

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa Newsletter

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UCCSA General Secretary Writes to South Africa President Jacob Zuma

July 28, 2011

Your Excellency, President Zuma

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA), spanning five countries, namely Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, is one of the oldest churches in the region, tracing its history back more than 200 years. Over these years, the UCCSA has built up a proud history of championing the cause of the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed and fighting all forms of injustices, institutionalized inequality and human rights abuses perpetrated in particular against the people of the Southern African region.

We write to express our great concern at the grave situation of famine and political instability in Somalia. Since the downfall of President Siad Barre in 1991 Somalia has endured political turmoil and the destruction of what was already a fragile economy. More than one million civilians have died due to famine and persistent wars in Somalia. There has even been a section of the country that has declared unilateral independence and calls themselves the Republic of Somaliland. Although both the United Nations and the African Union have been involved in efforts to quell the wars and bring stability, these efforts have not been sufficient.

Since 1991 there have been more than fourteen transitional governments, most of which were installed in neighboring Djibouti. It is therefore hardly likely that the current President, Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmad, can bring the desired peace and reconciliation. He has very limited control of the country, few resources and little international support.

It is lamentable that former colonial powers in Somalia, i.e. Britain and Italy, have shown little interest in this civil war whilst they are disproportionately involved in Libya. This level of diplomatic double standards has to be exposed at the appropriate bodies such as the United Nations.

We plead with you Sir to use your political influence and the good standing of the South African government to push for an urgent political solution to Somalia. This issue has to be brought before the Security Council and the African Union as an urgent matter.

We are also concerned that African countries do not seem to be doing much to come to the aid of Somalis who are dying in large numbers due to the famine. The pictures on television are disturbing, but what is even more distressing is the silence of African leaders when fellow Africans are going through such a perilous moment. We implore the Presidency to double up its efforts, and bring a special motion in parliament to accept a special package to rescue the people who remain in Somalia and those in the neighboring countries.

We therefore wish to petition your honourable Office to take meaningful steps and measures in order to come to the rescue of these fellow Africans.

Thank you,
Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. M. Prince Dibeela (**General Secretary**)

a similar letter was also sent to Presidents; Khama, Mugabe, Guebuza and Pohamba



Are you a delegate To UCCSA Assembly?

By now you should have received a letter informing you that you would be a representative of your Synod to the 36th Biennial Assembly as well as a REGISTRATION form to complete and return to the UCCSA Central Office.

The Assembly theme is: "Christ is calling us: Participating in Suffering and Struggle,"

Some important information to act on, remember and to consider:

Registration Fee:

Each delegate will be required to contribute a sum of R250.00 to assist the Synod of Mozambique in defraying the costs of hosting this event. Those delegates who do not pay their registration fee will not be allowed to take part in Assembly activities.

Accommodation:

The Mozambique Synod will be providing delegates with dormitory type of accommodation. Linen will be provided. It is very modest and we hope that delegates will appreciate that what is being offered is done with the greatest love and Christian hospitality. Those who wish to make their own private bookings can do so at the guest houses identified for us by the host. The information of these guest houses is attached to this letter.

Climate:

It will be hot in Mozambique at the end of September, around 28-30 degrees.

Cost of living:

Mozambique is one of the most expensive countries in Southern Africa, with quite a gap between the rich and the poor. The local currency is the *Metical* and it is currently MT4 to the Rand. The Rand and the US Dollar are generally accepted by the *Bureaus des Changes*.

Arrivals and Departures

Executive members are required to arrive on Tuesday 20th September whilst the other delegates are to arrive on Wednesday 21st daytime in Maputo. Matola is about 450km from Johannesburg. It could take as long as one hour at the boarder gate. Please plan to arrive during the day, no later than 4pm.

You are also reminded that the departure date is 28th September. Delegates are kindly asked not to leave before the closing service as this breaks the spirit of the hosts as well as the entire Assembly.

Meals and Special Needs

It is very important for those with special needs to indicate them on the registration form so that you can be well catered for.

Travelling Documents

You need a valid passport to enter Mozambique. Your passport should have at least two fresh pages and should be valid up to six months.

In Pre-Assembly Newsletter we will introduce you to all the resource people that will be performing different functions during the Assembly. The Chaplains, Bible Study Leaders, Workshop facilitators, Preachers at worship services, Speakers and many other guests. We will publish their photos and have a short profile on each of them enabling you to have a little more background on the gifts and skills they bring to share with us.



Keep the Assembly in Your Prayers

Although you may not be a delegate attending the Assembly it still remains your Assembly. The Assembly are the Church, the UCCSA family gathered. The UCCSA family from Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we will reflect on the journey we have travelled since Molepolole in 2009. We will worship, study, listen, pray, discuss business, celebrate and seek the will of God for the road ahead.

Therefore there rests a great responsibility on you remaining at home. Pray for all those responsible with the preparations for the Assembly. Think and pray for all the delegates to the Assembly as well as the proceedings of the Assembly.

Do so wherever you are. During Sunday Worship, midweek prayer meetings, in your women groups; Isilio/Manyano/Bomme, Women's Committee, Soldiers and Broedersband gatherings, Youth fellowships and even in your homes.



Pray for the President Rev. Pillay and the General Secretary Rev. Dr. Dibeela who will be responsible for leading the Assembly proceedings. Numerous resource people will be involved. Those who would preach at different services of worship and celebration. Some would lead Bible Studies and Workshops. Others would deliver lectures and addresses. New ministers and local churches would be welcomed into the fold. We will think of those who have passed on.



To guide you in your prayers, below find a programme of the daily schedule of the Assembly.

Tuesday 20th - Arrivals of Executive Committee members

Wednesday 21st - Executive Committee Meeting (arrivals of Assembly delegates)

Thursday 22nd Order of the Day

-Constitution of Assembly -Preliminary formal Business -Greetings from Government Officials -Reception of fraternal delegates - From the Molepolole to Matola -UCCSA President's Address -Reception of newly ordained ministers, -Church workers and local churches

Friday 23rd Order of the Day

-Bible study -Workshops -General Secretary's Address -Plenary on UCCSA Structure -Report of the Ministerial Committee - Presentation of Mission Partners -Report of the theological commission -Joseph Wing Lecture

Saturday 24th Order of the Day

-Bible study -Plenary on UCCSA Mission Plan -Presentation of awards - Group meetings (a) Women's meetings (b) Men's meetings (c) Youth meetings (d) Disability network -Assembly in Matola -Outing -Concert

Sunday 25th Order of the Day

-Worship at the different local churches -Assembly rally -Supper -Interest groups

Monday 26th Order of the Day

-Bible study -Workshops -Finance report -Report of the Mission Council -Synods reports -Report of the nominations Committee -Congregational legacy in Public life -Report on ecumenical institutions -Report of the Moffat Mission Institution -Report of the listening team

Tuesday 27th Order of the Day

-Bible study -Workshops -Report of the Leadership Academy -Report of the Nominations Committee -Supplementary report of the Executive Committee -Opportunities for high education learning -Report on the President-elect -Report of Resolutions Committee -Report of the Listening Team -Vote of thanks -Invitation to the 37th Assembly -Closing service and Induction of President



Scotland Youth Exchange Reflections



Nathan Owens is a Ministerial Student and part of the Mission Team

Introduction

As one of the members of the 2008 Scottish team who visited Southern Africa, I awaited with anticipation the second-leg of the project, where youth from Southern Africa arrived in Scotland. Having been over in South Africa and Botswana, I had experienced the passion, energy and vibrancy of my brothers and sister in the faith, and was keen to see that faith on our shores. All of this said, I still wasn't sure exactly what or who to expect when the bus pulled up at the centre for our orientation weekend, and so it was with nervous excitement that I greeted our guests! Thankfully I am pleased to say that after a short period of time, I quickly saw the faith that I had seen in Southern Africa and the same fire burn in these young people as I had seen in young people 3 years ago and 5000 miles away; Scotland Mission 2011 had definitely started!

I think the best way to sum up week 1 of Scotland Mission 2011, is to use the same headings that we used in our youth cafe up in Torry, Aberdeen. So with that in mind I would like to sum up team 2's experience by mentioning **Fellowship, Fun and Faith**.

Fellowship

The fellowship between us, those from Scotland, and from Southern Africa, was wonderful; and what struck me the most was how easy and natural it was to be in each other's company. Each morning we have devotions and prayer, each afternoon we went into groups and wandered round the community speaking to people and handing out leaflets, and every evening was the youth cafe programme. Again it was a genuine pleasure and delight to see our group of people become closer as the days went by, which was a blessing especially in the evenings because we knew we could rely on each other as we adjusted and worked through the programme; we knew we had each other's backs, and we knew this because of our fellowship together in Christ.

Fun

It would be far too easy to write pages on the topic of fun, because our week seemed to be filled with laughter, so I will restrain myself to a couple of remarks. On the Tuesday we were treated to a meal at a country club, and I'm pretty sure we were the loudest rabble they had ever had through their tranquil doors... On the Thursday three of our team conquered the mighty "Ashvale Whale" which is a very large portion of fish and chips, which if you eat you get a free mug; there were three very happy new mug-owners that day... My final remark is that no report on this topic would be complete without mentioning the infectious laughter and merriness of Aroschell: suffice is to say that no film will ever be the same when watched in her company! We really did have fun together, in each other's company and in Christ.

Faith

Although our fellowship was sweet and fun-filled, the glue of it all was our faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. At the end of the day I have no doubt that life-long friends have been made, but that was not the ultimate purpose of this trip: the purpose was for young people of Scotland and Southern Africa to join together to proclaim the gospel of Jesus to the lost, and with joy I can say that our little team were undoubtedly ambassadors for The King in Aberdeen that week. Our prayer-time in the morning was earnest as we prayed for each other and for the kids that would come, and the youth cafe at night was focused ultimately on telling them about our faith. So with true fellowship and real fun, nevertheless our week was one where we were simply beggars telling other beggars where to find bread.

By Nathan Owens.



Macmillan Teko from Molepolole, Botswana comes to Scotland to find the Meaning of his name.



Rev. Andrew McMillan
and MacMillan Teku

Macmillan Teko is one of the UCCSA young people on the Scottish Mission Experience. Macmillan tells us that from a very early age he tried to discover the meaning and origins of his name. He grew up in Molepolole with this Scottish name and always wondered about its origins and meaning. During his first week in Scotland he stayed with Rev. Archie Ford who was informed by Rev. Segola Keimetswe of his search. Here is his story.

THE ORIGINS OF MY NAME... 'I learn to succor the distress'

Being brought up in a rural place most of my childhood, it was not easy for the elderly people to understand, pronounce or even grasp the possible roots of this my name - MACMILLAN. It was at 5 years old that my sister wrote the name on the ground that I learnt how it was spelt and never let it go. I had spent years asking my mother where this name was coming from, but got nowhere with it, but rather insisted that it was my sister who gave it to me. I came across this name a lot in primary school on school books printed by the Macmillan Publishing company, also came across a story about a bicycle inventor, Patrick Macmillan.

Despite all these little pieces of incomplete information, I was still anxious to discover what my name really meant because I could not bear the thought of possibly carrying a curse-related name, " inalebeseromo..." a Setswana proverb says. I knew the name was Scottish though... It was one night at a youth prayer meeting in Gabane UCCSA, that I discovered the church building was officially opened by Rev. Andrew McMillan, a Scottish minister, and immediately had hope to find my name's trace. On Sunday August the 14th 2011, I finally met Rev McMillan, a man I had wanted to meet for years, he enlightened me on the name.

The Macmillans

Clans were a big part of Britain in the 6th century, both Scottish and English including MacDonalDs and Mcneills. The Macmillans were a Scottish clan at that time and the name is therefore ancient The Macmillans have a special history attached to them. They were involved in Godly service and they had monks serving at the Columbian church, a church which predates Roman Catholicism in Scotland. They were also artistic and carved stones and monuments, one of them being the famous Macmillan's cross standing within the ruins of Kilmory Chapel.

The Great and the Good

Though the Macmillans were not as powerful compared to the MacdonalDs and the Mcneills, they did produce many great individuals. The significant figures include:

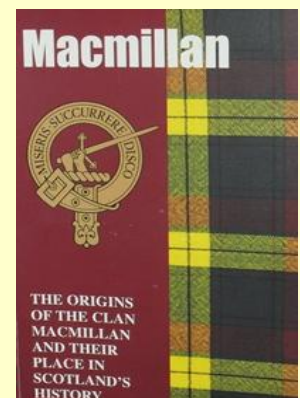
-Rev Angus Macmillan, born in Arran, lived through the remarkable times of 'Arran Revival' and played a large part in them in the 1800s. He was the first ever cleric o to have a religious book printed in Gaelic (original Scottish language)

-Rev John Macmillan, born in Galloway in 1669, a great adherent to the covenant. His personal communion cup (Macmillan's cup) was used as a Holy Grail and the 'unworthy' were not allowed to look into it

-Another Galloway Macmillan, Kirkpatrick Macmillan invented a bicycle in the 1840s

-Two astute businessmen and brothers, Daniel and Alexander Macmillan are the founders of the great publishing empire that bears this name.

-Harold Macmillan, prime minister of United Kingdom from 1957 to 1963, commonly known as 'Supermac'.



lastly me, Macmillan Teku from Molopolole, Botswana, who now know who I am.





Thamiso Chabalala from Botswana Reflect on his first week in Scotland.

Living a life that pleases God has, to a vast majority of people, proved a daunting task. They struggle to live up to a list of do's and don'ts. They attempt to 'appease' God for their sinful behavior by going to church and making a 'confession.' This piece, in fact the entire stay in Scotland thus far, lets you know that it is possible to live a life that is pure and pleasing to God. It also highlights the fun, yes fun, that young people can come together and have in Christ.

The apostle Paul often identified himself as a slave of Jesus Christ in his writings. He used the words *duolos*, which means 'servant by choice.' This word was readily understood by those in the Roman culture. A 'doulos' or 'bond slave' was a slave who had been granted freedom by his master, but who loved his master so deeply that he voluntarily chose to stay on as that master's servant. Likewise, the young people from both the UCCSA and the UF Church have demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that they are not slaves in Christ because they had to, but because they wanted to be. Leaving all pleasurable things behind; prized possessions, luxury of their houses, precious quality time with their friends etc to go all out and spread the gospel and share the good news has been humbling. The Friday morning of the first week stands out, where we had to go through the town of Lochowinnoch and sing in the wet, soaking rain by the shopping centre. Amazing!

Team two, which was based in Croftfoot, was engaged in a lot of activities which I will outline. Our Monday and Tuesday mornings were characterized by sightseeing, the first of which was a trip to the Glasgow Cathedral. It was a beautiful and fun an experience as was educational. We also had the opportunity to go bowling, which I must say was great fun. Led by the Rev. Ann, Marian and Susan, afternoons were a bit busier. We participated in the Champions Challenge programme. It must be noted that the United Kingdom will, in not so long a time be host to the Olympics. The champions challenge was especially designed for the kids, who were divided into four teams; France, Italy, Germany and the United States of America and competed against each other with medals won after each competitive game played. Like i mentioned earlier, it was great fun. I am seated here, three days after the completion of the games and I can still hear the echoing noise of the kids as they celebrated their victories. We thank God! I dare reiterate, there is no greater joy than the joy in the house of God. For us as the UCCSA, this is the one experience we definitely have taken a leaf from, something to go back and implement.

Two of the last activities we were involved in were a visit to the old age hospital, where we sang and prayed for the old. It was a humbling experience, especially with the part where they requested that we sing songs of their choice. There was also a cultural evening, where we experienced a taste of the Scottish and African culture in dance, food and song. This was one of the activities that were well attended.

I must also pause to note that for us as young people coming from Southern Africa, where we are used to many people turning up for church services, the same cannot be said about our UF counterparts. They have, however, a great deal of passion about the gospel and ministry, something we could learn a lot from and take home. They have demonstrated to us that it is pretty much not about numbers, but the love and passion for Christ.

We continue to learn from the experiences of our Scottish friends, to spread the love and share the gospel as we move to other parts of the country.

Be blessed as you read and enjoy!



A new nation is born: South Sudan

Congratulations are always in order when a child has been born. It is in that sense of joy and hope that congratulations are in order for the birth of a new nation, South Sudan. Africa's newest nation has been born in an unusual way, "a kind of caesarean operation", that has opinions divided on its merits. Those opposed to this way of solving problems argue that it will encourage separatist movements in other countries. Those in support say it is better than going to war to solve such problems and besides, it addresses the problem of colonially imposed boundaries that are a scourge of many parts of Africa.

Maybe the answer to the problems of the world in general and Africa in particular lies in the words of the prophet Isaiah, words that we often turn to during Christmas time:

*Nevertheless there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan- The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, (as men rejoice when dividing the plunder). For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, for to us a child is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing it and **upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time forever**. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9: 1 – 7. New International Version)*

Let these words of Isaiah be our prayer for South Sudan, especially that the new nation may be established on justice that will lead to peace. For it is not a matter of having one's ethnic group near us that will make us good neighbours and citizens but it is a life of justice for all that will save Africa and the world from self-destruction.

Prayer-thought:

Let there be no more gloom distress for South Sudan, Africa and the world. In the past the land of Africa was divided and cut up into pieces of colonial prey. The people walked in darkness and oppression, living in the land of the shadow of death May the light of justice dawn upon us all today

You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, (as men rejoice when dividing the plunder).

May the yoke of injustice be shattered forever and, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

For to us a child is born, for to us a child is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end.

*He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing it and **upholding it with justice and***



WOMEN OF UBUNTU: SHIPHRAH AND PUAH

The story of the Exodus begins with an account of how the children of Israel came to be in Egypt, here in Africa. Starting off being few in number, they actually came as refugees enjoying the protection of the good offices of their long-lost brother, Joseph. And the story continues to a next stage where a king “who knew not Joseph”, came to power and changed the Egyptian policy towards the children of Israel. How were they going to deal with the new situation? They could have gone on strike or fled to the desert. Or they could have capitulated and worked harder at their tasks and won the favour of the Egyptians. But whatever course of action they could take a lot of suffering and lay between them and their liberation. In such contexts of suffering and struggle, heroes and heroines are often borne as they make their daily contributions for a better life. One such pair of Heroines were the two women, Shiphrah and Puah, who were midwives to the Hebrews.

Read Exodus 1: 8 - 19

This story is so rich about the reality of the human situation in its varied manifestations. Let us pick a few points:

- 1) A new king, “who did not know about Joseph” came into power in Egypt. Often when people, rulers in particular, want to oppress others they start by trying to change history or suppressing or distorting the facts. This is done with the hope that the hope that ‘their perception of history’ will replace the ‘undesirable’ history. In our story the king of Egypt is said to have ‘not known Joseph’! It sounds untrue that one could take over a government and have been unaware of the key players of the previous rulers. Perhaps it was the principles of Joseph’s reign which troubled the conscience of the new rulers and hence the pretence to have not known who Joseph was. Let us suggest that Joseph’s leadership principles were those of justice, hospitality, sharing and, in short, **ubuntu**. (*Ubuntu* refers to that intrinsic humanness that is essential for peaceful co-existence in society). Ubuntu is the ingredient makes healthy relations, where one sees others as members of a functional family.
- 2) Realizing that the Hebrews were becoming numerous and strong, he conjured up a mentality of fear, divide and rule, which was xenophobic and basically racist. It is an attitude that could only see the growing numbers of the Hebrews as a threat instead of being an opportunity for better service delivery. Surely history has repeated itself several times over in this instance of hatred and fear of other human beings to the point of treating them like trash. Slavery, apartheid, genocides can all be seen as variations of the same ‘hate’ policy that the king of Egypt was working on.
- 3) When the first plan of hard labour did not produce the desired results, a new policy had to be ushered in. For this to work it required the involvement of a section of the hated population, that is the midwives, who were to become midwives of death. It is typical for all dictators to use the policy of ‘divide and rule’, in order to keep the oppressed squabbling over trivialities, such as meaningless quota systems of gender, youth, persons with disabilities, in order to appear to meet the legal requirements. The poor have to unite and be alert to the temptations of co-optation to the systems of the pharaohs/empires of the day.
- 4) But God being God of grace, did not let the defenseless infants on their own. Shiphrah and Puah, had that presence of the spirit of **ubuntu** that they could not be part of an infant killing-machine. Shiphrah and Puah were very courageous women. (Indeed, *‘Wathinta abafazi, wathinta imbokodo!’* ‘You touch a woman, you touch a rock!’), They dared to disobey an unjust command of the king. And this was risky business on their part as they could have been charged with treason. Not only were they courageous, they were also intelligent. They saw-off the king’s inquest when he continued to see the strong and healthy little boys running in the streets in increasing numbers!
- 5) And let us not think that the king of Egypt spared the Hebrew girls out of any goodwill. It was rather out of more sinister motives for the exploitation of the girl child. His new national policy required the numbers of the Hebrews should be reduced while the Egyptians should increase. Girls were thus to be “used” as child bearing machines for the system! One lesson from this is that we should be alert to the schemes of the evil one. We need to discern the subtle systems that continue to keep other people in eternal subjugation. Let us continue to even the so called progressive systems, knowing that liberation is not an event but a life-long process of suffering and struggle to be free.

Prayer-thought: Lord, God of Shiphrah and Puah, may our mothers and sisters, be filled with the spirit of *ubuntu*, which is love, freedom and justice. Give us discerning hearts that shall lead us to actions of courage for the sake of oppressed and downtrodden people in our world. **Amen.**

