Rev Jon and Rev Dawn Barnes Returns to the UCCSA!

"CHANGE AND ADAPT"

These are words that are very familiar in our lives at the moment.

We have just moved to Maputo, Mozambique as Global Ministries Missionaries in partnership with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA).

After serving eight years in South Africa with the UCCSA, we were in the USA for nine months on itineration. And now we find ourselves in a new land, with new challenges and new adventures!

We are only about 2 weeks into this journey and have already started learning Portuguese, had the pleasure of being in two worship services, tried new foods, our kids have started their new school at the Maputo International School, and we are learning how to drive in a big city! There are many differences between Mozambique and South Africa and we are looking forward to learning new ways of worship, living and loving from our brothers and sisters here.

Being so out of your “normal” context always makes you take a closer look at yourself, your relationships and the way you function. I have had several of those “ah-ha” moments of late! The one that stands out is that of change and adapt. Is this not our calling as Christians? In the last two weeks I have found that I am not familiar with many of the foods in the shops, things are very expensive here and many things are not available that I use for cooking. I do not speak Portuguese (yet!) and it is difficult to get the smallest things accomplished. The driving here is a challenge as it seems no one follows the lines down the middle of the road and the police are readily available to pull you over for the least mistake. These are the changes. And now to adapt! Jesus tells us in the Luke passages to not worry. Easier said than done, right? But it is a good reminder to read these passages in times of changing and adapting.

What is changing in your life? And how are you adapting? What is worrying you? Read with me today these Luke passages as we lean on God and know that God is journeying with us.

Jonathan and Dawn Barnes serve with the Mozambique Synod of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, based in Maputo, Mozambique. Dawn serves as an HIV and AIDS Coordinator and Jon serves as project and development officer.

UCCSA Synod Secretaries

Meet the persons who serve as Secretaries to the five Synods within the UCCSA.

Rev. Segola Keimetswe
Moderator of the Botswana Synod based at the Synod Office in Gaborone.

Rev. Xavier Massingue
Secretary for the Synod of Mozambique based at the Synod Office in Maputo.

Mr. Jimmy Heyman
Secretary of the Namibia Synod based at the Synod Office in Windhoek.

Mr. Aubrey Classen
Secretary of the South Africa Synod based at the Synod Office in Johannesburg.

Rev. Dennies Sikhosana
Secretary of the Zimbabwe Synod based at the Synod Office in Bulawayo.
The promise of the resurrected Christ before his ascension was actualized on the day of Pentecost in two types of power: the sound “as of a rushing mighty wind” and “tongues as of fire” (Acts 2:2-3). The advent of the Holy Spirit surpasses all possible description. For this reason Luke the evangelist uses the word “as”.

The powerful wind completely renews the entire atmosphere; it creates a new climate, providing a life-giving environment of breath and energy. “This energy filled the whole house where they were sitting.” The disciples were flooded, immersed, “baptized” in this divine energy, as the Lord had previously announced: “before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5).

The other type of power is symbolized by “tongues as of fire”. It is a manifestation of the uncreated energy of God. The fire burns, heats, enlightens. The Holy Spirit acts within the world “as” fire, burning whatever is dangerous or not useful – warming, comforting, strengthening. The Holy Spirit will forever remain a source of enlightenment, revealing the truth concerning the mystery of the Holy Trinity and of human existence.

The Holy Spirit comes in an hour when “they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1), in a celebration of thanksgiving – “the Pentecost”. It comes at a gathering of the faithful – “among the brethren” of “about a hundred and twenty” (cf. Acts 1:15), in order to transform the gathering into the Church of the Triune God. The “rushing wind” does not originate from some earthly direction but “from heaven”, from the “Father in heaven”. The fiery presence is split into tongues “and one sat upon each of them”. In this way the direct relationship between the Spirit and the Word of God (the Logos) is revealed, along with the personal nature of the divine gifts. The Spirit will reveal Christ as Lord and Saviour (cf. I Cor. 12:3) to human beings and will bring him, along with his grace, into the human heart. The Holy Spirit continues the saving work of Christ, within time and space, radiating the divine energy; in ways, often incomprehensible to the human mind. “The wind (pneuma) blows where it wills” (John 3:8)

The power, which the disciples received on Pentecost with the advent of the Holy Spirit, does not concern their spiritual progress and personal growth only. It is not an individualistic enlightenment, a fortunate state of ecstasy for them to enjoy on their own. It is offered for the transmission of the gospel of salvation to all of the inhabited world, the oikoumene, to continue the work of the transformation of the world, the work which Christ began: “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The disciples, who until then had been afraid, are turned into courageous apostles, the ones who are sent to continue the ministry of Christ in the world. And the Church becomes for all time “apostolic”.

The steadfast desire of each of the faithful is to become a temple of the Holy Spirit, for the personality of each one to be perfected with the maturity of the fruits of the Spirit within them (Gal. 5:22), so that each may become a bearer of the Spirit of love, truth, holiness and reconciliation within their surroundings, to those both near and far, and to contribute to a constant renewal of humanity.

Every celebration of Pentecost offers a new opportunity to each church community and to each of us, to live eucharistically and doxologically the advent and gift of the Holy Spirit, to renew our trust in the Spirit’s power and to implore with all of the intensity of our soul:

All-Holy Spirit, “come and dwell in us and cleanse us from every stain”: Strengthen our courage and determination. Renew and impart new breath and power to the Church. And give us the power to become, in today’s suffering world, “martyrs” of the cross and the Resurrection, witnesses to justice, peace and hope.
Rev. Cheryl Dibeela Awarded a PhD

Rev. Cheryl Natalie Dibeela was awarded a PhD by the University of Kwazulu-Natal in April 2011.

The topic of her dissertation “A Quest for a liberative learning ethos” - A case study of the Women's Associations of the UCCSA.

She researched the history of the Women's Associations in the UCCSA; their work, challenges, influences and the possibilities that these organizations hold for a transformative learning in church and society.

Her work was originally supervised by Prof Steve De Gruchy before his untimely death. She was later supervised by Prof. Sarojini Nadar.

Pray for the 2011 UCCSA Assembly

The Assembly will take place from 22 – 27 September in Matola on the outskirts of Maputo, Mozambique.

Synods are currently selecting their delegates. As soon as the lists of delegates are received at the UCCSA Central Office, a registration form and more details and information will be issued.

In the mean time keep in your prayers those responsible for preparing and making arrangements for this Assembly.

Pray for our church in Mozambique as they ready themselves to receive delegates from different parts of the UCCSA.

Pray for all delegates who will be attending the Assembly.

Impressions of the South African Council of Churches Central Committee Meeting held 7-8 June 2011

By Wellington Mthobisi Sibanda (UCCSA Youth Convener)

The Central Committee opened with a message of Hope and confession, a call to transformation and renewal, a call to participate in suffering and struggle.

The conference engaged around the theme ‘Following the Way, standing for the Truth and seeking the Life: SACC Reclaiming and Revitalizing the Spirit of Christian Witness and Prophetic Ministry’.

The theme is a reminder of the huge responsibility placed upon the Christian Church in reshaping South Africa and the continent at large for betterment of our present and future generations. The theme was a theological reflection of the acclamation from the book of John 14:6 Jesus answered, ‘I am the way the truth and the life…”

Representing the UCCSA was the General Secretary Rev Dr Prince Dibeela as member of the NEC, The UCCSA President Rev H Pillay, the SA Synod Secretary Mr. Aubrey Classen and myself as a youth delegate.

Some of the issues addressed by the SACC Central Committee meeting were:

- A Call for Peace in Palestine and Israel
- Concern for Crime and Corruption in SA
- Protection of the Information Bill
- Mushrooming of Tent Churches

The SACC Central Committee expressed it deep concern about the mushrooming of ‘tent churches’ which seems to propagate the abuse of human rights including the use of schemes that takes money from the poor, proclaiming the prosperity gospel and using the church for other questionable actions and therefore resolves called on Christians and Church leaders to be wise and circumspect about such teachings and activities.

- Conflict and Peace in the Continent

The SACC Central Committee expressed with deep concern about the escalating conflict and violence erupting in the African Continent, brought about political turmoil, economic deprivation and religious intolerance. The meeting also called on the Churches in Africa areas to work together in seeking peace, justice and stability for the continent.

In conclusion our calling as God’s people calls us to continue upholding the dignity of God’s creation and striving for ways to offer prevention, protection and restoration to those who are vulnerable in our society. As Church, I believe we must be intentional about following Christ, the Way who calls us to be ambassadors of his gospel – the Truth, who leads those who believe in him to eternal life.
STEVE DE GRUCHY MEMORIAL BURSARY

The STEVE DE GRUCHY MEMORIAL Bursary is in memoriam of one of the leading Congregational theologians, Steve Mark De Gruchy.

The Rev Professor Steve Mark De Gruchy was deeply passionate about developing competent ministerial cadres in the UCCSA and throughout the ecumenical fraternity. Steve was an open, creative and critical thinker who could engage in missiological issues from an informed position. Steve yearned for a world flowing with justice and exemplified that by refusing to fight in the army of the then apartheid South Africa.

The purpose of this Bursary is to promote research and scholarship in Theology and Mission and Leadership Development. It is open to all congregational women and men who are interested in research.

INTERESTED? THEN APPLY, AND STATE THE FOLLOWING:

• Research topic;
• Name of institution to register with;
• Motivation for the chosen topic, (1 to 2 pages maximum);
• Explain how your Research Topic will promote theological Missional action
• Also how your Topic will advance a culture for justice and leadership in Africa.
• Suggested Research areas to consider: Socio-economic justice; Water and Environmental Issues; History and Theology of Congregationalism and Leadership.

AMOUNT AVAILABLE Yearly: R15000.00

Send application to:

The General Secretary, P. O. Box 96014, Brixton, 2019, Johannesburg, South Africa.
Tel. +27118379997/8, Fax: +27118372570, Email: prince@uccsa.co.za
UCCSA (Synod of Botswana) Slams Botswana Government Strike Response

Rev. Kenneth Tlhabiwa

The UCCSA, Botswana Synod, has called on political leaders to treat Botswana’s current public sector strike as a national crisis. In a statement the Synod accused the government of treating the crisis as “business as usual” and using it as a platform on which to manipulate party politics.

“As the UCCSA we call upon you as our elected representative armed with a vote of confidence through your having been elected to cause those you lead with, that is the cabinet and the President of this country, to treat the obtaining situation as a national crises," the Synod said in a statement signed by Rev Dumi Mmualefe and Rev. Kenneth Tlhabiwa.

"We are concerned that as our leaders you seem to treat this as 'business as usual' and even more disturbing are statements and insinuations that all is well and normal even when the reverse is all true."

Tensions have reached boiling point during the six-week-long strike in which public servants have boycotted their posts while government and unions tussle over salaries.

The UCCSA has voiced its concerns that the rights of the electorate are being usurped by the political parties. They have also lamented the bad state in which students find themselves due to collapse of the sector, as witnessed during last year's examinations and the recent closure of government schools. But they are supporting health and education workers' demands for a 16 per cent salary increase.

"This is no time to play party politics, it is a time of crises, a kairos moment that demands collective positive response. Unfortunately we have witnessed our leaders play politics especially with lives of our children, the future of this, our beloved nation," the church said. The church also condemned government abuse of state media to mislead the nation.

"We wish to remind the government that public media is run with public taxes. It is the duty of the government to ensure public property is used for the interest of the whole public. People all over Botswana, especially those in rural areas where only Radio Botswana and BTV can reach deserved to know there is a looming crisis so that like everybody else, they could take necessary precautions."

Annual UCCSA Youth Gathering

Namibia 8-11 December 2011

Windhoek, Namibia is the venue for the 2011 UCCSA Youth Gathering.

This year the event will take the form of a Conference. It will be an opportunity for the youth of the UCCSA to have fellowship and interact with one another.

The last three youth events, two at Moeding in Botswana and one in Kuruman, South Africa proved to be very popular with our young people.

Start focusing on Namibia 2011. Become part of the re-building of youth structures within the UCCSA.

UCCSA WOMEN’S DESK

The 2007 UCCSA Assembly held in Oudtshoorn decided that as a church we setup a WOMEN’S Desk.

Workshops. Consultation and information sessions have taken place over the last few years involving different women’s groups and other stakeholders within the church as to how this dream can be realized.

It is hoped that through the Women’s Desk women would be helped to become involved more effectively in the mission of the church and to develop and use the diversity of their gifts and talents to benefit the UCCSA and the world in which we live.

Some objectives the Women’s Desk will focus upon will be:

- To recognize and coordinate the work of the different women’s formations found in our Local Churches, Regions and Synods.
- Identify, setup and coordinate projects, programmes and activities
- To advocate for women’s issues and concerns in the UCCSA.
- To influence policy within the Church so that the position of women could be improved.

The Women’s Desk will not take over nor replace the role and functions of current women’s formations in the UCCSA.

It rather affirms the work being done but also creates opportunity for other women’s groups to be recognized and celebrated.
EXTRACTS OF PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH IN BOTSWANA

Preamble
We, the leadership of the Church in Botswana represented by Botswana Council of Churches (BCC), Evangelical Fellowship of Botswana (EFB) and Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) has been engaging both the Government and Unions representing Public Service Workers from as far back as the 6th April when it was reported that negotiations between Government and the Unions were at the edge of collapsing.

The Heads of Churches observe that while Batswana over the years have been perceived as gentle, laid back and peace loving people, society is consistently changing due to forces from within and outside. As a result of these changes, the way people deal with the exigencies of everyday life have changed. This is the basis on which the Church has taken recent developments seriously and engaged all the parties concerned.

Given the position to which the impasse has evolved the Church wishes to highlight the following concerns:

- that the strike has already paralysed our public institutions as well as hurting our already struggling economy.
- deeply concerned about the socio-economic consequences brought about by the strike. Government is the main employer in Botswana and therefore the national strike is affecting the welfare of many homes, private sector and the social fabric of our nation.
- The deepening education crisis and the way it affects the poor and needy members of our community who go to public schools. This crisis is a microcosmic reflection of the overall national situation, clearly demonstrates that the strike has made a serious impact on all aspects of our lives.

The church has been mediating and praying for our country that the workers and the government may resolve amicably the issues at hand in order to end the strike.

From our participation in the efforts to end the strike we have discovered that both sides are willing to eagerly engage each other in efforts to end the strike, further, that both sides have treated the church and the rest of the negotiation team with utmost regard, and we are most grateful for this gesture.

As the church we commit ourselves to continue to do everything in our power to ensure that the current impasse is amicably resolved. In this regard we urge all the parties to the current conflict to allow love for our nation and the best interest of the citizens of this country to take precedence over any other interest. We call for peace which at the moment can be achieved through the government’s showing mercy and love by forgiving the workers and re-instating all workers unconditionally. The church commits itself to offer prayers and continued mediation at this most difficult time in the life of our nation.

We, the Christian community in Botswana remain committed to a peaceful and long lasting solution to the current standoff. We hold the whole nation deary in our prayers and urge all Churches across the country to continue with their prayers and supplications for peace and reconciliation. In light of this the Church will hold a National Worship and Prayer Service on the 26th June 2011 at a venue to be announced at 10am. All churches are encouraged to not to hold separate church services but to come together for joint worship and prayer services. All the Ministers’ Fraternal throughout the country are encouraged to make arrangements to hold such services in their localities throughout the country.

The Reverend Mmachakga Mpho Moruakgomo : President Botswana Council of Churches
Pastor Biggie Butale : Vice President Evangelical Fellowship of Botswana
The Reverend Philip Butale : Chairman Organisation of African Instituted Churches
“Dancing In The Mission Of God!”
A Devotional /Reflection by Rev Majaha Nhliziyo, Director for Leadership Development

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.
**Prayers for Zimbabwe**  
*Matthew 17:1-9*  
God, we lift up the country of Zimbabwe to you. We pray for the political stability of this nation and for so many who are struggling to survive. We ask that you might give the Christian community the strength to be your witness in this land. Give them a vision of your beloved Son and the accompaniment that he provides with those who are on the side of the poor and oppressed. Help us not to lose sight of your Son who calls us to be in this world as we stand with our brothers and sisters around the globe and particularly in Zimbabwe today. Amen

**Prayers for South Africa**  
*Matthew 3:1-12*  
Dear God, we are grateful for the opportunity to worship You today. We are incredibly blessed by Your unconditional love, compassion and generosity. We seek to be more like You. Help us turn towards You and away from those worries and daily troubles that keep us from having a closer relationship with You. We pray for all those here and abroad that seek to do your work. We pray also for the Inanda Seminary, the Bridgeman Center and the Theological Education by Extension College in South Africa, that students and staff grow ever closer to You this year, and that the resources needed to provide for them are found. Be with those that seek to understand You and share Your love with all creation, with those that are fighting for justice. Take our talents and use them to glorify You. We have found redemption in Your grace; help us now to be the embodiment of it. Amen.

**Prayers for Mozambique**  
*John 17:1-11*  
Despite the distance, languages, cultures, and experiences that could separate us, we give you thanks, O God, that we are all one in you. And in that oneness, today we celebrate and lift up our brothers and sisters of Mozambique.

This country has been ravaged by war, poverty, floods, HIV, and malaria. However, it is also a country that is filled with beauty, hope, strength and love.

We pray for the UCCSA, who is very busy preparing the way to host the UCCSA Assembly in September 2011. We also pray for Ricatla United Theological Seminary as they guide and teach the future spiritual leaders of Mozambique.

God, may you teach us to be family, to truly be one in you...to give, to love and to be a brother or sister to those who are in need. God Bless Africa; guard our children, guide our leaders and give us peace. Amen.

**PLEASE NOTE:** In the next Newsletter we shall focus our prayers on the UCCSA Synods of Botswana and Namibia.

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**CWM general secretary thanks UK churches for support**

CWM general secretary Rev Dr Collin Cowan will pay a special visit to CWM’s Europe region churches to thank them for their support in helping him gain his long-awaited UK visa.

Dr Cowan will visit general secretaries of the Presbyterian Church of Wales, Congregational Federation and the United Reformed Church as part of a three-day visit next week to acknowledge their behind-the-scenes role in lobbying the UK Border Agency.

CWM’s UK church leaders were instrumental in the drive to push through Dr Cowan’s visa application after his official start to work in London in January was compromised because of delays in issuing CWM a Certificate of Sponsorship.

Granted on 29 March this year, the certificate of sponsorship enabled Dr Cowan to apply for a three-year non-renewable visa.

Since January, Dr Cowan had been carrying out his new role from an office in Jamaica.

The new visa means he can move with his family from Jamaica to London and continue his role alongside secretariat staff at CWM’s Ipalo House office.

But difficulties encountered throughout the visa application process have sparked concerns over the wider issue of CWM’s ability to effectively employ international staff - and honour its commitment to recruiting a secretariat that reflects its membership - in the future.

Due to the fresh concerns, CWM’s trustees were asked to reconsider the issue of the location of the secretariat - despite having made a decision to remain in London at their extraordinary meeting in October 2010.

The trustees are due to make a final decision on location when they meet in Durban, South Africa at the end of June.

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**LATE NEWS!**

**Gantsi Church Members in Vehicle Accident:**

Members of the Gantsi Local Church in the Botswana Synod were involved in a vehicle accident on the 18th June 2011, on their way to a church council meeting. Prof. Gaonatlathe Mautle and Mrs Seleka died on the spot while 4 others, including Rev Pono Gakekgonwe, were seriously injured. Rev Gakekgonwe has been transferred from Gantsi Hospital to Princess Marina Hospital in Gaborone. Please pray for the bereaved families and the people of Botswana as they face a crippling strike and other challenges.