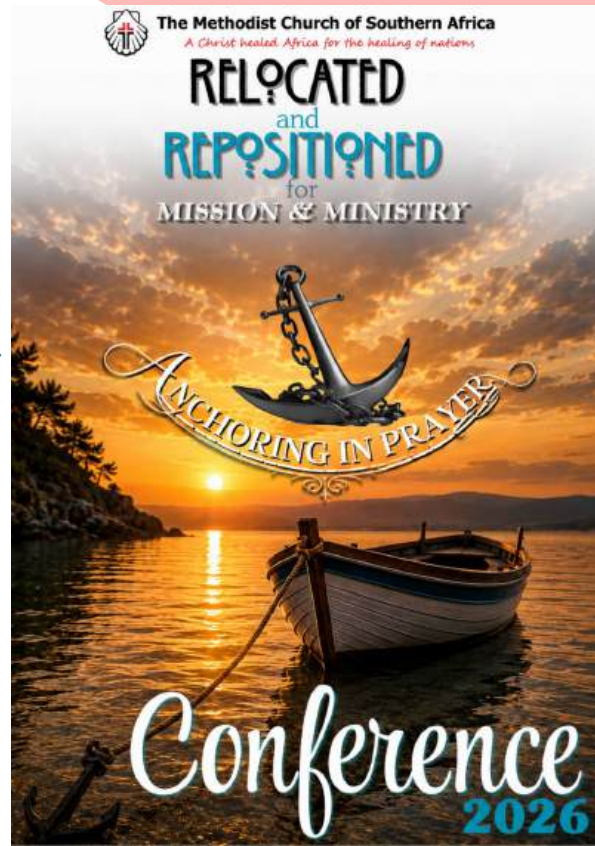




Another Dimension

AUGUST 2026

Clarkebury
District



Uphondolwendlovu
District

WELCOME TO CONFERENCE 2026

We greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is with great joy and heartfelt gratitude that the two Districts which emerged from the former Clarkebury 1300 Circuit warmly welcome you to the 136th Methodist Conference of 2026. As your hosts, we feel deeply honoured and blessed to receive and co-host you. This gathering is particularly significant, as it marks one of the final occasions on which we serve together following the division of the mighty Clarkebury 1300.

We extend a special and sincere welcome to our Chief Pastor, the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Nzimande, as she continues to provide spiritual leadership and guidance to the people called Methodists in Southern Africa.

We welcome you to Mthatha, the capital city of the former Transkei homeland, a place that is under the AbaThembu Kingdom. The place is friendly and the people are generous in Mthatha. We welcome all the conference delegates, the

invited guests and speakers and all the people who will be traveling across the Connexion to this annual Holy Conferencing.

May the good Lord guide all the proceedings and deliberations of this conference and when we leave this place, may we be empowered to go and make a difference in our communities. May this be a time for us to listen to each other, make courageous decisions and be guided by the Holy Spirit, that will shape how we do the mission of God. May this time also be a time of fellowship with one another as we seek to learn from each other.

Just a reminder that the weather forecast in Mthatha in mid-September, shows daytime highs generally ranging from 19 to 29 degrees Celsius, we do not need heavy winter clothes but bring a jacket for the cooler mornings and nights.

Once again, we welcome all of you, feel at home.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- The Kingdom Of God In Action (p. 3)
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THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
CONFERENCE ORDER OF BUSINESS:
Saturday 12th & Wednesday 16th – Sunday 20th September 2026
Theme: Relocated and Repositioned for Mission and Ministry
Anchoring in Prayer

Saturday 12 th	Wednesday 16 th	Thursday 17 th	Friday 18 th	Saturday 19 th	Sunday 20 th
10h00 Welcome and Opening Prayers Presiding Bishop Rev Pumla PN Nzimande Roll Call Constitution of the Conference Introduction to Commissions	08h00 – 12h00 Registration at Dr ISN Gqubule Memorial Church 14h00 Opening Session Welcome: Hosts: Rev. Mazubani Hlongwane & Rev Thulani Sonamzi of the Uphondolwendlovu & Clarkebury Districts Roll Call Re-Constitution of Conference 15h00 Administration & Conference Appointments 16h00 Introduction to Bible Studies 50 Years of Ordaining Women A JOURNEY OF CELEBRATION- 16h45 Presentation of Stations in District Groups 17h15 Logistics on Commissions Finalisation of the Commissions	08h00 Bible Study and Worship 50 Years of Ordaining Women A JOURNEY OF LAMENT 09h00 Discussion on the Presiding Bishop's Address 09h30 Lay President's Report Discussions on the Lay President's Report	08h00 Bible Study and Worship 50 Years of Ordaining Women A JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE 09h00 Final Presentation of Stations	07h00 Ordinands and Bishop's Photo Session 08h00 Bible Study and Worship 50 Years of Ordaining Women A JOURNEY OF PRAYER & HOPE including The Reception Full Connexion First Reading on the Strategic Direction 10h00 Ecumenical Guests Ecumenical Affairs Report Reports on Men's and Women's Work The Orders	08h00 Ordination Service at Assemblies of God Convention Centre, Cnr. Turot Ndamase Ave & Ekrom Street, Ikwezi Township, Mthatha Preacher: Presiding Bishop: Rev Pumla P N Nzimande
13h00: Lunch 14h00 Commissions Continue	16h45 Presentation of Stations in District Groups 17h15 Logistics on Commissions Finalisation of the Commissions	10h30 Tea 11h00 General Secretary's Report 11h45 EMWU Report 12h15 SMWS Reports 12h30 Question & Answer Session 13h00: Lunch 14h00 Mission Unit Report 14h20 General Treasurer's Report Question & Answer Session	10h30 Tea 10h30 The Journey of Resilience Honouring Methodist Women 12h00 1st Plenary: Resolutions	11h15 4th Plenary : Resolutions	Departure
15h00 Tea	15h00 Tea	13h00: Lunch 14h00 2nd Plenary : Resolutions	13h00: Lunch 14h00 Strategic Direction Presentation Adoption of Reports	13h00: Lunch 14h00	
Commissions Continue 16:30 Closure and Adjournment	18h00: Dinner Gqubule Methodist Church	15h30: Tea 15h30: Children & Youth Unit 15h50: Communications Unit 16h10: Human Resources Unit 16h25 DEWCOM Report 16:45 Question & Answer Session Busses depart for 18h00: Memorial Service	15h30 Tea 16h00 3rd Plenary : Resolutions 17h30 Celebrating Mission Flighting of District Presentations Adjournment	15h30 Tea 16h00 Unfinished Business Concluding Ceremonies	
	19h00: Opening Service ISN Gqubule Methodist Church Presiding Bishop's Address Rev Pumla PN Nzimande Conference Awards	Memorial Service John Wesley Society, Mthatha Central Mission Circuit Preacher: Rev Mavis Mbilini Dinner Garden Court & Mayfair Hotels	19h00: Dinner Garden Court & Mayfair Hotels	17h00: Dinner Garden Court & Mayfair Hotels	

Another Dimension

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN ACTION: MCSA Joins The World Methodist Council in San Salvador

From 13–17 August 2026, Methodists from around the world gathered in San Salvador, El Salvador, for the World Methodist Council Meeting under the theme: “The Kingdom of God is Justice, Peace and Joy in the Holy Spirit.” Romans 14:17.

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) was represented by General Secretary Rev. Musi Losaba, Lay President Mr Xhanti Mhlubulwana, Ecumenical Affairs Director Rev. Sikawu Makubalo, and Communications Unit Director Ms Bongie Moyo-Bango.

It was a time of worship, reflection, challenging conversations, fellowship, and renewed commitment to the Methodist witness in the world.

The Kingdom of God is Justice

The first thematic session turned our attention towards justice for God’s creation and God’s people. Philip Peacock, General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, delivered the keynote address on: *Ecumenical Cooperation for Climate and Economic Justice*. The conversation continued through a panel exploring justice from different perspectives: Justice for the poor of the Earth – Myra Suyapa Perez; Climate Change Impact – Sosiana Tangi; and Justice for Women – Katrina King. The panel was facilitated through an engaging interview by Stefanie Gabuyo.

The message was clear: justice cannot be separated from our calling to care for people, creation, and the common good.

The Kingdom of God is Peace

Peace was not simply discussed—it was explored as a calling to build communities where human dignity, freedom, and reconciliation can flourish. The keynote was delivered by the 2026 World Methodist Council Peace Award Laureate, Dr Humberto Martin Shikiya, who spoke on Peace Building. His witness to peace set the tone for a rich and challenging conversation. The panel explored: Human Rights as the Basis of Peace Cristian Schlick, GBGM Liaison for Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean; Freedom of Movement and Peace, Jeimy Peña; Youth and Young

Adult representative of the Evangelical Methodist Church in El Salvador, Rev. Dr Samuel Murillo, WMC Youth and Young Adult President and ordained presbyter in the Methodist Church in Mexico; Peacebuilding in Colombia, Rev. Luis Miguel Caviades, Pastor in the Colombian Methodist Church. Rev. Katie Paul, Pastor of Community Life in the United Methodist Church, interviewed the panel and facilitated a vibrant engagement.

Celebrating A Peacemaker

A special moment during the Council Meeting was the presentation of the 2026 World Methodist Council Peace Award to Dr Humberto Martin Shikiya in recognition of his courage and consistent commitment to peace. His life and work remind us that peace is not passive—it requires courage, persistence, and action.

CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME: Worshipping the Creator

The Council also reflected deeply on creation care. Rev. Sikawu Makubalo, representing the World Methodist Council on the Season of Creation Global Steering Committee, participated in presenting the Season of Creation report entitled: *Worshipping the Creator – Caring for Our Common Home*. The 2026 Season of Creation theme is: “Living Water” based on Ezekiel 47:9, 12.

The report reminds the Church that ecological wounding affects us all. As people interconnected in Christ, we are called to become agents of renewal, where environmental healing and human flourishing flow together.

The Council welcomed the inclusion of the Feast of Creation in the Revised Common Lectionary, with 1 September designated as a day for its observance. The Feast may be adapted to local traditions and contexts, including titles such as ‘God the Creator’, ‘Christ the Creator’, ‘Creation Day’, or ‘Creation through the Trinity’.

The World Methodist Council unanimously agreed by consensus to support the following:

Continues on page 4

1. Recognition and adoption of the Season of Creation and Feast of Creation in Christ within the ecumenical movement.
2. Reaffirmation of the WMC's 2016 Houston statement commending the celebration of the Time for Creation from 1 September to 4 October.
3. Encouragement for member churches to celebrate the Feast of Creation in Christ on the Sunday following 1 September, adapted to local contexts.
4. Development and sharing of liturgical resources that reflect local cultures and contexts.

The hope is that Methodists, United, and Uniting Churches will take these commitments into their own Connexions and communities.

The Kingdom of God is Joy

The third thematic session explored a dimension of the Kingdom that can sometimes be overlooked: Joy. Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler of the Council for World Mission delivered the keynote on: Joy, Spirituality, and Well-being. Junyoung Kim of the Korean Methodist Church guided the panel conversation. The responses explored joy as something deeply connected to community, pilgrimage, unity, and worship. 'Enlarging the Circle – Unity and a Non-Judgmental Approach', Rev. Dr Heather Morris, General Secretary and SOC, 'The Methodist Church in Ireland and Pilgrimage', Sarah Friswell, former President of the Epworth Old Rectory, and 'The Joy of Worship', Tércio Junker, who led worship throughout the Council Meeting. Together, they reminded us that Christian joy is not simply

happiness. It is a spiritual posture rooted in belonging, hope, worship, and the presence of God.

KEEPING IT ALL TOGETHER: Unity in Diversity

Perhaps one of the most significant conversations of the Council Meeting was the final session: Keeping It All Together – Unity in Diversity. The session recognised that the global Methodist family does not always agree. Yet difference does not have to mean division. Contributors reflected on how churches navigate difficult histories, convictions, and political differences: 'Living with Contradictory Convictions: The Methodist Church in Britain'; 'Living with the Legacy of Apartheid, The Methodist Church of Southern Africa' and 'Living with Political Differences, Methodist Church Hong Kong.'



WHEN MEMORY SINGS – Returning to Mount Coke

—By *Thandeka Gaubule-Mbeki*

Tell me, dear friend, have you ever heard and felt a choir raise the roof? Well, I have! And a week later I am still humming through my days, my tasks, and my thoughts. Understand this! I live in a very Anglican town (Makhanda/Grahamstown) with great musical choirs, but the Methodists CAN SING—with a capital S.

I returned last week Sunday (26 July) to Mount Coke Mission Station, and the experience settled on me like memory made flesh. The tears of nostalgia welled up when I turned right at the top of the Zwelitsha Road, and when I saw the church and our old home, the Manse, they flowed onto my face and make-up unrestrained. I fixed myself, steadied my soul, and entered the church with a large picture of my dad, the tears came back, choking me.

This place is not just a dot on the map of the Eastern Cape—it is the beginning and the ending of my father's ministerial journey. Rev. Dr Simon Gqubule arrived here as a young probationer minister, full of promise and discipline, and he completed his formal calling to the Church here too, closing the circle with the same humble, brooding spirituality and devotion that marked his life. Walking through Mount Coke last Sunday felt like stepping into the pages of our family story but also into the wider, deeper narrative of African Christianity, Black intellectual history, and the liberation struggle itself.

Mount Coke is one of those mission stations that shaped the ethos and spirit of the Eastern Cape. My father's PhD, Rhodes University's first black PhD, traced exactly this legacy: the Methodist mission stations of the Eastern Cape and their social role. These stations were obviously part of the colonial institutional intrusions on African society and religious outposts; they were engines of literacy, political consciousness, and African theological imaginations, both indigenous and acquired. They produced teachers, journalists, clergy, and activists who would go on to challenge the injustices of their time. They were the early laboratories of Black theology, where African ministers wrestled with scripture in their own languages, their own histories, and their own realities. They took the faith of the Wesley brothers and made it breathe in isiXhosa, in African rhythms, in the lived experience of a people determined to be free.

Standing there last week, in my family's name, listening to the Presiding Bishop, Pumla Nzimande's rousing call to renew our missions both personal and collective, I felt how these stations fashioned a generation that refused to be small. They created thinkers who understood that faith without justice is hollow and that education without dignity is incomplete. They nurtured leaders who would later stand at the forefront of the liberation struggle, armed not only with political conviction but also with a moral vocabulary shaped in places like Mount Coke.

The presence of the current Presiding Bishop Nzimande added a sense of continuity, an enormous conviction that through all the trials and tribulations of our society, drugs, corruption, and rotten politics, we are still standing and praying for the faith that shows us the light and the guidance of God, right here at this important seat of Methodism in SA, our problems notwithstanding!

It was a timely reminder for me that leadership in the Methodist tradition is a relay, not a solo performance. One generation hands the baton to the next, and the flame keeps burning.

Hayi ke! And then the choir began to sing. The same choir my mother so loved to conduct! They lifted the Nicene Creed—*uNdiyakholwa*—in isiXhosa, and the sound rolled through the rafters like thunder. Hearing that ancient creed, the backbone of Christian theology, carried in the cadence of our language of the region's tongue was overwhelming. *Ndiyakholwa* is "I believe". In isiXhosa, belief is active, communal, and embodied. This I know to be true: when we lived there, there were many deaths of the reverends who served the church there, and they were explained away by whispers of witchcraft. But on Sunday, the bells would ring and the villagers would file into the church and sing *Ndiyakholwa*!

I was seated in church last week with a large delegation of the family of the first Black superintendent of the church at Mount Coke, Rev. Nano; I sat next to sisMandisa. I did not have the courage to tell her that once I was studying at the manse and I was alone. The lights went out, and the phone rang. It was tat'tuBonco, the elderly Circuit Steward to my father. He said he would rush over to pick me up immediately because he did not wish for me to encounter the spirits of those who had died at Mount Coke like the Rev. Nano. He dropped the phone before we could debate the theology of this. That night I was rescued from the souls of the departed.

In all of this Mount Coke and reclaiming its spirit is a declaration of identity, of belonging, and of history remembered and carried forward.

Together in church we talked about the printing press that was founded there, the translations of the Xhosa bible partly done there, the great hospital that healed many, and our beloved lake whose waters have never dried out since the 1800s when Rev. Shaw first set eyes on the beautiful village on the hilltop. Mount Coke survived the animosity and brutality of the Frontier wars, two of them, and two World Wars, and still it stands—a pristine, newly developed building, still strong. Yes, challenged, but singing loud in red, white, and black, even the tiny tots and the youth guilds were in church uniform—One Way, One Heart!

As the voices rose, I felt my father's footsteps. I felt the discipline of mission-school life that shaped him; the intellectual seriousness that shaped me; the enduring power of a tradition that produced giants; and the spirit of surviving all odds no matter what theological interpretation is lent to them.

Today, Mount Coke reminded me that our personal stories are braided into larger histories and that some places never stop speaking if you know how to listen to silent prayers and loud songs!



WFMUCW: MCSA Women Take Their Place On The Global Methodist Stage

The 15th World Assembly of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW) came alive at the Due Drop Events Centre in Auckland, New Zealand, from 25–30 August 2026, bringing together Methodist and Uniting Church women from more than 70 countries across eight world areas.

Held every five years, the World Assembly is a significant gathering of women united by faith, fellowship, mission, and a shared commitment to being agents of transformation in the world.

This year's theme, "Arise and Shine," was more than a theme. Reflected in the Assembly's logo, the rising sun over the mountains and women of different generations carrying the light offered a powerful visual reminder of God's call to women to rise in faith, leadership, and service.

The Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) was proudly represented at this global gathering by over 20 women from organisations within the MCSA, with two MCSA women playing key roles in the Assembly itself.

Mrs Gretta Xoliswa Makhwenkwe, a former WFMUCW World Executive Member (2011–2016), was appointed by the World President to serve as Parliamentarian for the 15th World Assembly. In this role, she advised the World President on matters relating to the Constitution, Standing Orders, and parliamentary procedure, while helping to ensure that business sessions and elections were conducted fairly, orderly, and transparently. Mrs Makhwenkwe carried the flag of Southern and East

Africa and the MCSA with distinction. Her assertive leadership, clarity, and grace were widely recognised, and at the close of the Assembly, she was honoured with an award celebrating her leadership, dedication, and lasting legacy.

Mrs Vuyokazi Mdingi served as the Assembly's Technical Director, overseeing and coordinating the technical requirements of the gathering, including stage management, sound, visuals, and recordings. Her contribution helped ensure that worship, business, and celebration flowed seamlessly. The MCSA gives thanks to God for these two women and for their willingness to serve beyond the borders of the Church, contributing their gifts to the global Methodist and Uniting Church sisterhood.

A prophetic word from the MCSA Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, **"Your gifting is not their gifting. Your anointing is not their anointing. Stop trying to fit into someone else's calling. Walk in your own anointing!"**

The MCSA's presence was further strengthened by the ministry of its Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, who preached at the Assembly's powerful Holy Communion and Installation Service on Saturday, 29 August. Drawing from Luke 4:16–22, and under the sub-theme "Anointed to Arise and Shine," the Presiding Bishop offered a deeply prophetic challenge to the newly elected World Officers and to Methodist and Uniting Church women around the world.

Beginning with Christ's declaration, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me," she connected Jesus' manifesto to the realities facing women and communities today. She reminded the Assembly that Jesus spoke his words to people living under political, economic, and social oppression—and that his ministry responded directly to their lived realities.

"Speak a language that we will understand," she urged the new leadership, challenging them to address the spiritual, economic, and cultural realities that continue to hold people captive. She called for leadership that is relevant, grounded in prayer, faith, and discipleship, while confronting the systemic barriers that continue to affect women. "Your intentions will determine your actions."

A central message of the sermon was that anointing is not given for personal recognition or self-enrichment, but for mission and service. The Presiding Bishop challenged the newly elected leaders not to make their leadership about "your ego, your plans, your authority", but about the Kingdom of God.

She reminded the Assembly that the Church is called to serve beyond itself—to become a community that demonstrates an alternative way of living in a world often marked by individualism, exclusion, and hostility. Leadership, she said, must be measured not simply by titles or the completion of a term, but by the difference it makes in the lives of others.

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“Your intention should be bigger than finishing the term or getting the badge and title. The intention is to make a difference.”

Perhaps one of the most powerful challenges of the sermon was the call for women to become answers to prayer. Reflecting on Jesus’ declaration that the Scripture had been fulfilled in their hearing, Rev. Nzimande challenged women to move beyond speaking about faith to embodying it through action.

“May Methodist and Uniting Church women across the globe arise and be an answer to someone’s prayer!”

She challenged women to become answers in places of brokenness and pain, conflict and division, poverty and social injustice. “We are called to be answers to someone’s prayer and NOT

to be the reason for their prayers and tears.” The challenge was both personal and prophetic: holy hands must do the work of God; holy mouths must speak life; and lives must become testimonies of God’s promises fulfilled.

Drawing from Jesus’ rejection in Nazareth, the Presiding Bishop spoke candidly about the reality of rejection, particularly when people step into the fullness of their calling. Jesus was questioned by those who knew him: “Isn’t that Joseph’s son?” Rev. Nzimande connected this experience to the questions women leaders may encounter: “Are they really World President? Are they really Area President?”

Her message was unequivocal: “Rejection does not take away the anointing and God’s purpose!” The

anointing, she reminded the Assembly, is not dependent on human approval or support. Even in seasons of conflict, uncertainty, disappointment, or rejection, God’s call remains.

As the Assembly came to a close, the Presiding Bishop sent the women out with a message for a world facing patriarchy, gender-based violence, femicide, corruption, poverty, hunger, rejection, and discrimination.

The call was simple, yet profound: Arise and shine.

Even when the streams run dry. Even when there is no rain. Even when there is no apparent breakthrough.

Even when the sun is hidden behind the clouds.

Arise and shine.



LEFT: We celebrate Vuyokazi Mdingi (Vuyoyo), who was given an opportunity to serve at the 15th World Assembly in Auckland, New Zealand.

She represented the MCSA Women's Manyano and the Southern and East Africa Area with excellence, serving by leading the Technical Desk of the World Assembly.

Her service reminds us that every gift, no matter how small, can be used to glorify God when it is surrendered to Him. We thank God for her life and for raising one of our own to serve His church on the world stage.



ABOVE: Mrs Gretta Makhwenkwe, a former World Executive Member 2011–2016, was appointed by the World President as Parliamentarian for this 15th World Assembly. She held the flag of the Southern and East Africa and the MCSA high, as the Assembly agreed that she did a splendid job, displayed assertive leadership with clarity and grace. At the close of the assembly, she was honoured with an award for her leadership, dedication, and legacy that will be remembered.

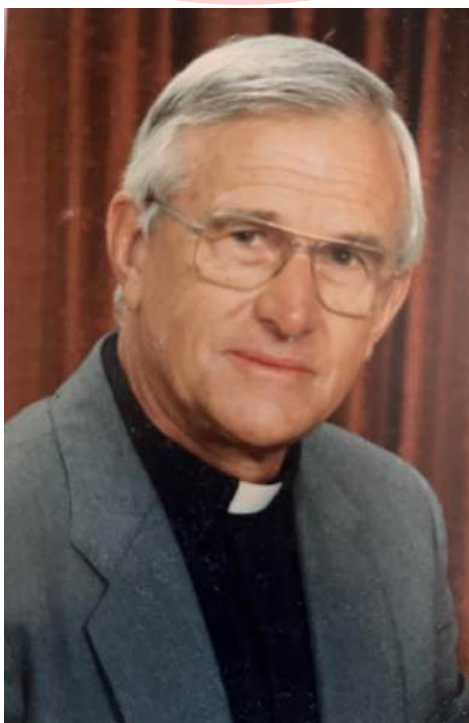
TRIBUTE TO MY DAD, REV. DR DONALD CLIFFORD VEYSIE, 17 May 1930 – 21 June 2026

—By Rev. Peter Veyisie

My dad, Donald, was born on 17 May 1930 in Graaff Reinet, and at the age of two his father passed away, leaving his mom to support him. He was an only child and they had very little. His mom, Dorothy, was a baker, and when my father was old enough, he would deliver bread and rusks on his bicycle early in the morning to support his mother. He later went to Union High School and was head boy in 1948. He went on to study a Bachelor of Theology at Rhodes University and passed cum laude. He received the Elsie Ballot scholarship to go to Cambridge University and studied there from 1952 to 1953, where he received a Masters in theology. His best friend was David Pawson, who was in residence at Cambridge with him and who wrote the book "Unlocking the Bible". My father and a friend cycled from Cambridge to Europe as young students and he shared many fond and crazy stories from this time.

He returned to South Africa and was posted to minister in Nelspruit, and later on to the Witwatersrand Mission as a youth worker. He would work along the railway line and visit various churches to minister to them. My mom, Pamela, was in Florida, and as a family (the Perry's) were very involved in the church just across the road. My mom and dad fell in love and were married on 6 October 1956. They would have been married for 70 years this year and my father would have celebrated his 74th year in the ministry! That's a long time. My father later went on to do a Doctorate in Theology at Rhodes University on the history of the Methodist church with Pam and us three small boys living in Grahamstown.

They then moved a few times but were in Mahamba Swaziland on the mission station where my brothers, Mike and Ian, were born (they are officially Swazi's). They then moved to Klerksdorp where I was born, then on to Benoni, and then Durban. Manning Road Methodist Church was bittersweet for them. It was a beautiful home and community on the Berea, however, my father was very involved in the struggle against apartheid and because of this, was asked to leave Manning Road and was moved to Lorne Street Indian Methodist Church. As hard as this was for all of us initially,



it turned out to be the best move as the people of Lorne Street embraced and loved us as a family. My father at this time (1975) was appointed Chairman (now called bishops which my dad always said was a big mistake) and then in 1978 was called to be the President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in a time of great turmoil in South Africa. Our homes were always filled with people from different backgrounds and communities, and my parents were committed to reconciliation which gave us the ability to embrace and love everyone who came to our home. Desmond Tutu was a good friend of my dad's during this time.

They later moved to Krugersdorp and then to Berea Methodist Church in Johannesburg where they were deeply loved by all.

They retired and continued to serve, as at 65 my father felt far too young to stop working, and always said to me that the church needed to reconsider the age of superannuation, as some ministers still had a lot to offer the church. He also felt strongly that the Methodist Church was a movement and not a denomination and he would have called the local churches 'Community Churches' rather than 'Methodist Churches'.

My mom and dad blessed us three sons with a very happy but challenging

childhood being preachers kids. My call came at Kearsney College in 1980 and my dad and I wept together when we shared this moment.

He leaves three sons and their wives: Michael, married to Penny in Johannesburg; Ian, married to Debbie in Australia; and Peter, married to Debbie at George Methodist Family Church; seven grandchildren: Matthew married, to Melissa; Luke; Joe; Emma; Isabella; David; and Lisa, and his great grandchild, Tannah, son of Matt and Melissa.

My father was a loving but also strong leader with a real love for the Lord and his family and a deep commitment to his call to ministry. He touched many lives and will be missed by us all and the MCSA. A giant of the faith and one who stood the test of time. I love you dad, and am honoured to have had you not only as a father but also a mentor and a friend.

"An inheritance is what you leave to your children, a legacy is what you leave in them". Thank you for leaving us a legacy in character, example, and love.



MOKALA-MONTLE DISTRICT HITS THE GROUND RUNNING: 800 Trees And Counting

— By *Tebogo Oepeng (Environmental Justice Desk)*

The Environmental Justice Desk (EJD) of the Mokala-Montle District continues to turn its commitment to care for God's creation into practical action, with the District reaching a significant milestone of 800 trees distributed and planted since the launch of the Desk in March 2026.

The latest August greening initiative has significantly strengthened this growing environmental footprint, with 613 indigenous trees being distributed across the District's geographical areas: 300 trees in the Northern Cape, 150 in the North West and 163 in the Free State. This brings the cumulative number of trees distributed and planted by the EJD since its launch to 800.

The initiative demonstrates that environmental justice is not simply about speaking about climate change and environmental degradation, but about mobilising communities and putting practical solutions into action. Through tree planting, the EJD seeks to encourage congregations, households, and communities to become active custodians of God's creation.

The initiative has also strengthened collaboration between the Methodist Church and government stakeholders in advancing environmental stewardship across the four-province footprint of the Mokala-Montle District—Northern Cape, Free State, North West, and Eastern Cape. The EJD acknowledges the support of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DPPE), particularly its Forestry Greening and Livelihoods Implementation Support unit, whose partnership is contributing meaningfully to the District's greening programme. As part of this collaborative approach, the Free State component is also willing to support communities in the Eastern Cape, particularly the six Circuits of Aliwal North, Bensonville, Blikana, Transgariep, Witterbergen, and Zastron, given their geographical proximity to Free State.

Importantly, the August greening initiative is also being undertaken during Women's Month, giving the programme a special dimension. The EJD deliberately dedicated part of its August environmental intervention to honouring and celebrating women, recognising their longstanding role as custodians of families, communities, and, in many instances, the natural environment. The planting of trees therefore becomes more than an environmental activity—it is also a symbolic investment in women, communities, and future generations.

This partnership also brings an important element of accountability. As trees are distributed, the EJD is expected to document the exact sites where they are planted, including churches, households, and other community areas, supported by photographic evidence. Such reporting ensures that the trees provided are accounted for and that the impact of the programme can be demonstrated.

For the EJD, however, the number 800 is more than a statistic. Every tree represents an opportunity to create shade, protect the soil, improve the local environment, and, perhaps most importantly, educate communities about their responsibility towards future generations.

The programme is also consistent with the broader mission of the Environmental Justice Desk: to challenge an uncaring attitude towards God's creation through awareness, education, mobilisation, practical action, and advocacy.

The progress made since March reflects a District that is beginning to move from environmental concern to environmental action. The EJD's growing network of Circuits, congregations, and ecumenical partners provides an important platform through which environmental stewardship can become part of everyday Christian witness.

As the Mokala-Montle District continues with its greening programme, the message remains clear: environmental justice is everybody's responsibility.

From 187 trees at the earlier stage of the programme to 800 trees since the launch in March 2026, the Mokala-Montle District is indeed hitting the ground running.

The journey continues. One tree, one community and one generation at a time.



Mokala-Montle District President, Women's Manyano, Mrs. Annikie Molise pray for the tree before planting.



50 YEARS OF WOMEN'S ORDINATION IN THE MCSA: Celebrating The Golden Jubilee – Central District Koinonia

SHE ANSWERED THE CALL

The Central District gathered for a District Koinonia, paused to mark an extraordinary milestone: 50 years since the ordination of women as Presbyters in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa.

It was more than an anniversary. It was a sacred moment of remembrance, gratitude, and hope, honouring the women who heard God's call, stepped forward in faith, crossed barriers, carried scars, discovered joy, served communities, and helped reshape the life of the Church.

At the heart of the celebration stood a special unveiled monument. A moment that tells a story: of the years before women were ordained as Presbyters; of the barriers they had to move through; and of the five decades of ministry, courage, and faithfulness that followed.

Five decades. Five chapters. Countless stories.

The First Decade: 1976–1986

The Door Opens

The story begins even before 1976.

For years, the question of women's ordination was carried through Societies, Circuits, Synods, and Conference. Resolutions were brought forward. They were rejected. Then brought again and again. Until, finally, the Church said yes.

In 1976, Constance Westhuizen became the first woman ordained as a Presbyter in the MCSA, opening a door through which others would follow.

It was a significant moment in the life of the Church, unfolding during one of the most turbulent periods in South African history. While the country was shaken by the Soweto uprising and the brutal realities of apartheid, another struggle for recognition and equality was unfolding within the Church.

The first women stepped into ordained ministry with courage. Their journeys were filled with joy and deep purpose, but also with marginalisation, suspicion, and resistance. They entered spaces shaped by patriarchy and encountered assumptions about where women belonged, what women could do, and whether their calling was truly equal.

But still, they answered the call.

They preached. They studied. They served. They challenged unjust rules. They crossed boundaries. And, sometimes with remarkable humour and courage, they refused to accept that being a woman made them less worthy of the ministry to which God had called them.

The door had opened, and it would not be closed again.

The Second Decade: 1987–1996

Finding Strength in One Another

By the second decade, the policy of ordaining women had been established; but attitudes had not changed overnight. Women continued to face resistance in Circuits, Societies,

Theological Institutions and places of leadership. Yet this decade also became a season of growing confidence, theological depth, and solidarity.

Women entered seminaries, participated fully, in academic and community life, and engaged deeply with African Theology, Black Theology, Liberation Theology, Feminist Theology, Womanist Theology, and Contextual Theology. They questioned inherited assumptions and rediscovered a liberating truth: God is not confined by human categories of gender, and neither is God's call.

Women began creating spaces for one another. They gathered, they shared stories, they spoke honestly about pain and prejudice, they celebrated victories, and they encouraged one another through difficult appointments and seasons of doubt.

What emerged was more than survival. It was sisterhood.

This decade became a testimony to resilience, hope, determination, and faithfulness. Women were no longer only walking through doors opened by others; they were widening those doors for the generations still to come.

The Third Decade: 1997–2006

Carrying the Call Across Boundaries

The third decade tells a story of movement.

Women were sent across cultures, languages, communities, and contexts; from townships to rural Circuits, from family life into demanding ministry appointments, from familiar places into spaces where they had to learn, adapt, and lead.

There were questions about clothing, appearance, culture, and womanhood. There were moments when women wondered whether they were being recognised as ministers or expected to fit into roles that diminished their calling. These are the scars that women carried in their journey.

However, these scars were also accompanied by extraordinary joy. There were communities that welcomed women ministers with love. Congregations that ensured that there was food on the table even when salaries were uncertain. People of God who embraced, encouraged, and carried those who had been sent to serve among them. And through every transition came a deeper resilience.

One testimony captured the spirit of this decade beautifully: "It is not easy, but we are here. It is not easy, but we move on."

That perseverance would carry women into chaplaincy, leadership, pastoral care, and countless spaces of service; standing before broken people and declaring with conviction: God loves you.

The Fourth Decade: 2007–2016

Rooted in the One Who Calls

By the fourth decade, the Church had travelled far, but the journey was not complete.

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Women continued to encounter racism, patriarchy, ageism, and exclusion. The painful question remained: what does the Church still need to learn after so many years of women's ordained ministry? Yet the testimony of this decade was not one of defeat. It was a testimony of deep spiritual rootedness.

Women spoke of Christ as the Light who transforms hearts, reshapes attitudes, and calls the Church into new ways of seeing one another. They reminded the community that God's call is not constrained by gender or race, but grounded in divine purpose and gifting. Through painful experiences, many discovered an unshakeable truth: nothing can disturb the soul that is at peace with God.

Why remain when the journey has been difficult?

For some, the answer was simple and profound: not because the institution had always made the journey easy, but because of a deep love for God.

The call came from God.

The strength came from God.

The hope came from God.

And so they continued; trusting that the One who calls is faithful.

The Fifth Decade: 2017–2026

Grace for Every Season

The fifth decade brings the story into the present.

A new generation of women ministers continues to navigate the realities of calling alongside marriage, motherhood, caring for ageing parents, supporting extended family, raising children, travelling, leading, and serving.

The pressures are real. Some stories carry deep pain. Some speak of humiliation, mistreatment, and seasons so dark that simply continuing became an act of courage. Yet, through it all, the testimony remains one of sustaining grace. "God has carried me through seasons I thought would bury me."

What may once have felt like merely surviving can, in hindsight, be recognised as being carried.

Carried by grace.

Carried by faith.

Carried by community.

Carried by the God who remains present through every victory, every lesson, every scar, and every blessing.

The women of this decade remind us that resilience is not always loud. Sometimes it looks like waking up and continuing. Sometimes it means caring for a family while serving a congregation. Sometimes it means standing again after disappointment. Sometimes it is simply holding onto the truth that one is still here for a reason.

The Story Is Still Being Written

As the monument was unveiled, one detail carried particular significance:

"It is open-ended."

The next part of the story has not yet been written.

There are still women who will hear God whisper their names. Still young girls who will discover gifts they do not yet know they carry. Still congregations that will be transformed by their leadership. Still sermons to be preached, communities to be served, wounds to be healed, injustices to be challenged, and lives to be changed.

The plaque unveiled at the monument bears the words: "In celebration of 50 years of the ordination of women as Presbyters in the MCSA."

And with them, the theme:

She Answered the Call.

For 50 years, women have answered.

They answered when the way was uncertain.

They answered when doors were closed.

They answered when their gifts were questioned.

They answered across racial and cultural divides.

They answered while raising families.

They answered through grief and joy.

They answered with scars and with songs.

They answered because the One who called them was faithful.

And now, as we look towards the next 50 years, we do so with gratitude for those who came before, courage for the work still ahead, and hope for every woman who will yet hear the voice of God and say:

"Here I am, Lord."

The story continues.

And by God's grace, there is still so much more to come.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It was deeply sad to hear a member of the clergy within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa preach that woman's place is at the feet of her husband, and that she has no authority to stand beside him but must remain beneath him and speak from that position. What makes this even more troubling is that such preaching does not come from an ordinary member of the congregation, but from clergy entrusted with the responsibility of teaching, interpreting Scripture and forming the theological imagination of the church.

This raises a serious theological question for the MCSA: What does it mean for the Church to celebrate the ministry, leadership and ordination of women while some of its clergy continue to preach a theology that places women beneath men?

It is therefore necessary to question not only the preacher's interpretation, but also the relationship between such preaching and the doctrinal commitments of the MCSA. If the Church has affirmed the ministry and leadership of women, then what theological accountability exists when clergy publicly preach ideas that appear to undermine the dignity, agency and authority of women?

The issue cannot simply be dismissed as one preacher's personal opinion. Clergy preaching has formative power. What is proclaimed from the pulpit can shape how congregations understand God, humanity, marriage, authority and the place of women within the Body of Christ. When a minister tells women that their rightful position is beneath men, the question must therefore be asked: Is this consistent with the theology that the MCSA claims to teach and embody?

Even the biblical language of submission requires greater theological care. Ephesians 5:21 speaks of believers submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Submission cannot simply be extracted from its wider theological context and transformed into a doctrine of female inferiority.

The reference to "Ndizohlala ezinyaweni..." also requires critical theological reflection. Sitting at someone's feet in the biblical tradition can signify discipleship and learning. Mary sitting at Jesus' feet in Luke 10 is not presented as a theological statement that women must permanently exist beneath men. To use such imagery to establish female inferiority risks imposing a patriarchal interpretation upon a biblical image of discipleship.

Vocem nostram amisimus! WE HAVE LOST OUR VOICE!

The many speeches during Women's Day celebrations and our totally irrelevant president's speech brought back for me a memory when our Methodist Church, along with many others, had a voice in the state of the nation.

Today, our Church sits quietly, as if licking our own wounds in disbelief and has nothing to say, while the ANC and others have allegedly helped themselves to billions of rands in one form or another. That which was meant for the poor and needy has been swallowed up by the rich and powerful.

The ANC has failed miserably. Desmond Tutu issued a warning many years ago. That went unheeded.

What is particularly sad, then, is the contradiction that this creates within the life of the MCSA. We celebrate the history of women's ordination. We celebrate women who have been called, ordained and appointed to positions of leadership. We celebrate the contribution of women to the mission of the Church. Yet, at the same time, women may sit in our congregations and hear clergy telling them that their place is beneath men.

That contradiction is sad honestly.

What does the MCSA actually believe about women?, if its clergy stand and preach such 🙄

Is the Church's affirmation of women's ministry merely institutional, while patriarchal theology continues to survive within our preaching and pastoral formation? Have we changed our structures without sufficiently changing our theological imagination? And what mechanisms exist within the MCSA to address preaching that directly undermines the dignity and agency of women?

These questions are not attacks on the Church. They are questions that arise precisely because the Church takes its doctrine and preaching seriously.

It is therefore not enough for the MCSA to celebrate women once a year, commemorate the history of women's ordination, or highlight women in leadership. We must also examine what is being preached from our pulpits every Sunday. The celebration of women must be accompanied by theological accountability.

It is sad that, after all the progress the MCSA has made in recognising women's ministry, a woman can still sit in a Methodist congregation and hear a member of the clergy proclaim that her rightful place is beneath a man.

The challenge before the MCSA is therefore much deeper than simply increasing the representation of women in leadership. It is the challenge of ensuring that our doctrine, our preaching, our pastoral practice and our lived theology speak with integrity about the dignity of women as people created in the image of God and called by the Spirit.

If we truly believe what we celebrate about women, then our pulpits must reflect it too.

– Mahlatse Rapholo

When the very system in place to curb criminality becomes itself embroiled in the very thing they were chosen to protect us from, we have to know that our country is in many respects, worse now than it was previously.

If we do not speak out, who will? If we do not challenge, who will?

In November we get the choice to vote for who we think will do the best job, not because of tradition but out of strong conviction.

Go in Peace.

– Michael Crockett

THE TREE HE WAS SUPPOSED TO PLANT: A Legacy of Hope For The Church and Community

— By **Tebogo Oepeng: Environmental Justice Desk**

At St. Timothy Church in Seodin Village, Kuruman, within the Diocese of Kimberley and Kuruman, a tree was planted as a sign of hope for the Church and the wider community. Yet beneath this seemingly simple environmental act was a poignant story of an unfinished assignment, remembrance, and legacy.

The occasion brought together three celebrations in one: *the commemoration of 150 years of the Mother's Union, founded by Mary Sumner in 1876; the planting of a Mohwelere tree; and an opportunity to affirm the importance of caring for God's creation.*

The tree planting, however, carried an unexpected and deeply emotional significance. Rev. Fr. Gregory Peme, who was expected to lead the plantation, sadly passed away before he could fulfil the assignment. His sudden departure transformed what could have been an ordinary environmental activity into a moment of remembrance.

The tree therefore came to represent more than the planting of another tree. It became a living reminder that although people may depart, the values they served and the work they helped inspire can continue to grow.

The Mohwelere was planted deliberately as “a sign of hope for the church and the community.” In this sense, the tree speaks a language that transcends generations: life, continuity, resilience, and hope.

The significance of the occasion was further captured in a message from Presiding Mother Victoria Bojosi of the Kgalagadi Archdeaconry, who expressed appreciation for the Environmental Justice initiative and its contribution to the life of the Church.

Addressing the District Environmental Justice Champion, Tebogo Oepeng, she wrote:

“You have written your name in our church yard and in our heart. May the Lord who sees in secret reward you openly.”

These words demonstrate that environmental stewardship can become much more than a campaign. When the Church plants trees, it is also planting a message for generations yet unborn.

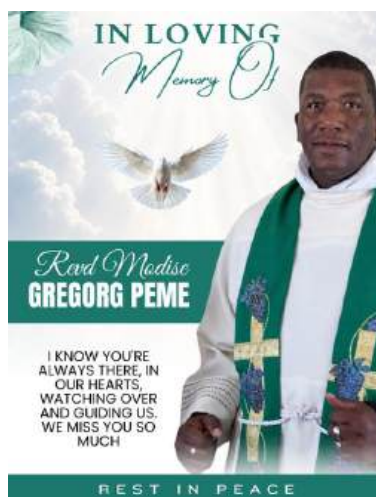
The 150th anniversary of the Mother's Union provided an appropriate backdrop. From Mary Sumner's founding vision in 1876, the organisation's legacy has continued through generations of women serving their families, Church, and communities. The planting of a tree during such a significant commemoration offered another powerful expression of that same principle: what is planted today must be nurtured for tomorrow.

For the Environmental Justice Desk, the occasion reaffirmed its conviction that caring for creation is part of the Church's mission. A tree may begin as a small seedling, but with care it grows into something that provides shade, shelter, and life long after those who planted it are gone.

In the shadow of Rev. Fr. Peme's passing, the Mohwelere now carries an even deeper meaning.

The man who was meant to lead the planting is no longer with us—but the tree stands.

And as it grows, so too may the hope he was meant to help plant in the Church and community.



LEFT:

From left to right: Kgalagadi Archdeaconry, Presiding member; Mrs Victoria Bojosi; Mrs. Lemogang Motseothata, Secretary, St Paul's Parish; Mrs Selloane Motlele, Deputy Secretary, Diocese of Kimberley and Kuruman and District Champion.

BIBLE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA WELCOMES GERHARD PIETERSEN AS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA) is pleased to announce the appointment of Rev. Gerhard Pieteresen as its new Chief Executive Officer. Gerhard officially assumed his role on 1 August 2026, bringing with him more than three decades of ministry, leadership, and cross-cultural mission experience.

To Gerhard, this appointment represents the continuation of a calling on his life that began in childhood.

“I can trace my journey back to a Bible my grandfather gave me,” he reflects. “As a young boy, I began reading about Jesus for myself. My mother knelt beside my bed and helped me understand the hope of the resurrection. Looking back, I believe that was the beginning of God’s calling on my life—to help people encounter Christ through his Word.”

Ordained as a Dutch Reformed minister, Gerhard has served congregations in Namibia, Cape Town, and the broader Western Cape region before spending the past decade as Chief Executive Officer of Africa Inland Mission South Africa. His ministry has taken him across the African continent, where he has worked alongside churches, missionaries, and communities in countries ranging from Kenya and Madagascar to North Africa.

These experiences strengthened his conviction that access to Scripture in one’s own language has the power to transform lives and communities.

“One of the great privileges of my ministry has been witnessing Bible translation in action,” says Gerhard. “When people receive God’s Word in their own language, something remarkable happens. Faith takes root, communities are strengthened, and people encounter God in deeply personal ways.”

Bible translation remains at the core of the BSSA’s mission and vision. The organisation is currently undertaking several first Bible translation projects into Xhosa, Tshivhangu, Ndebele and Xweda. These projects are helping to develop the first written forms of some of these languages while simultaneously making the Bible accessible to indigenous language communities. Alongside translation, the organisation supports Scripture engagement, literacy initiatives and the distribution of affordable Bibles in 11 of South Africa’s official languages and beyond.

Gerhard believes these ministries are now more relevant than ever.

“South Africa is a country of many languages, cultures and generations. The Bible Society of South Africa occupies a unique place because it serves all of them. Language



unlocks doors and when people encounter Scripture in their heart language, lives are changed.”

As digital technology reshapes how people read and engage with Scripture, Gerhard recognises both opportunity and responsibility.

“We live in an age of unprecedented access to information, yet many people are searching for truth and genuine human connection. The Bible Society has a vital role to play in providing faithful translations of Scripture while helping churches engage new generations in meaningful ways.”

Looking ahead, Gerhard says his hope is to strengthen partnerships with churches across South Africa while continuing the Bible Society’s long-standing commitment to making God’s Word available, accessible and meaningful to everyone.

“My prayer is that we will continue sowing God’s Word faithfully,” he states. “The soil may look different from generation to generation, but the calling remains the same – to help people encounter the life-changing message of Scripture.”

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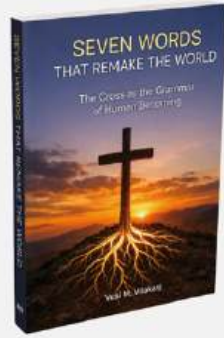
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MORE THAN A GATHERING:

Celebrating Ministry Through Koinonia

On 20 June 2026, the people of the Central District gathered at Gracepoint Methodist Church in Fourways Circuit for the annual District Koinonia. While it was a day filled with worship, teaching, fellowship, and celebration—it was much more than a programme on the District calendar. It was a living expression of the Church gathered as the Body of Christ, clergy and laity together, united in faith, purpose, and mission.

The choice of the name **Koinonia** is deeply significant. Derived from the Greek New Testament, *Koinonia* speaks of fellowship, communion, participation, partnership, sharing, and belonging. It describes the life of the early Christian community, where believers devoted themselves to God, to one another, and to the shared work of the Gospel. Koinonia is therefore not simply about being present in the same place; it is about participating together in the life and mission of Christ. It reminds us that the Church is not merely an institution or collection of committees, but a community bound together by God's grace and called into God's mission.

For Methodists, this understanding resonates strongly with our heritage. The Church flourishes when clergy and laity journey together, discern together, worship together, and serve together. The very nature of Methodist Connexionality is built on the conviction that ministry belongs to the whole people of God. Koinonia therefore became a visible expression of what the Church is called to be one body with many members, many gifts, and one Lord.

The theme of the gathering, "Celebrating Ministry," beautifully captured this vision.

The celebration was not focused on offices, titles, or achievements. Rather, it recognised the many ways in which God continues to work through the life of the Church. It celebrated the ministry of Word and Sacrament exercised by ordained ministers. It celebrated the ministry of local preachers, class leaders, stewards, mission groups, youth leaders, musicians, administrators, pastoral carers, and countless faithful disciples who serve Christ in their Societies, Circuits, and communities. It was a reminder that all ministry ultimately belongs to God and that every gift offered in service contributes to the building up of the Body of Christ.

The breakaway sessions further reflected this understanding. Facilitators from both clergy and laity shared insights on discipleship, stewardship, leadership, preaching, youth ministry, contextual mission, theology, and spiritual formation. In doing so, the District affirmed that both lay and ordained ministries have a vital role in shaping the Church for effective witness in a changing world. The sessions did not merely impart knowledge; they encouraged a renewed appreciation of the shared calling of all God's people.

Another significant aspect of the day was the rich diversity of worship that characterised the gathering. The songs, prayers, liturgy, languages, and expressions of praise reflected the vibrant reality of the Central District itself. From traditional hymnody to contemporary worship; from solemn reflection to joyful celebration; from young voices to

seasoned leaders, the worship revealed the beauty of a diverse people united in Christ. It was a powerful reminder that our diversity is not a weakness to be managed but a gift to be celebrated.

The unveiling of the Women's Ordination Jubilee Monument added further meaning to the theme of celebrating ministry. As the District reflected on fifty years of ordained women's ministry within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, it gave thanks for generations of women who faithfully responded to God's call and enriched the life and witness of the Church. The monument stands as a testimony to God's ongoing work through all who are called to serve.

Throughout the day, there was a strong sense that something larger than an event was taking place. Relationships were strengthened, new connections formed, and old friendships renewed. The gathering reminded attendees that ministry can never be reduced to individual effort. The Church is at its best when it learns, worships, serves, and celebrates together.

Perhaps one of the strongest messages emerging after the event was the widespread desire for more opportunities such as this. Many participants expressed appreciation not only for the quality of the programme but for the opportunity simply to be together as the people of God. There was a clear sense that the conversations, fellowship, learning, and worship could have continued far beyond a single day.

This longing speaks to the very heart of Koinonia. It reflects a deep desire for connection, belonging, and shared participation in God's mission. It suggests that gatherings such as these are not merely beneficial but increasingly necessary for the formation and strengthening of the Church.

The Central District Koinonia reminded us that ministry is not the responsibility of a few but the privilege of all. It reminded us that worship is richer when diverse voices are gathered. It reminded us that clergy and laity are partners in God's mission. Above all, it reminded us that we are one body in Christ.

For one day, the District did not simply talk about Koinonia. It practised it.

And perhaps the strongest testimony to its value is that many left not asking whether it should happen again, but when.



SANIBONANI: “If Music Be The Food of Love ... Then Play On.”

— By Rev. Mike Vorster

“Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.” – Matthew 13:34

Michael was in heaven before his minute soul, was made flesh in the form of a foetus. There was a sounding by one of the angels who strummed a Lyre playing soothing, life-given music. “Gather little souls before you are enfleshed; to each of you will be given talents of your choice that will bring joy, courage, and strength to those within the circles you move and have your being”.

Little Michael’s soul became excited, he wanted this talent. Yes, he heard that there were many wonderful musical instruments across the earth.

One of the angels exhaled that there were a number of doors. Each will have written on the door the talent. Little Michael was so excited. He rushed off to find the musical door.

However, on the way he saw written on one of the doors the words ‘till the ends of the earth’. Curiosity got the better of him and he opened it and stepped inside. “Welcome little soul.” “What is this about?” asked Michael. The angel became excited. He loved the question. It simply means you will travel to many places promoting peace, harmony, and fairness to the ends of the earth.

“Oh, yes! I want this”, said Michael.

Then the Angel with a bright light said: “When you are born, your life will be filled with travel to and fro across the earth. You will avoid those countries that speak the light, but there is darkness.” Little Michael was puzzled. “What is darkness?” he asked. “When you are born, you will discover what it is. You are to make our overseer Jesus’ promise become reality.”

“But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” – Acts 1:8

Then Little Michael rushed off to the door marked ‘Musical’. He rushed in and was halted by an angel, who asked: “What are you here for?” “The gift of music or singing or playing instruments...” before he could finish,

the angel stopped him and with a look of care he said: “Sorry Little Michael, all the gifts of singing and playing musical instruments are all gone. However, try that door over there.” Little Michael turned and saw a door marked ‘Musical Appreciation’. Little Michael ran and managed to obtain the very last musical appreciation talent. “Now I am ready to be enfleshed”, he said.

THE NOW:

Yes, I would love to have the ability to sing, play an instrument, and dance in tune with rhythmic music. However, the world needs to have those who do appreciate and enjoy music that is produced by others who received this talent. Without the listening appreciators, what then is the point of playing music? Both need each other.

As someone who appreciates an array of musical genres, I am constantly finding something I really enjoy and stick with this for a season before moving on. Instrumentals are the best and most pleasurable. Those with lyrics have my appreciation when it speaks to personal, relational, or political struggles. This leaves the field wide open. Allow me to unpack my eclectic relationship with music.

TRADITIONAL MUSIC:

Often when travelling from far north Circuits home, I would tune into SAFM with Richard Mwamba, whose whole show was dedicated to traditional music from all of Africa. Yes, I may not understand the lyrics, however, Richard was helpful and gave the meaning and context. I became somewhat proficient in recognising the country from which the song was birthed. One could hear the different styles from Mali, Senegal, the DRC, and South Africa.

I have my own compilation of traditional African music ranging from the distinctive voice of Salif Keita from Mali, whose back story is very interesting. He is from royalty who are not allowed to sing or produce music. Salif went counter-culture and is today a huge name throughout the worlds.

In South Africa I was privileged to see and appreciate AmaMpondo live at Durban City Hall, during the apartheid 80s. Their energy in both song and dance was mesmerising.



My appreciation grew and now includes, among others, Sona Jobeth (Gambia), Feila Kuta Maskandi, and amaPiano.

Someone described Hip Hop as opera music for this age. The point being that through music, it speaks of life as it is lived. The drama, et el.

House music: One of my favourites is DJ Sbu (especially ‘Remember When It Rains’).

Musical scores: Right at the end of the each of the Jason Bourne trilogy movies.

JAZZ:

It is said that if you don’t appreciate jazz when you are twenty-seven, that this could be a symptom of arrested development.

I have recently discovered Persian-Iranian Jazz music. Wow, the mix of traditional Persian, jazz music is quite outstanding.

A gem I discovered the other day, as I was searching for classical music, was the music of Black Mozart—a wonderful fusion of African jazz, blues, and classical music. If this does not touch your heart, then perhaps you may have gone to the wrong door in heaven as a foetus.

Hugh Masekele’s rendition of ‘Which Doctor’ is one of my favourites of all time. It is his damning commentary-song about the genocidal maniac King Leopold. Under his reign, 10 million Congolese lost their lives (Go read about this).

Sibongile Khumalo, who sadly passed away at aged 63, had a great voice. It is understood that the voice is an instrument with its own distinct sound, offering a well-rounded jazz rendition.

I played the music of a track which I kept singing (in flat minor), based on German Jazz musician Klaus Doldinger’s band, Passport, when my daughter was born in the wee hours of the morning, ‘There’s a new kid in town’,

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and then proceeded to phone everyone I knew to share the joyous moment... (I was living in Ireland at the time.)

The list can go on. When I get a chance, I love going to the Jazz Centre at UKZN. South Africa is rich with musical talent.

GOSPEL MUSIC

Question is: 'Why should the devil have all the good music?' – Song by Sir Cliff Richard.

My all-time favourite gospel band is the Blind Boys from Alabama. All the musicians are blind, but they can sing! They do a rendition of 'Amazing Grace' to the tune of the 'House of the Rising Sun'. They are arguably the pioneers of this genre of Gospel music.

I read in an article that so-called 'traditional churches' like the Methodists, especially the English services' must do what they present in an excellent way—do what you know with gusto and excellence. The assistance of a well-oiled choir is always needed to lead the congregation. If you get a chance, listen to 'Songs of Praise' produced by the BBC—the so-called traditional hymns with the depth of their theology will blow you away. Do what you do well. Stop competing with the mega churches, they do what they do well. Even if we disagree with their style and doctrine.

In churches that don't have a choir, make sure that there is at least a precentor who can lead the congregation and uplift the singing. Some congregations are blessed to have a minister who is a gifted singer—a person who went to the right door. If we do this well, young people may come to appreciate this worship.

"...as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."
– Ephesians 5:19-20

MUSICIANS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES.

You'll be surprised at the number of top singers and musicians who are challenged by mental illness. Listen to their lyrics, the music, the tempo. Are you able to reach the person inside of the song? What is he/she going through? I invite you to do some reading about the artist.

Some time ago I was driving home and I had ECR on very softly, when I heard this amazing song called 'Messy' by Nola Young. The lyrics were clearly indicating that she was struggling heavily. I googled her and read that Nola suffered from an intense form of bi-polar. Nola had channelled her condition through her music.

The psalmist needed these psalms to sing to soothe his soul. The Psalms are filled with moments of despair and pleading release. It is as though...

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
Jesus held on to these words as he hung on the cross in excruciating pain.

PLAY MUSIC WHEN YOU ARE TROUBLED:

So, when you're down and troubled, play music to soothe you. Be it traditional, jazz, gospel, or music where the singer is also going through downers—this often helps to know that you are not on your own.

In the biblical narrative in 1 Samuel 16:14-23, King Saul sought music to soothe his troubled spirit and David was summoned to play his Lyre. Whenever God's spirit came to Saul, David took the lyre and strummed a tune. Saul got relief from his terror and felt better.

For the sake of writing space and waning brain energy, I will not write about other genres like African American Robert Johnson (His story is enthralling—filled with mystery and intrigue. He died at the age of 27.), country and western, opera, heavy metal, psychedelic rock, pop music, electronic music by the likes of Tangerine Dream and the German group Amon Duul.

I have put together a compilation of musicians who all died at the age of 27. This is known as the '27 Club' Micasa's song, 'These Streets', is a joyful, uplifting song—it is this song that inspired the name of these articles—I have written about this in an earlier edition Another Dimension.

Having said all of this, there are long spells when I don't want to listen to music at all, and I am at peace with this.

Psalm 150

Praise God in his holy place.
Praise him in his mighty heavens.
Praise him for his mighty acts.
Praise him for his immense greatness.
Praise him with sounds from horns.
Praise him with harps and lyres.
Praise him with tambourines and dancing.
Praise him with stringed instruments and flutes.
Praise him with loud cymbals.
Praise him with crashing cymbals.
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Hallelujah!

"Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth."
– Psalm 96:1

CONFERENCE 2026 SERVICES



A STORY OF BELONGING: What Is To Prevent Me...?

— **By Rev. Charity Tozivepi-Nzegwu**

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



Do not tell me everyone belongs while some still learn to make themselves smaller in order to remain. Do not show me the policy if, in the room where decisions are made, one voice is heard as conviction and another as anger, one accent as educated and another as suspect, one body as leadership and another as disruption. When everyone is given the same, but only some were taught the rules, equality becomes a word covering an old arrangement.

“What is to prevent me?”

Perhaps it begins long before the door. In the shortlist where “fit” quietly means familiarity, in the classroom where confidence is praised in one child and punished in another, in the staff meeting where the person naming harm becomes the problem to be managed. Sometimes the barrier is not written down because it does not need to be. Everyone already knows how the room works.

We call it professionalism when we mean familiarity, fit when we mean comfort, merit when we recognise ourselves, inclusion when the centre still decides how much difference it can tolerate. That is why presence is not enough. A person can be in the photograph and still be absent from power.

“What is to prevent me?”

Scripture gives us that question through the Ethiopian eunuch, a man with learning, status, and experience, whose body the religious law he was reading had already excluded. He does not ask whether he is worthy. He asks what stands in the way. That is the question institutions fear because it

turns the gaze away from the excluded person and back towards the structure.

Who built the rule? Who benefits from it? Who has been exhausted trying to survive it? Why does truth become “tone” when it arrives from the wrong body? Why does challenge become “aggression” when power is finally named?

There is no superior image of God. No image made clearer by fluent English, academic ease, the right postcode, the right body, the right kind of mind. The image is already there before the assessment, before the diagnosis, before the interview panel, before the institution’s idea of who looks capable.

So do not ask people to prove they belong. Ask what belonging has been made to cost them.

“What is to prevent me?”

Look at the room. Look at who speaks and who is spoken for. Look at who makes the decision and who is thanked for their contribution. Look at who is told they are “not quite ready”, while somebody else is described as having potential. Look at who keeps leaving.

Then look at the barrier.

If our fingerprints are on it, repentance cannot be another statement. Repentance means moving it.

FELLOWSHIP OF GENERAL SECRETARIES OF CUC CHURCHES

On Monday 31 August, there was a meaningful gathering of General Secretaries from the CUC (Church Unity Commission), creating space for fellowship, relationship-building, mutual support, and prayer hosted by the MCSA at the Methodist Connexional Office.

Churches, share experiences of the nature and demands of their work, offer one another support, and pray together.

A beautiful reminder that ecumenical fellowship is strengthened when we walk, listen, learn, and pray together.

Pictured are:

- Rev. Dr Nioma Venter, General Secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church
- Fr Hugh O'Connor, General Secretary of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa (Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference)
- Rev. Dr George Marchinkowskie, General Secretary of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
- Rev. Bertram Swartz, General Secretary of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, was absent with apology.
- With Rev. Musi Losaba, General Secretary of the MCSA
- and Rev. Sikawu Makubalo, Director, Ecumenical Affairs and the CUC General Secretary.

The General Secretaries meet informally to strengthen relationships between themselves and their respective



MBILINI, NIKIWE MAVIS: The First Black Woman to be Ordained in the Methodist Church

By Prof. Rev. Simangaliso Kumalo

I never wanted to be a pioneer of women in ministry in the MCSA. I just wanted an opportunity to practice my calling. I simply had a burning desire to serve God as an ordained minister. That passion has remained with me. I did not manufacture it, nor did I invite it. Instead, it found me and I followed it.

Nikiwe Mavis Mbilini was the first black woman to be ordained in the MCSA. In that sense she was a pioneer who dared to face the triple oppression of patriarchy, racism, and poverty in the Methodist Church. Her experience was more complex than that of the Rev. Constance Oosthuizen, the first woman to be ordained, in the sense that although she also faced patriarchy, at least she was protected by her colour from racism and economic deprivation. Rev. Mbilini faced it all and she paid a big price for following her call. This is a price that will stay with her throughout her ministry and life.

She was the daughter of Mr Konile Kaiser and Mrs Grissel Mamara Mbilini. She was born on 12 July 1952 at Cofimvaba in the Eastern Cape. She received her early education from Mafateni Junior Secondary School. She later went to Clarkebury Institution at Engcobo. In 1972, whilst completing her practical teacher's course at Clarkebury Institution, she felt the call to ordained ministry. As expected, she reported these feelings to the Chaplain of the Institution who in turn reported the matter to the Rev. Jack Cook, who was the Warden of Deaconess Order. The reason was that at the time, women were not ordained in the MCSA, they could only serve in the Deaconess Order and there was no black person in the Order at the time. Rev. Cook travelled from Cape Town to Clarkebury Institution to meet with Mbilini. After stating the scenario to Mbilini, that it was impossible for her to be ordained in the MCSA, he then suggested that she at least be accepted in the Deaconess Order to be a Deaconess. She accepted what was offered to her, which was less than the position of an ordained minister. In 1973, Mbilini was sent to Emfundisweni Institution as a probationer Deaconess where she served at Faku Institution in the Pondoland area at Flagstaff, working with students. She faced lots of challenges, especially acceptance as a church leader by members of both the church and the community. People were not used to women preachers and so most of the oppression and negative response was overt and brutal. Very sexist and patriarchal remarks were thrown at her, even by men in the church where she was preaching, who just saw her as a beautiful woman who needed a man to make her a wife.

From 1974 to 1975, she was transferred by the Church to Edendale Circuit in Pietermaritzburg to work as a Deaconess. Again, the abuse by a male-dominated leadership, both at Circuit and denominational level,



continued. This was in spite of the fact that Edendale had very educated people in its ranks, but still the fact remained that she was a woman left her on the margins. From 1976-1978, she was sent to the Federal Theological Seminary (FEDSEM) for her theological training. This is because there was no institution for the training of deaconesses in South Africa. Conference made the decision for her to be trained at the Seminary with those who were training for the ordained ministry. At Seminary, she found only one woman colleague, the Rev. Charity Majiza, who was training for the Presbyterian ministry. She was the first and only Methodist woman at Seminary. Even here, the experiences of gender discrimination continued, coming from her own clergy colleagues, whom she had hoped would protect her.

Some colleagues found her to be a good colleague. For instance, Rev. Sydney Qangule remembered her as a good colleague at Seminary by saying that "We had a good time with her, and it was a blessing to be with her." Rev. Dan Nzimande also remembers her as "a beautiful woman colleague with striking presence at the Seminary." However, Rev.

Mbilini does not remember most of these positive feelings from her colleagues. For her, she remembers the pain and wounds inflicted on her because of her gender at the Seminary. She was then appointed to Harding and Port Shepstone Circuit where she started labouring in January 1979. This was after a struggle of finding a station for her. No Superintendent Minister was prepared to take her, even the Rev. Expraisses Sithole, who ended up taking her as a minister for Harding and Port Shepstone, had to defy discouragement from colleagues who felt she should be left without a station so as to discourage women from flooding the ministry. In 1980, she candidated for the ministry, thus making the move from being a Deaconess to the ordained ministry. She was ordained in the 1985 Conference, held in Bloemfontein under the Presidency of Rev. Ernest Baartman. One hundred and ninety years since the first Methodists arrived in South Africa in 1795, history was made when a black woman was ordained as a Methodist minister. Her ordination was not big news, as it was supposed to be. Not even the minutes of Conference nor *Dimension* picked up the significance of this event. It was done, dusted, and the Church moved on with its work.

Their patriarchal views confined women to domestic work, not participation in sacred activities, for the vocation belonged to men. Male colleagues argued that if Mbilini were to be stationed, this would have meant that women were now equal to men, and this was problematic. Ministers started influencing members of the congregation not to accept Mbilini as a Minister. This did not end within the premises of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, for it spread to other denominations.

Continues on page 20

People were told by their Ministers not to greet Mbilini and this made her life to be in danger. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa was insulted by other churches for having a female Minister, thus setting a bad precedent for other mainline churches. At the time it was only the Congregational and the Presbyterian Churches that ordained women. Unfortunately, these were smaller denominations and had ordained very few women by that time. The MCSA was already a big, powerful, and highly respected denomination that had members throughout the sub-region. So, her move to ordain a black woman was felt throughout the six countries of the Connexion.

She remembers that:

Congregations were also patriarchal because they preferred attending a service that was led by the male ministers. Members of the congregation avoided communion services that I was to lead. I always had few people in my services, but the numbers would be big if a male colleague was to conduct a communion service. Church members also found it difficult to address me as Reverend, mfundisi, and would rather call me mamfundisi, which really translated to a minister's wife, not a woman minister. They would even go to the extent of calling me Makoti Mfundisi to emphasize the fact that I was not a minister but a woman who happens to be a minister.

When she refused to be discouraged by the negative comments and treatment based on her gender, the congregations at Harding turned to ethnicity as a way of discriminating against her. They complained to her superintendent, Rev. Sithole, that, *asiliva leliXhosa thina*, "we do not understand this Xhosa." This was in spite of the fact that there were male Xhosa ministers around KwaZulu-Natal that they adored and celebrated, but suddenly they had problems with understanding her because of her language. She understood that as a way of objectifying and demeaning her because she was a woman, by using ethnicity. During the funerals, Mbilini was accused of being an arrogant person and when she entered, they looked down and talked with each other as though in sign language and their facial expressions conveyed a message that indicated that she was not welcomed.

In spite of the challenges that Mbilini encountered because of being a female minister, there were also good things that some people in the community appreciated about her. The area that she ministered in included the entire Harding area, which did not have a marriage officer. She was also the only woman minister recognised by the Department of Home Affairs. In this instance, therefore, people appreciated her, especially when she presided over wedding ceremonies, and they were moved by her speeches when addressing couples who were getting married.

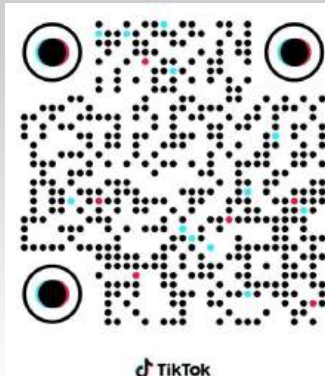
It was whilst busy with her work that she became pregnant.

She was impregnated by a senior leader in the Methodist Church who was married. She then agreed to apply for leave of absence from the Church in order to protect the minister who had impregnated her. This was an agreement between her and the one who had made her pregnant. So, in 1993 she moved out of the ministry into obscurity for over a decade and refused to divulge the name of the minister who impregnated her and he continued with his ministry in the Church. She got a job as a teacher in one of the local schools in her home area and Circuit, and her name was forgotten by the Church.

For a period of eleven years, the first black woman to be ordained in the Methodist Church was wiped out of the memory of the denomination, living in obscurity. No attempt was made by the leadership of the Church to look for her, rehabilitate, forgive, and restore her to the Church. In 2003, she applied to be re-instated into the ministry of the MCSA. When a pastoral commission asked her to narrate the whole reason behind her leave of absence, she decided to tell them that the minister who had impregnated her had died, just to continue protecting him. She was re-admitted into the ministry but at that time became a non-stipendiary and non-itinerant minister, which meant that she was of lower status in the ministerial ranks. She served as a local minister in her home Circuit, Hobhouse, for another ten years, until her retirement in 2014.

Even though she had been re-instated into the ministry, Mbilini remained on the margins of the MCSA in rural Transkei, unknown, unrecognised, unappreciated, stigmatised for having had a child out of wedlock, and almost lost to memory. Her experiences of rejection, sexual harassment, her need to protect those who harassed her and being left on the fringes of the Church are similar to those of most women ministers in the MCSA. Her legacy and resilience as one who pioneered ministry for black women in the Methodist Church has not been celebrated. It was only in 2017 that she was mentioned in a paper written by RS Kumalo on women ministers in the MCSA. This was followed by a paper published by Ntobeko Dlamini which mentioned her contribution. This essay is the first substantial contribution to honouring her legacy and bringing her back to memory. For as Margaret Lessing said, women tend to be wiped out of memory. The MCSA's story would never be complete unless we tell Nikiwe Mbilini's story of call, pain, and resilience. The fact that she bounced back from obscurity, claimed her position in the ministry for a decade, retired through her own decision, and found healing from what was almost a tragic end of ministry, is credit to her resilience and strength. It is with this in mind that her story must be remembered, told, and celebrated. She should not be remembered as a victim of patriarchy in the MCSA, but rather as a gallant and resilient black woman minister who paved the way for black women in the MCSA, paid the price for that bold decision, but triumphed in the end.

**CONNECT
WITH
THE
MCSA**



BEYOND DENOMINATIONAL BOUNDARIES: Women United In Prayer, Service, And Care

——— *By Tebogo Oepeng: Environmental Justice Desk*

In Mapetsana, an extension of Mokoena Village in Thaba Nchu, denominational boundaries took a back seat as women from more than 23 churches gathered under one roof for prayer, fellowship, and service.

The quarterly ecumenical gathering brings women from different Christian traditions together around a common conviction: when women pray together across denominational lines, they draw strength, encouragement, and spiritual renewal from one another.

For the women involved, ecumenism is not about erasing denominational identity, but about discovering what can be achieved when Christians focus on what unites them rather than what separates them.

Among those carrying this vision forward is General Secretary, Mrs.

Vicky Setlogelo, whose own journey tells a remarkable story of commitment. She joined the movement at the age of 30 and, now 75, has given 45 years of unbroken service.

Her journey represents more than longevity. It is a testimony to a ministry sustained through generations, demonstrating how commitment to prayer, fellowship, and service can become a lifelong vocation.

The movement's witness also extends beyond the prayer gathering. During its community outreach initiatives, the women donated toiletries to Boiketlo Old Age, situated next to Baratamia Special School for deaf and blind learners. Such initiatives demonstrate that their understanding of ecumenism extends beyond fellowship—prayer is translated into practical acts of compassion and care.

The gathering also embraced care for God's creation through tree planting, bringing environmental responsibility into the wider mission of the women's movement.

Known among themselves as "The Joseph Cloth," drawing on the biblical account in Genesis 37, the women have woven together prayer, fellowship, service, and practical action into a distinctive expression of Christian unity.

At a time when differences can easily become dividing lines, the women of Mapetsana offer another possibility: that denominational boundaries need not become barriers to Christian fellowship and service.

Their message is simple yet powerful—different churches, one faith; different traditions, one prayer; different identities, one shared commitment to serve God and community.



From left: Mrs. Florence Ntipe (Chairperson), Mrs. Motshegoa Bochele (Vice Chairperson), Mrs. Vicky Setlogelo (General Secretary), and Mrs. Mpai Seeco (Treasurer), members of "The Joseph Cloth", during the Mapetsana gathering in Thaba Nchu.



Tree planting on site.



Leaders from different inter-denominations collecting their indigenous trees.

CONNEXIONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Methodist Students' Society

Members of the Methodist Students' Society (MethSSoc) from across the Connexion gathered in the Highveld and Eswatini District from 7–9 August 2026 for the annual Connexional Spiritual Retreat (CSR). Hosted by the Gauteng Region at the MethSSoc NWU Branch, the retreat brought together students from different regions and branches for a time of spiritual renewal, fellowship, reflection, and discernment.

The retreat was held under the theme, "When the heavens call for everything, because what was buried still belongs to God," drawn from 1 Samuel 30:8.

Below are some reflections from the gathering:

"Just as how animals in the amazon of all types from herbivores, omnivores, and carnivores, all stop at the watering hole from all their wanderings and worry to have a drink of water, so have the Methodist students of this Connexion from all walks of life, come together in Vanderbijlpark to take a moment away from their wanderings and worries to retreat together in the presence of God. Indeed, this retreat has been a time where the aches of the day and worries of the heart were put on pause and we had a moment of wanting to sit with Jesus.

The retreat weekend has honestly been my moment of freedom from anxiety of the future of what may come and what successes or failures are awaiting my journey, as I took time to bask in the presence of old and new friends, fellowship and worship that I have begun to miss, and the joy of being a young person in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. The retreat may have not begun in the smoothest of gears but as we got on, we invited God, and truly he came and sat with us the whole weekend. Moments of praise and worship are testament to the fact that God was indeed within us. I am left with an awe of being in the presence and just reflecting on my faith and working on how is it with my soul." – *Brother Ntando Dladla*

"The MethSSoc Connexional Spiritual Retreat continues to prove itself as a beautiful and necessary space for young Methodists. It provides a platform where young people from different institutions of higher learning, regions, Districts, and backgrounds can come together as peers, united by their faith and their Methodist identity.

One of the most beautiful things about the retreat is witnessing young people freely express themselves in the presence of the Lord. There is something powerful about seeing students allow themselves to be vulnerable, to discern, to reflect deeply and, at times, simply immerse themselves in the Spirit. The retreat creates a space where young people can encounter God without feeling that their spirituality has to fit into one rigid expression.

At the same time, there is room for joy. Young people are able to sing, dance, laugh, and celebrate their faith together. There is a beautiful balance between the freedom to be young and expressive and the understanding that we are gathered as adults in the house of the Lord, conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of that sacred space. This balance is perhaps one of the things that makes the Spiritual Retreat so special: young people do not have to choose between being themselves and being deeply spiritual. They are given the space to bring their whole selves before God.

The increase in attendance was also particularly notable and commendable. In reflecting on this growth, I cannot ignore the influence of social media. Across different regions and branches, we have increasingly seen MethSSoc members sharing their services, worship, and fellowship online, particularly on platforms such as TikTok. Young people are seeing other young Methodists praising God, singing hymns, worshipping freely, and enjoying fellowship together.

Then imagine seeing all of that online and knowing that, at the Connexional Spiritual Retreat, these young people from across the country will come together in one place. It naturally creates anticipation. You would not want to miss it.

Social media has therefore become more than just a platform for sharing moments; it has become a tool for visibility, invitation, and connection. It gives young Methodists an opportunity to see what is happening beyond their own branches and regions and to recognise that they are part of something much bigger. I believe this visibility has contributed to the growing excitement around MethSSoc and its Connexional gatherings.

Another encouraging development has been the growing intentionality around our diversity. Over the years, concerns have often been raised that some of our Nguni-speaking siblings do not participate as much in singing Sesotho, Setswana, and other non-Nguni hymns. However, at this Spiritual Retreat, it was encouraging to witness young people intentionally participating in and learning hymns beyond their own linguistic backgrounds.

Again, social media may have played an important role in this. These platforms give us the opportunity to watch, listen, repeat, and learn from one another. A hymn that may once have felt unfamiliar can now be encountered repeatedly online before we even gather physically. By the time we meet at the retreat, we are more willing and prepared to sing with one another. In doing so, we are not only learning songs; we are learning one another.

Overall, it is nothing short of amazing to witness young people from different regions, Districts, institutions, and cultural backgrounds coming together in the house of the Lord. We come to worship, to grow spiritually, to learn from one another, and to build meaningful friendships—friendships that may very well last a lifetime.

The Connexional Spiritual Retreat reminds us of the beauty of the Methodist Students' Society. It reminds us that MethSSoc is more than an organisation on our respective campuses; it is a community of young people who are journeying together in faith. It is a space of worship, belonging, fellowship, growth, and friendship.

I sincerely hope and pray that the Connexional Spiritual Retreat continues for many years to come, so that even more young Methodists may have the opportunity to experience what it means to gather freely, worship wholeheartedly, encounter God deeply, and discover the beauty of being part of a Connexional student community.

For this beautiful concept that is MethSSoc, we can only thank God and pray that He continues to grow it from strength to strength" – *Brother Mandiluve Matiwane*

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CONNEXIONAL SPIRITUAL RETREAT MISSION WORK

Upon arrival, attendees gathered at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) for the first part of the CSR Mission Work, through the leadership of the Connexional Projects Officer (PO), Sister Asthandile Lenze.



MethSSoc, in collaboration with the Green Campus Initiative (GCI), took a bold step towards embodying the spirit of mission and service under the theme "Rooted to Flourish." As part of the initiative, five trees were planted at VUT to commemorate the five years of the Ready to Help Campaign. Vegetables were also planted as a practical contribution towards supporting students and helping to address some of the challenges they face in their daily lives. Aiming to create a better campus life where food security is not a luxury accessible only to those who can afford it, but a basic need that every student should be able to access with dignity. One of the focus areas from the 2025 Mission Congress.

The Connexional Projects Officer encouraged Methodist students and all those gathered to remain grounded in their faith and in their relationships with one another, emphasising: "Stay Rooted in faith. Stay Rooted in Christ. Stay Rooted in one another." The message served as a reminder that mission is not only about proclamation but also about caring for creation, responding to the needs of communities, and creating spaces where people can flourish.

The second part of the CSR Mission Work took place through collective engagement and partnership. The Connexional Executive Committee, with the assistance of the Connexional Methodist Children and Youth Unit and the Connexional Women's Manyano, handed over 32 food parcels and 170 sanitary towels to students from VUT and NWU.

This act of service sought to communicate to students that MethSSoc is present, sees their struggles, and cares for their wellbeing. The initiative demonstrated the Society's commitment to a practical expression of Christian faith, which is one that responds to the realities faced by students and seeks to embody Christ's love through tangible acts of care and solidarity.

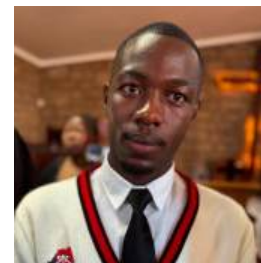
CONNEXIONAL METHODIST STUDENTS' SOCIETY EXECUTIVE

Congratulations to the newly inducted Executive of the Methodist Students' Society, who will assume office on 1 January 2027.

Methodist Students' Society Connexional Executive:

President: Brother Buhlebuzile Xongwana
Deputy President: Sister Kholeka Msomi
Secretary General: Brother Bandile Dlamini
Deputy Secretary General: Sister Lahlumile Hoboshe
Treasure General: Brother Mivuyo Mgandlela
Public Relations Officer: Sister Itumeleng Maphisa
Projects Officer: Sister Amahle Ntuli
Gender and Transformation Officer: Sister Nerry Gxabhu
Religion and Theology Officer: Brother Oratile Tawana

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GRADUATION SESSION: Beyond the Degree



During the 2026 Connexional Spiritual Retreat of the Methodist Students' Society, an intentional moment of honouring and celebrating graduates within the entity took place.



As an entity of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa's Children and Youth Unit, MethSSoc is located within institutions of higher learning and training. It was therefore fitting that the retreat created a dedicated space to celebrate those who have completed their academic journeys.

The graduation session, themed "Beyond the Degree," was led by Sister Nerry Gxabhu. This was not simply a session on graduation, but an intentional space where Sister Nerry reminded all attendees that graduation is not the end of one's journey; it is the beginning of a greater responsibility.

Drawing from Colossians 3:3, Sister Nerry challenged graduates to recognise their collective responsibility to support, mentor, encourage, and uplift one another beyond university life. A degree may qualify one for a profession, but it is how that qualification is used to serve God, humanity, and society that gives it true value and purpose.

Graduates were encouraged to remain grounded in their Christian identity and to see their achievements not merely as personal accomplishments, but as opportunities to make a meaningful difference in their communities, workplaces, and society.

Congratulations to all the MethSSoc graduates! May the Good Lord bless you as you step beyond the degree and into new spaces of service, leadership, and purpose. May your knowledge become a tool for transformation, your achievements become a blessing to others, and your Christian witness remain at the centre of all that you do. Go beyond the degree. Go beyond yourself. Go and serve.

MOLOPO DISTRICT ACCOMPANIMENT TRAINING OF TRAINERS

A comprehensive leadership and mission equipping programme was held for trainers within the Molopo District of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA).

The purpose of the training of trainers was to ground the leaders in the MCSA's organisational structures in theological foundations, biblical stewardship, and servant leadership, empowering them to effectively mobilise their local communities toward the church's broader vision of a Christ-healed Africa. The facilitators were the Director of Mission Unit Rev. S Waqu, accompanied by Rev. Bosman, and the General Treasurer Mr Rannoi Sedumo.



A VISIT THAT PLANTED HOPE: Women's Manyano Honours Elders, Widows, and A Living Legacy

—By *Tebogo Oepeng: Environmental Justice Desk*

Women's Month is not only a time to celebrate women, but also an opportunity to remember those who have faithfully carried the Church through generations. This spirit came alive when the Mokala-Montle District President of the Women's Manyano, Mrs. Annikie Molise, undertook a series of visits to elderly women, supernumeraries, and widows of ministers, bringing with her a message of honour, prayer, remembrance, and hope.

Among those whom Mrs. Molise sought to reach was Mrs. Malotle, the first President of the Women's Manyano of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). Although Mrs. Molise could not meet her personally, the effort to reach out to one of the women who helped shape the ministry of the Women's Manyano was itself a meaningful expression of respect for the pioneers of the organisation.

The outreach continued with a courtesy visit to former Bishop Rev. Jongi Mdaka and his wife, Mrs. Nokwezi Mdaka, in Bloemfontein on Sunday, 9 August 2026. The visit was more than a social call; it was an acknowledgement of the contribution of those who have served the Church and whose lives remain part of its living history.

During the visit, prayer and fellowship created a moment of connection between generations of Church leadership. Mrs. Molise's presence

demonstrated that while the Church continues to move forward, it must never forget those whose service helped lay its foundations.

The outreach also extended to supernumeraries and widows of ministers, recognising the women who have stood alongside ministers and, in many cases, carried the responsibilities of family and ministry through difficult seasons.

Among them was Mrs. Siziwe Weza, widow of the late Rev. Boy Weza. Her presence gave particular meaning to the environmental dimension of the visit. A tree was planted at her home, turning a moment of fellowship into a living symbol of remembrance and continuity.

The planting of the tree was significant because a tree does not simply mark a moment; it grows, provides shade, bears witness to passing generations, and can continue long after those who planted it are gone. In this sense, the tree becomes a living memorial—a symbol that ministry, love, and legacy can continue to bear fruit.

The tree-planting also connected the Women's Manyano's pastoral outreach with the work of the Environmental Justice Desk (EJD) of the Mokala-Montle District. The EJD has been encouraging the Church to move from speaking about care for God's creation to practical action through the planting and nurturing of indigenous trees.

This collaboration demonstrates that environmental justice is not separate from the Church's ministry to people. Caring for creation can take place alongside caring for the elderly, remembering Church pioneers, supporting widows, and strengthening relationships across generations.

The words of Jesus in John 15:4–5, reminding His followers to remain in Him so that they may bear fruit, offer a fitting reflection for these encounters. A Church that remembers its roots is better positioned to bear fruit for generations to come.

The visits by Mrs. Molise, the Mokala-Montle District President of the Women's Manyano, therefore carried a message greater than the events themselves: the Church remembers. The Church honours. The Church cares. And the Church continues to plant for the generations yet to come.

In a season dedicated to celebrating women, these encounters remind us that some of the most powerful expressions of honour are not found in grand ceremonies, but in a visit, a prayer, a listening ear, a hand extended in fellowship—and, sometimes, in the planting of a tree.

A visit planted hope. A tree planted memory. And together, they planted a legacy.

CONFERENCE 2026 SERVICES

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
RELOCATED AND REPOSITIONED FOR MISSION & MINISTRY - ANCHORING IN PRAYER

136TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
MEMORIAL SERVICE
16TH SEPTEMBER 2026
John Wesley Society,
Mthatha Central Mission Circuit
Mthatha

LIVE STREAMING
Service will be streamed live on
Facebook and YouTube

Preacher **Rev Mavis Mbilini**

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
136TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Introduction to
BIBLE STUDIES
WED | 16TH SEPTEMBER 2026 | 16H00
TSN Gqubule Methodist Church
Mthatha

50 Years of Ordaining Women
A JOURNEY OF CELEBRATION

BOOK REVIEW: CELEBRATING A JOURNEY OF FAITH, RESILIENCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

—By Rev. Musi Losaba – General Secretary

On 29 August 2026, Mr Lekitlane Reginald Mutsi, former Lay Leader of the Northern Free State and Lesotho District, accomplished entrepreneur and philanthropist, launched his autobiography, *Walking on Thorns to Success: An Entrepreneurial Autobiography*.

The occasion was not only a celebration of his remarkable personal journey, but also an opportunity to reflect on entrepreneurship, economic empowerment and the responsibility to build thriving communities. Guest speaker Mr Bonang Francis Mohale, a prominent South African businessman, academic, thought leader and social justice advocate, challenged those gathered to develop a greater consciousness of local and global events and their impact on everyday life. He emphasised that meaningful economic progress does not always require a big beginning, encouraging people to recognise and harness viable economic activities such as stokvels as stepping stones towards wealth creation. He also stressed the importance of constructive collaboration, mentorship and learning from others as essential ingredients for sustainable growth and success.

Walking on Thorns to Success: An Entrepreneurial Autobiography does not merely tell a story—it disrupts comfort, it interrogates excuses, and it calls us to account.

In the life of Reginald Lekitlane Mutsi, we do not just see a man who rose—we see what becomes possible when discipline defeats despair, when purpose overcomes pain, and when a human being refuses to be defined by limitation. From the dusty paths of Marquard to the boardrooms of enterprise, this is a journey that refuses to romanticise struggle—but insists that struggle must produce something. And here is the prophetic challenge this book places before us:

We cannot continue to live in a society where we celebrate survival but do not pursue transformation. We cannot continue to speak of inequality, unemployment, and exclusion as if they are distant realities—when they are the daily bread of our communities. We cannot continue to inherit the language

of oppression without cultivating the discipline of liberation.

This book exposes something uncomfortable: that while systems have failed many, resignation has also imprisoned many. And so it calls us—not gently, but urgently—to rise beyond blame, beyond passivity, and beyond fear. The foreword reminds us that this is a life forged in adversity, anchored in faith, and sustained by values. But today, I want to say: those values are not for admiration—they are for imitation.

Integrity is not optional in a corrupt age. Discipline is not negotiable in an undisciplined economy. Courage is not a luxury in a fearful society. If we are serious about transformation—real transformation—then it must begin here: with the transformation of the self. Because no nation rises above the character of its people.

And so this book becomes prophetic. It speaks to the young person who is waiting for opportunity: Stop waiting—start building. It speaks to the leader who has grown comfortable: Comfort is the enemy of calling. It speaks to communities trapped in cycles of dependency: You have more power than you are using. And it speaks to all of us: What are you doing with what you have?

Mr Mutsi's life reminds us that economic participation is not an abstract idea—it is a disciplined practice. That entrepreneurship is not merely about profit—it is about dignity. That success is not measured only by accumulation—but by contribution.

And here is where the challenge deepens: If your success does not transform others, it is incomplete. If your growth does not uplift your community, it is insufficient.

If your faith does not move you to action, it is shallow. This is a call to involvement.

A call to build businesses that employ. A call to mentor those who come after us.

A call to invest not only in profit, but in people.

A call to become agents of change—

in our homes, in our communities, in our nation.

Because transformation is not coming—it must be created. Do not treat this book as an event. Treat it as an encounter. Do not buy it as a souvenir. Buy it as a tool. Read it. Wrestle with it. Allow it to disturb you. Allow it to provoke you. Allow it to push you out of comfort into commitment.

May this book not only travel far—but work deeply.

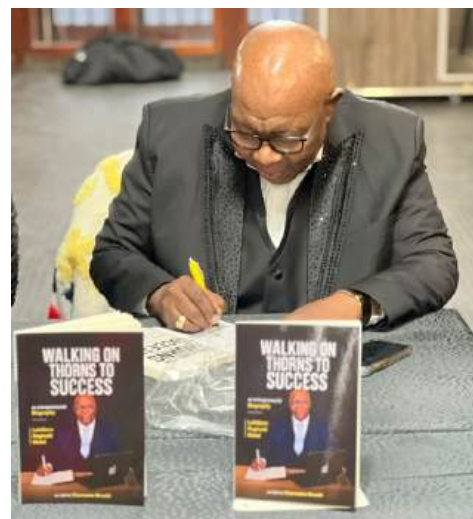
May it awaken those who are asleep in comfort.

May it strengthen those who are weary in struggle.

And may it ignite a movement of people who understand that grace is not an excuse for inaction—but the power to act.

Congratulations on this remarkable work.

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MESSAGE OF SUPPORT

by Rev. ODD Mmutle

We celebrate not only the launch of a book, but the life and journey of a remarkable man—a life marked by faith, entrepreneurship, courage, perseverance, service and generosity.

But before anything else, allow me to congratulate our beloved Buccaneers! Once again, we have conquered Sekhukhune United—and twice in two weeks! Pirates 3, Sekhukhune United 0! What a way to begin the celebration!

But tonight, our focus is not football. Tonight, we celebrate a dream that has become a reality and a life that has become an inspiration to many.

This book is more than a collection of pages. It is a testimony. It brings together the reflections of people who have walked alongside the author, worked with him, known him and been touched by his life.

And what emerges is a powerful picture of a man who understands that success is not simply about what we achieve, but what we do with what God has entrusted to us.

His journey reminds us that true wealth is not measured only by what we accumulate, but also by what we give. Success is not merely about how high we rise, but about how many people we lift as we rise.

At the heart of this story is stewardship: using one's gifts, resources, influence and opportunities in the service of God, the Church and humanity.

Tonight, as we celebrate this achievement, we also honour the women among us, particularly as we come to the close of Women's Month. To all the women here tonight: we see you, we honour you and we celebrate you.

And in a special way, we remember the author's late mother. A mother's influence does not end with her passing. The values she taught, the sacrifices she made, the prayers she prayed and the love she gave continue to live through her children. Tonight, we honour her memory and recognise the role she played in shaping the life we celebrate.

Every meaningful journey has its thorns. As Matshona Dhlwayo reminds us:

"Thorns do not keep a rose from blooming, neither should obstacles keep you from success."

That is perhaps one of the great lessons of this book.

There will always be obstacles. There will be disappointment, doubt, setbacks and seasons when progress seems painfully slow. But obstacles do not have to determine the outcome of our lives.

The lesson is simple: start, persevere, remain teachable, and do not give up.

We can easily become trapped by procrastination, excuses, fear, the need for approval, or simply the comfort of where we are. But purpose requires movement. Faith requires courage. And meaningful success requires perseverance.

As Benjamin Franklin famously said:

"If you would be remembered, write a book worth the reading or live a life worth the writing about."

Tonight, we celebrate someone who has given us both: a life worth writing about and now a book worth reading.

To the author, congratulations. May this book travel far beyond this room. May it inspire those who are discouraged, challenge those who have become comfortable, encourage those facing obstacles, and remind those who are ready to give up that their story is not over.

And to all of us gathered here, may we remember:

The thorns may be real, but so is the rose.

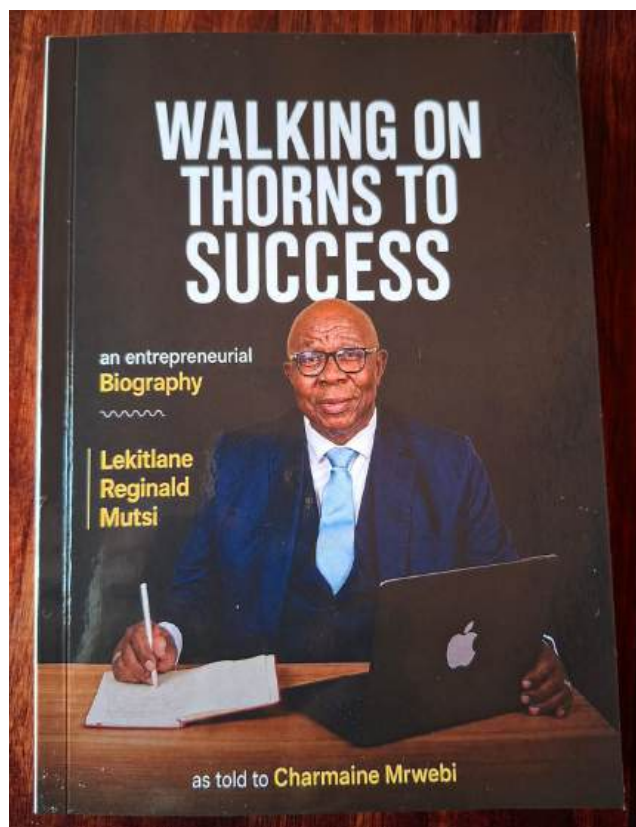
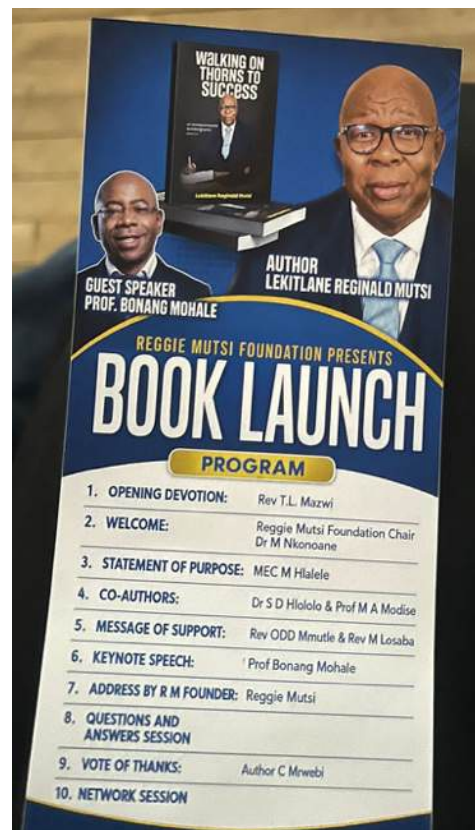
The obstacles may be many, but so is our potential. The journey may be difficult, but the purpose is worth pursuing.

When faith drives our purpose, when service

shapes our success, and when God remains at the centre of our journey, our achievements acquire a meaning far greater than ourselves.

Congratulations to the author. Congratulations to the family. And congratulations on the birth of this book.

May God bless the author, bless this book, and bless all who read it.



IMPORTANT DATES IN SEPTEMBER – YOUTH MONTH

September	01 Sept – 04 Oct	Church Unity Commission Season of Creation	
September	14-19	Ordinands' Retreat	Clarkebury District
September	14-19	Connexional Executive, 136 th MCSA Annual Conference	Clarkebury District
September	20	MCSA Ordination Service	Clarkebury District
September	21	World Day of Peace	
September	26	Connexional Women's Fellowship Youth Summit	HESWA District
September	30	District Treasurers and District Trust Properties Secretaries Consultation	Virtual

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY

Ordinary Time	Liturgical Colour: Green
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	
Proper 20A – 20 September, 2026 Exodus 16:2-15 OR Jonah 3:10-4:11 – Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45 OR Psalm 145:1-8 – Philippians 1:21-30 – Matthew 20:1-16	
Proper 21A – 27 September, 2026 Exodus 17:1-7 OR Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32 – Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16 OR Psalm 25:1-9 – Philippians 21:1-13 – Matthew 21:23-32	
Proper 22A – 04 October, 2026 Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 OR Isaiah 5:1-7 – Psalm 19 OR Psalm 80:7-15 – Philippians 3:4b-14 – Matthew 21:33-46	
Proper 23A – 11 October, 2026 Exodus 32:1-14 OR Isaiah 25:1-9 – Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23 OR Psalm 23 – Philippians 4:1-9 – Matthew 22:1-14	

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Sibusiso Sangweni
Rev. Synod Siswana
Rev. Don Doran Dabula
Rev. Trevor David Sadler
Rev. Arthur Thembinkosi Makenanda
Rev. Brenda Leigh Timmer

*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.*

