

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa Newsletter: February 2013

CHURCH LEADERS INVITE MEMBERS TO SHARE THE UCCSA VISION AT THE HISTORIC MOFFAT CHURCH *-A Call for Cohesion and Communion*



On Saturday February 2, 2013 the Teemane Region hosted the leaders of the UCCSA Executive for the first 2013 Roadshow event. The members leading the visit to the Teemane Region included the Rev Basil Manning- President; Mrs Florince Norris- Treasurer; Rev Prince Dibeela- General Secretary; and Rev Majaha Nhliziyo- UCCSA Leadership Academy Director; Rev Aubrey Mtshekang, Mission Council Convenor; Rev Johannes Stuurman and Mrs. Esther Molete, Executive Members. Ministers, Regional leaders, Church Members attended from across the Teemane Region and gathered at the historic Moffat Church at Kuruman, Moffat Mission.

The Moffat Church was completed in 1838 and is a living symbol of the London Missionary Society (LMS) a predecessor of the UCCSA in South Africa. The Moffat church is named for Robert Moffat (1795-1883) who with the help of local converts founded the mission at Kuruman and begun building the church in 1829.

The Roadshow is the first of a series of planned visits to all the UCCSA Synods and Regions inviting Members, Ministers and Church Leaders to share in conversations about the vision and plans for the ministry and mission of the UCCSA.

The General Secretary welcomed those gathered at the Moffat Church. Rev Dibeela introduced a presentation on the UCCSA vision and restructuring process. The foundation of the UCCSA vision is a call to greater cohesion and communion across the whole church. This he pointed out is rooted in the Bible's message to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

The proposals to promote unity in the church include a proposal to appoint Synod Secretaries as part of the Central Office Administrative Team to strengthen communication within the Church and widen the pool of skills and expertise for administration of the Church. Treasurer, Mrs Florince Norris also outlined the proposal to establish a Ministry and Mission Fund to address the outstanding issue of a just living wage for UCCSA Ministers and a central fund to provide adequate resources for the mission and ministry of the Church.



The President Rev Manning spoke passionately about the issues of conflict within the church. He described the proposal to establish a Mediation team specially trained in mediation and conflict resolution. The Mediation team will provide timely and adequate support to Local Churches and leaders to resolve issues in a manner that preserves relationships and the unity of the Church.



After the presentation participants were invited to raise questions and give feedback. Members were appreciative of the presentation. They were especially pleased at the opportunity to connect with the Officers and leaders. They encouraged the Officers to continue this style of leadership that encourages participation, engagement and feedback from members. They expressed a desire that the presentation be available to share with other members in their Local Churches.

The Roadshow continued in the afternoon with a full presentation on the Ministry and Mission Fund.

On Sunday Feb 3 Officers and church staff celebrated UCCSA Covenant and Commitment Sunday along with Local Churches, including worship and preaching at Galeshewe, Danielskuil and Bathlaros.

The Roadshows continue in March with visits to the Algoa Region of the South Africa Synod (1-3 Mar, 2013) and the Botswana Synod (15-18 Mar, 2013).



Welcome from Rev Kudzani Ndebele, Executive Director of Kurman Moffat Mission Trust



Rev Dibeela, Rev Manning and Retired Minister Monare Petso



Mrs Florince Norris, Treasurer in presentation mode



A Second Successful Launch of the 'My UCCSA Plan' at Kuruman



The second launch of the 'My UCCSA Plan' took place on Saturday Feb 2, 2013 at Moffat Mission, Kuruman. The My UCCSA Plan is an initiative of the UCCSA to offer comprehensive and affordable family funeral insurance cover to persons age 18-64 across the countries in which UCCSA Local Churches are present.

The 'My UCCSA Plan' offers affordable monthly premiums and attractive benefits. Monthly premiums for the family funeral cover range from R77 for R10, 000 funeral cover; R97 for R15,000 funeral cover and R117 for R20,000 funeral cover. Value added benefits include Vehicle Access, Body repatriation, Airtime, Electrosure, and rewards and discounts from the Mahala Loyalty programme. Extended family options are also available.

The 'My UCCSA Plan' initiative is a partnership of UCCSA with Hollard- TBFS one of South Africa's leading insurance companies and Ulwembu Financial Services.

The first launch of the 'My UCCSA Plan' took place at Founders Memorial Congregational Church in Newclare, Johannesburg. A series of launches are planned during the upcoming months, including launches in Port Elizabeth and in Botswana. The launch will provide an opportunity for persons to learn more about the insurance plan and to register as members and policy holders in the 'My UCCSA Plan'.

The 'My UCCSA Plan' Launch at Kuruman was preceded by the training of persons as promoters on February 1, 2013 at the Moffat Mission. Seventeen promoters were trained in Kuruman. The promoters will advertise and register members for the 'My UCCSA Plan'. The promoters' training provides, especially young people, an opportunity to gain experience in insurance sales and the potential to create employment opportunities.

Rev Dibeela, General Secretary, UCCSA cited the 'My UCCSA Plan' as another opportunity for the UCCSA to participate in life giving ventures that offer a brand of hope. The initiative will provide an opportunity for income generation for the mission work of UCCSA. Rev Dibeela emphasized the deliberate focus of the venture to create life giving earning opportunities for promoters and financial provision for families in the inevitable case of the death of a family member.

Vic Hendericks a marketing executive at Hollard/TBFS presented an overview of the 'My UCCSA Plan' and answered questions from participants regarding the application and claims procedure for insurance coverage. Mr. Sibusiso Kunene CEO of Ulwembu Financial Services delivered a presentation of the Roll-Out Strategy for the 'My UCCSA Plan'.

Rev Kudzani Ndeble, Executive Director of the Kuruman Moffat Trust, commented that the excitement is great from the launch at Kuruman. The Director has pledged that The Kuruman Moffat Mission will provide administrative facilities such as fax, scan and email services amongst many of its offers to make the programme a success. The next launch of the 'My UCCSA Plan' will take place in the Algoa Region of the South Africa Synod in Port Elizabeth.



Promoters trained at Kuruman

REFLECTION FROM THE CENTRAL REGIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE 2013

*By Zandie Maxam**

The annual UCCSA Central Region Youth Conference was held during 15 – 17 February 2013 in Mamelodi, Pretoria. The three-day conference was one of studying, learning and of understanding Gods work through one self. This year's Theme **“Yielding to the Will of God”** featured a fantastic assortment of speakers. As youth we were encouraged to be part of a **“dream team”**. The conference was not only a chance to hear from the leaders but also to prepare for the journey God has set before us. It provided a community where everyone was valued and heard, where talents were discovered, celebrated and whereby the youth were empowered to share those gifts. It was also an opportunity for the youth to meet new friends and reunite with old friends. Through a community of acceptance, support and conversation the youth discovered their calling as beloved children of God. We discovered that faithful discipleship is lived and not just talked about. It was encouraged through faith practices that helped the youth to engage with the church and the community by participating in the suffering and struggle by visiting MaLerato Orphanage home. There we practiced ministry and evangelism. The youth re-discovered ministry as a life of service and discipleship and they were rooted in Scripture explored in small groups.

One of the speakers, Mr Ricky Olifant mentioned that for us to be winners we need 3H's. *Heart* (passion for what you do), *Head* (sound Mind), & *Hand* (fold up your sleeves and start working), and that we cannot do that without the Holy Spirit.

Christ has come that we might have life, and life more abundantly (John 10:10). Our relationship with God is not dependent upon us having an emotional response at a worship service or a heightened understanding about theology from hearing a powerful sermon. Jesus is committed to us even when we struggle in our commitment to Him, and He would not leave us astray.

The Conference which consisted of 200 + attendees/ visitors, in a nutshell was a platform where the Youth learned and were encouraged that no matter how high the mountain we should have faith in God. He will bring us through those mountains. God will strengthen us as we get off those mountains because we are not born to remain there but to pass them so as to see the future!



Youth march through Mamelodi



Visit to MaLerato Orphanage Home

**Zandie Maxam is a youth leader and member of the UCCSA Central Region Youth Executive Committee*





UCCSA REMEMBERING THE COURAGE OF ANENE BOOYSEN

Press Release,
Brixton, Johannesburg
February 12, 2013

The Church family of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) like the whole nation of South Africa is shocked and outraged at the news of the brutal rape, mutilation and murder of 17 year old Anene Booysen in Bradesdorp just over a week ago. Like the family of Anene and the community of Bredasdorp we too struggle to understand how the young men who attacked Anene could commit such a gruesome attack on a sister, a daughter, a friend. In the midst of our struggle to understand we honour Anene's courage. She survived and before she died in hospital identified one of her attackers so that justice would be found, and for that reason her death must not pass as another news headline or just as a case docket in the Courts. We are hopeful that the story of Anene's courage will create a living memory that empowers us to stand with the women and girls who are victims of rape and who silently scream for help!

Anene is one of the thousands of women who become victims of rape every year in South Africa. The researchers tell us that a woman is raped every 17 seconds in South Africa and that 1 in 2 women in South Africa is likely to become a victim of rape in her lifetime. More important than the number is the fact that each rape statistic bears the face and the name of a girl or woman whose body, mind, spirit and whole life is scarred by the act of rape. As a Christian faith community we believe that the reprehensible actions of Anene's attackers also are the evil and demonic work of Satan and depraved spiritual forces.

We therefore encourage the whole community of faith and especially the Christian community to pray for God's intervention against these spiritual forces pervading our communities.

We stand in solidarity with the family of Anene Booysen, the community of Bredasdorp and the whole of South Africa to speak out and say NO TO RAPE AND VIOLENCE against our women and girls. We must continue to pray for and give our best resources of time and money to support the journey to healing for our women and girls who are survivors of rape and sexual violence. We must work to raise community awareness of the Justice Department Service Charter for Victims of Crime that promotes among other things the right to be treated with fairness, respect for dignity and privacy. We must take united action to create a safe and secure society for all our women and girls- a society that is free from violence especially the scourge of sexual violence. The increasing incidents of sexual violence against women and girls in South Africa are too loud to ignore.

We offer our condolences to the parents and family of Anene Booysen on the passing of their daughter. We pray for God's comfort to them at this difficult time. We look forward to the day when God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. May Anene Booysen rest in peace.



Stephanie Healey of 1FootForward speaking out against rape. SPEAK UP. SAY NO TO RAPE.





Flash Mob Invades Geneva Ecumenical Centre

World Communion of Reformed Churches News Release
14 February 2013

A flash mob erupted

today in the cafeteria of the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, Switzerland. At 12:30 people scattered throughout the lunch crowd suddenly left their tables and broke into dance.

Twenty dancers, wearing bright pink and purple, performed to a song condemning violence against women. The lyrics of *Break the Chain* written by Tena Clark and Tim Heintz call attention to the fact that one billion of the world's three billion women and girls will be raped or attacked in their lifetime. The song ends with a stirring call for people to rise up and stop the violence.

Similar dance events are being held today in countries from Australia to Lebanon as part of the One Billion Rising campaign created by V-Day, a global activist movement that promotes creative events to increase awareness about violence against women and to re-energize anti-violence organizations.

The event at the Ecumenical Centre, which is home to global church organizations and non-governmental organizations, was organized by the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).

Dora Arce-Valentín who heads WCRC's Gender Justice Programme explains that the intent was to raise awareness of the urgent need for men and women to work together to change attitudes that contribute to rape, abuse and assault of women and girls.

"Unleashing a flash mob in the cafeteria creates excitement and catches attention," says the Cuban pastor. "It's a great way to raise awareness of this urgent and dramatic situation."

Flash mobs erupt with no warning in public places. Performers emerge suddenly from a crowd to sing or dance then disappear as soon as the performance ends.

Aiko Sumichan, a youth intern from Indonesia, gathered dancers from among organizations including the World YWCA, World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, COHRED and World Student Christian Federation.

"Taking over the cafeteria and filling it with the sounds of protest and power is a wonderful way of giving momentum to the movement to stop the violence," Sumichan says. "And besides it was a lot of fun. People tell me there's never been anything like this here before."

WCRC has a history of supporting the rights of women and girls. Plans in the coming year include a campaign to encourage its member churches to participate in the Orange Campaign that asks people to wear orange on the 25th of each month as a reminder of the need to keep working to prevent violence against women. A flyer printed on orange paper distributed by the flash mob at the Ecumenical Centre offers a biblical reading, questions for reflection and a prayer.

"We will be producing more resources such as these for churches in future," Arce-Valentín promises. "Churches can help stop the violence. WCRC wants to be sure our members are motivated and empowered to do that."

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www.wcrc.ch

WCRC represents 80 million Christians in 108 countries. Its member churches are active worldwide in initiatives supporting economic, climate and gender justice, mission, and cooperation among Christians of different traditions.





ASH WEDNESDAY SERMON 2013*

Rev. Dr. Moiserale Prince Dibeela, UCCSA General Secretary

"This is how to truly worship the Lord, Remove the chains of the prisoners who are chained unjustly, Free those who are abused, Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and the homeless...then your light will shine in the dark; your darkest hour will be like the noonday. (Isaiah 58: 6-10)

Isaiah 58: 6-10; Philippians 2: 6-11 and Mark 5: 6-17

Dumelang, Sanibonani, Molweni, Goie Nant, absheni! I greet you in the many languages of the people of Southern Africa. We bring you the blessings and good wishes of your sisters and brothers from the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa.

Thulani and I are grateful for the opportunity to share with you on this service which marks the beginning of lent. We thank God for the opportunity to share and to worship God with you on this occasion. It is a reminder that our vocation as human beings, as creatures of God, is to worship God. Worship of God is part of the DNA of our *creatureliness*. If and when we lose that capacity within us then we have lost something fundamental in our human beingness. We have lost the reason for our existence, we become shells, and we have lost the essence of being human.

One of the heartrending conversations in the New Testament is the story in Mark 5, of the man who lived at a graveyard. To begin with it is a sad indictment on society that someone would have given up on community and taken refuge among the dead. It means that there was something drastically wrong with the make-up of society that the only place where he could find some solace was in a cemetery. However, what is even more tragic is that in the conversation Jesus asks him a basic yet potent question "What is your name?" to which he responds by saying "I am legion." He does not say 'I am Prince, John, or Emmanuel', he says "I am Legion." Legion or Legiones was a Roman army battalion that enforced the Empire system upon citizens. It was an occupying force that made sure that the

people paid their taxes, that forced the so-called *pax Romana* (made sure that there was no resistance) and that harassed the people on a daily basis in order to show them who was the boss. It is this battalion that this man identifies with 'when he says I am Legion.'

How does it happen that someone loses a sense of who he or she is, his identity, and their sense of being part of society? How does it happen that someone can lose the reality that they are created by a gracious and loving God? How is it that we lose the spiritual antenna that connects the divinity within us to the God who created us in their image? How is it that as human beings we can come to a point of effortlessly identifying and even glorifying death-dealing forces/ and systems such as war, exploitation and thievery of the resources of other countries, violence against women and children, and the gradual but certain destruction of the environment. It is tragic that these life-denying attributes have become a characterization of who we are as human beings, we may not have the honesty of the man in the graveyard of Gerasene, but it is who we have and are becoming.

In the worldview where we come from we talk of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is the light inside all of us which draws us to each other as creatures of God, it is the wiring in our make-up that reminds us of our humanness. It is that which reminds us and activates within us attributes such as kindness, mercy, compassion, justice and the quest to worship God. It is that which reminds us that we are denying ourselves of our place in God's abundance of love and grace when we lose our vocation as worshippers.

As the Psalmist says:

"And I praise you because of I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful and of this I have no doubt." Psalm 139:14

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of a journey to the cross and beyond. It ought to be a self-emptying of the self- kenosis. For some this means denying themselves of a few delicacies like chocolate, beef and other things that are non-essential for our living. However, the self-emptying I am talking about is deep and much more radical. It is reconnecting with our purpose as creatures created by a loving God. It is learning again what it means to be truly human, which is to worship God.

Jesus modelled this for us:

Even though he is King he counted that as nothing to boast about and humbled himself and took the form of a servant.

Even though he is the Word par excellence, the One through whom all things were created, he came to live among us and participated in our suffering and our struggles.

Even though he is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, he opted to be a peasant in Nazareth, and suffered the brutality of Empire.

And because of this radical model of what it means to be human; this kenotic presentation of grace, the Bible says:

*"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father."*

Jesus self-emptied himself, took the form of a servant, and transformed our reality so that power is no longer vested in the kings and Imperial systems of this world, so that we can take our rightful place in God's vision of a new earth and a new heaven, and that all God's children can be called by their rightful name and not by the systems that oppress them.

Ash Wednesday cannot be just another day in the liturgical calendar. It is an invitation to radical discipleship; it is a reminder of our vocation and our place in God's radical solidarity with creation. And that disciple of Isaiah of Jerusalem puts it most eloquently when he says:

"This is how to truly worship the Lord, Remove the chains of the prisoners who are chained unjustly, Free those who are abused, Share your food with everyone who is hungry; share your home with the poor and the homeless...then your light will shine in the dark; your darkest hour will be like the noonday.

A Modimo o lo Segofatse, o lo boloke, o bo o lo phatsimisetse sefathhego sa One.

* [This is an extract of the sermon delivered at a reception at Howard University on Wednesday February 13, 2013 as part of the UCCSA- United Church of Christ (UCC) Central Atlantic Conference Partnership visit during February 11-22, 2013.]





*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the
prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”
Luke 4: 18-19 (NIV)*

THE SEASON OF LENT

Lent has evolved from a period of pre-baptismal preparation, a period of public penitence and finally as a forty-day devotional preparation for Easter. It is based on the story of Jesus’ forty day fast and temptation experience in the wilderness. Lent refers to the forty day period, excluding Sundays, preceding Easter. It begins with the observance of Ash Wednesday and has evolved over the centuries as a time of special spiritual preparation for the celebration of the resurrection and renewal of faith.

Lent in the context of the struggle for justice

The church encourages the re-discovery of the value of Lent and its importance for our faith today. We can observe Lent through special disciplines and engagements, especially as communities, by focusing on certain themes that define who we are and what we are all about.

The search for justice was at the centre of Jesus’ life and work. Jesus’ mission statement, Luke 4: 18-19, is a summary call for a justice ethos which deliberately and unapologetically locates itself on the side of the poor and marginalized. The story of the people of faith from the Old Testament times has always been about justice.

As a denomination, we would do well with such focus for our Lenten season and beyond, in the guidance of our theme: *“Christ is Calling Us: Participating in Suffering and Struggle”*.

Scripture Readings for the Sundays in Lent 2013. (taken from the Revised Common Lectionary)				
Week	Old Testament	Psalm	Epistle	Gospel
1	Deut. 26:1-11	91:1-2; 9-16	Romans 10:8b-13	Luke 4:1-13
2	Gen 15:1-12; 17-18	27	Philippians 3:17-4:1	Luke 13: 31-35 or 9: 28-36
3	Isaiah 55:1-9	63:1-8	1 Corinthians 10:1-13	Luke 13: 1-9
4	Joshua 5:9-12	32	2 Corinthians 5:16-21	Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
5	Isaiah 43:16-21	126	Philippians 3:4b-14	John 12:1-8
6	Isaiah 50:4-9a	118:1-2; 19-29; 31:9-16	Philippians 2:5-11	Luke 19:28-40; Luke 22:14-23:56 or 23:1-49



UCCSA LEADERSHIP ACADEMY PROGRAMMES FOR 2013

The UCCSA Leadership Academy is offering courses, throughout the UCCSA, in:






- **Preaching**
- **Christian Leadership**
- **Conflict Resolution Through Mediation**

For more details on how you may access these learning programmes, please contact the Leadership Academy via the following:

Postal Address: **UCCSA Leadership Academy,
P. O. Box 96014
Brixton, 2019
Johannesburg, South Africa**

Telephone: **011 837 9997**; (International: **0027118379997**)
Fax Numbers: **011 837 2570** (International: **0027118372570**)
Email addresses: **majaha@uccsa.co.za** or **admin@uccsa.co.za**
Visit UCCSA Website: www.uccsa.co.za

Principles of the Leadership Academy

-  Mission orientation
-  Social, Gender and Economic justice
-  Empowerment of individuals and communities
-  Transformational and life-long learning for all
-  Re-reading the Bible in the light of life-settings and experience

**Something is coming.
Be among the first to hear the news.**



A bold fresh new look for the UCCSA website with updated content is coming soon!

We're making it easier to use, easier to navigate, with updated resources, news and information about UCCSA church issues and events. You can stay involved in the ministry and mission of UCCSA.

Visit us on Facebook by clicking 'Like' at the **'Congregationalist'** page:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Congregationalists>
for updates on the date the new website will Go Live!



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**"He has shown you,
O mortal, what is good.
And what does the
LORD require of you?
To act justly and to
love mercy and to
walk humbly with your
God"**
Micah 6:8



EVENTS To Remember and Pray For:

- 1-3 March** "Christ is Calling Us" Roadshow (Algoa)
- 15-17 March** UCCSA Officers visit (Botswana Synod)
- 18-22 March** UCCSA Executive Meeting (Botswana)
- 19-21 April** "Christ is Calling Us" Roadshow (KZN)
- 2-5 May** "Christ is Calling Us" Roadshow (Zimbabwe)
- 14-19 May** "Christ is Callings Us" Roadshow (Namibia)

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UCCSA
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**Comprehensive
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Policyholder (18 to 64)	R10 000	R15 000	R20 000
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