

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa



South Africa Synod

Bulletin



December 2010

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Do not miss Christmas!!

The Christmas rush is on! I know many of you are frantically searching for that perfect gift for someone special, wrapping up projects, planning a trip to spend the special time with family or friends and making plans for the big family lunch on Christmas Day.

Right now - right where you are - stop. Take a deep breath and travel back with me to the time before Christ was born. I simply cannot imagine a world without Jesus and yet I often live my life as if He does not even exist. A trial comes and I try to handle it on my own. Loneliness floods my heart and instead of reaching out to Him, I withdraw into the darkness. Instead of turning to God, my source, I settle for a human answer when what I really need is a supernatural solution from our extraordinary God!

When I do cry out to God, He lovingly fills each black corner with Light. His love flows over the pain like a soothing balm and once again, I experience the manger. Once again, He steps into the smelly, unlikely and very ordinary existence that is mine to change everything. He could have come to us in many ways but He chose to interrupt the very ordinary with the most extraordinary! He could have chosen to be born in a palace. After all, He was a King. Yet His life on earth began in a manger - a dirty, smelly barn. The simplicity of His birth is one of His most precious gifts to me and one of my most profound life lessons. I often wish that I had been there that holy night when Jesus was born but then He reminds me that I have my own manger, my own holy moment when God became a reality to me, and I worship Him for all He has done in my life since I met Him.

Every year I am reminded of the very heart of Christmas - Emmanuel, God with us. God wants to be involved in the simple, ordinary happenings of daily life: where we go - what we do - the smile we give the harried stranger - the patience we wear in the crowd of impatient shoppers - the love that prompts the secret gift - the heart that constantly celebrates His birth through every sparkling light, every beautifully wrapped gift, each special meal, every card, phone call and visit.

Join me in this quest - to celebrate Him and His birth in everything we do. Have a birthday party for Jesus! Adopt a family in need! Reach out to the lonely! Look for Him in the crowd! Emmanuel, God with us!

Commissioned for ordination



Mr Tuelo Thobega
Baltharos UCC – Kuruman



Mr Tshepiso Moreosele
Ga-Molopo UCC – Mafikeng



Mr Pieter van Niekerk
Wrenchville UCC – Kuruman

In the news



The Langa United Congregational Church recently held a Turning of the Sod service at their church in NY22, Gugulethu.

Rev Thami Mooi told the *Sunday Sun* newspaper that since the church is extending its building, they needed God to give them strength.

“We will be extending our church very soon and for that great work we asked God for blessings,” he said. He also committed the church to God’s hands through prayer. The project, funded by church members, will commence in a few weeks. “We need to finish extending the structure very soon so that we can be able to accommodate all the members of the church,” he said. Anyone who wishes to donate towards the project can contact the church. *(Adapted from article in Sunday Sun on Sunday, 24 October 2010)*

Rev Thami Mooi turning the sod

From the desk of the editor



As South Africans, we love fighting for a cause. We outwardly express our support for different causes and campaigns by wearing pink, red, and white ribbons. We think of creative ways to show our support to victims of violence, breast cancer survivors, and AIDS sufferers.

However, what good is a pink ribbon when a campaign does not work. How does a campaign help parents that make the dreaded call to the Police to report her/him missing? Does the campaign help when parents go to mortuaries and hospitals to look for their missing children? That is what my friend and former Algoa Region Children's ministry convener Lisle Douglas and her husband Danie, had to do recently when their beautiful matric daughter, Stacey, disappeared.

She was brutally murdered; her body was found two days after she disappeared. This all happened a day after the launch of a campaign that encourages us to wear white ribbons: 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children. Stacey was a woman and a child.

The late Liezel August became known as "Little Rock" after she was brutally raped and left for dead.

As with Stacey, she was set alight. Why? She was a little girl – a female child.

Why is a campaign necessary? Apart from the awareness aspect, what does the Government want to achieve? The parliamentary debate on this campaign as well as World AIDS Day on 30 November 2010 in the Western Cape provincial legislature degenerated in a political mudslinging. It happened in front of members of the public who came to listen to the debate on this matter. Who is more important? Them or the so-called campaign and victims of violence?

I wonder about the impact of this campaign. It is widely advertised (the Government has an advertising budget that us that work for universities would give our front teeth for) and focused television programmes are supposed to reinforce the core message of no violence. I am certain that the guilty parties look passed those. If they are at all able to read, I can only imagine them saying: "let me see if they can stop me."

Violence against the vulnerable is a problem. It does not necessitate a campaign. Why must we remind people to not abuse others? White ribbon or not; women and children should never be subjected to violence. They should never have to live in fear.

Sing unto Him a new song

Just like the birds expresses itself through song, so has the choral singers at the 7th Outeniqua Regional Mass Choir Festival in Joubertina. The audience from all over the region – drawn by the gifted choristers - flocked to the festival.

For the last seven years, the Outeniqua Regional Mass Choir hosted such events, but the one hosted at the George McLachlan Hall on 26 September 2010 may be the one closest to the listeners' hearts. With the theme, ***Sing unto Him a new song***, the choral singers made joyful noises unto the Lord. As King David believed that the soul of man should rejoice because of the Lord's mercy and His unchanging character, the choral singers served the Lord with gladness. They came before His presence with singing, accompanied by a single instrumentalist.



The festival clearly certified the humans' talent, as the Revd Christopher Saaiman noted, "Attending the Regional Choir Festival was such a blessing. God lives among the praises of God's people in a very special way. The human voice is indeed the greatest instrument. Never stop praising!"

The choir were composed of good singers and were well-trained and directed by Vernon Meintjies and John Theodore. Furthermore, the music chosen for the event fitted the taste of the audience. Their performance contributed significantly to the idea of the audience as worshippers themselves. The voices of the choral singers reminded the audience of Psalm 100:1, which stated: Make a joyful noise unto the Lord... Under the leadership of Mr Meintjies, the choir strived to present as diverse a programme as possible of the world's greatest choral literature, and has performed works ranging from old to contemporary masterpieces. An audience member remarked: "there are certain songs which are very good and will never grow old."

The Regional Mission Council Convenor, Marthinus Lewie, said, "I love great voices, and I thank God for the great singers. The joy comes from God, who is the hero of this performance and the one we are here to worship. These songs they sang reminded me of what matters."

The great value of a choir, from biblical times to the present day, has been its ability to glorify the words of worship with the beauty of music. Never stop singing, because choirs are part of the temple worship, in the same way that prayer, praise and sacrament are part of that worship. **(Submitted by Marthinus Lewie)**

Christmas has lost its meaning for us because we have lost the spirit of expectancy. We cannot prepare for an observance. We must prepare for an experience. - Handel Brown

KZN women celebrate Women's Day

About 250 women at KZN region from Isililo, Women's Committee, Youth, Soldiers of Christ and Women's Fellowship came together on 9 August 2010 to celebrate Women's Day. The Theme for the day was: 'Women, Unite and Stand Up'.



Testimonies were heard from single, married and widowed women and how God can bless women. The guest speaker for the day was Ms Nonhle Mkhulisi who encouraged women as members of the society and stressed that "Your friend is my friend, Your neighbour is my neighbour and your enemy is my enemy" and we should take care of one another as women of the UCCSA.

Every women received a small book titled 'I am She' which was donated by Bible Society. (Submitted by Baphiwe Nxumalo)

Health matters

Kwa-Mashu Congregational Church in KZN members on their Health and Wellness Day during August women's month, where members were checking their eyes, blood pressure and sugar levels. After the check-ups they were given free glasses, medicine and some were even referred to hospitals.

The health committee did a talk on health awareness such as the importance of cleaning and washing of hands, exercising, eating healthy and taking care of our bodies as God's temples. Elderly people from the age of 60 were demonstrated how to exercise at home stretching body and legs.

People were also encouraged to plant their own vegetables as well as the importance of reading medicine instructions and taking medicine and tablets correctly. (Submitted by Baphiwe Nxumalo)



The spirit of Christmas needs to be superseded by the Spirit of Christ. The spirit of Christmas is annual; the Spirit of Christ is eternal. The spirit of Christmas is sentimental; the Spirit of Christ is supernatural. The spirit of Christmas is a human product; the Spirit of Christ is a divine person. That makes all the difference in the world. - Stuart Briscoe

Anti-poverty programmes focus on education and information

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) focused its attention on poverty when the church in the Algoa Region had its first Justice Week.



The programme, put together by the Regional Youth Convener Rodney Williams and his core group, was educational and informative in nature. With the theme "A moment in poverty" the church came together at different congregations from 27 September to 1

October 2010.

After each evening programme those who attended were served **black coffee** and **dry bread**. It served as a reminder that we have comfortable lives and we are very seldom mindful of the experiences of the poor. The week kicked off with a



video show with the theme "What is poverty?" An overview of the movie, *Slumdog Millionaire*, was done and the impact of poverty was discussed. The following evening a live drama with the theme "Consequences/results of poverty" took place.



A Bible study followed on Wednesday, 29 September and on Thursday the stories of families living in poverty in the New Brighton area were shared by the social workers who daily deal with these matters.

A highlight of the week was when the church moved beyond the building on Saturday, 2 October

with a visit to the Arlington Tip where food parcels were distributed to the needy. As the truck moved through the city's Northern Areas, people stopped it to make more donations.

UCCSA Youth Convener Wellington Sibanda was in awe of the programme compiled by the Algoa Region. He attended all the programmes since his arrival in Port Elizabeth.

A Christmas Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

I believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible:

I believe in the one whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

I confess my ever-lasting need of God: The need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.

I believe in God who gives us the best of himself. I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born in Bethlehem this night, for me and for the world. - Walter Russell Bowie

It is only goodbye; not farewell

Lizzie and Gladys retires after serving the UCCSA for close to 40 years



The Synod took leave of Ms Elizabeth Cele and Ms Gladys Mahlangu during the recent Synodical Committee meeting in Johannesburg.

Synod arranged a special dinner during the meeting to provide the opportunity for the different constituencies of the UCCSA to wish them well.

Lizzie and Gladys with Shahida, the office Receptionist/Secretary.

Elizabeth remarked that she started working for the UCCSA when she was 23 years old. Both of them started working under the leadership of the late Rev Joe Wing, the 1st General Secretary of the UCCSA.

Also in attendance were the UCCSA General Secretary, **Rev Dr Prince Dibeela**, the President-elect, **Rev Basil Manning**, and the Director of the Leadership Academy, **Rev Majaha Nhliziyo**



Synod chairperson, Rev Michael Mzini, wishing Elizabeth and Gladys well.

Current affairs

When is the Church's decisive moment?

Do we need a post-apartheid Kairos document?

In the late 1980's a document was circulated. My mother was perturbed when she saw a copy of the document in our home. She did not want to be associated with it and neither did she want to have her eldest daughter associated with it.

It was called the Kairos Document because Kairos was taken to mean the "moment of truth" and the "moment of grace and opportunity". It was discussed at a meeting held in Soweto in July 1985. A number of the church leaders who attended the National Initiative for Reconciliation signed the second edition.

The KAIROS document is a Christian, biblical and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa in the 1980's. It was an attempt by concerned Christians in South Africa to reflect on the situation of death in our country.

And here we are; 25 years after the Soweto meeting and the country finds itself in a peculiar situation. We enjoy political freedom; yet there are so many injustices being done. We have little economic freedom. The poor is getting poorer while our leaders and the rich line their pockets, very often at the cost of the poor and the disenfranchised.

Corruption is at the order of the day. Service delivery is shoddy. Crime, despite the recent statistics, is a major cause for concern among the ordinary law-abiding citizen. The education system fails so many potential leaders. The Church's voice is hardly audible.

Corruption is at the order of the day. Service delivery is shoddy. Crime, despite the recent statistics, is a major cause for concern among the ordinary law-abiding citizen. The education system fails so many potential leaders. The Church's voice is hardly audible.

Does the Body of Christ need another moment of truth? Or are we living (emphasis here) the moment of truth? We are not rocking the boat as we have in the apartheid years, yet we experience injustices and discrimination daily. Climate change and sustainability are buzzwords, words that should spur us into action in the fight to protect the earth. We have become complacent.

Late last year the Kairos Palestine document saw the light. The authors declare the following: "We, a group of Christian Palestinians, after prayer, reflection and an exchange of opinion, cry out from within the suffering in our country, under the Israeli occupation, with a cry of hope in the absence of all hope, a cry full of prayer and faith in a God ever vigilant, in God's divine providence for all the inhabitants of this land. Inspired by the mystery of God's love for all, the mystery of God's divine presence in the history of all peoples and, in a particular way, in the

history of our country, we proclaim our word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging – a word of faith, hope and love.

Why now? Because today we have reached a dead end in the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The decision-makers content themselves with managing the crisis rather than committing themselves to the serious task of finding a way to resolve it. The hearts of the faithful are filled with pain and with questioning: What is the international community doing? What are the political leaders in Palestine, in

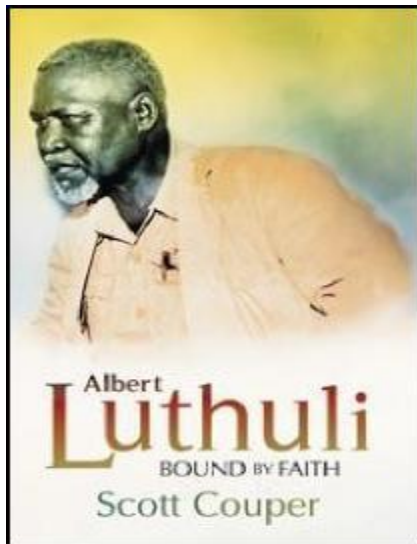
Israel and in the Arab world doing? What is the Church doing? The problem is not just a political one. It is a policy in which human beings are destroyed, and this must be of concern to the Church.”

I believe that as a Church we need decisive action. We talk too much and really say and do too little. Therefore, in my opinion yet again, we do not need a document. We need to act and make a difference. **(Roslyn Baatjies)**

Comments on this article or any contributions can be sent to roz.baatjies@gmail.com

ALBERT LUTHULI

Bound by Faith by Scott Couper



Much public historical mythology asserts that Chief Albert Luthuli, former President of the African National Congress (ANC), launched the armed struggle upon his return to South Africa after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. This misinterpretation sparks what is arguably one of the most relevant and controversial historical debates in South Africa. Due to Luthuli's domestic and international prominence and impeccable moral character, liberation struggle icons, political parties and politicians justify in part their past actions and their contemporary relevance upon a contrived historical memory. Often that memory is not compatible with the archival record. Contrary to a nationalist inspired historical perspective, in this book Scott Couper argues that Luthuli did not support the initiation of violence in December 1961.

Luthuli's ecclesiastical tradition, Congregationalism, embedded within him the primacy of democracy, education, sacrificial service, multiracialism and egalitarianism, propelling him to the heights of political leadership. However, these same seminal emphases rendered Luthuli obsolete as a political leader within an increasingly radicalised, desperate and violent environment. While Christian faith fuelled his political success, it engendered the inertia for his

irrelevance following the ANC's resort to violence. By not supporting the ANC's armed movement, Luthuli's political career proved to be 'bound by faith'.

Scott Couper serves the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa as the Development Manager of the historic Inanda Seminary through the auspices of Global Ministries, United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

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When Christ entered our world, he didn't come to brighten our Decembers, but to transform our lives. - Rich Miller

Outeniqua Region commemorates UCCSA Day

The Outeniqua Region celebrated UCCSA Day on the 3 October 2010 at the Oudtshoorn United Congregational Church. The service celebrated the union of the Congregational Union of Southern Africa, the London Missionary Society, and the Bantu Congregational Church of the American Board.



As clergy and laity assembled, various choirs of the region, and the host church choir provided the ministry of music. Feet were tapping and hands were clapping! The host minister, the Rev Johannes Muggels, mentioned that the service celebrated the union of the Congregational Union of Southern Africa, the London Missionary

Society, and the Bantu Congregational Church of the American Board. It was a good opportunity to remember all those who have played a part in the life of the church.

The minister of the Dysselsdorp United Congregational Church, Rev Samuel Britz preached with power and conviction from the subject, **REMEMBER, BUT MOVE ON!** He talked of the

importance of courage, conviction, and vision in being a Congregationalist. In his sermon he mentioned that the UCCSA is a multiracial and transnational church with a diverse history.

The congregation were reminded of the boundaries that were crossed in order to unite as a church. The reality is that our differences and cultural obstacles are often far too dominant and divisive. As the Congregational church we should build our foundations on the rock, Jesus Christ. Before sharing the Holy Communion, the Rev Britz challenged the congregation to remember where we come from, but to move on. *"There is a new vision, let us having hope, showing love for one another and understanding one's relation to others and to community"*.

After the celebration of the Holy Communion, the host minister, Rev Muggels said that it was good to be part of the celebrations. We must remember that we are privilege to be partners in the mission of the church. (**Submitted by Marthinus Lewie**)

****The UCCSA Justice Week (see story on pages 5 and 6) culminated on UCCSA Day celebrated in Kruisfontein. The General Secretary, Rev Dr Prince Dibeela was the guest preacher. A march to the church led by the Boys' Brigade preceded the service. Congregationalists were requested to dress up as poverty-stricken people in line with the Justice Week theme.**

The Region was also blessed to have delegates to the Synod Youth Conference and Mission Council meeting from all over the country attending the service. Another highlight of the day was the combined choir of the Kouga area. They contributed to the service in a special way.



Please continue praying for:

1. Former Algoa Region children's ministry convener **Lisle Douglas** and her husband Danie. Their matric daughter, Stacey, was abducted and brutally murdered late November.
2. **Mr Ishmael Kgapola**, Free State Regional Secretary, and his family who lost a baby recently.
3. **Rev Arthur le Roux** who is booked off on sick leave until end of December 2010.
4. **Rev Winston Smith's** father passed away recently. Kindly keep him and his family also in your prayers.
5. **Rev Ivan Petersen and Rev Peter Lamoela.**



6. The mother of **Rev Lincoln Wildemans** was released due to her heart not being strong enough to conduct an operation. She was further referred to the doctors at the George Provincial Hospital to treat her heart condition to get her strong enough to go through an operation.
7. Rev **Lemuel Stalmeester** for full recovery after the bypass operation he had on his leg.
8. Rev **Berryl Arends'** father who suffered a stroke.
9. Rev **Esther Johnson** whose mother passed away.
10. Please pray for **Mrs Joanne Peers**, wife of Rev Peers, who was in hospital.
11. Also, continue to pray for the **Rev Lionel Hill**. He receives 24 hour nursing at home.
12. **Mrs Bertha Langa** – the wife of the late Rev PZ Langa passed away in September. Rev PZ Langa was originally a minister from the Disciples of Christ before the merger with the UCCSA. He served a long time at Soweto United and Percy Webber until his death.
13. **Rev Enoch Mapoe** and family; his mother passed away in Port Elizabeth.
14. **Rev Xolani Koom** passed away after a short illness. He and his family relocated from the KwaZulu-Natal Region to the Kei Region about two months ago. Please pray for Mrs Koom and the rest of the family.
15. The mother-in-law of the **Rev Leon Barendse** passed away recently. Please pray for Leon, Fredericka and the rest of the family.
16. **Rev Florence Botha** was hospitalised. Please pray for her and her family.
17. The family of the Rev Gert Mfundisi – His father-in-law passed on.
18. **Rev Jacob Alberts** and family as his wife is sick.
19. Please keep the UCCSA President-Elect, **Rev Basil Manning**, his wife, Rachel, and children in your prayers as they are going through a difficult time at the moment. Mrs Manning had major surgery recently.
20. The wife of Rev Klaas (in Postmasburg) is seriously ill;
21. The sister-in-law of Rev Bosman was called to higher service.
22. The Rev Keketso Bloem was hospitalized in Humansdorp.
23. A tornado went through the Kalahari and damaged schools, homes, churches and clinics.
24. The sister-in-law of the Synod secretary passed away in Cape Town.

Polishing Windows!

If you are spending hours a day pushing your mouse around a desk, take note of these nifty PC shortcuts – and learn how to work smarter, not harder.

Most of these speed tricks involve using keyboard short cuts – in other words, clicking a combination of keys simultaneously. By learning the right keyboard short cuts, you can navigate your way round your PC in a flash, cut down on the time you spend on repetitive tasks and streamline many of the functions you have to execute.

These keyboard shortcuts work in Word, Excel, Internet Explorer, Notepad, Outlook and most other Windows-based applications.

Undo a mistake, or undo the last action	Ctrl + Z
Redo something	Ctrl + Y
Select everything on a page or screen	Ctrl + A
Select a block of text	Ctrl + Shift + any arrow key
Copy text: Highlight it and press	Ctrl + C
Paste text	Ctrl + V
Delete text: highlight it and press	Ctrl + X
Create a new file	Ctrl + N
Print a document	Ctrl + P
Insert a hyperlink (web address)	Ctrl + K
Open a file fast	Ctrl + O
Find and replace text	Ctrl + F
Save a file fast	Ctrl + S
Close a file or window	Ctrl + W
Make text bold	Ctrl + B
Make text underlined	Ctrl + U
Make text italic	Ctrl + I
Open the font formatting box	Ctrl + D
Align the text to the left, right or justify	Ctrl + L / Ctrl + R / Ctrl + J
Centre text	Ctrl + E
Quickly increase or decrease the font size of text	Highlight text – To increase press Ctrl + Shift + >
	Highlight text – To decrease press Ctrl + Shift + <

For many of us, sadly, the spirit of Christmas is "hurry". And yet, eventually, the hour comes when the rushing ends and the race against the calendar mercifully comes to a close. It is only now perhaps that we truly recognize the spirit of Christmas. It is not a matter of days or weeks, but of centuries-nearly twenty of them now since that holy night in Bethlehem. Regarded in this manner, the pre-Christmas rush may do us greater service than we realize. With all its temporal confusion, it may just help us to see that by contrast, Christmas itself is eternal.

Burton Hills

UCCSA family and youth Convocation

“in Christ there is a future for the family”



Date: 9 - 12 December 2010
Venue: Kuruman Moffat Mission

The back pew



Imagine the buzz around Heaven's coffee maker when God's salvation plan for mankind was revealed. **Luke 1:25ish**



As hard as it is to Christmas shop, you still give good presents. How much more will your Father in Heaven give good things to those who ask him. **Mt. 7:11** (CIV) Christmas International Version



In sharp contrast to the serene images of Joseph and Mary's journey that first Christmas night, Harry and Betsy's travels that same evening could neither be described as a **SILENT NIGHT** or a **HOLY NIGHT**.



Being 3 **wise MEN** the journey to baby Jesus took longer than expected because they refused to stop and ask directions.

(credit: www.thebackpew.com)