501 in Kimberley. The Synod provided a valuable platform to engage church leaders, delegates, and members on the importance of caring for God's creation and responding proactively to the environmental challenges facing our communities.

During the presentation, the District Champion, Tebogo Oepeng, shared the

work already undertaken by the Environmental Justice Desk. These initiatives include tree-planting campaigns, environmental awareness programmes, and the establishment of food gardens aimed at promoting food security, self-reliance, and sustainable livelihoods.

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The Synod echoed its appreciation for the work being done by the Church through the Environmental Justice Desk. Delegates acknowledged that climate change, global warming, environmental degradation, and food insecurity are among the pressing challenges of our time and affirmed the importance of practical interventions that bring hope and transformation to local communities.

As part of the ongoing greening campaign, the Environmental Justice Desk distributed 26 trees to Superintendents, Circuit Stewards, and delegates representing various Circuits across the District. These trees will serve as living symbols of hope, stewardship, and our collective commitment to a greener future. In addition, Environmental Justice Desk pins received from the Connexion were distributed to promote awareness and visibility of this important ministry.

The Environmental Justice Desk firmly believes that environmental justice is a

matter of faith, human dignity, and social responsibility. As Christians, we are called to be faithful stewards of God's creation, ensuring that future generations inherit a healthy and sustainable environment.

Looking ahead, the Environmental Justice Desk is preparing to roll out training programmes across the District to equip Environmental Justice Champions within Circuits. These champions will help drive local environmental initiatives, support food security projects, encourage climate action, and mobilise congregations to become active participants in caring for creation.

The Desk therefore extends an open invitation to ministers, Circuit leaders, church organisations, and members to join this growing movement. Together, we can strengthen our response to climate change, promote sustainable communities, and build a culture of environmental responsibility throughout the District.

As we plant trees today, we are planting hope for tomorrow. Every tree planted, every food garden established, and every person empowered brings us one step closer to a greener, healthier, and more sustainable future.

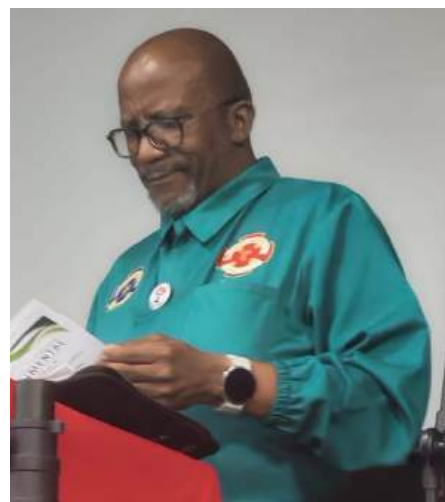
"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second-best time is now."

"Caring for creation is not merely an environmental duty; it is an act of faith and a commitment to future generations."

"A green church is a living testimony that faith can inspire action and transform communities."

"The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." (Psalm 24:1)

May every Circuit become a centre of environmental stewardship, every congregation a champion of sustainability, and every member a guardian of God's creation.



CARING FOR CREATION: Building A Greener Future Together

— By **Tebogo Oepeng (Environmental Justice Desk)**
Mokala-Montle District

As we commemorated World Environment Day on 5 June 2026, we joined millions of people around the globe in raising awareness and taking action to protect the environment. This annual observance serves as a reminder that caring for creation is not only an environmental responsibility but also a moral obligation.

Since its establishment by the United Nations in 1973, World Environment Day has become the world's leading platform for environmental awareness and action. It encourages individuals, communities, organisations, and governments to work together towards a healthier and more sustainable planet.

The 2026 theme reminds us that climate action is not only about reducing emissions; it is also about restoring and strengthening our relationship with the environment. Through collective action, we can secure a safer, healthier, and more just future for all.

In observance of this important day, the Environmental Justice Desk (EJD) attended the World Environment Day celebration hosted by the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Environmental Affairs in Bloemfontein, Free State. The event provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen partnerships, exchange ideas and broaden the scope of environmental work across the Mokala-Montle District.

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As communities continue to experience the effects of climate change through droughts, floods, biodiversity loss, and extreme weather conditions, the need for environmental stewardship has never been greater. We are all called upon to become responsible custodians of God's creation by protecting natural resources, planting trees, conserving water, and promoting sustainable practices.

The Environmental Justice Desk remains committed to advancing climate justice, biodiversity conservation, and environmental awareness. Through education, advocacy, and practical action, we seek to inspire communities to become agents of change and hope.

As people of faith, we believe that caring for creation is an expression of our love for God and our neighbour. By working together today, we can build a greener, healthier, and more sustainable future for generations to come.

"The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." – Psalm 24:1

"When we care for creation, we honour the Creator."
"The future will be green, or it will not be at all."

Let us move beyond awareness to action. Together, we can build a greener future and leave a legacy of hope for generations yet to come.



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Thank you for another informative issue of *Another Dimension*. I appreciated the new layout of some of the pages, finding it easier to read single blocks of text, or at most two columns!

I did read Rev. Kumalo's article on Rev. Morgan with some concern, though. What starts off as a record of Rev. Morgan's ministry in the MCSA, ends with what feels like a "sting in the tail" in the concluding paragraph, which left me wondering what he is actually saying about a minister who has held significant positions within the Methodist hierarchy, and why he is saying those things.

"The way Morgan has performed her duties, treated and related to the majority of ministers in the MCSA (most of whom are males) will determine the way in which women ministers will be viewed and considered for positions of power and leadership in the MCSA.

"The way she has treated and responded to challenges faced by black ministers, especially those who were vulnerable during her time of leadership, will determine the

possibilities of white ministers elected into positions of leadership and influence in a church that is dominated by black people.

"Unfortunately, her ascent to power has been a test of the level of acceptance of the leadership of minority groups in the MCSA, these being women, coloureds, and whites. She has either encouraged the majority of the Church to embrace the leadership of those who remain on the margins of leadership in the MCSA, or has shut doors for them because of the way she was perceived, judged, and welcomed."

Is Rev. Kumalo speaking on his own behalf, on behalf of male clergy in general, or on behalf of a particular sector (faction?) in the MCSA?

It would be interesting to hear whether others are also uneasy about an article which introduced "Rev. Charmaine Morgan: 'First Woman General Secretary in the MCSA'" but concluded with the comments quoted above. Why were such remarks seen to be appropriate in this article?

Concerned, Margaret.

APOLOGISE TO GOD FOR YOUR WRONGS

By TK Sonjica

The Zwelitsha Central Mission (ZCM) Circuit-312's Women's Manyano (WM) on 23rd May 2026 in its mission work led by their President Ms Buyiswa Ngwendu donated toiletries at the Bhisho Child and Youth Care Centre to 18 young males who are detained at the juvenile centre because of wrongdoings and crimes. Her motivating pronouncements to the young men were based on Jeremiah 29: 1-11.

In her message, Ms Ngwendu said she wished that God would anoint another Prophet Jeremiah among the young men. She reminded them that the God

we worship is a forgiving God. She encouraged them, when speaking to God, to address Him directly as if He is in their midst. "Do not fight with God but apologise to Him for your wrongs. Similarly, in that apology include those you have sinned against", she added.

Ms Ngwendu advised them not to speak to God just because members of the Women's Manyano were with them at the Centre at that time. She added that they should continue talking to God even in the Manyano's absence in their dormitories.

In relation to the news currently circulating about the Ngcobo boys that are alleged to have murdered an old lady, Ms Ngwendu speculated that the cause of that could have emanated from conversations the boys had overheard in their homes accusing the old lady of being a witch. It is highly improbable that the young men have a proper understanding of the belief system.

The WM's Christian Citizenship Secretary (CCS) Ms Somikazi Siwisa agreed with the notion that children in

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Centres like the Bhisho one belong to communities, hence the visit to the place. She described the Centre as an institution that falls squarely within their president's focus area as an outreach under the 3rd pillar of the 5 mission pillars of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) which is Justice, Service, and Reconciliation.

To support her reasoning, she quoted John 13:34 when Jesus said, "...love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another". She concluded by saying, "We have come to make a difference here".

The Circuit Superintendent, Rev. Madodonke Ngwendu, on the day donated two books to the Centre's library which are on "The History of the Young Men's Guild (YMG) of the King William's Town Circuit-312 (between 1950 and 2020)." It would seem the Centre is very relevant to the YMG mentorship programme broadly known as the Man-In-The-Making.

Mr. Mgcineni Bhatala accepted the books on behalf of the Centre. He agreed that there are lessons the boys will pick up from the books.

Mr. David Mchithwa, also from the Centre, lamented that visits from the Church are very scarce at their institution. He admitted that they have transformative and constructive programmes for their boys, but no divine intervention.

"We need your prayers. There are those who rejoice correctly or wrongly because these boys are here. Regardless, our wish is for these boys to overcome their mistakes and leave this place having learnt lessons that benefit their futures. I hope your visit here is the beginning of greater intervention by your church", Mchithwa said.

The day's guest speaker, Ms Nosipho Nkalitshana highlighted the fact that it is not easy to be a parent. She conceded that the process has no manual and described it as a trial-and-error phenomenon. She complimented the scripture (Jeremiah 29:1-11) that had been used by Ms Ngwendu with Psalm 23.

Ms Nkalitshana told the boys that they do not belong to the Centre and their presence there was a detour. She reminded them that in all that they are doing, they should remember that there is a living God, our shepherd, who is always with His people.

"You could be thinking about what brought you here. Perhaps there is no love at home. Then that leads to one leaving and ultimately being incarcerated here. Let's accept that as a mistake", she suggested.

"Sometimes we have to go past such mistakes in order to learn. Our eyes have now to move out of that mistake positively", Ms Nkalitshana advised and made reference to Nkosinathi Nathi

Mankayi of Maclear who reformed after leaving prison and nowadays is a popular South African Afro-Soul musician. He had been sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for crime.

She asked them not to allow themselves to be identified by their mistakes. She urged them to stick to their names which would remind them of who they are. Ms Nkalitshana made an example about her name which is Nosipho (Gift), emphasising that when she gets back home, she would still be the gift she was to her parents when she was born. She could still be a gift to her children these days.

Another crucial point Ms Nkalitshana raised with the boys is that they should realise and admit the mistakes they made. This would enable them to apologise to their victims, and when they are in their little corners at the dormitories, to apologise to God.

The Deputy-Secretary of the YMG, Mr Mzonke Puwana, encouraged the boys to know what they want in life. In no uncertain terms he reminded them that with all the restrictions and freedoms that are in prison, surely, it is not nice to be locked behind bars day and night.

Mr. Puwane warned them that accepting outside influences at the expense of their parents' guidelines is detrimental to them (boys) in the final analysis. He urged them to always remember the teachings that had been inculcated to them by their parents.



Rev. M Ngwendu handing over YMG books donated to the library at the Bhisho Child and Youth Care Centre to Mgcineni Bhatala, a staff member of the Centre.



Mr. Mziwonke Puwane of the YMG addressing the male youth at the Child and Youth Care Centre in Bhisho



Ms Buyiswa Ngwendu and Ms Nosipho Nkalitshana at the Bhisho Child and Youth Care Centre recently



Rev. M Ngwendu, Ms B Ngwendu, and members of the executive of the Women's Manyano in front of the Bhisho Child and Youth Care Centre on the day of the outreach



Members of the executive of the Circuit Women's Manyano with packages of toiletries handed over to the Bhisho Child and Youth Care Centre recently

NINETEEN BOYS ATTEND YMG INITIATION SESSION

—By TK Sonjica

The Dale College Alumni Association Re-union at Qonce in the Eastern Cape, because of its activities, is a very attractive event to teenage learners in the town and in local villages. However, on 9 May 2026, 19 boys from five different high and secondary schools and opted to attend a boy's initiation session for the winter season at the Tshatshu Society organised by the Young Men's Guild (YMG) of the Zwelitsha Central Mission Circuit-312.

The session at the Tshatshu Society under the YMG Man In The Making mentorship programme was a two-fold event with a programme for boys ready to go to initiation schools this winter and another meant for men termed "A Man In A Broken Society". Guests present to equip the boys and the men for challenges they face were: Mr. Phila Mtyholo of the Zwelitsha Police Forum, Mr. Mbulelo Matayo from the Department of Health, Captain Sakhiwo Koti and Sergeant Mthuthuzeli Penxa from the South African Police Service, and Ms Nosipho Nkalitshana who is a Social Worker.

In his address, Mtyholo explained to the boys that traditional circumcision these days has to abide with legal prescripts. Therefore, everybody is expected to comply or face the consequences.

Mtyholo highlighted that before a boy goes to a circumcision school in rural areas, traditional leaders should be alerted because they are the custodians of the culture. They can also provide guidance and support in unbecoming instances around the culture. In urban areas, counselors are used for that purpose.

Mtyholo added that, "Through circumcision, a boy is being transformed to manhood. The boy has to endure that transformative experience. Amongst others, the initiate is empowered to be a respectful and a responsible person".

He informed the boys that sometimes initiates do come across characters that use drugs in that environment. He continued and explained that if initiates have not been conscientised about these characters, they end up being victims of those characters and, end up being liabilities to their parents, post initiation. Mr Mbulelo Matayo, from the Department of Health, informed the

session that his responsibility is to make sure that boys from the age of sixteen go to circumcision schools in good health. Because of the deaths that are rife in circumcision schools these days, he has to make sure that they go there healthy and return back alive and still in good health.

"The boy that undergoes this journey in good health protects himself, the traditional surgeon, and the traditional nurse against dire consequences if an untoward situation could arise at the time the boy is under their guidance at the circumcision school", he said.

"There are forms that have to be filled in for each boy by a chief or a counselor. Parents should also be available whenever we have to interact with them. Parents must also give their sons support while at the circumcision school. It is imperative that fathers monitor what is going on at the boys' huts because some of these traditional surgeons and traditional nurses are careless", he was emphatic.

Mtyholo continued with his emphasis and pointed out that water is very paramount at the circumcision hut and no boy should be dehydrated at any given time there. He complimented this point by adding that the diet of a boy that arrived at the school with a chronic condition must never be changed unless that is done under a medical doctor's instructions.

Sergeant Penxa of the Zwelitsha Police Station stated that circumcision schools are not gathering places for those who break the law. When cautioning parents and their sons he cited a case when a boy had committed a crime and his father refused to reveal his son's whereabouts. Upon finding the boy at the circumcision school, he was compelled to arrest the boy and the father for refusing to tell him where the boy was when he knew that the boy was at the circumcision school.

He also made reference to unending battles that sometimes erupt between boys of various villages during the initiation seasons. "There has been no valid explanation of the cause of these fights. This is compounded by the fact that historically there has never been something like this. In the past, the boys would assemble together and enjoy the

circumcision ceremony of a particular boy. Once again, in these instances, we have to arrest the instigators of these fights", he concluded.

On his side, Captain Koti revealed that he started the circumcision programme in 2003 and has 201 police stations under his domain with each station having a coordinator including the Zwelitsha one. For each boy seeking to go to circumcision school, parents must visit the relevant offices three months in advance. Such forms must be accompanied by affidavits.

Expanding on what had earlier been alluded to by Sergeant Penxa, Koti said there is no need for anyone to carry weapons when visiting circumcision schools. This sometimes leads to fights.

Man in a broken society

When dealing with a man in a broken society, Ms Nkalitshana requested all men present at the event to be open about their challenges to her. She added that it is common that in many an instance men find difficulty in expressing themselves on family issues.

She encouraged them to love their wives. She mentioned that people live in a broken society that has wounded men and women. Nkalitshana explained further that, "We are therefore raising broken children. Then that suggests that it is going to be difficult for us to accomplish our goal which is an unbroken society".

On symptoms of a broken society, she named the abuse of women and the use of drugs by children. Nkalitshana warned and called on the participants to remember someone is always watching what they do.

"We must learn to listen to our children. As women, we live with men who are present but emotionally not available. Men must be consistent in their presence and compliment their children whenever they have done well", she added.

She recommended that men should show love to their wives and be with them when they are pregnant or sick. She continued and asked men to be open to their wives and communicate

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with them because they are the ones who support them.

Nkalitshana reminded the men that their wives cannot make assumptions about situations. It is therefore imperative that men communicate effectively. However, she acknowledged that, "...you are leaders that make things happen."

She conceded that fathers are lonely people and advised them to introspect and discover their loneliness. She motivated them to mend their loneliness themselves because another person

would not be able to do that.

On the belief that men do not cry, she remarked that they must understand that they are humans and must not suppress their emotions, but cry when the need arises. This should also be inculcated in their sons or else the habit will become a recurring phenomenon.

She called upon fathers to "...contribute constructively for their children and be their role models".

Her concluding remarks were that, "All we want from you is accountability,

protection, presence, and partnership for your spouses and children". She encouraged them to go for therapy, explaining that stress is a condition that can be managed.



Sergeant Mthuthuzeli Penxa and Captain Sakhiwo Koti from the SAPS



Mr. Mbulelo Matayo from the Department of Health



Mr. Phila Mtyholo, the chairperson of Zwelitsha Police Forum at Tshatshu Society



Ms Nosipho Nkalitshana in a discussion at Tshatshu in Qonce with men on the topic of men in a broken society

SANIBONANI: To Pray Is To Work, To Work Is To Pray

— By Rev. Mike Vorster

Whenever I mop a floor, wash dishes, sweep the leaves, and prepare our home every day, this becomes for me a time of prayer. I have discovered this for myself before I read that this practise is known as the Cistercian way who lived by the adage "to work is to pray". This for me becomes a time when I listen to the daily prayer podcast from the Anglican Book of prayer as I wash dishes, sweep leaves, pick up dog poo, and put out the trash.

Another adage which comes to mind is based on number 9 of rules of a helper by John Wesley: "Be ashamed of nothing but sin: Not of fetching wood (if time permits) or drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes, or your neighbour's."

My version of this rule is that no task should be too menial, even cleaning the loo.

Balancing Prayer and Work: The Cistercian Way

In the Cistercian tradition, the harmonious integration of prayer and work forms the cornerstone of monastic life. This balance, encapsulated in the Benedictine motto "Ora et Labora" (Pray and Work), offers profound insights not only for those within monastery walls but for all seeking a more purposeful existence.

The Rhythm of Prayer

Cistercian life is punctuated by regular intervals of communal prayer, known as the 'Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office.' This practice, considered the Opus Dei or "work of God," takes precedence over all other activities.

The day typically begins before dawn with Vigils and concludes with Compline in the evening, with several prayer services in between. This structure ensures that the monks and nuns remain constantly attuned to the divine presence throughout their day.

Sanctifying Work

For Cistercians, work is not merely a necessity but a sacred act. St. Benedict believed that labour itself could be a form of prayer, famously stating, "To pray is to work, to work is to pray". This perspective transforms mundane tasks into opportunities for spiritual growth and service to the community.

Cistercian monasteries often engage in various forms of work, including:

- Agricultural labour
- Intellectual pursuits
- Craftsmanship
- Stewardship of resources

Each task, performed with mindfulness and dedication, becomes an extension of the monks' devotion to God.

Striking the Balance

The Cistercian way teaches us that prayer and work are not mutually exclusive but mutually enriching. Here are some principles we can apply in our daily lives:

1. Establish a routine: Set specific times for prayer and meditation, even if brief.
2. Sanctify your work: Approach your tasks as acts of service and devotion.
3. Practice mindfulness: Maintain an awareness of God's presence throughout your activities.
4. Embrace silence: Incorporate periods of quiet reflection into your day.
5. Continuous learning: Dedicate time to spiritual reading and study.

The Cistercian approach to balancing prayer and work offers a timeless wisdom applicable to our modern lives. By integrating spiritual practices with our daily responsibilities, we can cultivate a deeper sense of purpose and connection to the divine. As we navigate our busy schedules, let us remember the Cistercian ideal: that every moment, whether in quiet contemplation or active service, can be an opportunity for communion with God.



THE MOUTH THAT MAKES PEACE CAN ALSO START A WAR

— By Rev. Charity Tozivepi-Nzegwu

Theologian, storyteller, justice centred EDI specialist, author, Methodist minister, speaker.



Beloved, today I have been reflecting on the Setswana proverb, *Ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo*, the greatest battle is fought with words.

At first hearing, the proverb offers wise counsel. The better battle is the one conducted through speech rather than physical violence. Sit down. Speak. Listen. Reason together. Seek understanding before hands are raised, relationships are destroyed, or blood is shed.

There is profound wisdom here. The mouth can interrupt violence before violence takes hold. A carefully chosen word can lower the temperature of a room.

An honest conversation can prevent resentment from hardening into hostility. An apology can open a door that pride has kept locked. But the proverb also carries a warning. The mouth that makes peace can also start a war.

James writes that “the tongue is a fire” and that a small flame can set a great forest ablaze (James 3:5–6, NRSV). Proverbs is equally direct: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Proverbs 18:21, NRSV). Speech is never merely sound. Words enter bodies, relationships, and institutions. They shape how people are seen, whose testimony is trusted, and what a community is prepared to call true.

I have sat in meetings where someone named a painful injustice, only for the conversation to turn towards the manner in which they spoke. Suddenly, the problem was no longer the harm being exposed. The problem was that the speaker sounded angry, direct, or insufficiently gracious. The room became more troubled by its own discomfort than by the wound before it.

I have watched one person raise a concern and be described as aggressive, then heard another person repeat almost the same words and be praised for their wisdom. One person must arrive with evidence, restraint, and a carefully managed tone. Another is granted authority before they have finished the sentence. That is also *ntwa ya molomo*, the battle of the mouth.

It is a struggle over who may speak, who is heard the first time, whose words enter the minutes and whose disappear. Tone is not judged in a vacuum. It is often judged through assumptions about race, gender, class, accent, disability, and social standing.

The demand for civility can become a method of control, especially when it is directed towards those naming what polite institutions would rather conceal.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye writes about the power of what she calls “folktalk”, the proverbs, stories, and everyday speech through which a community teaches people who they are and where they belong. Such speech can preserve wisdom and hold a people together. It can also make unequal arrangements appear natural, holy, and beyond question. A proverb must therefore be received respectfully, but not passively.

We must ask whose life it illuminates, whose behaviour it disciplines, and whose power it leaves untouched. The words of a community can nourish life. They can also train some people to remain silent.

Yet prophetic speech is not automatically righteous simply because it calls itself prophetic. Those who name injustice are still capable of distortion, cruelty, and self-deception. Anger may reveal that something is wrong, but anger alone does not prove that every judgement arising from it is right. The speaker must also remain accountable. This is where the proverb turns its gaze upon each of us.

The battle of the mouth is not only a battle against those who silence us. It is also the struggle within us, between truth and exaggeration, courage and self-righteousness, necessary anger and the temptation to humiliate. We can become so certain of our own moral clarity that we cease listening. We can speak about justice while wounding people who have less power than we do.

We can expose another person’s failure publicly, not because public speech is necessary, but because it is satisfying. Jesus used sharp words. In Matthew 23, Jesus called religious leaders “blind guides” and “whitewashed tombs”. This was not soft language. It exposed leaders whose outward respectability concealed corruption and whose religious authority placed burdens upon others.

The question is not simply whether speech is gentle or severe. The deeper questions are these: towards whom is its force directed, what truth does it reveal, and what life does it seek?

Jesus did not use powerful speech to crush those already beneath the weight of society. Jesus confronted those whose power harmed others and restored speech to people whom society had reduced to silence. Prophetic words were directed towards repentance, liberation, and the recovery of life.

This is why “speaking the truth in love” must mean more than speaking pleasantly (Ephesians 4:15, NRSV). Love does not require us to make truth harmless. Nor does truth release us from responsibility for how we speak. Love refuses to protect wrongdoing, but it also refuses to turn another person’s failure into entertainment.

Silence, too, needs careful discernment. Silence is not always cowardice. It may be survival, grief, prayer, refusal, or the knowledge that a particular room is not safe enough to receive the truth. No one should be forced to disclose pain merely to satisfy a community that failed to protect them. Sometimes silence preserves the self until trustworthy listeners can be found.

Words alone, however, cannot carry the whole work of justice. Racism is not a misunderstanding that can be corrected by a better conversation. Poverty is not caused by

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a failure to choose kinder vocabulary. Sexism, displacement, and exclusion are sustained through customs, money, policies, appointments, and decisions about who exercises authority. An institution can speak beautifully about belonging while withholding power from those whose presence it celebrates. It can publish statements, hold listening exercises, and learn more careful language without surrendering one chair at the table.

Dialogue without consequence can become theatre.

Repair begins when truthful speech is met by truthful listening. It requires the person or institution responsible for harm to name what happened without minimising it, defend neither intention nor reputation, and accept appropriate consequences.

What was taken must, where possible, be restored. Unsafe practices must change. Power may need to be redistributed. Those who were harmed must not be pressured into premature forgiveness, reconciliation, or renewed relationship. An apology is not repair if the same conduct continues. A conversation is not accountability if the wounded person must carry the whole burden of changing the institution. Reconciliation is not Christian when it restores the appearance of peace but leaves the conditions of harm intact. *Ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo.*

The proverb does not permit us simply to mistrust words. It calls us to take them seriously. Speech may prevent violence, but it may also conceal it. Silence may protect injustice, but it may also protect the wounded. Prophetic words may tell the truth, but those who speak them remain accountable for the fruit they produce.

Perhaps the greatest battle is learning to speak without becoming what we oppose, to listen without becoming defensive, and to move from words towards changed relationships and structures.

The mouth can begin a war. It can interrupt one. It can also begin the difficult work of repair, but only when speech is joined to accountability, restitution, and change.

A prayer

God of truth and wisdom, examine the words we speak and the silences we keep. Guard us from speech that humiliates, distorts, or protects our innocence. Give us courage to name injustice, humility to recognise our own capacity to wound, and wisdom to know when to speak and when to wait. Where harm has been done, lead us beyond carefully worded apologies towards accountability and change. May our words make room for truth. May our listening restore dignity. May our actions bear witness to the peace we so easily proclaim. Amen.

OOSTHUIZEN, CONSTANCE MARGARET: First Woman To Be Ordained In The MCSA

— By Prof. Rev. Simangaliso Kumalo

If God had wanted me to be a Bishop, I would have been free to offer—I don't think the time was right yet—but in time there will be a lady Bishop I am sure.

Constance was the first-born child of Andreas Cornelius Oosthuizen in 1931 and Magrieta Aletta Oosthuizen, née Enslin. Her sister, Thelma, was born 3 years later and her brother, Andre, 15 years later.

Her mother was orphaned at her birth, and she was raised by her sister and brother-in-law in Durban. She only attended junior school, where the old Durban Central Police station was in Smith Street Durban. She was trained as a tailor and moved into a boarding house. She met her husband, who was a policeman, through her brother-in-law. They married in the Dutch Reformed Church in Durban. They later moved to Greytown in Natal where Mr. Enslin became Station Commander.

Constance's parents lived by a very high standard of honesty and integrity as exemplary Christians. Her mother was the disciplinarian. She was an excellent cook, gardener, and seamstress and could play the piano by ear. She could turn her hands to anything. Both parents had a strong work ethic and worked themselves to a standstill, and their



children all inherited this attribute, especially Constance, who is remembered for her hard work. Constance was a Sunday School teacher at the Rosburgh Methodist Church, which was later demolished to make way for a new road. At this time, she worked for Dunlop in Durban doing clerical work, and Thelma, her sister, attended the Natal Technical College. Their younger brother always won a prize for best attendance at Sunday School. So, this was a family committed to the church.

At the age of about five, they relocated to a two bedroomed house at 42 Selbourne Road, Sea View, in Durban. An outside room was converted into a room for Constance, and Thelma left home to take up a career as a nurse. Very soon Constance had large wooden benches made for adults and small ones for children for their garage so that she could start a Sunday School. Her younger brother was the first and very keen Sunday School student. The music was provided by Constance on her piano accordion.

In a document that she wrote about her call into the ministry, she asserts:

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The story of my call into the ministry started as a deaconess and then into the ministry of word and sacraments, the story of unfolding grace and love of God.

Converted in 1946, in 1950 she received a call to preaching. She was accepted to preach and given a note by the Rev. H Prangley, the superintendent minister. She was trained to preach by the Rev. A. Western. At the time, Constance was working as a secretary for a private welfare company in Durban. She started assisting the deacons in their work of feeding the poor in Botha's Hill. That is where she met with Sister Caley. She offered herself as a Deaconess in the Order in 1953. Then she worked with Rev. H. Sunbury at West Street Methodist Church. On 24 August 1954 she sailed to England to receive training as a Deaconess.

On her return in 1956 she worked in Johannesburg as a Deaconess, first under the superintendence of Rev. S. Freeland and later under Rev. Prangley again. She would start churches in new suburbs and move on once the congregation could afford to invite a minister. Amongst her responsibilities she also had to minister to the youth and run the camps. She was then ordained in 1957 at the East London Conference (in the Eastern Cape). At the time the MCSA did not ordain women. A number of Deaconesses wanted to be ordained but were refused. Some left the order for other churches like the Congregational Church, but she stayed in the MCSA to push the struggle from within.

Constance asserts that she was fulfilled in her ministry, although it was a lonely journey. For instance, during ministerial sessions she sat alone as the ordained male ministers all sat together. There were times she felt the need to administer the sacraments but could not.

She received her first call to the ordained ministry in 1967 whilst in the middle of the 6-day war. She was afraid of alerting the Church to this call for fear of what could happen, as women who had expressed this call were frustrated into leaving the Church. Then she prayed a crucial prayer to God: "Lord, if you want me to be in the ministry, let the Church open the door to women." She began to express her call to her Circuit and church. In 1974, the church at its Conference resolved to ordain women into the ministry. Then she offered for the ordained ministry under the superintendence of Rev. A. Coates. She was faced with lots of opposition, even from ministers who felt that she did not possess the necessary gifts. But she persevered.

She was ordered to resubmit both her birth certificate and certificate of ordination as deaconess and complete a medical report.

She viewed all these as attempts to discourage her by men who were in the examination committee. Constance shares that the night before the oral examination the committee chairperson told her he had no intention of passing her. To this she replied in her feisty but correct manner: "In your shoes and with your background I would say the same to any woman candidating for the ministry, but if God has called me I will be accepted."

She passed the oral examination at Synod, but was also ordered to do an orientation course with the new candidates, even though she had already qualified and had been in the ministry for over two decades. These were further attempts to discourage her. She was subsequently ordained on 17 October 1976 at the Pietermaritzburg Conference. The same year she was appointed Warden of the Deaconess Order, which meant that it received more recognition. The first problem she was confronted with was finding a station that

was willing to accept a woman minister. It was only through the help of Rev. E. Flowerday who was the Superintendent of the Port Shepstone Circuit and new to her work in Johannesburg, that she was accepted to be stationed in that Circuit in 1977.

She remembers the cold reception she received in that congregation when she arrived as their first female minister: *Five families left the Methodist Church when I was appointed; there were protests from a group of women who would come to my services and walk out before the last hymn. My welcome social was very poorly attended by the Port Shepstone congregation.* She remembers the negative comments by the congregation: "Conference always sends us ministers who are about to retire. Now they have sent us a woman. What a thrilling challenge."

Before Constance arrived, the Women's Prayer Day used to be ecumenical, involving the Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans, Pentecostals, and Catholics. But in response to her arrival, it broke down into denominational enclaves. The Methodists were abandoned. The Baptists and Pentecostals held their own; the Anglicans and Catholics theirs. She suffered rejection from clergy colleagues from other denominations who refused to recognise her as a colleague, with one refusing to shake her hand and ordering her not to put her collar on if she came to his church! This was the kind of abuse and discrimination she had to go through as a pioneer woman minister.

She recalls that discrimination extended to gatherings such as retreats, where she was the only woman. She would be forced to sleep in the same room as men, just separated by a piece of cardboard.

In 1980, the Church offered her the position of Superintendent, thus becoming the first woman Superintendent in the MCSA. This presented an opportunity for her to work with the Superintendent of the neighbourhood black Circuit, in this case Rev. Expresses Sithole. At this time, she was still the head of the Deaconess Order and so had to attend Conference to present her report. But they always forgot to prepare for her and so she had to endure staying in awkward places.

In the same year, Constance was also appointed Secretary of the Natal West District. This was also a difficult time. They could not find a suitable male candidate. She was nominated and appointed, again being the first woman to occupy this position. She was given no assistance by her predecessor, who resented her appointment. She was labelled as unintelligent and humiliated in this position. She was happy to exit the position two years later!

She also remembers that she was approached to stand for nomination as Bishop but turned that down because she did not feel called to this position. Constance notes that she did experience moments of heartbreak and prejudice from males, both clergy and laity.

By the end of her ministry Rev. Oosthuizen had established 6 churches and Merlowood Pre-school. She retired in 1996 after 42 years of active ministry. In spite of all these negative experiences, she summarised this journey by saying: "Nothing can take away the joy of being chosen, called, and set apart for God's work."

Quotes from "Letter to Dr Khoza Mgojo on her Retirement", and "I will open a door in front of you that none shall close, Rev 3:8." Unpublished and undated document written by Constance Oosthuizen, reflecting on her journey in the ministry.

MOLOPO DISTRICT HOSTS SUCCESSFUL CHILDREN AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa's Children and Youth Unit continues to strengthen leadership across the Connexion through its Mission Synod leadership capacity-building programme. Following successful training in Mozambique, Lesotho and Eswatini, the fourth phase of the programme was held in the Molopo District from 12–14 June 2026 at Botswana Central Circuit, Mahalapye Society, Botswana.

More than fifty children and youth leaders from across the District gathered for a weekend of learning, reflection, and leadership development. Participants included Circuit and Society youth leaders, leaders of the Methodist Children and Youth Unit (MCYU), Children's Ministry practitioners, and Methodist students from institutions of higher learning across the District.

Welcoming delegates, Molopo District Lay Leader Ms Neo Molentze encouraged participants to embrace the opportunity for growth and to return home committed to implementing the lessons learned within their Circuits, Societies, and communities.

The acting District Bishop, Rev. Dr. Ketshabile, opened the programme with an inspiring devotion based on Numbers 27:18–20. He commended the young leaders for their willingness to grow and challenged them to lead as Christ leads—grounded in love, compassion, integrity, and accountability. He reminded them that effective Christian leaders remain present, available, and teachable throughout their ministry.

Setting the scene for the weekend, Baboloki Mothuti presented a contextual analysis of the Molopo District, highlighting the realities affecting children and young people across Botswana and South Africa. He reflected on challenges including unemployment, poverty, gender-based violence and femicide, mental health, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, migration and cross-border dynamics, declining youth participation in the MCSA, and shortages of young leaders in District structures. Alongside these challenges, he also celebrated stories of hope where the Church's mission

continues to bring transformation and renewal.

The programme addressed a range of strategic themes aimed at equipping leaders for effective ministry. Rev. Phezile Koekoe, Director of the Children and Youth Unit, led a session on Transformative Leadership in a Wesleyan Context, exploring the foundations of Christian leadership together with its spiritual, ethical, innovative, and missional dimensions. He challenged participants to embody Christ-like leadership marked by love, courage, commitment, vision, compassion, and integrity.

Omphelokile Motshotlwane presented on revitalising Methodist Students' Ministry across institutions of higher learning in both Botswana and South Africa. He highlighted the importance of campus ministry in providing spiritual formation, pastoral care, and practical support through initiatives such as the Ready to Help Campaign, Feed a Student, student food banks, leadership development programmes and justice initiatives. Particular emphasis was placed on expanding Methodist witness to campuses where no active Students' Ministry currently exists.

Refilwe Matsidiso encouraged Children's Ministry practitioners to adopt transformative approaches to faith formation, reminding participants that ministry with children must remain relational, engaging, and responsive to the rapidly changing world. She emphasised the importance of continuous learning for those who minister to children and offered practical approaches to nurturing children's holistic spiritual development.

Addressing economic empowerment, Palesa Haas spoke on advancing sustainable human and economic development among young people. Recognising that youth make up a significant proportion of the population across the Connexion, she highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship and education in responding to unemployment and poverty. Participants were introduced to opportunities available through initiatives such as the Youth Economic

Empowerment Fund and the Tsietsi Mashinini programme, and were encouraged to take advantage of these resources for their personal and community development.



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Sean Giba concluded the training presentations with an overview of the governance structures, operational guidelines, and strategic priorities of the Methodist Children and Youth Unit. He reminded participants that the Unit exists to coordinate the mission and ministry of children and youth across the MCSA, promote collaboration among leadership structures, and ensure that the voices of children and young people are represented in the Church's decision-making processes.

The weekend proved both educational and inspiring, equipping participants with practical tools to strengthen ministry in their local contexts while reinforcing the Unit's ongoing commitment to accompanying and supporting the Connexion's growing Districts.

The programme concluded with participants mapping a way forward for the revitalisation of Children and Youth Ministry throughout the Molopo District.

On Sunday, the District gathered for a vibrant Children and Youth Service led by Rev. Phezile Koekoe. Preaching from Luke 10:1–10, he challenged young Methodists with Christ's words, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few." He called on children and young people to respond boldly to God's call, to reclaim their place in the mission of the Church, and to become faithful disciples serving both their communities and the Kingdom of God.



GALI'S STORY: Finding Belonging Through Music

Gali, as everyone knows her, is a 27-year-old member of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). Born into a Methodist minister's family, she lives in Nelspruit in the Limpopo District. Reflecting on her early church life, she laughs as she recalls that her usual place on a Sunday was near the door so that she could be among the first to leave after the service.

Everything changed when she participated in the 2024 Choir Encounter Project in Germany. We spoke to her about how that experience transformed her relationship with church, music, and ministry.

1. What motivated you to apply for the 2024 Choir Encounter Project?

"More than anything, I was longing to be in a musical space. It had been almost a year since I had left my university church, where I had been part of the worship band for five years. Being back home without a musical community felt lonely. When the opportunity came to join the Choir Encounter Project,



I didn't hesitate. It was primarily aimed at young people, and I was excited to be part of something with other youth who shared a passion for music."

2. What were your expectations, and how did your experience compare?

"I expected it to be mainly about cultural exchange and music festivals. Although we had a very tight schedule, I treasure the moments of fellowship through song in the different communities we visited—from singing on farms to visiting Handel's Museum.

The project also introduced me to choral music in a completely new way. At first, I honestly wanted to quit because it was overwhelming trying to learn the music and understand the notes during the intensive 36-hour preparation camp. But thankfully we worked through it together, and

eventually I connected with the choir. By the end, it had become an experience I will always treasure."

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3. How has your life changed since returning from the project?

"When I came back from Germany, my heart was full of song. That spark led me to join the Music Association. Before the project, I was the person who sat at the back of the church, one of the last to arrive and one of the first to leave. Being part of a mission group or serving in church had never really crossed my mind. During the Encounter Project, I discovered that many of the people I admired were members of their church choirs. That completely changed how I viewed church choirs. Instead of seeing them as an organisation I could never relate to, I began to see them as a place where I, too, could serve God.

My journey since then has been full of surprises. Before I had even officially become an active member of the Music Association, I was elected as a District member, and only a few months later I was elected to the Connexional Committee as Mission Coordinator.

I truly believe the Lord has led me here both to learn and to teach. It has been challenging navigating the MCSA from a contemporary music perspective, but I hope to share what contemporary music ministry can contribute and what it means to build an inclusive choir community—not just an inclusive Music Association.

Whenever I feel like giving up, because change is never easy, I remind myself that I am not doing this only for myself. I am doing it for all the young people who want to belong but don't know how, or who are simply afraid. I am aware that I represent young people in a space where about 98% of the members are much older, and that responsibility keeps me going."

4. What is special about choir ministry? What does music mean in your life?

"There is a quote that says, 'When words fail, music speaks.' That has been true throughout my life. Music has always been my safest place—a place where I could communicate and express myself when words were not enough. It is where I have always felt secure.

As a Christian, being in musical spaces is deeply important. God has given me this gift, and it is only right that I offer it back to Him in praise and worship. Through music, life becomes lighter—emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Choir is much more than singing. It is a community that ministers together, supports one another, and helps shape one another. Before the minister even begins to speak, the choir has already set the spiritual tone for worship. We minister to the congregation. We encourage the minister, uplift one another, and help people encounter God.

Human beings were created for community, and choir provides that sense of belonging.

Looking back, I had taken almost a year away from singing before the Encounter Project. It brought me back—not only to music but also to church and to community. It helped me rediscover myself and reminded me who I am. Whenever there has been uncertainty in my life, from high school until now, I have found myself returning to places where music was present. Music has given me strength, direction, and hope."

5. What would you like to encourage young people to do?

"One of the biggest challenges for young people is that when they don't see themselves represented in a space, they struggle to imagine that they belong there. My encouragement is this: don't stay only in youth organisations because they are fun, vibrant, and comfortable. Those spaces are important, but growth also happens when we step beyond them. Find where your gifts can serve the wider church.

I pray that the Music Association continues to open its arms to everyone, regardless of the kind of music they come from. Not everyone has a tonic sol-fa background or formal choral training, but there should be space for all of us to worship together under one umbrella. It's all music, and ultimately it is all offered to God. Every language, every style, and every tradition matters.

I would love to see more young people flood into the Music Association so that it continues to grow. I also dream of seeing a stronger youth movement in the English-speaking churches, where all our organisations work together as one inclusive community. We have so much to learn from one another.

We are the future of the Church. If we don't step into these spaces now, the changes we hope to see will never happen. We know what exclusion feels like. The question is: how do we broaden those safe spaces so that we can fully participate in the whole life of the Church? Change will only come when we are willing to enter those spaces. I know I represent young people there, and I hope others will see that and feel free to come too."

6. What is your hope for the Methodist Church of Southern Africa?

"My greatest hope is that we become a Church that lives out what it says. We often talk about being inclusive and youth-led, but we don't always hand over the responsibility or create genuine opportunities for young people to lead.

As Mission Coordinator, I want to build bridges through collaboration so that people feel represented, welcomed, and free to participate wherever they worship. I want to be able to visit any Methodist Church and immediately feel that I belong. Communication and inclusivity should unite us so that we truly become one movement.

I am excited about the future. I pray that every leader under the age of 35 will realise that if we don't speak up now—even when it is uncomfortable—the change we long to see will never happen. Leadership requires courage.

More than anything, I want to be a stepping stone. I pray that wherever I serve, I can inspire other young people—other catalysts for change—to step forward. I know I am not the only young person who dreams of a better future for our Church.

We can no longer afford to lead from the shadows. God calls us to be bold and courageous.

I am deeply grateful for this project and for everyone who has been part of my journey. It has led me to this place. Even when I feel afraid or uncertain, I know this calling is bigger than me. It has never been about me alone."

IMPORTANT DATES IN JULY – MEN’S WORK MONTH

July	01	Communications Unit Board Meeting	MCO
July	02-03	EMMU General Committee Meeting	Virtual
July	03-04	CDC, DDR's, and DDC Workshop	Johannesburg
July	04	Connexional Children and Youth Executive Meeting	Virtual
July	07	Connexional Audit Committee Meeting	
July	07	Connexional Gender Justice Task Team	Virtual
July	08	Structures Standing Committee Meeting	Virtual
July	08-12	Women's Association Consultation	TBC
July	08-12	Order of Deacons Consultation Meeting	
July	09	Revisions Standing Committee Meeting	Virtual
July	09-12	Connexional Children and Youth Unit Conference	Mokala-Montle District
July	15-16	Preliminary Stationing Meeting – Bishops and Lay Leaders	Physical
July	18	Connexional Executive	Physical
July	21-23	Church Unity Commission Consultation	Durban
July	22	Methodist Publications Meeting	Virtual
July	24-26	Music Association Connexional General Executive Committee Meeting	Virtual
July	25	Order of Evangelism Graduation	Johannesburg
July	26-29	Young Women's Manyano: Presidents' Retreat	TBC
July	30	Human Resources Unit Board Meeting	Virtual

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY

Ordinary Time	Liturgical Colour: Green
Proper 9A – 05 July, 2026 Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67 OR Zechariah 9:9-12 – Psalm 45:10-17 OR Song of Solomon 2:8-13 OR Psalm 145:8-14 – Romans 7:15-25a – Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30	
Proper 10A – 12 July, 2026 Genesis 25:19-34 OR Isaiah 55:10-13 – Psalm 119:105-112 OR Psalm 65:(1-8), 9-13 – Romans 8:1-11 – Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23	
Proper 11A – 19 July, 2026 Genesis 28:10-19a OR Wisdom of Solomon 12:13,16-19 OR Isaiah 44:6-8 – Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 OR Psalm 86:11-17 – Romans 8:12-25 – Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43	
Proper 12A – 26 July, 2026 Genesis 29:15-28 OR 1 Kings 3:5-12 – Psalm 105:1-11, 45b OR Psalm 119:129-136 – Romans 8:26-39 – Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52	
Proper 13A – 02 August, 2026 Genesis 32:22-31 OR Isaiah 55:1-5 – Psalm 17:1-7, 15 OR Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21 – Romans 9:1-5 – Matthew 14:13-21	
Proper 14A – 09 August, 2026 Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28 OR 1 Kings 19:9-18 – Psalm 105:1-6, 16-22, 45 OR Psalm 85:8-13 – Romans 10:5-15 – Matthew 14:22-33	

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Masedi Mabilu
Rev. Simpiwe Mdolo
Rev. Donald Veysie

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

