UCCSA Executive Meets in Kuruman

The Executive Committee of the UCCSA met at the Kuruman Moffat Mission from 23-26 March 2010.

UCCSA President - Rev. H. Pillay, presided during the meeting

In his address to the Executive the General Secretary Rev. Dr. Prince Dibeela said.

“We are also meeting at a special place in the life of our Church. Many of us have been here many times before because this is a place of our pilgrimage.

We have to give thanks to God for giving us this sacred space, for moments when it has been a site of struggle, for the women, men and children who have laboured here for the last two hundred years. In particular we should pay tribute to those who have not been acknowledged by history for their work from this place.

We honour Thomas Mebalwe who rescued David Livingstone from being killed by a lion and later cooperated with the latter and Evangelist Paulo Molefane in planting the first Church in present day Botswana. We pay homage to Mary Moffat the matriarch of this place, who was a hard worker and provided the ministry of hospitality to the missionaries who were sent by the LMS and to those who returned from the hinterland, often tired and dejected. At this place they found rest and their faith was rekindled.

We give thanks to the African missionaries who accompanied their white counterparts on their evangelistic journeys. Sehunelo, who, together with David Livingstone, planted the first church among the Bangwato in 1859. Mogatsa Makgasane who accompanied the Prices and Willowmores on a mission journey to Linyanti in Southern Zambia.

We should also give thanks for God to Maphakela Lekalake whose life was devoted to serving God and was the first Motswana ever to be ordained to the ministry of the word and sacrament. The mission will be celebrating the centenary of his ordination next year.

It is also fitting that we give thanks to God for the life and witness of Steve de Gruchy who also walked and lived in these hallowed grounds. Our prayer is that God may raise men and women of his courage, intellect and vivaciousness in living out the gospel.”

Extracts of the General Secretary’s Address to Executive!

“This is our first meeting since the 35th Assembly, which was held in Molepolole, Botswana. The Assembly was a special moment that evoked a sense of urgency in our witness as a church. In 2006 we embraced the Vision Plan, which has by and large been well received, despite the usual doubters and detractors. However, the Assembly once again stated in no uncertain terms the need for us to continue with the key areas of the Vision plan which are focusing on building humanizing relationships (in the midst of polarization), mission and evangelism, spirituality of lifelong learning, the quest for justice (in a world where discrimination in all forms is rampant), enabling the participation of those who have been marginalized such as women ministers, youth, children and people with disabilities. The Assembly called upon us to be much clearer and unambiguous in our prophetic witness. We have to devise ways of speaking-out and also exercising a ministry of accompaniment and presence among those who are struggling and oppressed.”

The General Secretary continued his address by raising issue of great importance for us as members of the UCCSA to consider and be aware of.

Reviewing the structures of the UCCSA

“One of the resolutions of the Assembly was for the leadership of the Church to engage in a review process of our structures in order to ensure their effectiveness in our mission practice. This is a timely resolution, which coincides with the call for the UCCSA to hold a discussion that will delineate our missiology for this time. The Mission Conference is scheduled for August later this year. However, in order to prepare for this important conference in the life of our Church I wish to propose that we engage ecumenical partners to assist us in reviewing and auditing the effectiveness of our structures. It may be a valuable exercise to have our ecumenical neighbours visit different synods, regions and local churches to see/hear, judge and make suggestions of how we might act as we move forward as a denomination. These could be members of sister churches from the Council for World Mission who could also share with us their own experiences.

Although the Vision Plan declares that ‘we are a church called and committed to be a caring and inclusive community that bears testimony to the fullness of life in Christ...’ there is
often a disconnect between this and the way we operate. The fragmentation between the denomination and its courts is a concern. For example, the way we operate the structure of the UCCSA is ecclesiologically problematic in that it puts emphasis on hierarchy, autonomy and bureaucracy. We have an opportunity through this exercise to seek other models of operating than the current system which is costly and frustrating. The kgotla ecclesiological model is something we could explore, which would mean that there is connectedness in the way we do things as a denomination. The Kgota model would mean that there is connectedness between the regions, synods and the denomination. For instance, if we had a disciplinary committee that all the time deals with conflicts and is composed of members from synods and the denomination. When conflict or trouble arises within a Church the complaint would go directly to such a ‘Disciplinary Team’ in order to deal with the matter it gets out of hand. The region where the conflict is could nominate a person to join the disciplinary team. This model of working would short-circuit the long-winded journey from local church-region-synod-UCCSA, whilst the conflict worsens. If this model proves to be efficacious then it could become the guiding principle in organizing the entire life of the Church.

Part of the difficulty with the way we operate at the moment is that some courts of the denomination take decisions that contradict the theology and vision of the denomination. We cannot claim to be one Church when we do not operate with the same ethical and theological vision.

Some of the difficulties of our current structure became manifest in the roll out of the Vision Plan. Seen individually our Synods are very thinly staffed and clearly struggle to implement some of the programmes they are assigned. However, if there was to be a collective approach to the mission of the church then we would have between us a team of at least twenty people! This way we would have shared skills in the area of missiology and mission practice, administration, pastoralia, report writing, finance management, ecumenism and leadership training. However, as long as we operate in an uncoordinated and disjointed way then we will remain weak and frustrated.

Further, I wish to underscore the point I made above which is that autonomy is about self-interest in contrast to mission which is always about the other. We therefore have to re-visit some of our traditional notions in the knowledge that ‘God has yet more light to reveal to the Church.’

Developing the Mission Council
My vision is of a Mission Council that is strong and missiologically competent. There is a lot of enthusiasm and passion in the current team and it is my hope that they will take us beyond our horizons. This is especially important in that the Mission Council works directly with the children, youth, women, men, people with disability, the elderly and the women at the well. It ought therefore to be the life-blood of the church in terms of its practice. We have to provide resources and space in order for those charged with spearheading our participation in God’s Mission to do so with freedom and confidence.

We also have to give the Mission Council access to our local churches, regions and synods so that they can be a flurry of missional activities throughout the denomination. I am glad to note that there is an effort between the Synod Mission Convenors and the UCCSA Mission Council leadership to work closely together. We do however, have to encourage the Synods leadership to leave the Mission council programmes to the elected or appointed people. We have blockages and therefore frustrations in the system where those in office often hoard all the work and the resources and in the process kill the enthusiasm of our mission practitioners. Where resources are designated for mission work it is a matter of good governance that it be disclosed to the Mission Council.

2010 Football Event and the Church
In the months of June and July South Africa will be hosting this major event. However, this is an event for all Africans. In December we sent out a pastoral letter with ideas of what churches might do to extend hospitality to the visitors who will be in our countries at that time. It is important that we do not just think of overseas visitors coming especially to South Africa at that time. With the memory of xenophobic attacks still fresh in our minds we have this event as an opportunity to welcome the stranger among us. Perhaps we should be encouraging our churches and regions to invite football lovers from Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola to share this event with them. We too can host our regional neighbours for the World Cup. Through such an invitation they could work out a programme that includes watching soccer on the screens, sightseeing, worship, discussions and volunteering.

As the UCCSA we should also encourage our local churches to keep an open door policy during the world cup. There will be many people who might become victims of crime, human trafficking, or who may just get lost and need assistance. The world cup is an opportunity for us to welcome the stranger and to share the warmth and love of Christ to those who may be far from home and distressed.

Whilst it is wonderful that the world cup is being held on African soil, it however raises some important concerns for us. For example there is a concerted effort in South Africa to ‘clean the cities’ which has led to the demolition of churches and homes of poor people especially in Cape Town. The World Cup is also marketed as a big corporate event that excludes the poor such as hawkers and informal traders from sharing its benefits. It seems it is only those with big capital that are being catered for by the FIFA transnational corporation. We have to participate with others in recording the collective knowledge from our experience of the world cup in order to share it with future hosts such as Brazil.

The hosting of the Soccer World Cup has demonstrated the financial capacity of South Africa. The country was able to commit close to 20 billion Rand from its public purse to build world class stadia. We should be able to call on the political leaders to commit a similar amount of resources within the same time period to provide houses, clean water and schools to the poor in South Africa.”

Prince Dibeela (General Secretary)
The Executive Committee met at the Moffat Mission in Kuruman, South Africa on 22\textsuperscript{nd} to 26\textsuperscript{th} March 2010. This was the first meeting of the Executive Committee since the Assembly in Botswana. The mood of expectancy that something new and greater is about to happen in the UCCSA was abundant. We started with Bible Studies as a foundation for each day's business. We were inspired by studies of the implications of lent for our witness and struggle as followers of Jesus.

As it is the custom, the UCCSA Officers travelled through the host region, Teemane, on a pastoral visit. They visited the churches in Postmsburg, Dingleton, Bothithong circuit and Kimberly. These visits set the context for our meeting as we heard of the struggles of rural communities, the impending relocation of the mining community of Dingleton to Kathu and the poverty of our people.

Our Officers visited one of the historic places where missionary work by the LMS among the Griqua (Hottentots) people was started. This was an emotional journey to a place that has been unknown to us and has been in the hands of a private person all these years. It was an exciting experience as we were taken around the ruins by Captain Adam Kok v wherein we visited the graveyard of the missionaries and the old stone church that was completed by Rev. John Bartlett in 1831. We are thankful for re-discovering the suppressed history of the LMS work with the Griqua people. The UCCSA is in the process of re-claiming this property for the future mission of the church among the Griqua people.

We were saddened by the reality of poverty experienced by our retired ministers and ministers' widows. The executive has expressed distress at the failure of many of our Churches to pay adequate pension contributions for our ministers. We cannot claim to be a justice church when in fact we do not have justice at the heart of our employment system.

We listened to the presentation of Ecumenical Service for Social Transformation, ESSET. The presentation by Mrs Thembela Miranda Njenga, Executive Director of ESSET made us introspect and realise how little connection we are making as a church with the world. Many questions were raised such as “Is God inside or outside the church?” We realised again that Church leaders tend to be disconnected to the concerns and struggles of the poor. The challenge of ESSET was particularly pertinent and filled with possibilities for social engagement around the World Cup. We felt that the church of Jesus Christ must be about the struggles of the poor if it is going to find salvation.

The Executive discussed the structures of the UCCSA and the disconnect they create between our different courts. The trouble with autonomy, bureaucracy and hierarchy that are
Some of the Issues Executive Discussed:

Children at Communion
The Theological Commission is currently working on a booklet to assist those churches, which wish to admit children at Holy Communion. Since this will quite a paradigm shift for many people in our local churches it is important that we engage in a teaching ministry as part of welcoming children to the table of our Lord. The document under preparation is a simple one based on a question-answer form. It addresses questions of theology, tradition and practicality. Some of the questions/areas addressed by the booklet include the following:

a) Children won’t understand the significance of the sacrament
b) Is Holy Communion not for members only?
c) Do children really want to partake in the Holy Communion?
d) Won’t children be a Disturbance?
e) We have not done this before, so why now]

People with Disabilities in the Church
The Theological Commission has been working on a theological position on the place of people with disability in our Church. Originally the focus of this paper was on ‘people with mental disability’ however, it has now been broadened to include people with disability in general. The Commission has discussed among other things the following:

- Language we often use regarding people with disabilities. We often talk about ‘these’ or ‘them’ which is quite demeaning.
- The Commission is also concerned that people with disability are not represented in the decision making structures of the Church.
- It is also important that we should in the paper explain what we mean by disability as it includes a wide range of areas that we do not often regard as disabilities.
- We should talk about access of programmes and structures within the Church for people with disabilities.
- We should also pay some attention to the fact that many people, including ministers, suffer lifestyle induced disabilities including depression, suicidal tendencies, heart disease, diabetes and liver diseases. Some of the reasons for these kinds of disabilities include social factors such as loss of a job, trauma, poverty and abuse.

The paper should also build its theological content on Biblical material especially Luke’s particular interest in the healing ministry of Jesus.

UCCSA Youth & United Free Church of Scotland visit
While South Africa is gearing up for 2010 the UCCSA youth we preparing for 2011 in Scotland. The UCCSA Yoputh has been invited by the United Free Church of Scotland to have a group of young people from UCCSA going to Scotland to work along side with a group of young people from the UF church. This visit would be for 3weeks serving God In a variety of setting thought Scotland. The youth would work in a partnership as one big or several smaller teams in projects suggested and supported by UF congregation.

Application forms will be sent to the Regions to apply to be a participant on this visit. A selection process involving the Synod and the UCCSA Central Office will be put in place to ensure a balanced and well prepared group.

Successful applicants will be informed by March 2011.

Methius Moyo Fund
We thank all Synods, Regions, Local Churches and individuals who have so graciously donated to the Methius Moya Fund.

This fund has been administered by the UCCSA Central office. It has helped Rev Moyo to receive treatment and other procedures. These is already a remarkable difference in Rev. Moyo's appearance.

UCCSA Minister Appointed New General Secretary for Botswana Council of Churches
Rev. Mosweu Simane a UCCSA Minister from the Botswana Synod and a former UCCSA Mission Council Convener has been appointed the new General Secretary of the Botswana Council of Churches.

We wish Rev. Simane well in his new position. We pray that God grant him wisdom and courage as he take up this new responsibility.

Passing On Of Mrs. Beukes.
During the meeting of the UCCSA Executive we reived the sad news of the passing of Mrs. Beukes, the wife of Rev. Cornelius Beukes the Moderator of the Nambia Synod.

Both Rev. and Mrs Beukes has served the UCCSA for a very long time in different way. They have just recently moved to Namibia to retire.

Please keep rev. Beukes and his family in your prayers.
Members of the Teemane at Opening Service

Local Church Youth Carrying The Bible at the Opening Service.

Children from Wrenchville Church doing a Spiritual dance during the Opening Service.

Postmasburg Church Choir During the Opening Service

Mrs. Cathy Bott – Children’s Ministry Convener

Esmenia – Youth Representative from Mozambique.

Esmenia was a participant in the 2009 Youth Development Programme. She attended Executive as part of the Mozambique delegation. The only delegation with a Youth Representative who is a woman.

Rev. Annalie Brandt from Namibia.

Rev. Brandt is the first ever woman ministers serving as UCCSA TMC Director.
Leadership Academy News

Preacher’s Course Graduation 2009
The Preachers’ Course graduation ceremony was held at Kuruman Moffat Mission on the 21st November 2009. A total of 121 preachers were presented with the Preacher’s Course certificates. Of these there were 57 women and 64 men. They came from our centres in Windhoek, Port Elizabeth, Bulawayo, Balaza, KwaZulu-Natal, Kagiso and Kuruman. Kuruman caters for the Gordonia, North West and Teemane regions. The Guest speaker was the Rev Joey Naika, UCCSA Mission Council Convener. The event was a colourful and joyous occasion for friends and family.
This year’s graduation will be held on the 20th November at Kuruman Moffat Mission.

Preacher’s Course Class of 2010
This year has seen the addition of Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Francistown, Okhahandja and East London to the centres that we had last year. The new centres give us a more balanced picture of the UCCSA. We are also beginning to strike a gender balance, youth and diversity balance. The more we can bring different people together the more we can strengthen the family feeling throughout the UCCSA.

Undergraduate and Honours degree candidates
Revs Felicia Ramaribana and Salvador Macule (Mozambique) have started their Bachelor of Theology Honours degrees at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. They are full time residential students at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the UKZN.

Rev Veronica Kakaza (South Africa) has started her BA (Hons) Practical Theology degree at the University of Pretoria. Rev Aaron Mompati (Botswana) will most likely start his BA (Hons) Practical Theology degree in Practical Theology with the University of Pretoria in August this year.

Candidates for assistance for Doctoral studies
The Revs Arthur LeRoux, Fred Matthews and Denzil Jacobus are busy with their doctoral studies. They are studying with Free State and Stellenbosch Universities respectively.

Nine new courses
We are in the process of setting up new courses to cover a wide range of subjects which are all designed to consolidate a culture of life-long learning throughout the UCCSA. These courses range from Church Administration, Deacon’s training, Public Witness, Community Organizing, Children’s Ministry, Music ministry as well as Sign Language training. They also include a special course called ‘Caressing Your Soul’ This course comes in the form of a retreat and aims to help ministers to relax and re-charge themselves!

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ST. JOHN’S UNITED CHURCH
(Congregational & Presbyterian)

VACANCY FOR A FULL TIME MINISTER
Applications are invited for the above vacant position.

The successful incumbent will:

1. Be required to:
   - lead the church (St. John’s United Church) and guide in all matters of the faith;
   - preach the Word of God;
   - administer the Sacraments;
   - exercise the pastoral office;
   - visit all members and adherents, and
   - generally build the CONGREGATION in its faith, its service and its witness to Jesus Christ;
   - have vision and recognize a Kingdom Ministry that reaches out to all and not just those within the congregation.

2. Conform to the educational standards as required by the UCCSA / UPCSA.

3. Be involved in Regional Council / Presbytery activities.

A PROFILE OF OUR CHURCH IS OBTAINABLE FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE.
Applications, together with a detailed CV of no more than 3 pages, should reach the Church Secretary by no later than Friday 30 April 2010. Please supply the names and contact details of 3 referees.

All applications will be treated in strict confidence.

Send Application:
For Attention: Rev. Thulani Ndlazi (Interim Moderator/Acting Minister)
c/o Mrs. Margie Dicks
St. John’s United Church (Congregational & Presbyterian)
P.O. Box 227
Pietermaritzburg 3200
Tel: +27-33-345 3157 (Church Office)
E-mail: stjohnsdicks@sa.co.za
Cell: +27-82 588 3740 (Interim Moderator)

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A four year old spilled his cola on the rug and wanted to clean up the mess himself. So his mother told him that the mop was just outside the back door. Quickly, he ran to the door, but realized that it had become dark outside. Suddenly scared, he told his mother what the problem was. Assuring him, she told him that Jesus is everywhere, even in dark places, and that he’ll always protect him. This put a smile on his face! So, he opened the door just enough to poke his head outside and called out “Jesus, if you’re out there, could you pass me the mop?”