



The Methodist Church
of Southern Africa

Another Dimension

JULY 2026



CELEBRATING 200 YEARS OF METHODIST WITNESS IN MOUNT COKE (1825–2025)

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.” – Psalm 127:1

Under the prayerful leadership of Circuit Superintendent, Rev. Sonwabile Vava, and the District Bishop, Rev. Nomphithizelo Sibidla and the District Lay Leader, Mr Sikhumbuzo Bukula, the people of Mount Coke and the wider Methodist Connexion gathered to celebrate an historic milestone—200 years of Methodist witness in Mount Coke and the surrounding communities. The bicentenary celebration was more than a remembrance of the past; it was a joyful affirmation of God’s faithfulness and a renewed commitment to God’s mission for generations to come.

Two Centuries of God’s Faithfulness

The story of Methodism in Mount Coke began in 1825, when the Rev. Stephen Kay, under the leadership and vision of the pioneering missionary, Rev. William Shaw, established the Mount Coke Mission Station. Named after Dr Thomas Coke, the “Father of Methodist Missions,” the station became one of the earliest centres of Methodist work among the amaXhosa and throughout Southern Africa.

From these humble beginnings, Mount Coke became a beacon of Christian witness. Schools were established, literacy flourished, the Gospel spread across the

region, and the mission played a significant role in the translation of Scripture into isiXhosa. Through education, healthcare, evangelism, and community development, Mount Coke became a place where faith was lived out as well as proclaimed.

The journey has not been without hardship. The Frontier Wars, social change, and more recently the COVID-19 pandemic tested the resilience of the Church. Yet through every generation, the people of God have remained steadfast, bearing witness to Christ’s enduring presence.

A Celebration Rooted in Gratitude

The bicentenary celebrations brought together Methodists from across the Connexion, alongside community leaders and friends of Mount Coke, to give thanks for God’s sustaining grace over two centuries.

One of the significant moments of the celebration was the planting of a commemorative tree, symbolising deep roots, continuing growth, healing, transformation, and hope for future generations. Like the other trees planted on this sacred ground, the Methodist witness at Mount Coke has taken root, weathered many storms, and continues to bear fruit.

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Another Dimension

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Another deeply significant moment was the dedication of the COVID-19 Memorial Plaque, honouring the faithful sons and daughters of Mount Coke who lost their lives during the pandemic, some of whom were not even afforded decent funerals. Their names and memories now form part of the living history of this community of faith. The dedication reminded all present that while the pandemic brought profound sorrow, God's love and promises remain steadfast, and the lives of the faithful continue to inspire the Church.

A second plaque was unveiled and dedicated in the sanctuary. This was in special commemoration of the life, ministry, and service of Evangelist Tunyiswa.

The tree planting and plaque dedication were led by the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, together with the Kumkani Hintsa District Bishop, Rev. Sibidla, and the Mount Coke Circuit Superintendent, Rev. Vava, symbolising continuity between the generations who have gone before and those who will carry the mission into the future.

Honouring the Fathers and Mothers of the Faith

The celebration was enriched by the presence of many who have faithfully shaped the life of the Methodist Church over the years. Among those in attendance were former Presiding Bishop, Rev. Zipho Siwa, former General Secretary, Rev. Vido Nyobole, former Bishops, Rev. Andile Mbete and Rev. Mongameli Noqayi, former Vice-Chairperson of the Clarkebury District 1300, Rev. Bonco, and Rev. Nomvuyo Mpuqa, remembered with gratitude as the first woman to serve as Superintendent of the Mount Coke Circuit.

Also present was the General Secretary of the MCSA, Rev. Musi Losaba, the Bishop of the William Kama District, Rev. Dr Sox Leleki, and the Mission Unit Director, Rev.



Sva Waqu. Their presence was a living testimony that the story of Mount Coke has been written through the faithful ministry of countless ministers, evangelists, class leaders, local preachers, Women's Manyano, Young Men's Guild, Young Women's Manyano, Sunday School teachers, choir members, and ordinary members whose lives have reflected the love of Christ.

"Change Your Method"

Preaching from Psalm 127:1–5 and Luke 5:1–11, the Presiding Bishop Rev. Pumla Nzimande delivered a challenging and inspiring sermon under the theme: "Change Your Method."

Reflecting on Mount Coke's remarkable 200-year history, she celebrated God's faithfulness through every milestone—from the ministry of Rev. Stephen Kay, the translation of the Bible into isiXhosa, the mission hospital, and the Church's survival through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yet she reminded the congregation that history alone cannot sustain the Church.

Drawing on the image of a photocopier whose copies gradually faded because its ink cartridge had never been changed, she observed that traditions, however treasured, can lose their effectiveness if they are repeated without renewal.

She challenged the Church with these memorable words: "For 200 years God has carried Mount Coke. But now it is time to change the cartridge. Change your method."

Her message was not a call to abandon Methodist doctrine or heritage, but to seek fresh ways of praying, preaching, evangelising, and serving in a changing world.



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Using the story of Simon Peter's empty fishing nets, she reminded the Church that faithful labour without Christ's direction can leave us weary and discouraged. Jesus' instruction to the disciples to launch into deeper waters became an invitation to Mount Coke to trust God beyond familiar routines.

Perhaps the most powerful image came as she invited the congregation to "hand over the boat" to Christ. The boat represents everything people hold dear—our lives, families, ministries, careers, and possessions. In her words, these things are not ultimately ours but God's, entrusted to our care.

She reminded the congregation that when Christ becomes the true Master of the boat, ordinary lives become

extraordinary instruments in God's hands. Simon the fisherman became Peter the rock because he surrendered his boat and trusted Christ's word.

Her closing encouragement echoed throughout the gathering: *"Make Jesus your method."*

Looking Ahead

As Mount Coke enters its third century of ministry, this anniversary becomes more than a celebration of history. It is a call to faithful discipleship for a new generation.

The pioneers planted the Gospel in faith. Successive generations nurtured it through sacrifice, prayer, and perseverance. Today, the responsibility rests with us to ensure that the next 200

years continue to reflect Christ's love in worship, mission, justice, education, compassion, and service.

A Covenant of Rededication

Therefore, standing on the shoulders of 200 years, we rededicate ourselves:

- To memory – keeping alive the stories of faith and sacrifice.
- To mission – embodying holiness that heals, liberates, and transforms.
- To hope – living as a people of resurrection, anticipating God's new creation.

May Mount Coke be not only a place of history but a fountain of renewal. May the flame of Methodism burn brighter, carried by African hands, African voices, and African hearts.



"MEMORY IS CONSCIOUSNESS": Rev. Sethunya Motlodi Calls BMC to Renew Its Prophetic Identity

The Chairperson of the Black Methodist Consultation (BMC), Rev. Sethunya Motlodi, delivered a deeply personal and challenging address at the 2026 Annual Consultation, calling members to reclaim the movement's prophetic identity under the theme "Consciousness."

Speaking from Jeremiah 1:1–12, Rev. Motlodi reminded delegates that consciousness is far more than awareness—it is memory, character, purpose, and faithful action rooted in God's call.

Reflecting on the theme, he explained that the conversation began earlier in the year when the BMC asked a simple but profound question: "What is the agenda?" The 2026 Consultation sought to answer that question by examining consciousness from biblical, philosophical, activist, and reflective perspectives.

Remembering to Move Forward

Addressing the Consultation in the Vaal, a region deeply connected to South Africa's liberation history, Rev. Motlodi shared moving stories from his own life. He recalled arriving in the Vaal as a 19-year-old youth leader in 1993, shortly after the Boipatong Massacre, where he witnessed communities living under constant fear and violence.

He also reflected on his childhood in Mokwena village, where security forces searched for anti-apartheid activists during the final years of apartheid.

These memories, he said, continue to shape his understanding of Christian leadership.

"Memory is consciousness. We move forward by looking back."

Quoting author James Carroll, Rev. Motlodi reminded delegates that people discover where they are going by remembering where they have been.



He also drew biblical examples from David's encounter with Goliath and Jesus' command at the Lord's Table, showing that remembrance strengthens faith, courage, and hope.

Consciousness Comes at a Cost

Rev. Motlodi spoke candidly about his own experiences as a student activist at R.T. Mokgopa High School, where political protests led to arrests, violence, and persecution.

Looking back, he compared those experiences with the biblical woman who suffered from continuous bleeding, observing that transformation often begins while people are still wounded.

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“The woman touched holiness while she was still bleeding.”

He challenged delegates not to wait for perfect conditions before acting. “Consciousness is costly. The cause is always greater than the pain.”

According to Rev. Motlodi, Christian discipleship inevitably involves sacrifice. Just as Christ carried the cross, those who pursue justice and truth must be prepared to pay a price for faithful witness.

A Call to Recover the Character of the BMC

One of the strongest sections of the address focused on the internal life of the Black Methodist Consultation.

Rev. Motlodi questioned whether the movement still reflected the character of its founders.

“What happened to the BMC?” he asked repeatedly, expressing concern about conflict, public criticism, and divisions that have emerged in recent years.

He reminded delegates that elections come and go, but Christian character remains the true measure of leadership.

“Consciousness is character.” Integrity, humility, accountability, and respect, he argued, must define the movement long after annual meetings have ended.

The BMC’s Prophetic Legacy

Looking back over the history of the Black Methodist Consultation, Rev. Motlodi celebrated the movement’s long tradition of courageous leadership.

He reminded delegates that the BMC championed young leaders before youth quotas became fashionable, advocated for women in senior leadership before the wider Church was ready, promoted racial integration through its nominations, and invested in theological students long before many organisations embraced educational support.

These milestones, he said, demonstrate that the BMC has always existed to provide prophetic alternatives rather than simply maintaining the status quo.

“Prophets are not called to maintain the status quo—they announce God’s alternative.”

The Agenda Remains Relevant

Responding to questions about whether the BMC has outlived its purpose, Rev. Motlodi argued that the real issue is not the gathering of Black Methodists but the movement’s ongoing agenda of empowerment, transformation, leadership development, and justice.

He shared the story of a young Methodist who contacted him on social media seeking to understand the purpose of the BMC. Rather than debating, Rev. Motlodi simply sent him BMC literature and invited him to attend the Consultation.

After reading the material, the young man responded enthusiastically and attended the gathering. Rev. Motlodi said this encounter reminded him of Philip’s invitation to Nathanael: “Come and see.”

Investing in the Next Generation

A recurring theme throughout the address was the importance of young people.

Rev. Motlodi proposed that each host District intentionally sponsor at least ten young delegates to attend future Consultations.

Drawing on the writings of Cornel West and recalling the courage of South African youth during the struggle against apartheid, he argued that every institution’s future depends upon investing in its next generation of leaders.

“The real sense of hope and struggle comes from young people.”

Jeremiah: A Model for Prophetic Leadership

Returning to Jeremiah 1, Rev. Motlodi described the prophet as a model for the BMC.

Jeremiah understood God’s call, cared deeply for his community, spoke uncomfortable truths, and never separated pastoral ministry from public responsibility.

Like Jeremiah, the BMC must continually rediscover its identity and purpose. “The BMC is a movement,” he said, “not merely an organisation.”

Leadership from the Lower Deck

Concluding his address, Rev. Motlodi drew an unexpected leadership lesson from the film *Titanic*.

Using the character of Jack Dawson, he encouraged leaders never to forget the “lower deck”—ordinary people whose struggles should remain the focus of Christian leadership.

He challenged leaders to maintain integrity when entrusted with power, to cast vision that inspires hope, to unlock doors of opportunity for others, and to remain connected to those they serve.

Leadership, he said, is not about privilege but about remembering where one comes from and ensuring that those left behind are brought forward.

Becoming the Light

Rev. Motlodi concluded with words from author Alice Walker, reminding delegates that transformation begins when people choose to become light in places of darkness.

“When life descends into a pit, I must become my own candle, willingly burning myself to light up the darkness around me.”

Calling the Black Methodist Consultation to renewed consciousness, prophetic courage, and faithful service, Rev. Motlodi urged delegates to remember their history, reclaim their identity, and continue building a movement that exists to transform both the Church and society.



RELOCATED AND REPOSITIONED FOR MISSION AND MINISTRY: Living Christ's Radical Compassion in Action



The Methodist Children and Youth Conference 2026 gathered under the inspiring theme, “Relocated and Repositioned for Mission and Ministry – The Other Side Awaits,” with the sub-theme “Embracing and Living out Christ’s Radical Compassion in Action.” In his address, the Director of the Methodist Children and Youth Unit (MCYU), Rev. Phezile Koekoe outlined the vision and priorities that will guide the Unit’s work during 2026–2027.

At the heart of this vision is a call for Intentional Spiritual Renewal. As young people navigate an increasingly complex world, the Church is challenged to help them move from an inherited faith to a personal, living relationship with Christ. The Director reminded delegates that radical compassion begins with a deep love for God. Only when we are rooted in Christ can we faithfully reflect His compassion to others.

To strengthen the spiritual formation of children and young people, the MCYU will continue to invest in leadership development through initiatives such as the Connexional Children’s Ministry Indaba, Children’s Ministry Tuesday Webinars, and the development of practical theological resources. Districts, Circuits, and Societies are encouraged to provide contextually relevant training, make creative use of worship resources, and intentionally plan activities such as children’s rallies, holiday clubs, and camps that nurture discipleship and spiritual growth.

The second priority is Intentional Social and Public Advocacy Engagement. Drawing on John Wesley’s conviction that love of God must be expressed through love of neighbour, the Director called the Church to respond courageously to the challenges facing children and young people today. Poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, mental health challenges, gender-based violence, and educational inequalities require more than words—they demand practical Christian action.

The MCYU will strengthen initiatives such as the Youth



Economic Empowerment Fund and the Tsietsi Mashinini Bursary Fund while expanding partnerships that promote education, entrepreneurship, and skills development. Districts and Circuits are encouraged to raise awareness of these opportunities and to collaborate with government departments, NGOs, and community organisations in addressing the social realities affecting young people.

The third strategic priority focuses on Accelerating Ecumenical Partnerships to Strengthen Youth Public Advocacy and Active Citizenship. Recognising that the Church is stronger when it works together, the MCYU reaffirmed its commitment to building relationships with councils of churches and ecumenical partners across the Methodist Connexion’s member countries. Districts, Circuits, Societies, and Methodist Student Societies are encouraged to engage actively with local ecumenical bodies to strengthen Christian witness and collaborative ministry within their communities.

In closing, the Director challenged every Society, Circuit, District, and youth entity to ensure that their mission and ministry are both practical and transformative. While programmes should reflect local contexts, they should also align with the Connexional vision of embracing Christ’s radical compassion in action.

As we move forward together, we are invited to embody Christ’s compassion through three clear commitments:

- Intentional Spiritual Renewal
- Intentional Social and Public Advocacy Engagement
- Accelerating Ecumenical Partnerships to Strengthen Youth Public Advocacy and Active Citizenship.

May we be a generation that is deeply rooted in Christ, boldly engaged in our communities, and united in God’s mission, remembering that indeed, the other side awaits.



A JUBILEE DECLARATION OF SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN ORDAINED MINISTRY

By Rev. G. Muzi Monama (YMG General President)

And the Young Men's Guild of the MCSA



To the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), and especially to our sisters in ordained ministry:

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

As the Young Men's Guild, together with our leadership and membership across the Connexion, we offer this declaration with gratitude, humility, conviction, and hope.

As we commemorate the Jubilee of the ordination of women within the MCSA, we pause to give thanks to God for a significant chapter in the life of our Church. We celebrate not merely a historical decision, but the faithfulness of God who continues to call women and men alike into ministries of leadership, service, witness, sacrament, teaching, justice, and pastoral care.

This Jubilee invites us to remember, to reflect, and to recommit ourselves to the work of becoming a Church that more fully embodies the reconciling and liberating purposes of God.

Celebrating God's Faithfulness

We give thanks for the women whose courage, perseverance, faith, and obedience made this journey possible.

We honour the pioneers who responded to God's call despite resistance, misunderstanding, and exclusion. We remember those who faithfully exercised ministry long before recognition was granted, and those who opened doors for future generations through their sacrifice and witness.

We celebrate the countless women who have served, and continue to serve, across our Connexion as ministers, leaders, teachers, chaplains, theologians, pastors, spiritual guides, and agents of transformation.

Through their ministry, congregations have been nurtured, communities strengthened, lives restored, and the Gospel proclaimed with wisdom, compassion, courage, and integrity.

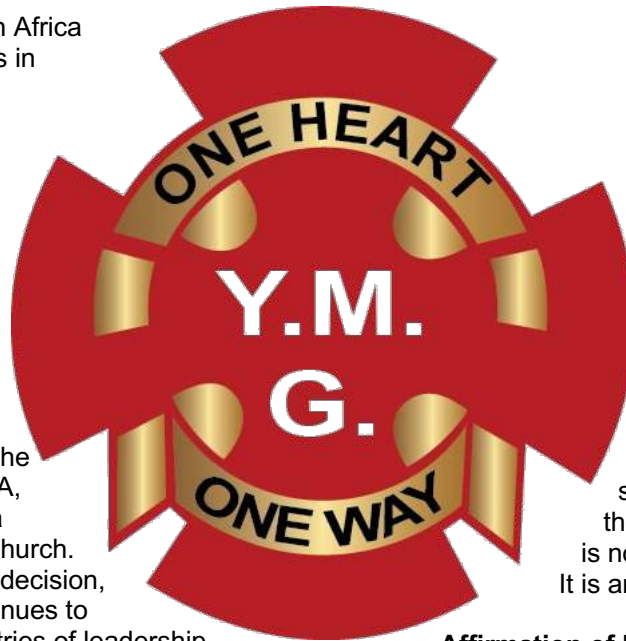
The Church has been immeasurably enriched by their gifts.

Our Theological Affirmation

We affirm that ministry belongs first to God before it belongs to any office, structure, culture, or tradition.

The Church does not create God's call. The Church recognises God's call.

Throughout Scripture, God consistently raises women and men to participate in God's mission. From Deborah's leadership, to Mary's witness, to Priscilla's teaching ministry, to the women who were first entrusted with the proclamation



of the resurrection, the biblical witness reminds us that God's Spirit is not limited by human assumptions, social conventions, or inherited prejudices.

We therefore affirm that women in ordained ministry are called by the same God, entrusted with the same Gospel, ordained into the same covenant, and empowered by the same Holy Spirit. Their ministry is not an exception to the Church's life. It is an indispensable expression of it.

Affirmation of Leadership and Authority

As the Young Men's Guild, we fully affirm the leadership, authority, standing, and ministry of women ministers throughout our Connexion.

We affirm their rightful place in every sphere of the Church's life, including preaching, teaching, sacramental ministry, pastoral oversight, theological formation, governance, discernment, and leadership.

We recognise that their authority is grounded not in social approval or institutional accommodation, but in the call of God and the affirmation of the Church.

We reject attitudes, practices, assumptions, and behaviours that diminish, undermine, or question the legitimacy of women who have been called and ordained by God through the Church.

The flourishing of women in ministry is not a concession to contemporary culture. It is a matter of faithfulness to the gifts that God has entrusted to the body of Christ.

Acknowledging Continuing Challenges

While we celebrate this Jubilee, we also recognise that our journey is not complete. Women in ministry continue to encounter obstacles that many of their male colleagues do not face.

These challenges often arise from deeply embedded cultural assumptions, patriarchal patterns, institutional habits, and personal biases that persist within both society and the Church.

Too often, women ministers are subjected to heightened scrutiny, unequal expectations, diminished opportunities, inappropriate criticism, and burdens that should not accompany faithful service.

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As men within the Church, we acknowledge with humility that we have not always listened sufficiently, spoken courageously enough, or acted consistently when confronted with these realities.

Where silence has contributed to exclusion, we confess it.
Where attitudes have caused harm, we lament it.

Where systems continue to disadvantage women, we commit ourselves to their transformation.

A Southern African Witness

We recognise that this Jubilee takes place within a broader Southern African and global context in which women continue to exercise extraordinary leadership in churches, communities, institutions, governments, businesses, and movements for justice.

Across our region, women have carried families through hardship, sustained communities through crisis, strengthened institutions through leadership, and helped shape the democratic and developmental aspirations of our societies.

The Church cannot speak credibly about justice, dignity, reconciliation, and human flourishing while failing to recognise the gifts, leadership, and contributions of women.

Our witness to the Gospel is strengthened when every person called by God is enabled to serve fully and faithfully.

Our Commitment

As members of the Young Men's Guild, we commit ourselves to being active partners in the work of transformation.

We pledge to challenge sexist attitudes, discriminatory practices, and exclusionary language wherever they appear.

We commit ourselves to cultivating cultures of respect, dignity, mutuality, and accountability within our organisations, congregations, and communities.

We will intentionally support environments in which women ministers can flourish, lead, teach, serve, and exercise their ministries without unnecessary barriers.

We commit ourselves to listening more carefully, learning more deeply, and acting more faithfully whenever injustice is encountered.

We will seek to model relationships that reflect the mutual partnership and shared discipleship to which Christ calls the Church.

A Word to Our Sisters in Ministry

To our sisters in ordained ministry: *Thank you.*

Thank you for your faithfulness, perseverance, courage, wisdom, scholarship, leadership, pastoral care, prophetic witness, and service.

Thank you for carrying God's people through seasons of joy and sorrow, certainty and uncertainty, growth and struggle.

Thank you for remaining steadfast in your calling, often at considerable personal cost.

We honour your ministry.
We celebrate your contribution.
We thank God for your witness.

Conclusion

As we celebrate this Jubilee, we do so with gratitude for the past, honesty about the present, and hope for the future.

In the spirit of the Gospel, we commit ourselves to walk alongside our sisters not as patrons, but as partners; not as spectators, but as allies; not merely for this season of celebration, but for the ongoing life and witness of the Church.

May the next chapter of our Connexion's history be marked by deeper partnership, greater justice, fuller participation, and a richer expression of all the gifts that God has entrusted to the people of God.

For when the whole Church is able to serve according to God's calling, the whole Church is strengthened for God's mission.

To God be the glory. Amen.

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WOMEN'S SKILLS WORKSHOP SPARKS ENTHUSIASM AND ENTREPRENEURIAL AMBITIONS

—By TK Sonjica

Participants at the Zwelitsha Central Mission Circuit 312 Women's Manyano (WM) Skills Development Workshop demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm as they acquired practical, income-generating skills at Phakamisa Society on 20 June 2026.

The workshop, organised under the leadership of the Women's Manyano Christian Citizenship Secretary, Somikazi Siwisa, focused on tapestry (mat making) and flower arrangement, equipping participants with skills that could help them establish small businesses and improve their household incomes.

Providing background to the initiative, Siwisa explained that the programme began with the training of selected Women's Manyano members at Kumkani Hintsa District level. Nodi Fatyi and Xoliswa Ngqangweni were trained by the District and subsequently tasked with transferring their newly acquired knowledge to women across the Zwelitsha Central Mission Circuit.

"The goal is not only to teach practical skills but also to encourage women to explore entrepreneurship and establish sustainable small businesses," Siwisa said.



In his busy schedule, Rev. Madodonke Ngwendu included visiting the Women's Manyano skills development workshop at Phakamisa, Zwelitsha.



A group of participants busy making their mats at Phakamisa.



Ms Lindiwe Mtiya with properly arranged flowers at the skills development workshop at Phakamisa, Zwelitsha.



Circuit 312 Women's Manyano CCS, Somikazi Siwisa, displaying a hand-woven bathroom mat at the skills development workshop at Phakamisa, Zwelitsha.



Former MCSA Women's Manyano General President, Gretta Makhwenkwe crafting a bathroom mat at the skills development workshop at Phakamisa, Zwelitsha.

SANIBONANI: Morning Musings on the Heart of God

— By Rev. Mike Vorster



It's 4am, I get the household prepared for the day. I listen to the Daily Office Podcast of the Anglican Church, and "thought for the day" as I wash the dishes and sweep the yard. I have adopted the Cistercian adage 'Work is prayer and prayer is work'. And also 'no task should be too menial', even cleaning the loo. I base this on one of Wesley's "12 Rules for a Helper, number 9."

Between prayer and musings, I imagined what God must see and experience with everything good or bad in the entire world? What must it be like to see all the killings, wars, deaths, rape, abuse, deceit in all their manifestations. The omnipresent, all-knowing God's heart must be breaking. The closest God gets to knowing what this feels like, is God's experience through the suffering of God's son who died a tortuous death by the hands of idiotic, cruel, manipulative, gaslighting leaders. All of this is done in the name of Religion—pseudo-religion.

How do we remedy all of this as a collective body of Jesus Christ?

Let's listen yet again to the prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of St. John where Jesus prays that they shall be one, The Christian Unity document underlines that the Church ecumenical aspires to "a vision reflected the conviction that Christian divisions contradicted the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21: 'That they may all be one.'"

In its history, the CUC's "commitment to unity represented an implicit rejection of apartheid ideology. By bringing together churches across racial boundaries, it offered an alternative vision of Christian community since 1968".

During the apartheid years it rattled the cages of the regime.

The document goes on to say, "With the end of apartheid, churches faced new challenges:

- Nation-building and reconciliation
- Economic inequality
- HIV/AIDS
- Poverty and unemployment
- Violence and social fragmentation"

"The CUC increasingly understood unity not only as an internal ecclesial concern but also as a basis for common witness and service in a changing society."

The work of the Church Unity Commission is therefore unfinished. Its continuing task is to remind the churches that unity is not an optional aspiration but a gospel imperative."

Having read and heard about these aspirations often enough, when the document was read again at the recent CUC consultation (at Marianhill Monastery in eThekweni on 22–24 July '26), this insight below was for me louder than the rest of the document:

"Unity has already been given in Christ. What we are trying to do is to discover what this unity means and how we could embody it in the life of our churches together. We cannot unite the churches, what we can do is to discover our unity in the most practical way we can." (This is attributed to Prof John de Gruchy.)

We need to discover our unity in practical ways, by reading the signs of the times. The Kairos moment for us now is to add to the list of challenges.

I would add the scourge of gender-based-violence both directly and indirectly.

The murder and disdain we have for our human companions who happen to be of a different sexual orientation but add beauty and fulfilment toward our unity as humans.

For heaven's sake, I often wonder why we hate our children so much. We beat our little ones, rape our little ones, we kidnap the little ones for child labour, and the list goes on (a subject for another time).

By doing nothing, are we not complicit to this hatred?

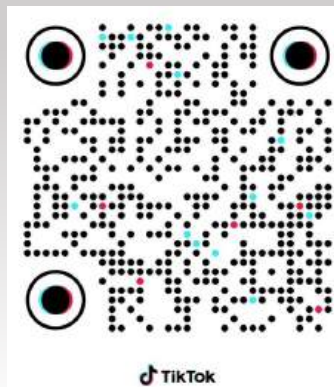
We destroy, dominate, and exploit everything that is nature. We do this at our peril. The push back by our eco-companion is ongoing. The fires, the earthquakes, the floods, and the cyclones are indicators. We don't need to save the planet, we need to save ourselves. Nature will heal itself, we, on the other hand, will be annihilated. To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Also, the advent of the dominance of Artificial Intelligence needs a Church response and guidance.

"We are already united in Christ, now we need to express our unity by becoming one in mind for justice for all."

"When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.'" — Mark 10:14

CONNECT
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BEFORE THEY HAD NAMES

—By Rev. Charity Tozivepi-Nzegwu

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



Beloved, I have been reading and reflecting on Genesis 25:19–34, the story of the birth of Esau and Jacob, and the day Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of stew.

What caught me first was the way this chapter announces itself. “These are the descendants (toledot) of Isaac, Abraham’s son,” a formula that elsewhere in Genesis promises a genealogy centred on the named man, yet just as often opens onto someone else’s story entirely. The toledot of Terah becomes Abraham’s story in chapter 11.

Here, within three verses, the frame cannot hold either. The story leaves Isaac behind and goes into Rebekah’s body, her barrenness, her pain, her question, her inquiry. The text sets out to trace a father’s line and hands the theological action to a woman instead.

Of course, the heading still names Isaac. Rebekah’s prominence is not freedom from the structure, it is significance within it.

Her barrenness would not let me go, either. It is part of a recurring pattern in scripture: Sarah, Rachel, and later Hannah. Again and again, the woman whose child will matter to the larger story is first made to carry the burden of delay, shame, and expectation in her own body. Isaac’s prayer “for his wife” is a single brief clause; everything that follows dwells at length on what Rebekah herself experiences.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye has shown how many African women carry this burden, how fertility becomes the price of belonging, and barrenness becomes a public verdict on a woman’s worth long before it is ever her private grief to hold. That verdict is still being handed down today, wherever a woman is made to feel provisional until she produces something, a child, a promotion, a visible “usefulness”, before she is allowed to simply be.

Then Rebekah conceives, and the waiting does not end gently. It turns into a pregnancy so violent within her that she cries out, “If it is to be this way, why do I live?” She did not wait for Isaac to inquire on her behalf. The text does not make her access to God dependent on a male intermediary.

The Hebrew verb there, *darash*, “to inquire, to seek out,” is often used for seeking God, including through recognised prophetic means. The oracle she receives is formal poetic speech, the kind often associated with patriarchal promise and destiny. The form of address elevates her, even where the household around her never fully catches up.

Isaac, and later, Jacob, remain the ones who bless and are blessed. I wonder how many of our own churches still ask women to bring their preaching, their word from God, through a man first, when this text gives Rebekah no such requirement.

This led me to reflect on the love that followed in that household, how Isaac loved Esau “because he was fond of game.” A love with a condition stitched into it. I thought of how many of us grew up learning to be useful enough to be kept, performing for a love that should never have needed a reason.

There is something else here, too, quieter but just as real. “Chinoziva ivhu kuti mwana wembeva anorwara,” only the soil knows when the baby mouse is unwell. The struggle in her womb was real before it was named, before Isaac knew, before the boys themselves could know. It was known only to her body and to God, the way so much of women’s pain is carried long before anyone else is willing to name it, believe it, or call it real.

The stew troubles me too, especially how the narrator seems to tilt the scales before either brother acts. Esau is named for his appearance, red and hairy. His request for “that red stuff,” doubled for emphasis in the Hebrew, is tied directly to his other name, *Edom*. He is characterised by appetite before he is characterised by any decision. Jacob is called *ish tam*, a word whose range stretches from “simple, quiet” to “blameless.”

Esau comes in from the field, hollowed out, saying the words of a desperate man, “I am about to die.” Jacob does not simply feed his brother. He asks for an oath first, while Esau is weakest. The chapter’s closing verdict, “thus Esau despised his birthright,” is the narrator’s own judgment, which is why Hebrews 12:16 can call him profane with the text behind him.

That verdict falls only on Esau; the text supplies no equivalent verdict against Jacob. Delores Williams has taught us to notice the moral danger in survival being romanticised by those who are not the ones paying the price.

Esau is judged for despising what was sacred, and Jacob is left unremarked upon, not praised, for how he obtained it. This is still one of the oldest patterns of power: calling it a fair agreement when the hungry had no room to refuse.

And beneath all of it sits a struggle the brothers did not choose; they were fighting before they had names. Later generations would read this oracle as settling something between nations, Jacob and Edom, Israel and its neighbour, “Jacob I loved, Esau I hated,” as Malachi would later put it.

I do not want to flatten that. The national memory matters. But it is not all the story is carrying. Something is being said here about what is spoken over us before we have done anything at all.

God speaks before either boy can perform, bargain, grasp, or fail. But divine speech does not excuse human harm. What is given before us still has to be handled among us.



MANDELA, NOMZAMO WINNIE: Mother of the African Nation

— By Prof. Rev. Simangaliso Kumalo



All what we fought for is not what is going on right now. It is a tragedy that he lived and saw what was happening; we cannot pretend like South Africa is not in crisis. Our country is in crisis and anyone who cannot see that is just bluffing themselves.

A process of harassment marked Winnie Mandela's extraordinary life and by constant separations from those she loved. Paradoxically, her Xhosa name, Nomzamo, means 'trial.' She was tried in her entire life, which dovetailed political and domestic affairs. She was born on 26 September 1936 in Bizana, Transkei, now known as part of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. She was one of eight siblings of whom only three are still living: these are sisters Nobantu Mniki, who works as a teacher, and Nonyaniso Khumalo, who is a homemaker. Her brother, Msuthu Madikizela, is a bank manager in Bizana. Her mother, Nomathamsanqa Mzaidume, taught Home Economics (Domestic Science) at a local school. Winnie's mother "died when Winnie was only eight years old". Her father worked in the Forestry and Agriculture Department of the Transkei government.



Winnie attended primary school in Bizana and completed her high school in Shawbury, a Methodist School in the Transkei. She received a diploma in social work at the Jan Hofmeyer School in Johannesburg, Gauteng. Winnie completed a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in International Relations, at the University of Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg. It was hard for a black person, let alone a woman, to obtain a college degree in those days. In college, Winnie excelled and became one of the first black social workers in the country. Winnie's family was considered affluent compared to most black families in South Africa of that time. She was unaware of the inequality that was so rampant among South Africans. It was only when she worked at the Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto as a social worker that she became acutely aware of the huge disparities between the privileged white minority and the marginalised black majority. She said:

It was while working as the first black medical social worker at Baragwanath Hospital that I started to become politicised. I started to realise the abject poverty under which most people were forced to live, the appalling conditions created by inequalities of the system. Above all, I became politically conscious through research I carried out in Alexandra Township to establish the rate of infantile mortality - it was 10 deaths in every 1,000 births.

Winnie Mandela's involvement in the South African liberation struggle "dates to the '50s. Her first detention was in 1958, and coincided with the mass arrests of women involved in the anti-pass campaign."

At the time, she was chairperson of the Orlando West branch of both the ANC and the ANCWL. In 1962, she received her first banning order, which restricted her to Soweto.

Winnie's marriage to a young lawyer named Nelson Mandela bore her two daughters, Zinzi and Zenani Mandela. Even in the early years of their marriage, she had to learn to survive on her own, as Mandela toured different townships, passing on the anti-apartheid message. After his arrest and imprisonment in 1962, she was banned; this meant that she became a prisoner within Soweto, the largest township in South Africa. Winnie ignored the ban and visited her husband, Nelson, in prison in Cape Town in 1967. This resulted in her being imprisoned for a month because she violated the banning order. Thereafter, Winnie's name became synonymous with jail. In 1969, she became one of the first detainees under Section 6 of the notorious Terrorism Act. She was detained for 18 months in solitary confinement in the condemned cell at Pretoria Central before being charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. The famous "Trial of 22" took place in 1970. After initially being found guilty, Winnie Mandela and the other accused were discharged on appeal.

Winnie spent until September 1975 in prison in Kroonstad, along with her good friend Dorothy Nyembe. At the time of her release, she was on the last National Executive Committee of the original ANC Women's League, along with other legends of the women's struggle like Lilian Ngoyi, Florence Matomela and Frances Baard. It was not long before the Women's League was banned as well. This did not deter Winnie and her female comrades, and they continued their advocacy for democracy by working through the Federation of South African Women. In 1976, following her activities during the school uprising, she again served six months at "Number 4" prison, commonly known as "the fort." On May 16, 1977, she was internally exiled, taken directly from her prison cell, to Brandfort for nine years. Here her house was bombed twice, and she was once again arrested for defying her restriction order and returning to Johannesburg.

Winnie's reputation was put at risk by what many considered her careless pronouncements. The most noteworthy example is a popular statement, often quoted, that she made in a speech in Munsieville, Krugersdorp, on April 13, 1985, where she endorsed the practice of "necklacing" in the struggle to end apartheid. She said, "With our boxes of matches and our necklaces we shall liberate this country." Her reputation was further tarnished by her bodyguard's accusations.

The bodyguard, Jerry Richardson, claimed that Winnie Madikizela-Mandela ordered him to abduct and kill 14-year-old ANC activist, James Seipei, also known as Stompie Moeketsi, in January 1989.

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These accusations seemed to linger around like a cloud of bad omen. The accusations came between the supposed celebrations of the long-awaited release of her husband in 1990. In 1991, she was convicted of kidnapping and being an accessory to assault in connection with the death of Moeketsi. Her six-year jail sentence was reduced to a fine on appeal. Even after the demise of her marriage with Nelson Mandela in April 1992, Winnie remained popular among many ANC radicals. In April 1997, she was elected president of the ANC Women's League. She, however, withdrew her candidacy for ANC deputy president at the movement's Mafikeng conference in December 1997. In 1997, she appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Desmond Tutu, as chair of the Commission, recognised her importance in the anti-apartheid struggle, but also begged her to say sorry and to admit her mistakes. In a guarded response, she echoed his words, admitting that 'things went horribly wrong.'

Her Contributions and Legacy

Winnie Mandela's courage and leadership abilities triumphed over years of political harassment, severe personal pain, and a wave of media controversy to enable her to become the ANCWL's president. During the transition from apartheid to democracy, she adopted a far less conciliatory attitude than her husband toward the previously dominant white community. Unfortunately, their 38-year marriage ended in separation in April 1992 and a divorce in March 1996. Winnie then adopted the surname Madikizela-Mandela. Winnie will be remembered as a strong woman tried under difficult circumstances who still prevailed with above-average normality and expectations. Despite the fact that Nelson Mandela initiated their divorce, he for a fact admired Winnie's personality and courage. He felt, in particular, that Winnie was his friend as well as his wife. She was given no space by the South African racist government to be a normal person, to be a mother in a normal household. She was always detained, always arrested, so the normal family that anyone would expect was not going to be there. Madiba felt very guilty sometimes about his absence; guilty about the fact that he was not around to develop a family, as anyone would want to. He respected Winnie's independence; he actually admired her guts, her independence and tenacity to a certain degree. As an African Xhosa man, he still expected her to play the role of a loyal wife to him, as her husband. He spoke about her strength and the fact that she was the person that held the family together while he was away. Despite the many difficulties, she was able to keep a semblance of a family.

Winnie Mandela carried the South African black race woes on her shoulders all along. She was constantly at the frontline of the freedom fight. She suffered banishment and exile; she was incarcerated in various jails. She lost her private life and husband during apartheid and, as if that was not enough, she lost their marriage at the threshold of democracy. She never gave up championing for a better life for South Africans as much as she unwittingly retired from politics. She never lost the role of mother of the nation, even after her retirement from politics.

Winnie Mandela and the Methodist Church

Winnie Nomzamo Mandela was a Methodist from as early as her young life in Bizana. It is not surprising that her marriage with Nelson Mandela was held at the local Ludeke Methodist Church. There is no evidence of her attitude to and involvement with the church in the years when she was fighting in the struggle. She seemed to have been so engrossed with the struggle that she lost her passion for organised religion, even though she still acknowledged her

faith and membership in the Methodist Church. The Reverends Peter Storey and Jack Scholtz ministered to her even when she was banished to Brandfort on the basis that she was Methodist. Soon after that, she joined Central Methodist Mission (CMM) under the leadership of Bishop Peter Storey, who continued his pastoral ministry to her and her family. It must also be remembered that Peter Storey had been Mandela's chaplain whilst he was in Robben Island. In the early 1990s, with the changes in the political landscape in the country, she changed congregations, moving her membership from CMM to Meadowlands Methodist Church in Soweto. In the early 1990s she approached the leadership of Meadowlands Methodist Church and asked if she could take membership there. The Rev. Ike Moloabi remembers that:



In around 1994, I was approached by one of our stewards, who had had a conversation with a Mr Kubheka, who was Mrs Mandela's driver. He asked if we would welcome Mrs Mandela into the membership of the church. I responded in the affirmative.

A meeting was scheduled, and she came to see me at my study at the church. She shared with me that although she cherished her regular worship at Central Methodist Mission, she however missed the black church. She remembered her young days at Bizana, where she was a ribbon-girl. She even mentioned that her and Mandela's wedding had been conducted at Ludeke Methodist Church. She was seriously looking for a spiritual home and that must be Methodist. However, she wouldn't join the Orlando church, which is close to her home, simply because of the developments there. Of course, I was happy to welcome her to the church and we were happy that she took her membership very seriously. She then had a conversation with Mrs Moloabi, who was president of the Women's Manyano, about joining the organisation and getting robed in the red and white uniform. After being on trial for six months, as per the requirements of the organisation, she was robed. She continued coming to church, especially during the Easters, and made contributions to support the work of the church from then to the end of her life.

Mrs Mandela maintained her commitment to the church until April 2018, when she went to attend the Easter Services and died a few days later. Her Personal Assistant, Ms Zodwa Zwane (a lay preacher in the Methodist Church herself), noted that "She (Winnie) drew her strength to face the most brutal system from her faith." She said that:

Umama had her moments of doubt and struggles, but when she went to church, she longed for spiritual nourishment and replenishing of her resources to face the challenges of a woman leader in a patriarchal, political world. She longed for the pastors to preach fulfilling sermons and she liked singing the traditional songs like Hymn 278, Nkosi Sihlangane Kuyo Indlu Yakh Yiza Nawe Sesingene (Lord here we are meeting in your sanctuary come and join us as we meet before you.)

She raised eyebrows when she attended ANC Women's League Rallies clad in her red and white Manyano uniform. At the beginning this was seen as a strategic publicity stunt.

But these suspicions were not substantiated, because she continued to attend church quietly, wore her uniform, and contributed financially to the work of the church, and she did this privately. Her Personal Secretary, Zodwa, herself a local preacher in the Methodist Church, recalls:

Mama used to go to church when she was available. She liked going there more especially for Easter services to listen to the seven words. At times she was discouraged that the church seemed to be out of touch with the realities that were faced by people in the context of oppression and poverty. But she also understood the important role the church was playing by providing pastoral care to people. She had a very ambiguous relationship with the church, but she loved it, especially her uniform of the Women's Manyano. At times she would miss the pastoral support of the church and indeed when the ministers and bishops visited her to give her communion, she was really happy. She loved Bishop Gary Rivas and would always instruct me to call him when she needed to talk to the church or pastoral support from the church. He too loved and supported her.

It is not surprising that a few days before she died, Winnie had been in church participating in the Good Friday Service. She was in good spirits and came back from church hungry and wanted to buy something to eat. Two days later she died. Her funeral was like an annual convention of the Women's Manyano clad in their red and white uniforms. Methodist Bishops and leaders officiated in the service. Bishop Gary Rivas led the liturgy, her minister, Rev. Tawana, did the prayers and was walking alongside the family. The Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church, Rev. Zipho Siwa, delivered the homily. Like Nelson Mandela's funeral, Winnie Mandela's funeral was also conducted through the Christian rites laid down by the Methodist tradition. Winnie is an example of one who was nourished by the Church, but who in her own way nourished the story of the Church. She redeemed the Church from a narrative of complicity with the system of apartheid, as she received support from the church when fighting against the system. Her story of triumph and victory is not complete unless one tells of how she received the ministry of the Church and she then gave her life, sacrifice, and contributions to the Church.

NGWENDU'S PRAYER SERVICE INSPIRES COMRADES RUNNER

—By T.K. Sonjica

On the eve of the 2026 Comrades Marathon, Circuit-312 Superintendent, Rev. Madodonke Ngwendu, led a prayer service for Khangelani Halom, a 44-year-old long-distance runner, during a visit to the V GK Ntshinga Society in Zwelitsha, Qonce. Despite a hamstring injury that had not fully healed, Halom completed the gruelling race in 10:01:36.

Halom acknowledged that Rev. Ngwendu's prayer service played a significant role in inspiring him to make his second attempt at the Comrades Marathon.

"In my preparation for the Comrades Marathon, I sustained a hamstring injury a week after the Two Oceans Marathon during a training session in April, while the Comrades was scheduled for June," he explained. "I had to stop training, rest, and focus on recovery with the assistance of a physiotherapist."

His achievement was celebrated as a victory by his family, friends, fellow congregants at the Zwelitsha Central Mission Circuit 312, and his colleagues at Transnet in Gqeberha.

Halom added, "In May, I participated in the Sanlam Cape Town Marathon over 42 kilometres. I decided to take it easy because the injury had not fully healed, but I still managed to finish in 3 hours and 45 minutes."

He further explained that this year's Comrades Marathon was an up run from Durban to Pietermaritzburg,

featuring numerous challenging hills.

"Regardless of the difficulty, I managed to complete the race in just over 10 hours, improving on my previous performance," he said.

Looking ahead, Halom revealed that he is now focusing on league races.

"My hope is to qualify for next year's Master Marathon, a 42-kilometre race from Macleantown to East London along the N6, expected to take place around September 2026."

He also encouraged people to adopt healthier lifestyles.

"I encourage everyone to stay active and live a healthy lifestyle. As the saying goes, 'A healthy mind in a healthy body.' Young people must realise that sport can open doors to opportunities, financial success, and better lives. Adults should also keep their bodies active because regular exercise improves blood circulation and contributes to healthier body organs."

Halom was born in Tshatshu, where he attended both primary and secondary school. After completing high school in 2012, he left his village and moved to Gqeberha, where he currently works for Transnet Port Terminals as an Operations Supervisor. In 2025, he obtained a Diploma in Occupational Education, Training and Development from Khanyisela College in Gqeberha. He was raised by his single mother, Nosipho Halom, alongside his younger

sister, Khulula. His mother, the Tshatshu community, and congregants of the Tshatshu Society of the Zwelitsha Central Mission Circuit-312 have supported him throughout his athletics journey.

Halom developed an interest in sport from the age of 10, initially excelling in soccer and cricket.

"When I stopped playing soccer in 2017, I turned to running. I revived the running club at my workplace, but unfortunately the project had to be suspended when the COVID-19 pandemic brought sporting activities around the world to a halt," he said.

Following the pandemic, he revived running among his colleagues, friends, and church members in Gqeberha in 2023. He was later elected chairperson of the Nelson Mandela Bay Region for Transnet runners.

Reflecting on his journey, Halom said running has become a lifelong passion.

"I now regard running as part of my life because it has no age limit, and the competition is healthy and inspiring. When I became passionate about the sport, I dreamed of participating in South Africa's major races. So far, I have completed three Two Oceans Marathons, two Sanlam Cape Town Marathons, and two Comrades Marathons."

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Halom's determination in overcoming injury to complete one of the world's toughest ultramarathons stands as a testament to perseverance, faith, and

disciplined preparation. His story continues to inspire his family, colleagues, church community, and aspiring athletes alike.



ABOVE: Khangelani Halom and members of his family and the Tshatshu Society Steward, Dennis Krawe (on the right). Rev. Madodonke Ngwendu is in the background.

LEFT: Rev. Madodonke Ngwendu praying for Khangelani Halom during a prayer service at the VGK Ntshinga Society in Zwelitsha, Qonce.



Khangelani Halom pounding with his feet the N3 Route between Pietermaritzburg and Durban during this year's Comrades Marathon

RELOCATED AND REPOSITIONED FOR GOD'S CREATION: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DESK CONTINUES TO TURN THE DISTRICT GREEN

—By Mr. Tebogo Oepeng

The Environmental Justice Desk (EJD), a collaborative ministry of the Connexional Mission Unit and Ecumenism, continues to demonstrate that caring for God's creation is an essential part of Christian mission.

During a successful three-day Wesley Guild Mission Weekend hosted by the Nomzamo Society in the Aliwal North Circuit, ministers, members and young people came together in a practical expression of faith by distributing and planting thirty (30) indigenous *Searsia lancea* (Karee) trees.

The Karee is an evergreen indigenous South African tree renowned for its resilience against frost and drought. Growing up to eight metres in height with a broad canopy, it symbolises endurance, resilience and hope—qualities that reflect the Christian calling to remain steadfast in God's mission.

The Environmental Justice Desk forms part of a broader partnership between the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and its ecumenical partners. In the true spirit of Christian unity, the District President of the Wesley Guild, Rev. Bulelani Majija, intentionally invited neighbouring denominations to participate. The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) Youth from Kganyeng joined the environmental mission, and Rev. Majija further donated indigenous trees to them for planting at their own church, demonstrating that caring for creation knows no denominational boundaries.

Expressing her appreciation, Ms. Asanda Bhayibhayi, representing the URCSA Youth of Kganyeng, said they were deeply encouraged by the opportunity to connect and work alongside young people from another denomination. She described the initiative as a meaningful expression of Christian unity, adding that caring for God's creation brings believers together in a shared mission that transcends denominational boundaries.

Since its launch in March 2026, the Environmental Justice Desk has distributed and planted a remarkable total of 179 indigenous trees across the District, including *Combretum*

erythrophyllum (River Bushwillow), *Olea africana* (Wild Olive) and *Searsia lancea* (Karee). Each tree planted stands as a living testimony of the Church's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable ministry.

One of the most inspiring moments of the mission was that participants did more than simply plant trees. Before each tree was planted, they offered prayers, spoke words of blessing and even gave each tree a name. Young people embraced this symbolic act with great enthusiasm, recognising that every tree represents life, hope and future generations. It reminded everyone that they were not merely planting trees—they were planting faith, responsibility and a greener future.

This initiative beautifully embodies the Presiding Bishop's theme:

"Relocated and Repositioned for Mission and Ministry: The Other Side Awaits."

Indeed, the Church is relocating from words to action and repositioning itself as a faithful steward of God's creation. The "other side" is a greener, healthier and more sustainable future where faith is demonstrated through practical care for people, communities and the environment.

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Bro. Itumeleng Tihobelo (Health, HIV-AIDS, and MASA Desk), Rev. Bulelani Majija (District President, Wesley Guild), and Bro. Tebogo Oepeng (District Champion, Environmental Justice Desk).

As Scripture reminds us:

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Genesis 2:15)

And again,

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

The Environmental Justice Desk continues to proclaim that caring for creation is not an optional activity—it is a sacred calling entrusted to every believer. Every tree planted today is a testimony of hope for tomorrow, a gift to future generations and a living reminder that God's people are indeed relocated and repositioned for mission on the other side.



Bro. Bantu Kondla (MCYU District Coordinator) and Rev. Morailane Majoe (Aliwal North Circuit).

CHRISTIAN VOTING TRANSFORMS SOCIETY FOR THE BETTER

— By Bishop Dr William Leleki
(Chairperson, SACC Metro)

Committed Christians do not cast their ballots based on manifestos, political rhetoric, and baseless false promises by political parties. We vote because God has called us to participate in making sure that God's people live according to the will of God.

When we vote, we demonstrate our understanding of the words of Jesus Christ when he taught us the Lord's prayer, *"may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matt. 6:10). This part of the prayer allows us to offer ourselves as doers of God's will, asking God to guide, lead, and give us the means to accomplish God's will and purpose.

When we vote as Christians, we wholeheartedly express our complete obedience to God's will and purpose. If voting is about the purpose of God, it is then given that we cannot vote for those who don't want to strengthen their relationship with God. Leaders who want to be voted in by Christians must demonstrate their willingness to serve God by occupying the leadership positions. If being in the leadership and government offices is about serving God's people to the satisfaction of God, we can never talk about corruption and selfish enrichment.

Voting is part of our civic responsibility as Christians, because we have understood the meaning of the question put to Jesus Christ; *"and who is my neighbour?"*

Not participating in the voting process is a demonstration of lack of love and it is often easy to justify, even though it is never right. Our neighbour is anyone in need and that means a neighbour cannot be a wealthy person living next-door to you. Your neighbour is someone

who finds him/herself in abject poverty, someone who is unemployed, someone who is homeless, landless, someone who cannot access education, someone who believes voting you into power will be helping you to improve his/her living conditions.

Those who would be canvassing for our votes must stop asking us questions about our needs, because they should know them by now. They have been asking us about our needs for the past 30 years and we are tired of false, empty promises.

Godly votes are able to influence those in power to govern fearing God and respecting the people of God. The Bible tells us about the freedom we have obtained in Christ. The freedom we claim to enjoy in South Africa is through pain, suffering, and tears of many Christians believing we will vote guided by Christian principles.

We can no longer trust politicians to bring about meaningful change on their own. The freedom we must vote for is Christ-led freedom. We must vote to have a say in the way we are governed in this country. We can no longer outsource our freedom to those who shout political rhetoric loudest. Freedom leaders are those who stand up to be the voice of the voiceless and downtrodden.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" – Galatians 5:1.

We must stand up against those who would enslave us with evil rules, pathetic methods, and oppressive constitutions. Voting is a civic responsibility given to us by God to create a conducive political environment



where stewardship is exercised to reflect the will of God. All of us are given responsibility to elect leaders to lead and govern us, and the process of electing those whom God has called to lead cannot be done outside the existence of God.

The process of electing authentic leaders must be approached with God-given wisdom and discernment. Basic guiding principles in electing authentic leaders are based on the following:

- Leaders who care for the poor with an open mind to empower them to transform their lives for the better; not those who see them as objects to be exploited for their own selfish enrichment.
- Leaders who spend sleepless nights fighting for justice and harmony; and
- Leaders who work hard for peace and stability in their communities.

We must vote for those who understand the wise words of our Lord Jesus Christ, where he says, *"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me"* – Mark 8:34.

Jesus used the image of carrying a cross to illustrate the ultimate submission required of those who want to lead God's people. We hear Jesus talking about the heroic effort needed to lead people of God moment by moment.

We must recognise that our vote is a stewardship responsibility given to us by God and it cannot be outsourced to corrupt and self-enriching politicians. Authentic leaders must be those from the communities elected by the people, not by fellow politicians.

CONNEXIONAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH UNIT CONFERENCE '26 STRATEGIC DIRECTION REPORT

— By The Strategic Direction Committee

Relocated And Repositioned For Mission And Ministry; The Other Side Awaits

There are moments when the Church gathers not simply to meet, but to discern. Moments when heaven interrupts our agendas and asks us uncomfortable questions. This Connexional Methodist Children and Youth Unit Conference has become one such sacred moment. Under the Conference sub-theme, "Embracing and Living Out Christ's Radical Compassion in Action", we gathered in Bloemfontein not merely to attend another conference but to ask ourselves what kind of Church Christ is calling us to become.

Our hosts, the Mokala-Montle District, welcomed us with warmth that reflected the richness of God's Kingdom. A District stretching across 4 provinces, worshipping in 5 languages, and singing from 5 hymn books reminded us that diversity has never been a barrier to God's mission. The Church has always spoken with many voices, yet proclaimed one Gospel.

Before any words were spoken, our clothing had already begun preaching. Clothed in 'Thursday in Black', we stood with those whose lives continue to be scarred by Gender-Based-Violence. In a world where violence has become ordinary and human dignity is too easily violated, we confessed that Christ's compassion cannot remain silent. Radical compassion mourns with those who mourn, stands where others walk away, and refuses to normalise injustice. Yet the challenge before us reached even deeper:

What kind of communities are we becoming?

Are we communities that merely gather, or communities that heal? Are we churches that entertain, or churches that transform?

Are our pulpits producing disciples, or simply spectators?

Perhaps the most searching question of the day was not directed at the world but at the Church itself; Have we forgotten our first love? For the Church was never called to become familiar spaces while communities wait to encounter Christ. The altar prepares us, but the town square reveals whether we have truly met Jesus.

For the other side does not wait for polished programmes or impressive titles. It waits for disciples. Disciples whose worship continues after the benediction. Disciples whose faith is measured by their willingness to see, to listen, to touch, and to restore.

As young people, we were challenged to recover this gift of seeing. To look beyond appearances. To look beyond disagreements. To look beyond titles and positions, and recognise the image of God in one another.

If compassion teaches us to see, then it also teaches us to remember. Fifty years have passed since the uprising of June 16, yet history continues to ask uncomfortable questions. Have we truly become free, or have the faces of injustice merely changed? Have we inherited the courage of those who came before us without embracing the responsibility they carried? Have we remembered the sacrifice while forgetting the assignment? We were reminded that the legacy of June 16 cannot remain confined to history books or annual commemorations. Its spirit compels every generation to confront every form of injustice that continues to rob people of their dignity. Justice is not seasonal, and Christ's compassion is never selective.

As the MCSA Youth, we were challenged not to become silent observers of the realities confronting our nation. Instead, we have gathered to discern holy direction, to seek where God is leading his Church, and to discover how we, as young people, might become catalysts of hope within our communities. Radical compassion calls us to leave comfortable spaces, to walk alongside those whose burdens are often ignored, and to become a church that goes where others hesitate to go. It embraces the rejected, feeds the hungry, clothes the poor, and restores the dignity of those whose humanity has been overlooked.

The Conference also invited us into courageous theological reflection. As we considered the growing realities surrounding illegal immigration in South Africa, we were reminded that this is not merely a South African concern but one that affects our continent. As the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, we are called to think beyond national borders and remember that we remain one Church, united in Christ despite our different contexts and perspectives. Unity, however, does not require uniformity. It calls us to engage one another with humility, grace, and theological integrity. Rather than allowing public opinion to determine our witness, we were encouraged to wrestle faithfully with our theological response, ensuring that our voice reflects both truth and Christ's radical compassion.

Our reflection on God's unfolding mission continued as we celebrated 50 years of the ordination of women within our Connexion. This milestone was more than a remembrance of history, it was a testimony to God's faithfulness in breaking barriers and calling his people into new possibilities. It reminded us that when God calls, age, gender, and human limitations cannot silence his purpose. As we honour those who paved the way, we are challenged to continue breaking barriers, remain steadfast in our calling, and hold fast to the mission that God has entrusted to us, no matter how loud the voices of criticism may become. For the Church that embraces Christ's radical compassion is not shaped by the noise of the world, but by the voice of the one who continues to call his people beyond the familiar, towards the other side that still awaits.

Can the courage of the unnamed inspire our revolt against the systems that seek to dehumanise, for indeed "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's food". What happens when compassion meets justice on the dance floor? What happens when mercy is the name of the song playing and love is the melody? What happens when young Methodist people declare that we will be the embodiment of this radical compassion of God that interrupts the procession of death? We shall see God's people.

We shall honour the God in them. Their story, our story, God's story will not fall by the wayside. And so, do not lose a word, do not drop a syllable, do not betray our pain, do not speak of our joy as an afterthought. Pick up our story and journey on—tell it like it should be told, tell them that Africa's hills are still green, and so are her wounds.

Yet the radical compassion of God calls, redirects, restores, and transforms. God's compassion "*e phatsima jaaka tsatsi*" for the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. That is our radical compassion that commits to stand boldly in the town square of injustice and proclaim to the darkness, *uYesu uyakhanya!*

“OH, SING TO THE LORD A NEW SONG! FOR HE HAS DONE MARVELOUS THINGS.” – PSALM 98

A Music Holiday Club for Children and Youth

Westvaal Circuit 1004, at the invitation of the superintendent and General President of the Music Association, Rev. Tolashe, hosted the first Music Holiday Week from 6–12 July, 2026, which was facilitated by Ms Annekathrin Buchold of the Mission Unit. The Circuit was thus also responding to the MCYU's call for the expansion of Holiday Clubs into townships and rural communities.

A 'Holiday Week' is a missionary task that is not just about getting children off the streets, but about supporting them holistically. Furthermore, it creates spaces for integrity and bridges divides between cultures, languages, organisations, and societies towards an inclusive community. Music is one of the best ways to experience a sense of belonging, deepen spirituality and faith, broaden one's perception of oneself and others, enable self-development, boost self-esteem, and reach out to marginalised people. Furthermore, the concept addresses the unequal access to musical education.

At the St Timothy Society in Sebokeng, 42 children and a further 10 young people from all the Societies gathered for this purpose. The daily devotions and small-group sessions centred on Psalm 98, under the focus: “Rejoice, Obey, Acclaim, Remember – ROAR”, with time set aside for reflection, creative activities, and prayer in 5 small groups. Each day featured a musical session accordingly: singing (Melody), Listening (Harmony), Rhythm (Body Percussion), Dynamics (Dancing, Movements), and finally a combination of all. Alongside being active, it was important to reflect on breaks, our breathing, and relaxation. All of these are musical essentials, yet they ultimately affect our whole life and wellbeing.

It was wonderful to see how the children and young people grew into a community over the course of the week, how they gained self-confidence and a sense of belonging, how they moved from a shared melody to harmony, and how they

developed an awareness of rhythm and dynamics.

The highlight of the week was the closing service on Sunday morning. This was entirely in the hands of the children and youth and was based on Psalm 98. We were very grateful to the Circuit leadership for giving them space, for allowing them to minister to us, for opening our eyes and hearts, and for challenging us.

This week would not have been possible without the engagement of many people of the whole Circuit. We would particularly like to thank the responsible and dedicated CM Superintendent, Ms Modiehi Mofokeng, and her team of CMP's and Wesley Guilders. Furthermore, we are grateful for the help in the kitchen from all the Societies; the stewards who helped transport the children; the CMP's awareness and care regarding registration and ensuring compliance with childcare policies; and last but not least, Rev. Nene for her presence and support.

Children are the responsibility of the whole church, not just one organisation. And so, such a comprehensive week can only be managed through collaboration with all organisations and congregations. In future, there is scope for even closer cooperation and more intensive preparation by all organisations within the Circuit, particularly the MCYU, the Music Association, and the Mission Unit. One aspiration remains: that Music and Holiday Weeks could also serve as bridges to the English-speaking and non-Black communities and include various musicians from the Circuit.

The concept was developed as a pilot programme for the MCSA and, following evaluation, will be rolled out to all Districts.

NB: Permission was sought and given to publish the pictures of the children.



THE CHURCH UNITY COMMISSION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: A History of Ecumenical Commitment, 1968–Present

The quest for Christian unity has been a defining feature of the modern ecumenical movement. In Southern Africa, few initiatives have embodied this commitment more consistently than the Church Unity Commission (CUC). Founded in 1968 during one of the most turbulent periods in South African history, the CUC emerged as an ambitious attempt to overcome denominational divisions and witness to the unity of the church in the midst of apartheid, political conflict, and profound social change.

Over nearly six decades, the Commission has evolved from an organisation seeking the organic union of participating churches into a broader instrument of visible unity, common witness, and practical cooperation. Although the original goal of a single united church has not yet been realised, the CUC has significantly shaped ecumenical relationships among churches in Southern Africa and has fostered concrete expressions of unity through shared ministry, reciprocal communion, and local united congregations.

The story of the Church Unity Commission is therefore one of both remarkable achievement and continuing challenge. It reflects the complexity of pursuing Christian unity across differences of theology, ecclesiology, culture, race, and historical experience.

Origins and Context: South Africa in the 1960s

The Church Unity Commission was established in 1968 against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa. The country was deeply divided by laws that enforced racial segregation and entrenched inequality. Churches themselves were often fragmented along racial, linguistic, and denominational lines.

The 1960s also witnessed the growth of the global ecumenical movement. The formation of the World Council of Churches and the influence of the Second Vatican Council encouraged churches worldwide to seek greater unity and cooperation. In South Africa, many Christian leaders recognised that the visible disunity of the church undermined its witness against injustice and weakened its proclamation of the gospel. (Duncan and Egan 2019)



While the South African Council of Churches concentrated primarily on social witness and opposition to apartheid, a number of denominations sought a more ambitious goal: structural or organic union. The CUC emerged as the institutional expression of this aspiration. (Duncan and Egan 2019)

The initiative began with informal discussions among church leaders in 1967. These conversations recognised that churches sharing similar theological traditions and historical roots might move beyond cooperation toward genuine ecclesial unity. The resulting Commission was formally constituted in 1968. (Duncan and Egan 2019)

Founding Member Churches

The founding churches represented a significant cross-section of the English-speaking Protestant tradition in Southern Africa. They included:

- The Church of the Province of Southern Africa (now the Anglican Church of Southern Africa)
- The Methodist Church of Southern Africa
- The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa
- The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
- The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
- The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa.

These churches reflected both European missionary traditions and African Christian communities. Significantly, the inclusion of black-majority churches alongside historically white denominations represented a deliberate challenge to apartheid's racial divisions. (Duncan 2011)

Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches participated initially as observers rather than full members. (Duncan and Egan 2019)

The founding vision of the Commission was explicit and ambitious: to seek

organic union among participating churches and thereby establish a visible expression of Christian unity in Southern Africa.

Early Vision and the Search for Organic Union

The concept of organic union was central to the CUC's early work. Unlike looser forms of ecumenical cooperation, organic union envisaged the creation of a single church structure with a shared ministry, common governance, and unified worship.

This vision reflected the conviction that Christian divisions contradicted the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21: "That they may all be one."

During its initial years, the Commission focused on developing theological foundations for union. Working groups explored questions relating to:

- The nature of the church
- Ministry and ordination
- Sacraments
- Church governance
- Worship and liturgy
- Mission and social witness.

Theological discussions proceeded with considerable optimism. In 1970, the Commission proposed a Declaration of Intention to Seek Union, which was subsequently adopted by all participating churches. This declaration became a foundational document for the movement. (see www.churchunitycommission.org)

The declaration committed member churches to three important objectives:

1. To seek agreement on a common ministry of Word and Sacraments.
2. To admit members of all participating churches to the Lord's Table.
3. To increase cooperation in all areas of church life and mission. The adoption of reciprocal communion represented a major ecumenical breakthrough. Christians from member churches could now receive Holy Communion in one

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another's congregations as a visible sign of their shared faith and commitment to unity. On 24 November 1974, churches celebrated Services of Commitment to the Search for Union, publicly affirming their shared vision.

Challenges of Ministry and Church Polity

Despite early enthusiasm, the CUC soon encountered substantial obstacles.

The most persistent challenge concerned differing understandings of ministry and church governance.

Five member churches operated within conciliar or presbyterial systems of governance, while the Anglican Church maintained an episcopal structure centred on the historic office of bishop. These differences were not merely administrative; they reflected deeply rooted theological convictions regarding authority, apostolic succession, and the nature of ordained ministry. (Duncan 2011)

Key questions emerged:

- Could ministries be mutually recognised?
- Was episcopal ordination necessary for church unity?
- How could different patterns of oversight coexist within a united church?
- Could apostolic succession be understood in ways acceptable to all traditions?

These discussions proved complex and often contentious.

By 1972, the Commission had developed a proposed Basis and Plan of Union, but consensus remained elusive. While substantial agreement existed on many doctrinal issues, the question of ministry repeatedly delayed progress. (Duncan 2011)

The challenge was not unique to Southern Africa. Similar ecumenical initiatives worldwide struggled with reconciling episcopal and non-episcopal traditions.

The Impact of Apartheid

The political context of apartheid profoundly shaped the work of the Church Unity Commission.

On one hand, apartheid intensified the urgency of church unity. Christian leaders increasingly recognised that racial segregation within the church contradicted the gospel's message of reconciliation.

On the other hand, apartheid complicated ecumenical efforts. Member churches occupied different social locations and held varying perspectives on political engagement.

The CUC's commitment to unity represented an implicit rejection of apartheid ideology. By bringing together churches across racial boundaries, it offered an alternative vision of Christian community.

However, the Commission generally focused more on ecclesial unity than on direct political activism. In this respect, it complemented rather than duplicated the work of the South African Council of Churches, which became a leading voice in the struggle against apartheid. (Duncan and Egan 2019)

The Commission's work nevertheless contributed significantly to the broader ecumenical resistance to apartheid by demonstrating that racial divisions within the church were neither inevitable nor acceptable.

From Structural Union to Visible Unity

By the mid-1970s, it became increasingly clear that immediate organic union was unlikely.

A significant turning point came with the 1975 consultation on "Spirituality and Union." Participants concluded that church unity could not be imposed through institutional structures alone but must emerge from deeper relationships of fellowship and shared spiritual life.

The consultation affirmed that "the unity of the Church must be the product of renewal of fellowship within the Churches and not the result of a superimposed unified structure."

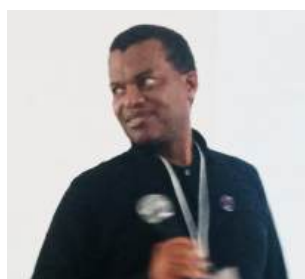
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The 2026 Church Unity Commission meeting had 63 participants who included members and observers from various church traditions.



Rev. Heidi Pieterse leading our final inspiring devotions: Reflection and challenge from the Hymn "who will save our land and people".

Rev. Pieterse reminded us of our inhospitality to our brother and sisters from other parts of Africa. Christ calls us to offer hospitality to others, especially the stranger. "Thy Kingdom come—in Africa."



ABOVE: MCSA delegates and SMMS students.

LEFT: Rev. Sikawu, CUC General Secretary/MCSA Director of Ecumenical Affairs, steered the CUC ship until we got to the other side.

This insight led the Commission to adopt a more gradual and relational approach.

Rather than focusing exclusively on structural merger, the CUC began pursuing interim goals that could deepen practical unity, including:

- Shared worship
- Joint mission projects
- Mutual recognition of ministry
- Ecumenical education
- Common theological reflection
- Cooperation in social outreach

This shift marked a significant evolution in the Commission's understanding of unity.

New Developments in the 1980s and 1990s

The later decades of the twentieth century brought significant changes both within member churches and in the wider ecumenical landscape.

One important development was the formation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa in 1999 through the union of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa and the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa. This merger demonstrated that the CUC's vision of organic unity could be realised, at least among some participating churches. (Duncan 2025)

The transition to democracy in South Africa after 1994 also transformed the context of ecumenical engagement.

With the end of apartheid, churches faced new challenges:

- Nation-building and reconciliation
- Economic inequality
- HIV/AIDS
- Poverty and unemployment
- Violence and social fragmentation

The CUC increasingly understood unity not only as an internal ecclesial concern but also as a basis for common witness and service in a changing society.

The Emergence of United Congregations

One of the most practical and enduring achievements of the Church Unity Commission has been the development of local united congregations.

These congregations bring together members from different denominational traditions within a single worshipping community while maintaining links to their parent churches.

United congregations embody the Commission's commitment to visible unity at the grassroots level. They provide practical demonstrations of cooperation across historical divisions and allow local communities to experience unity in worship, mission, and fellowship.

Several united congregations now exist across Southern Africa, providing living examples of ecumenism in action.

These congregations have shown that local expressions of unity can often advance more quickly than national structures.

Expansion of Membership

Over time, the membership of the Commission has expanded beyond its original composition.

Today, member churches include:

- The Anglican Church of Southern Africa
- The Methodist Church of Southern Africa
- The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
- The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
- The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa
- The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church)
- The Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa.

Several other denominations participate as observer churches.

The admission of the Dutch Reformed Church as a full member in 2018 represented a particularly significant milestone, given the denomination's historical association with apartheid. Its inclusion signalled both the Commission's commitment to reconciliation and the continuing evolution of South African ecumenism. (Kerkbode 2018).

An addition, the admission of the NELC in 2023 shows an on-going commitment to the expansion of the Commission and a commitment to encourage observer Churches to become full participating members of the Commission.

The Five Trajectories Framework

In 2011, the Central Committee adopted a new framework for the Commission's work, focusing on five trajectories. This decision reflected a recognition that ecumenical engagement needed to address contemporary realities while remaining faithful to the original vision of unity.

Although the precise emphases have evolved over time, these trajectories generally include:

- Deepening theological dialogue
- Strengthening common witness
- Encouraging practical cooperation
- Promoting shared ministry
- Developing local expressions of unity

The framework has enabled the Commission to move beyond a singular focus on structural union and embrace a more comprehensive understanding of ecclesial communion.

Contemporary Challenges

The Church Unity Commission continues to face significant challenges.

Theological differences remain concerning:

- Ordination and ministry
- The role of bishops
- Human sexuality
- Gender and leadership
- Ecclesial authority
- Liturgical practices

At the same time, broader societal changes have affected ecumenical engagement.

Declining church membership in some denominations, growing secularisation, the rise of independent churches, and shifting patterns of religious affiliation have altered the ecumenical landscape.

Financial constraints and limited institutional capacity also affect the Commission's work.

Nevertheless, the CUC remains committed to fostering relationships among churches and maintaining the search for visible unity.

Achievements and Legacy

Despite not achieving its original goal of a single united church, the Church Unity Commission has made substantial contributions to Southern African Christianity.

Its achievements include:

- Establishing reciprocal communion among member churches.
- Building enduring relationships across denominational boundaries.
- Encouraging cooperation in mission and ministry.
- Supporting the formation of united congregations.
- Contributing to the creation of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

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- Providing a platform for theological dialogue.
- Offering a visible witness against racial division.
- Promoting reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Perhaps the Commission's greatest achievement has been its demonstration that unity is not merely an abstract ideal but a practical and ongoing process.

The CUC has helped churches move from competition to cooperation and from isolation to partnership.

Conclusion

The history of the Church Unity Commission is a story of faithfulness, perseverance, and hope.

Founded in 1968 amid the divisions of apartheid South Africa, the Commission sought to embody Christ's prayer that his followers might be one. While the ambitious goal of organic union has not yet been fully realised, the CUC has profoundly influenced the ecumenical landscape of Southern Africa.

Over the decades, it has evolved from a movement primarily concerned with institutional merger into a broader fellowship dedicated to visible unity, common witness, and shared mission.

Its journey illustrates both the possibilities and the challenges of Christian ecumenism. Differences in theology, polity, and tradition remain significant obstacles. Yet the Commission's history demonstrates that genuine unity can be nurtured through sustained dialogue, mutual respect, shared worship, and collaborative service.

As Southern Africa continues to confront social inequality, economic hardship, and cultural fragmentation, the witness of churches united in common purpose remains essential.

The work of the Church Unity Commission is therefore unfinished. Its continuing task is to remind the churches that unity is not an optional aspiration but a gospel imperative.

The future of the CUC will depend on its ability to deepen relationships, embrace diversity, and renew its commitment to visible expressions of Christian fellowship. In doing so, it continues to bear witness to the conviction that, despite their differences, Christians are called to be one body in Christ.

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BLACK METHODIST CONSULTATION CALLS THE CHURCH TO RENEWED CONSCIOUSNESS

— By the Listening Committee

The Black Methodist Consultation (BMC) celebrated its 50th Annual Consultation, marking 51 years of prophetic witness, at the Vaal University of Technology in the HISWA District from 2–5 July 2026. Hosted in the historic Vaal region under the theme “Consciousness,” the gathering brought together delegates from across the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) for worship, theological reflection, leadership development, Bible study, and organisational business.

Throughout the Consultation, delegates reflected deeply on what it means to be a conscious Christian leader in a world facing moral decline, inequality, corruption, economic hardship, and social fragmentation. The Consultation affirmed that consciousness extends far beyond self-awareness. It embraces historical memory, moral integrity, spiritual maturity, social responsibility, theological conviction, and an unwavering commitment to justice.

Remembering the Past to Shape the Future

One of the strongest messages to emerge from the Consultation was that “memory is consciousness; we move forward by looking back.” Delegates were reminded that remembering the rich history and prophetic legacy of the BMC is essential for renewing its identity and strengthening its witness within the Church and society.

Drawing on the biblical story of the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment, delegates were challenged to examine the spiritual health of the BMC itself. Questions were raised about whether the movement remains attentive



to those who suffer, whether it continues to pursue holiness, and whether it still speaks prophetically against injustice.

The Consultation affirmed that consciousness is ultimately reflected in character. Christian leaders are called to live lives marked by integrity, accountability, justice, compassion, and faithful discipleship—not only during annual gatherings but throughout the year.

Conscious Leadership for God's Mission

Theological presentations highlighted that ethical and transformative leadership begins with an awakened conscience rooted in Christ.

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The Memorial Lecture honoured men and women who sacrificed for justice and freedom in Southern Africa, including the late Advocate Thulani Maseko, whose life continues to inspire courageous Christian witness.

Drawing on African humanism, *Ubuntu*, Black Consciousness, Black Theology, and John Wesley's teaching on social holiness, delegates affirmed that authentic leadership requires moral courage, historical awareness, spiritual maturity, and practical action. Consciousness without action cannot transform society, while leadership without consciousness inevitably leads to injustice and corruption.

The Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, located this challenge within today's realities of global conflict, unemployment, inequality, corruption, declining public trust, and rapid technological change. She reminded delegates that the Church is not immune to these pressures and called for greater accountability, transparency, and faithful governance.

A recurring message throughout her address was God's invitation for the Church to "relocate, reposition, and cross over," reminding delegates that "the other side awaits." The Church was encouraged to move beyond familiar spaces in order to proclaim the Gospel and become an instrument of hope, healing, and restoration.

Quoting Steve Biko's well-known words, "The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed," the Bishop emphasised that the Gospel liberates minds, relationships, institutions, and communities. Delegates were encouraged to continually evaluate church structures, traditions, and policies through a reflective and decolonised theological lens so that they remain faithful to God's mission.

Worship, Learning, and Fellowship

Daily worship, devotions, contextual Bible studies, and fellowship provided delegates with opportunities for spiritual renewal. Reports from Districts, task teams, and the Acting General Secretary reflected faithful stewardship, sound financial management, and continued growth within the BMC.

The Consultation also paused to honour members who had passed on, giving thanks for their faithful witness and celebrating the Christian hope of the resurrection.

Investing in Future Leaders

The Consultation celebrated the ongoing contribution of the Centre of Black Thought and African Studies in strengthening Black Theology, African Theology, and Wesleyan scholarship within the Methodist tradition.

In reaffirming its commitment to leadership development, the BMC awarded academic bursaries for postgraduate theological studies and encouraged continued investment in the formation of future leaders for both Church and society.

Key Decisions

Among the significant resolutions adopted were:

- Declaring 2026–2027 as the Year of Consciousness and Awareness.
- Promoting Black Consciousness, Black Thought, African Theology, and Wesleyan consciousness throughout the Church.
- Strengthening partnerships across the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.
- Investing intentionally in young leaders by encouraging each host District to support at least ten young delegates annually.
- Developing educational resources documenting the history and contribution of the Black Methodist Consultation.
- Continuing support for contextual theological initiatives, including the Centre of Black Thought and African Studies and the Ernest Makhathini Grocery Fund.

Encouragement to New MCSA Leadership

During the Divine Service held at St Luke Methodist Church in Sharpeville, prayers and words of encouragement were offered to newly elected MCSA leaders.

They were urged to trust God's calling, lead with humility and integrity, place Christ at the centre of every decision, serve selflessly, maintain unity through prayer and mutual respect, and depend continually on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A Call to Transformation

As the 2026 Black Methodist Consultation concluded, delegates expressed renewed hope and a strengthened commitment to the Church's prophetic witness.

The Consultation prayed for a Church-wide awakening in which the "Winds of Consciousness" would renew the Church, transform communities, and inspire society through the liberating power of Jesus Christ.



ROOTED IN LOVE, REPOSITIONED FOR MISSION: Women's Association Embraces Environmental Stewardship

—By Mr Tebogo Oepeng

The Connexional Women's Association Consultation, hosted by the Mokala-Montle District at Aldersgate Methodist Church, Diamond Fields Circuit, demonstrated that Christian mission extends beyond the walls of the Church and into the care of God's creation. Gathering under the consultation theme, "By Love Serve One Another" (Galatians 5:13), delegates witnessed how love for God and neighbour is expressed not only through acts of service, but also through faithful stewardship of the environment.

Delegates from eight Districts of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa participated in the consultation. As part of the Environmental Justice Desk's greening initiative, each District received an indigenous tree as a symbol of life, hope, and environmental responsibility.

In a remarkable display of Connexional unity, the Women's Association resolved that, rather than planting the trees separately in their respective Districts, all eight trees would be planted together at Pescodia Methodist Church, Rooidepan, Kimberley. This shared act became a powerful witness to the interconnectedness of the Connexion and the conviction that, although the delegates would return to different Districts, they remain one in Christ and united in God's mission. The

trees will continue to stand as living reminders that relationships rooted in Christ transcend distance, and that what is planted in faith will flourish under God's gracious care.

The District Champion of the Environmental Justice Desk addressed the consultation, highlighting the biblical mandate to care for creation and encouraging the Church to become a prophetic voice for environmental stewardship. Delegates were reminded that caring for the earth is not an optional activity but an expression of faithful discipleship and responsible stewardship of God's creation.

Connexional General President, Mrs Melanie Kivedo, acknowledged the presence and commitment of the Environmental Justice Desk and affirmed the Women's Association's commitment to strengthening its partnership with the Desk. Together, they pledged to deepen the Church's mission, inspire local Societies, and contribute towards transforming communities through practical acts of caring for God's creation.

The tree-planting initiative beautifully echoed the Presiding Bishop's 2026 Connexional theme, "Relocated and Repositioned for Mission and Ministry – The Other Side Awaits." As the Church is repositioned for God's mission, it is

also called to restore creation, protect the environment, and leave a legacy of hope for future generations. The consultation demonstrated that mission is not confined to proclamation alone; it is also expressed through faithful stewardship of the world God has entrusted to our care.

Scripture reminds us:
"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." — Psalm 24:1
"The righteous care for the needs of their animals." — Proverbs 12:10

The late Kenyan environmentalist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai wisely observed:
"When we plant trees, we plant the seeds of peace and hope."

Indeed, the trees planted at Pescodia Methodist Church, Rooidepan, Kimberley, are more than trees—they are living symbols of unity, faith, service, and hope. Rooted in love and growing in mission, they proclaim that the Methodist Church of Southern Africa continues to answer God's call to care for both people and creation. Long after the consultation has concluded and the delegates have returned to their respective Districts, these trees will remain a living testimony that love, when expressed through faithful service and shared stewardship, continues to bear fruit for generations to come.



IMPORTANT DATES IN AUGUST – WOMEN’S MONTH

August	04	Connexional Unit Leaders’ Meeting	MCO
August	06	Finance Unit Investment and Advisory Board Meeting	Virtual
August	07-09	Connexional MethSSoc Spiritual Retreat	Gauteng Region
August	12-17	World Methodist Council	El Salvador
August	13	Local Preachers’ Department Districts Secretaries’ Consultation	Virtual
August	13-17	World Methodist Council	TBA
August	17-21	EMMU – New Superintendents’ Training	eMseni
August	19-20	The Women’s Auxiliary’s Annual Connexional Meeting	Highveld and eSwatini District
August	20	Connexional Trust Property Meetings	Virtual
August	25-30	World Federation for Methodist and Uniting Church Women, 15 th World Assembly	Auckland – New Zealand
August	29	Connexional Women’s Fellowship Gospel Extravaganza	TBA

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY

Ordinary Time	Liturgical Colour: Green
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	
Proper 15A – 16 August, 2026 Genesis 45:1-15 OR Isaiah 56:1, 6-8 – Psalm 133 OR Psalm 67 – Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32 – Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28	
Proper 16A – 23 August, 2026 Exodus 1:8-2:10 OR Isaiah 51:1-6 – Psalm 124 OR Psalm 138 – Romans 12:1-8 – Matthew 16:13-20	
Proper 17A – 30 August, 2026 Exodus 3:1-15 OR Jeremiah 15:15-21 – Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45c OR Psalm 26:1-8 – Romans 12:9-21 – Matthew 16:21-28	
Proper 18A – 06 September, 2026 Exodus 12:1-14 OR Ezekiel 33:7-11 – Psalm 149 OR Psalm 119:33-40 – Romans 13:8-14 – Matthew 18:15-20	
Proper 19A – 13 September, 2026 Exodus 14:19-31 OR Genesis 50:15-21 – Psalm 114 OR Exodus 15:1b-11, 20-21 OR Psalm 103:(1-7), 8-13 – Romans 14:1-12 – Matthew 18:21-35	

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Archibald Ntombela
Rev. Sbu Sangweni
Rev. Synod Siswana

*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.*

