

# United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

# Newsletter

September 2011

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## **36<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

### PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE UCCSA CENTRAL OFFICE

The biennial meeting of the Assembly of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, UCCSA, will take place in Matola, Maputo, Mozambique, from 22 – 27 September 2011. The Assembly will take place under the theme: “Christ is Calling Us: Participating in Suffering and Struggle.” The story of the UCCSA has always been about seeking to respond to the calling from the God of justice, God who deliberately locates God-self in the life and work of the poor and marginalized. It is a story that is cemented in the lives of people like iNkosi Albert Luthuli, and the hundreds of unsung heroes and heroines of the struggle for a free and democratic Southern Africa who gave living testimony to the power of faith through their commitment to the struggle for justice and dignity of all people.

The UCCSA is spread through its Synods in the countries of Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. These Synods come together at Assembly to deliberate on the reports from its Standing Committees, Commissions, Synods and any other business that may be brought for the attention of the Assembly. Assembly is thus a moment of reflection on the overall mission performance of the church.

As a faith community we also meet at Assembly to celebrate our faith and commitment to new life in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. This celebration and reflection is done in full cognizance of the harsh socio-economic realities that the majority of the people, especially those in Southern Africa, have to live under. Whether one is in Molepolole or Katutura or Matola or Khayelitsha or Makokoba, the evidence of the suffering of people is so real and challenging for action to be taken to liberate the people of God. The UCCSA is aware of and troubled by the ever-widening gap between the rich, powerful few and the poor and powerless majority populations in our member states. We live in a world where the rich natural resources of our lands are enjoyed by a few elite whereas the majority remain impoverished.

This is a scandalous situation that should not be allowed to continue as it is not only a threat to peace and security but is intrinsically unjust. Our people fought colonialism and apartheid in order to create an egalitarian society where health care, education, training, economic growth and socio-cultural development; all undergirded by the spirit of Ubuntu/Botho, would be the order of the day. And when we see these non-negotiable signs of freedom and justice still remaining as a mirage to the most vulnerable majority of our people we are troubled and perplexed. It is in times and contexts such as these that we hear clearly the call of Christ to all to participate in the suffering and struggle for justice for all. The Assembly will therefore be centred around this theme as a way of conscientizing the world that we have not yet reached the promised land of justice and full dignity without the scourge of injustice, poverty and starvation for Africa. We have had some trying times as well as some great moments of witnessing to the love of Christ in the world. Under the leadership of our President Rev. Hendrick Pillay, we have been able to keep hope in the midst of an economic crisis that has seen many companies close down and many people's lives left in ruin. The effect of this economic crisis have been multiple, including extended public services strikes in all our countries. We therefore live at a time that is characterized by economic and political volatility. It is not easy to be church in a time when most of the people are struggling to make ends meet. Many are simply drained from trying to survive and do not have the time nor the energy to participate in the life of the church. Assembly is a time of exposure to mutual inspiration as we share the pain and the stories of success from around the region. It is also a time of marching and



declaring in public worship that evil will not have the last word in the struggle for justice.

The speakers at this Assembly will include Rev. Dr. Prince Dibeela, General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Collin Cowan, CWM General Secretary, Rev. Esther Johnson (Bible Study Leader), Rev. Dr. Simanga Kumalo, Head of the School of Religion at the University of Kwazulu-Natal.

Some of the issues that will feature in the various reports include ministerial formation, the social justice agenda, Haiti crisis, Basarwa/San situation, corruption and nepotism, and youth development.

## First UCCSA Awards to be Presented during 36<sup>th</sup> Assembly



**Rev. Sandra Gourdet**

### **Congregational Justice and Peace Award**

The UCCSA is to honour Rev. Sandra Gourdet.

Sandra will receive the **“Congregational Justice and Peace Award.”**

This is a prestigious award is intended to recognize women and men, and institutions who have distinguished themselves in the promotion of justice and peace in society. This year the UCCSA would like to recognize Sandra Gourdet for the tireless work in supporting the churches in Southern Africa in their work against HIV and AIDS, hunger, landlessness and marginalization.



### **UCCSA Officers to Meet With Mozambique President**

Arrangements are being made for the UCCSA Officers to have a audience with the President Armando Guebuza of Mozambique on 20 September.

This will be a courtesy visit where the Officers will also bring greetings on behalf of the whole UCCSA family.

### **Lephoi Centre for Visually Impaired Children**

### **Community Empowerment Award**

The UCCSA to honour Lephoi Centre for the visually impaired children with the “Community Empowerment Award.” Lephoi Centre is a home for about 55 young people who are either blind or partially sighted. It is owned and run by the UCCSA in Botswana, and has been operating since 1986. Over the years it has been a home for more than one thousand children with disability.



UCCSA President. Rev. Pillay presenting a gift to children at the Lephoi Centre.



## Resource People and Contributors to Assembly 2011



**Bible Study Facilitator** : Rev. Esther Estelle Johnson. Rev. Johnson is currently serving Emmanuel Congregational Church Worcester.

Esther was born in Knysna in 1962 from where she moved to Oudsthoorn where she grew up and matriculated in 1981 at Morester Senior Secondary School. She started her Ministerial training in 1985 at FEDSEM in where she Graduated 1988. She did her Internship 1988 to 1989 at Emmanuel Congregational Church Worcester. She later accepted a call to this church where she was Ordained on 17 January 1990. Her fields of interest and specialisation: Hospital, Prison, Industrial and Highway Ministries. Esther is married and her husband Hubert is currently also serving his Internship in the

### Assembly Chaplains

The Assembly Chaplains responsibilities are varied and many. These include leading worship. Listening to those who might need someone to talk to, and supporting the Assembly through its difficult moments. The two persons who provide this pastoral assistance during the Maputo 36<sup>th</sup> Assembly will be Rev. Salvodore Macule and Rev. Corin Magielies



**Rev. Corin Magielies.** Corin was born and raised in Port Elizabeth. She was a member of the Bethesda Congregational Church where from an early age she showed interest in choir and music ministry.

Corin completed her Bth studies at the University of Fort Hare in 2003. She served her Internship at the Austerville Congregational Church in Durban where she was also ordained in 2005. In 2009 she was called to Woodland Congregational Church in Pietermaritzburg where she is currently serving. Corin is a very committed member of "Women at the Well" In 2008 she represented the UCCSA at



**Rev. Salvodore Macule.** Salvodore was born in Inhyambane in Mozambique where he also grew up.. He completed his Ministerial Training at Ricatla United Seminary in Maputo in 2001. After a two year period of Internship, he was Ordained at the Balaza Congregational Church in Inhyambane in 2004. Rev. Macule served as the Mission Council Convener for the Mozambique Synod for a number of years.

In 2009 he continued his studies for a year at Edouardo Monto University in Maputo. He is currently doing a Honours degree in Gender and Religion at the KZN University in Pietermaritzburg.

Salvodore's bachelor status will soon end when in December 2011 he ties the knot to Esmenia one of the participants in the 2009 UCCSA Youth Development Programme.



### Guest Preacher – United Act of Worship



**Rev. Dr. Collin Cowan**, the new General Secretary of CWM will be the guest preacher at the United Act of Worship. Rev. Cowan started his responsibility as CWM General Secretary in 2011

Rev. Cowan has been in ministry for 28 years. Ordained in 1983, he served as a minister to different local churches in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands until 2005. In 2006 he was appointed as General Secretary of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Rev. Cowan is a good friend of the UCCSA. He was the person who had the difficult task of facilitating the Kuruman Process in 2006 that gave birth to the UCCSA Vision Plan.

### Joe Wing Memorial Lecture



**Rev. Dr. Simangaliso R. Kumalo.** BTh (UN), BTh Hons (UN) MTh (UNISA), PhD (UKZN)

Dr Simangaliso Kumalo will deliver the 2011 Joseph Wing Lecturer.

He is an ordained minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), lecturer of Religion and Governance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. He also serves as Head/Director of the Religion and Governance Programme

### Study Opportunities at University of KZN



**Rev. Dr. Roderick Hewitt.** Roderick will share with the Assembly about the Agreement between the UCCSA and the University of KZN and the opportunities for studies that comes with this agreement. He will also be facilitating a workshop on Worship.

Roderick is currently serving as a guest lecturer at the University of KZN, representing the UCCSA.

He is a former Moderator of the Council of World Mission.

### Workshop's Co-ordinator



**Rev. Thulani Ndlazi.** Thulani will be responsible for co-ordinating the different workshops that will be presented during the Assembly.

Rev. Ndlazi is a UCCSA minister serving in the KZN Region. He is the current Moderator for the Region. He is seconded to the Church Land Programme



***“Showing our faith by what we do”***

Rina has been coming to a Living Room drop In Centre at Drum Chapel in Scotland for the past 7 years. She has learning difficulties and has epileptic fits, she doesn't have much financially either, she lives with her brother and because she had long dirty nails, dirty clothes, lice in her hair, no one wanted to seat next to her. One of our girls on the UCCSA team initiated a conversation with her and offered to cut her nails. she refused to cut her nails and said she liked them long but agreed on her cleaning and putting a nail polish on them. The rest of us joined in and offered to put make up on her; and she said she had a make up kit that she bought way back and she has never used it because she did not know how to put it on. The next day myself and the youth worker of the UF went to the mall to buy the nail polish kit and the ladies from UCCSA were busy setting up the place for manicure, to our surprise Rina remembered to bring her make up kit and after all was said and done she rested on the couch, with red lipstick on her lips with a smile on her face and everyone that was coming in that day she would call them and smile and refused to drink tea that day as that would have messed up her lipstick.

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**UCCSA Isililo/Manyano/Bome Meet in Durban KZN**

The Isililo/Manyano/Bome oof the UCCSA had its yearly conference in Durban during August of this year. The Free State Region of South Africa under the leadership of Mrs. Sarah Ceasar will hold the office for the next two years.



**Mrs. Ceasar and Free State Women**



**Ministers serving Communion during the conference**



## Dancing in the Mission Of God

**When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give to you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Acts 3: 3- 7 (NRSV)**

The story of the healing at the Beautiful gate is part of the narratives that tell us about the remarkable transformation that was experienced by the disciples after the dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Apostles were now ready to step out and continue with the work that Jesus had been doing, yet the stage had not been cleared of the dangers that had always confronted Jesus even to the point of death. Peter, John, James, Mary and all the other followers of the Way, both men and women, were about to enter into a phase that was as fulfilling and exciting as it was dangerous. It was going to be a costly exercise for which many paid the ultimate sacrifice as martyrs. The story before us is placed early in the plan of the writer. At this stage the disciples were still part of the Jewish religious and social systems. The temple was still their spiritual home and they observed the usual times of prayer, used the same scriptures and saw themselves as being the true representatives of Israel.

We observe that as Peter and John were about to enter the temple they met the lame man who was brought to the temple to beg for alms. For this man it was probably another day of begging and waiting for the occasional coins to be dropped into their basket. Peter and John stopped and asked the expectant man to look at them. We cannot judge him harshly for expecting a hefty grant from the two apostles! In a way what they gave him turned out to be greater than any silver or gold they may have given him: it was the gift of independence, standing on his own feet as a proud member of the community. He was healed and could now enter the temple "leaping and praising God."

I read a caption recently, which is applicable to the ever-unfolding story of the drama of the Mission of God. It reads something to the tune: ***Life's not about waiting for the storm to pass, but dancing in the rain.*** How very true it was for the disciples and for the man at the Beautiful gate. All of a sudden he learnt the meaning and responsibility of living as a free person, able to praise and worship God in the company of fellow worshippers. Peter and John and the rest of the young church had to enter the storm and continue the dance of the Mission of God.

Perhaps we could take time to think about our own situations and possible roles (or dance) that we could play in the unfolding Mission of God. We might be surprised as this man was to discover the freedom and joy of Mission.

**Prayer-thought: Lord, as we heed your invitation to enter the storm and join in the dance of your mission, hold us firm so that we may rise again whenever we fall; enable us to hold on to each other for mutual support and encouragement whenever the dance is slow and hard. Amen.**

