How did Congregationalism develop?

A reflection by Euodia Volanie – House of Formation student, UKZN

The actions of many Biblical characters have always been informed by their conviction that the messages they had received, either directly or indirectly, were from God. These actions performed by kings, prophets, priests and ordinary people brought about relief in times of oppression, comfort in times of despair and hope in desperate situations. As servants of God, they spoke words that inspired valour, delivered sermons that prompted people to act justly and assessed situations that brought judgment on those who acted unjustly. They spoke prophetic words that were informed by their ability to read the signs of the times in conjunction with their theology, and in this way allowed God’s justice to reign in both the private and public spheres. This is the tradition that Christians have inherited and a tradition that undergirds the essence upon which Congregationalism is constructed. This is evident in the development of this church system since its incipient stage. This article will therefore trace the development of Congregationalism through five distinct periods beginning in England and ending in Southern Africa, where this particular form of Congregationalism became known as the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA).

Essence of Congregationalism: Puritans and Separatists

Congregationalism is a blend of John Calvin’s theology (Reformed Theology) with Anabaptist ecclesiology. It started with the influence that Reformed theology had on the Puritan Movement within the Church of England where the monarch was set as the temporal authority, with the Archbishop of Canterbury as its spiritual leader. From Calvin the Puritans appropriated the centrality of the Bible in all matters of faith and doctrine. They endeavoured therefore to purify the Church according to the pure teaching of the Bible. When this effort failed some of them separated from the church to establish small gathered churches. These Churches were modelled on the concept of a gathered Church that consists of believers around a mutual covenant to journey in the power of the Holy Spirit. The leaders of this Church were democratically elected and decision making rested in the sphere of the local gathered church. Their confession was that Jesus is Lord in all spheres of Life and the Head of the Church as taught in Scriptures. Consequently, this confession found a direct opposition in England and the Separatists were therefore persecuted. They disregarded this persecution and met secretly to worship Christ in open fields, plantations, and abandoned buildings. The Churches that were established by the Separatists were known as Independent, Free, Non-Conformist or Congregational Churches.

Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers

The desires of these Separatists to worship Christ freely and in community, led them to flee to Holland and New England (America) famously acclaimed as the Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers. Their arrival in America saw the establishment of democracy based on their Christian convictions. Consequently, their role in the abolishment of slavery and gender justice was built on the belief that all human beings are equal. Harvard and Yale universities were founded by these Congregationalists and their emphasis on education was modelled on the Reformation’s conviction that every believer should read the Bible for themselves was taken to the mission field. It was the Great Awakening which brought a spiritual revival to both America and England that led Congregationalists show concern for the salvation of the world. This led them to leave their comfort zones to act as missionaries to spread the Gospel and its benefits.

It is at this stage that missionaries from England on the auspice of the London Missionary Society and America Board of Commission for Foreign Mission enter Africa. Noteworthy, although both Societies had missionaries predominantly from Congregationalist orientation, they did not spread a particular denomination. Instead, they came as an ecumenical movement united in the common spirit to spread the Gospel among indigenous peoples.
Missionary Movement
In Africa the missionaries are seen as both collaborators of the colonial movement and as the ones that brought the Gospel and its benefits to Africa. But this ambiguity brings with it God’s intervention despite human failure. This is seen among Congregational missionaries such as John Phillip, David Livingston, and James Read, etc, who opposed the ill treatment of indigenous people by colonial powers. Their Christian conviction about the equality of human beings before God allowed them to act prophetically like the prophets of old. The missionaries’ efforts saw the building of schools, colleges, hospitals, industries, churches, like Inanda Seminary, Adams College, Tiger Kloof, among others. Their conviction also allowed them to establish institutions of learning to prune African leaders for independent thinking and to raise individual consciousness to a level where they could lead their own people. These institutions produced nurses, teachers, artisans, ministers, political leaders among others who played an integral role in the liberation movements particularly from Southern Africa. Significantly, among these is Inkosi Albert Mvumbi Luthuli the first African from Congregational orientation to receive the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize. His disposition towards peace in the liberation struggle was informed by his deep Christian convictions as expounded by the Congregational Church. However, the efforts of the missionaries were paralysed by an apartheid government which dispossessed many of these institutions based on their distorted view of the different races created by God.

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and Apartheid
The formation of the UCCSA comes at a time where the Apartheid legislation was being enforced violently and vigilantly. This unity which was constituted in Durban on 3 October 1967 is a prophetic act in itself since it comes at a time that the South African government prohibited interracial groups from growing together. It is also a time that the state-church justifies apartheid theologically. But these heretic views that God created humanity hierarchically and that one group could dominate other groups were soon denounced by the UCCSA making it one of the few Churches in Southern Africa that unequivocally denounced Apartheid. It responded to the system by transforming its structures to facilitate change. Despite living in a divided country, the UCCSA sought formed alliances to strengthen the Gospel message that Church unity is the essence of the Christian message. It became the founder member of an array of ecumenical endeavours to promote unity instead of division. It was during this time that the Congregational prophets notably Joseph Wing, John de Gruchy, and others delivered cutting edge theological treaties to respond to the heretic views of the Apartheid government. This was followed by social action, campaigns, and reports to condemn the system but also through pastoral intervention to the communities and government assuring that God is merciful to those who approach him with forgiving hearts. The demise of this oppressive system came about not only through revolutionary movements but also through the efforts of our Church.

UCCSA and Democratic South Africa
The Church has indeed been inspired to act prophetically through the centuries past. However, democratic South Africa with its liberal Constitution presents multiple challenges to the Church at large. Its involvement in the liberation struggle has left the Church ill prepared for liberation itself. It is lacking the unity to speak in one voice on issues of globalisation where global capital finds precedence over the well being of other countries. It is devoid of decisive ecological discernment to teach people that we only have one earth that we need to care for. It finds itself divided on issues of sex and sexuality with the implications of co-habitation before marriage, teenage pregnancy, abortion, homosexuality, HIV/AIDS and an array of other issues without clear theological stances. Indeed it is in this time that we should heighten our theological education and discernment not only for ministers but the Church community at large.

Commissioned for Service
The UCCSA has inherited a great legacy! The baton is in our hands as its members to continue the work done by our spiritual ancestors who refused temporal leaders as the head of the Church but insisted in word and deed that Jesus is Lord in all spheres of Life. They also understood the independence of the local church, but that due to its covenant relationship did not misconstrue independence with authority. They understood the implications of a covenant relationship to be interdependent and that freedom should be enjoyed with responsibility is the mode of operation. Our Christian conviction as a Church should prompt us to continue the work of education, strengthen our involvement in health and well being, persist in raising individual consciousness and enforce teachings on human dignity, self worth and self respect. It should prompt us to challenge political, social and religious issues which are contrary to our faith that seeks to benefit a few to the detriment of many. This is what the prophets of the Congregational Church have done in their service to Christ and Humanity. We are therefore commissioned as a Church to continue this great service to bring about the reign of God here on earth! The question we need to ask ourselves at this point in time is “Where are we standing in relation to this powerful legacy of Congregationalism?”
Rev Damon Abrahams joined the list of ministers celebrating 50 years of ordained ministry on the 31st January 2010. With him is Mrs Florence Norris, Central region chairperson.

The Algoa Region treated the retired ministers, ministers’ widows, ministers and their wives, the regional leadership and other elderly members to a Christmas dinner in December last year.

From left are Mrs Joan Meyer, Maria Booysen, Anne Drake and Daphne Arends.

Rev Dr Henry van der Linde recently celebrated 58 years in the ordained ministry. Mrs Celester Theron hands over a certificate in this regard as recognition for his ministry.

Steve de Gruchy’s last supper with students at the House of Formation.

Praise the Lord.
Never give up. Follow your dreams,
Because any dream worth having
Is a dream worth fighting for.
Honour bestowed on God’s faithful servants

On 17 January 2010 a packed Audrey Renecke Congregational Church in West End, Port Elizabeth witnessed the handing over of the UCCSA Roll of Honour Certificate of the late Harry van Schalkwyk to his wife Mrs Lena van Schalkwyk and his son, Selwyn. The couple has two daughters, Heather and Hayley, as well.

Rev Mike Kirby wrote the following tribute re the late Harry van Schalkwyk:

Much has been, and must still be said, about Harry by others better equipped to recount the many achievements of this husband, father, grandfather, colleague, friend and servant of God. Because it is in the telling of our stories and how we have been influenced by significant people that we strengthen our own faith and in a real sense ‘pass it on’ to others. So mine is but one such story about Harry.

I had heard about him before I went to Audrey Renecke Memorial Church in 1994, but it was in my time there as probationer under Bruce Theron and then later as minister to the congregation, that I really got to know him well, and I had the privilege to call him friend. As we began to share something of his vision for the local and wider church, there were things about this gentle and caring man that we all would do well to practise in our own lives:- His love was grounded in his love for his wife, Lena, and the family, and strengthened by their love for him. We need to acknowledge their readiness to allow him to use his talents in the service of the community and the church. With this groundedness he was free to explore and develop his relationship with God, and to work out in his life what the many practical implications of that relationship were. He could not discard anyone, no matter how they might let him down, because they, too, were the creation of a loving God. Sometimes folk told him that he was too conscientious and that he worried too much; but this was also a part of that connectedness that he felt with all he came into contact with. And that is perhaps what I will remember most about Harry, and that will continue to motivate me on my path – we are all connected – ‘members one of the other’, as Paul reminds the Ephesians.

If we do that, we honour him and we honour God. Can there be a better way to stay connected?

And in another region – North West – another celebration took place at the A.J Wookey Congregational Church in Huhudi, Vryburg on 14 February 2010. It was described as “a celebration day of its own kind that will never be forgotten in the history of North West Region, SA Synod and the UCCSA”. At this celebration the UCCSA Roll of Honour were certificates were handed to Rev K Colane and to the son of the late Rev B.G (Bro ‘B’) Mongwaketsi.

Praising the Lord at the UCCSA Roll of Honour Award Service
Elizabeth Cele bids the UCCSA farewell after 36 years

Elizabeth, better known as Lizzie or Chango, is retiring at the end of March 2010 after about 36 years of service to the UCCSA. She started working in the UCCSA Office during the tenure of the late Rev Joseph Wing as General Secretary. She continued under the leaderships of the Rev Sam Arends, Dr Des van der Water and Rev Steve Titus.

In January 2002 she was seconded to the SA Synod to assist in the establishment of the Synod structures and where she served the Church with dignity and compassion. Lizzie will always be known for the quiet way in which she did her work.

The following are the words from Lizzie: “I greet you all in the wonderful name of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ. First of all I would like to thank Him (God) for giving me the opportunity to work for the UCCSA and its wonderful people.

I give thanks to Him for protecting me through all these years. I am really blessed to have worked with all these wonderful people: The late Revs Jo Wing and John Thorne, Rev Sam Arends, Mr Maluleka, Rev Dr Des van der Water, Rev Steve Titus and Mr Aubrey Classen.

Thank you very much for being so kind and patient to me. I will think of each and every one of you because everyone has something special I will always treasure, and to the people of the church whom I have met and known, it is because of all of you that I worked for such a long time for this office.

In life we all know that there are ups and downs, but for the years I worked for the church there was more ups than downs and I am grateful for that. To my dearest Sister and best friend Gladys - I would like to say thank you very much for being such a good person for the 35 years we have been working together.”

Thank you all and God bless you!

Elizabeth

Steve Tshwete’s Ordination will be
On the 14 March 2010 in the Ebenezer East Rand Congregational Church
Steve de Gruchy was born on 16th November 1961 in Durban, South Africa, later moving with his family to Cape Town and matriculating from the South African College High School (SACS) in 1979. He continued his studies at the University of Cape Town obtaining a MA in Religious Studies, a STM from Union Theological Seminary, New York, and a DTh at the University of the Western Cape in 1992. His doctoral thesis focused on the themes of justice and liberation in the work of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.

As a young man, Steve’s commitment to issues of justice and liberation were evident in his involvement in the Students’ Union for Christian Action, as a youth pastor at the Rondebosch Congregational Church, as a religious conscientious objector refusing to serve in the South African Defence Force during the 1980s, and finally as an ordained minister in the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa in Athlone, Cape Town. Committed to both faith and social action, Steve became Director of the Kuruman Moffat Mission Trust in 1994.

During this time he was engaged in establishing a number of projects to alleviate poverty, curb illiteracy, and promote theological education, becoming fluent in speaking Tswana.

In 2000 Steve was appointed as the Director of the Theology and Development Programme at the School of Theology at the then University of Natal. At the time, this fledging programme was small and little known and Steve has built this programme to be recognized throughout the African continent as a relevant and contextual centre of postgraduate study.

With a strong commitment to the Ecumenical movement he has participated in a number of consultations and commissions of the World Council of Churches, World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Council for World Mission.

Appointed Associate Professor in 2005 and later full Professor in 2008, Steve’s stature as a scholar grew enormously over the past decade with numerous publications in the field of theology and development, more recently in the area of public health and issues of water and climate change. He was passionate about the way in which communities need to regain their dignity and focus on their assets in order to become more fully human. He has supervised numerous students, who know and love him as a committed and critical scholar, pastor and friend. In 2008, Steve became Head of the School of Religion and Theology at the merged University of KwaZulu-Natal. Colleagues have thrived under his decisive and brave leadership. He was always full of new ideas, ready to relieve tension with a joke, and determined that the School of Religion and Theology would be a centre of excellence within the University.

Those who are close to Steve also know that scholarly and activist pursuits are not his only love. He is a gifted musician, loves walking in the Drakensberg, and always enjoys socializing with friends. Married to Marian, and with their three children, Thea (18), David (15), and Kate (11), the family loved outdoor adventures. It was on one such adventure that the life of Steve de Gruchy was taken by the very waters (pula) he spoke so passionately about. South Africa has lost a son of the soil. The South African church has lost a key Theologian. The Ecumenical Movement has lost a prophet. And the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and particularly the School of Religion and Theology, has lost an astute administrator, dedicated academic, an agent of transformation, and a caring friend. We mourn his loss.

This Eulogy was prepared by the School of Religion and Theology.

Have faith in God – the sun will shine
Though dark your way may be today;
His heart has planned your way and mine
Have faith in God, have faith always. - Anon
A TRIBUTE TO OUR BELOVED PROFESSOR STEVE de GRUCHY
By
THE CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE OF FORMATION

As the Congregational House of Formation we always had the privilege of having Steve de Gruchy coming over and share with us at our Wednesday fellowship services. Usually when Steve is coming we will enjoy some pizzas afterwards and it will be a time for him to catch up, finding out how each one of us is doing. Although he was Professor Steve de Gruchy, Head of School at the University of KwaZulu Natal, to us he was Steve, our friend and guide, one who was never too busy to take time from his hectic schedule to spend time with us.

On February the 3rd 2010 we had our first Communion service of the year that was conducted by Steve. Although this communion was not that different from all the other times, there was something distinctive about it. We spoke about this after the service and related to each other how we enjoyed time together with Steve even though we could not pinpoint why it was somehow different. Unaware that it was actually our last time together with him. The message that Steve shared with us was from Psalm 121 and told us never to lose heart even if we are going through difficult times, and always to remember that our help comes from the One who created the mountains, heavens and the earth.

We were hit hard by his sudden and tragic death. The intensity of our loss is expressed by the words of one of the guys in the house: “His death pained me!” Nonetheless, we as the Congregational House of Formation were honoured and blessed to have known such a beautiful and free person as Steve de Gruchy. How we cherish that moments that we had with such a down to earth and humble Professor. He taught Congregationalism to us with so much passion and you cannot help but be amaze by his experience, knowledge and insight that he had about the history of our Church at a very broad level. Steve took us to his home one evening and we got a glimpse of the type of father and husband he was. He did not hesitate to let us into his private space, meeting his family, and allowing us into the kitchen where we could help ourselves and making us feel at home. That evening at his house was a time of reflection on the life of the late Joseph Wing, and we had men like Dr. Des van der Water and Dr. Roderick Hewitt who also shared with us on the memories they had of Joseph Wing. What a heartening and appreciative experience it was, I felt proud to be called a Congregationalist.

From this gathering at Steve’s house I’ve realized that our church has such a rich and powerful heritage that needs to be shared with our children, friends and families. The tragic part of possessing such a rich heritage is that many of us do not even realize or know it. Brave men and women who were excellent leaders sacrificed many things, including their lives, to build the Church as it is today. We will always remember our beloved friend and mentor as one who was always motivating us to reach our full potential, to make use of every opportunity that comes our way, and to be courageous to step-out and reach for our dreams. He was always looking for ways to reach out to people in his humble, yet unique way. We remember him as one who is a portrayal of an island of love in the midst of a sea of individualism, a person who was all embracing and very passionate about transforming paradigms, for he refused to be fettered by false chains of race, creed and colour. Steve epitomised the values of inclusiveness even though his ideas were too far developed for the Church to understand.
A true Congregationalist who understood what the confession “Jesus is Lord in all spheres of life” meant to the covenant relationship not only to the Church, that he loved so much, but also to the wider world. His ideas and way of life will be treasured and we will draw from this Congregational well for a long time to come.

We give thanks to God for a man who had faith in a God of nature, a God of the hills, of the mountains, valleys and rivers. He was a true son of the soil. He will be dearly missed by us; his intoxicating sense of humour, his singing, words of wisdom and motivation will forever ring in our heads. Steve left behind a great legacy from which we can draw to build our own legacy from. As Congregationalists let us learn from the legacy of this great spiritual ancestor, for he now joins those who have gone before him. Viva Steve! Viva! You have certainly been great!

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Rev Dr HWD van der Linde

to graduate for the 8th time!

Rev Dr van der Linde will receive his second doctorate on 20 May 2010 DV in Bloemfontein.

The intention of his research was to remedy a deficiency in the Congregational historiography in respect of the work done by that denomination in the North-Western Cape. The Dutch Reformed Church was the first Christian denomination to undertake mission work among the indigenous people in the area in the 1870’s.

Areas covered in this study include the schism in the Dutch Reformed Mission congregation at Upington at the beginning of the 20th century, the involvement of the Congregational Church in the situation; its settlement and contribution to the community. The entry of other denominations in the area once it was opened up made co-operation among the local churches particularly in the field of education, possible. It is to the credit of the Congregational Church and its minister, Rev. Saul Damon that the first secondary school for people of colour was opened up in 1943 at Upington.

In the economic depressed situation which prevailed in the country in the 1930s caused unemployment with its concomitant hardships. Under these circumstances the Congregational church responded to the need of its members who were adversely affected by it. The farms bought by the Upington church along the Orange River in the vicinity of Keimoes were converted into settlements. There the members with an interest in agriculture could rent plots and in that way make a fresh start again.

Although the area is relatively far removed from the bigger centres it was not entirely left unaffected by developments which took place elsewhere in the country. A case in point was the ‘Roaring Forties’, as that period is referred to here. The creation by the Government of the day of a Coloured Advisory Council in 1943 caused divisions within the ranks of the community. Some rejected it outright while others were prepared to give it a chance. Two leading members of the Upington Congregational church accepted nomination on this Council, viz. the minister, Rev. Damon and the treasurer, Mr. A.J. Ferreira. But it did not deteriorate into open animosity in the community as was the case in other parts of the country.

For more than forty years the Congregational churches operated as a group under one minister. With the passage of time it was realized that the situation became untenable. The experiment in the early forties is settled an assistant minister there did not produce the desired effect. The alternative was decentralisation and when it was implemented in 1946 it proved ultimately to be a viable option.

Church extension was started in the 1930s when Prieska was developed as an outstation of the Upington church, Work among the African section of the local community can also be seen as church extension especially when the group who severed ties with the Upington church in the late 1920s were persuaded in 1935 by the Rev. Damon to return to the Congregational fold. Although this congregation operated as a separate local church it was always ministered to by the minister of the Upington church.

Although this study only covers the first fifty years of the Congregational Church's work in the North-western Cape it is hoped that it will serve as an incentive to others to undertake research into the period subsequent to 1952.
What Should I Give Up for Lent? 
Chocolate? - Ice Cream? - Soda?

Many of us try to be more disciplined for Lent and give up something that we really like. I have given up 3 C’s: cool drink, chips and chocolate and not having these things to chew on when the going gets tough at the office or going to the fridge on a hot day or evening to get a glass of ice cold soda are challenging.

That’s great to give up the things that we like. Fasting has always been an important tradition of Lent. This year however, let us also consider other things that we can give up.

Give up complaining - Focus on gratitude
Philippians 2:14&15 – Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure…
1 Thessalonians 5:18 – Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Jesus Christ.

Give up bitterness - Turn to forgiveness
Ephesians 4:31 – Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.
Ephesians 4:32 – Be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Give up worry - Trust in God
Matthew 6:25 – “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life... who by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”
Matthew 6:33 – But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Give up discouragement - Be full of hope
Deuteronomy 31:8 – The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you: he will never leave you or forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.
Isaiah 40:31 – But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint..

Give up hatred - Return good for evil
1 John 2:9 – Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.
Luke 6:27 – “But I tell you who hear me; Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”

Give up anger - Be more patient
Matthew 5:22 – But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.
Proverbs 15:18 – A hot tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

Give up gossiping - Control your tongue
Psalm 34:13 – Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.
Proverbs 21:23 – He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.
South Africa Synod
Youth Development Programme

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Serah Beukes
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Algoa Region

Kei Region
Namibia Synod

North West Region

"In Christ there is a future!"
Current affairs
Is the UCCSA a caring church asks Rev Dr Bruce Theron?

This request for this article came about as a direct result of the reflections of the editor following the recent earthquake in Haiti where thousands died and others left homeless. According to press reports the casualties of the earthquake equalled that of the tsunami in Phuket in 2004. I could theologize about caring, exegete texts on caring or do literary criticism. Yet this will not bring us any nearer to the quest for a caring church.

Ms. Baatjies raised the following questions:

• “What is our definition of church?”
• “What does it mean to be a caring church?”
• Does caring mean a ‘cheque-book relationship’ and where people eventually stop doing anything for themselves anymore?

We find ourselves in a post-modern society characterized by secularism and individualism. While we should celebrate the development and growth we see, we also need to mourn the fragmentation and pluralism that abounds. In the midst of this, the church is called to embody the Gospel. It is for this reason that we are called to be practicing Christians. Is that not what we mean when we claim to “Show our faith by what we do?”

The author of the letter to the Hebrews urges us to pray for those in prison as if we are in prison with them. Surely, this would then imply that we should pray for the city of Haiti as if we feel the tremors and destruction with them. My mind goes back to the apartheid years. As we suffered and struggled during all that dark time, the international community stood alongside the oppressed and the suffering. They also showed their care by making money available for study opportunities and legal aid. In addition, our exiles were also accommodated and educated in preparation for the advent of democracy. When a call was made for disinvestment many of the transnational corporations complied. They showed their care by giving.

As always, we should take our example from Jesus. Luke 4:18 beautifully defines the ministry of Jesus. In addition, the Gospels remind us that “Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus gave all of himself that we may have life in abundance. As the salt of the earth and the light of the world, where need exists, the church must be seen to be actively working to alleviate discrimination, poverty, catastrophe or even national disasters.

It may quite rightly be asked; “Who is the church?” Quite simply, I am the church, you are the church, and we are the church together. This leaves all helping and assisting to us, the church, God’s agents of change. Did Jesus not say, “I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me something to drink?” Are we able to hear that same voice say; “I was caught in an earthquake and left destitute and you did not...?”

Following the Tsunami and later the Haiti earthquake and also the famine Ethiopia, I could not help but notice how organizations like ‘gift of the givers’ and ‘doctors without borders’ responded within days, dispatching food and medical aid. None of these organizations are explicitly Christian. In fact the former organization is unashamedly Muslim. All the while, the voice of the church has always been conspicuous by its silence. In many ways as the UCCSA, we have been a receiving church. We received missionaries, we received mission personal and we even seek and often receive funding for programmes initiated by us. Could that be why the initiatives that have been attempted to date, have come to naught?

Have our receiving over the years created such a culture of dependency in us that we have lost the ability to give? To care is to give.

Despite our newfound democracy, the increase in corruption, nepotism and self-enrichment seems to becoming endemic in our society and the underlying cause I believe is greed. The politicians and those in government must be lambasted for their greed and corruption. Yet, can we point a finger when the tithes from individual congregations tell a story of not being completely honest? Despite the best of our intentions, we have not yet budged from...
maintenance to mission. Instead, we seem to function in a survival mode. Now, in the face of global need and disasters, are we able to show our faith by what we do? May God give us grace to discover the joy of giving. Alas, to give is to care. To give is to care.

Current affairs

The last edition of the SA Synod Bulletin contained an article on human trafficking. I read some more stories about the incidence of it and decided to share this one with you.

In an article on the social networking site www.biz-community.co.za Issa Sikiti da Silva writes that some people wonder how the Salvation Army and its partner Be Heard, which have stepped up their anti-human trafficking campaign and recently launched a 24-hour toll free hotline, will manage in such a complicated environment.

But Marieke Venter, of the Salvation Army’s central division, is adamant her organisation will do whatever it can to stop what she called ‘new slavery’, and save lives despite various challenges. “We already have a couple of billboards erected here and there, and we will soon launch an aggressive media campaign on TV, radio and print, which we hope will create an ultimate awareness,” Venter said recently.

An ongoing Bizcommunity.com investigation reveals that trafficked people, nicknamed ‘livestock’ by syndicates, are sometimes dumped in and around Johannesburg and Pretoria (in front of churches, pubs and recreation centres, where there is a large concentration of foreigners), in the hope that a good Samaritan will spot them and help out.

The Salvation Army has recently opened a shelter for victims of human trafficking in Pretoria.

Members of the public are urged to report cases of human trafficking on +27 (0) 8007 37283 (+27 (0) 8000-rescue), a number that will be operated by Be Heard, a division of Quiver Corporate Solutions.

Brian Adams, Quiver CEO, said: “We are glad to help for free and we hope this vital initiative will encourage people to speak out against this bad social behaviour.” However, the call centre must not fulfill people’s expectations as members of the public can only report in eight SA languages - a problem Adams attributes to lack of funding to recruit staff who speak French, Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, Russian or Swahili. “For now, this is the best we can do. But as soon as we get funds, we will definitely roll out the project in other languages.”

The Salvation Army is calling on the government to pass legislation as soon as possible so that human traffickers can be detained and prosecuted. It is believed that a draft bill on human trafficking is being discussed in parliament. Report human trafficking on 0800 073 7283.

It could be your loved ones who are at risk!
Algoa region

The Algoa Regional Council held its biennial Choir Festival in the Feather Market Centre in Port Elizabeth on 29 November 2009; the first Sunday of Advent and naturally the theme was focusing on music from this season. The Algoa Mass Choir performed “The future lies in Christ” composed by the father-daughter team of Andy and Margeaux Lamont from George, for the first time.

Church choirs from Humansdorp and Hankey as well as Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth participated in the festival. The choral conductors, under the leadership of Mrs Antoinette Gallant, were Messrs Benjamin Draai, Frank Human, Benjamin Berkatt, Carl Alexander and Michael de Villiers. Adding some flavour to the repertoire were the Nelson Mandela Bay Brass Ensemble, Antonio Lawack on organ, a bagpiper as well as flute artists. According to the audience members the 2009 festival was the best it has been in years.

Kei region

- **Country Club Christian Church in Kansas City, Missouri, USA has donated an HIV/AIDS quilt to the region.** The quilt was dedicated in Oct. 2007 and the quilt has been through 12 of our 20 churches thus far with dedication services and more applications. The quilt will continue to make this journey through 2010.

- **The Bedford Congregational Church HIV and AIDS Project** has been established. It is now an official NGO and has been fully funded for 1 year by the CDT. The project is providing home based care to the terminally ill, mainly those that are HIV+. They currently have 51 outpatients. And they are also providing a weekly soup kitchen and support group for their patients. The caregivers (5) are all members of the Congregational Church and have received formalized home based care training. These ladies are to be praised for their initiative in their fight against AIDS and encouraged for the strength to press forward!

- **The Peolton Congregational Church began a partnership with the Masakhane Project,** also in the Peolton location. Masakhane is providing home based care to the terminally ill as well as providing a day-care for the children of their patients. This project has been in existence since 2006. They have also received some funds from CDT for the crèche. Rev. Saule, UCCSA minister, is providing pastoral leadership as needed to the patients and the caregivers. This is a much needed project in the Peolton community and is seeking to provide a holistic approach in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

- **Agricultural project at LLC Duze**

  In the last few weeks of 2009, Jon and Dawn Barnes have started working with the LLC Duze Congregational Church on an agricultural project. First, veggie gardens have been planted at the main church and manse in Mdantsane. The veggies grown will be distributed to elderly in the community. Nozuko Toli has been around a number of times to help with issues of organic pest control, as well as general care for the garden. They have also started working with one of the outstations of the Duze church called Gladstone. The outstation has a small piece of land that they want to farm. In early January 2010, the land was fenced to secure it from both animals and theft.

  **Ms. Nozuko Toli,** a member of Peolton Congregational Church, spent most of 2008 in Japan studying community development and organic agriculture at the Asian Rural Institute. Since her return, she has been used in the Kei Region to assist with agricultural projects. It is hoped that, in addition to working with the Kei Region, she will be called upon by the other regions in the SA Synod, as well as all of the Synods within the UCCSA. One highlight of the year 2009 is that Nozuko was able to attend the UCCSA Assembly in Molepolole, Botswana, in August. She assisted Jon and Dawn in leading a workshop on sustainable asset based development.
Outeniqua
Not even 'n power failure could take away the Outeniqua region’s excitement about its mass choir festival with a Christmas theme held on Sunday, 29 November 2009 at the Weyers Memorial Congregational Church. A variety of traditional Christmas songs – a few with new arrangements – were part of the programme. The choral items were preceded by readings from Scripture. The region has 14 choirs of which 11 participated in the festival. Six choirs performed their own music choice. The 2010 festival will take place on 22 August in the Langkloof.

Men reminded of their role as priest of the home at Band conference

The Synod Broederband recently had its 1st Conference in the Immanuel Congregational Church, Eersterust, Pretoria (Central Region).

The highlight of the Conference was definitely the keynote address of Dr Gregs Perreira (picture) from the Baptist Church. He focussed on the topic “The man as the priest of his household”. This ideal man is to be unlocked - by him becoming the God-ordained role in all of his relationships. According to Dr Perreira the man can only define that role if he first identifies his relationships. What are his relationships? He itemized the relationships as Self, Wife, Children, Other Men and Women, work, God and Church.

What then are my PRINCIPAL roles?
- To SELF Preserver, Improver
- To WIFE Husband, Lover, Head
- To CHILDREN Father, Leader
- other MEN & WOMEN Honorable, Conscientious
- At WORK Diligent, with Fidelity
- To GOD Image, Servant
- At CHURCH Member, Witness

SOUTH AFRICA SYNOD
CONFERENCE 2010

24 – 27 June 2010
Somerset East
(hosted by the Karoo Region)
Karoo minister receives doctoral degree in Theology

Rev Jacobus Bezuidenhoudt of Graaff-Reinet recently obtained his doctoral degree in Theology from the University of Stellenbosch. The title of his dissertation was: *Liturgy and spirituality in the ecumenical movement: a systematic-theological evaluation*. This dissertation emphasizes that liturgy and spirituality ultimately informs the church quest for social justice in society.

This dissertation has examined the relationship between liturgy and spirituality in the ecumenical movement. Liturgy was mainly defined as the work of the people within the worship service (deriving from the Greek word “leitourgia”). It was noted that the understanding of spirituality has undergone some changes from being first perceived as an aspect of life solely concerned with devotions, prayer and fasting to a more holistic perception that stretches beyond merely devotional life. It became clear that ascetic, religious discipline and social commitment should not be separated because such dichotomies are alien both to biblical teaching as well as to the experiences of congregations.

The study focuses on how four factors (challenges) have had major influences on the development of liturgy and spirituality. These factors are the impact of the Charismatic Renewal, the increasing need for meaningful inculturation, widespread secularization, and the consensus on baptism, eucharist and ministry.

The research has found that there is an inextricable connection between liturgy and spirituality, and by linking liturgy and spirituality, the world outside the church must enter the church. Thereby our liturgies can be inculturated, thereby can we develop liturgies that embrace the secular world, where the worship of the gathered community can be carried over into worshipful living because the real test for the Christian is in the sphere of everyday life. The world, life itself, history, the public sphere, must somehow be present in the liturgy, because Christian liturgy has to do with Christian life.

**What our experiences are in Christian life, must be prevalent in our liturgies, be it recession or depression, be it unemployment or poverty, or racism or classism, be it child abuse or human trafficking, all of life, the dreadful and the positives, all need to be engaged with in our liturgies.** With the ever-recurring quest for ethical leadership and moral regeneration, liturgy becomes imperative in helping this cause. The issues of public life ought not to be estranged from the church, but that it should be part of our liturgical life and impact on our spirituality, a spirituality which embraces the fact that we individually and collectively appropriate the traditional beliefs about God, humanity and the world, and express them in terms of our basic attitudes, life-style and activity.

This and that

On 6 February 2010 I attended the funeral service of the father of Rev Franklin McCabe in Hankey. The late “oom Fransie” would have celebrated his 100th birthday on 30 May 2010. Having served the Hankey Congregational Church and having worked closely with oom Fransie Rev Margaret Constable was there to pay her respects. But that is not the only thing she did. She wrote a poem in the most beautiful Afrikaans in honour of this great son of the soil. Listening to the words and the emotion it carries, I realised again how many talented people we have in our church. She asked me to include it in this edition of the newsletter. Reading it, I imagined that many of you might have known a man like oom Fransie.

The poem is a tribute to oom Fransie and in a nutshell speaks of his character. The character of a man that could weather every storm; a man that was called and saved by God; a man that could look you straight in the eye even though he is humiliated and a man that would stay on his knees praying until they hurt. The poem touches on the man who will seem defeated, but will soldier on and won’t look for excuses. Instead, he will carry on putting his faith in His Maker.
Please continue to pray for:

- The wife and children of the late Rev Graham Stilwaney as well as for the church in Kokstad where he served.
- Mrs Florina Mohale, Free State Regional Chair. She had an operation and is recuperating at home.
- The wife, children and parents of late Rev Prof Steve de Gruchy who died during an accident while tubing with his son on the Mooi River.
- Rev Franklin McCabe and his family after the passing of their father in Hankey.
- Rev Alistair Arends who was admitted to hospital again in January and is now recuperating at home.
- Rev Prof Bench Mkonto who is slowly recovering from the stroke he suffered.
- Our UCCSA, SA Synod and regional leaders.
- The upcoming SA Synod conference in June in the Karoo region. Pray that God chooses the people that He wants to lead the South Africa Synod.
- Rev Chukudu and his family were involved in a motor accident recently. His wife, Naledi, had a fracture on the left arm.
- Michaela Muir (see the next article.)

**Michaela Muir** is a beautiful and courageous little girl, with the most angelic smile and a wonderful zest for life and is the daughter of Leona Greaves. She was born on 27 December 2004 and on 11 May 2009 at the tender age of 4 years and 5 months, was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML), commonly known as bone marrow cancer.

12 May 2009 - started a series of test over a period of 3 weeks. She had 3 bone marrow aspiration (BMA), 2 lumbar punctures, and 3 liter blood and 4ltr platelets.
8 June 2009 - she started chemotherapy for 8 days and antibiotics for 5 weeks and a BMA.
9 July 2009 – went home from hospital for 4 days and returned on Monday 13-07-2009, with still no sign of remission.
13-07-2009 – had another BMA and LP with another 4 week session of chemo, no sign of remission.
13-08-2009 – went home and returned to hospital on 18-08-2009 for 2 BMA’s and further chemo and antibiotics for 4 weeks.
15-09-2009 – was sent home for a while because the doctors thought she was in remission, but sadly that was not to be.
12-10-2009 – went back to hospital for another BMA and was then sent to doctors in Johannesburg for further test because despite all the extensive treatment she was not getting better or going into remission.
20-10-2009 – had one more BMA and further chemo for about 4 weeks…
24-11-2009 to 18-12-2009 – had another BMA and chemo every Tuesday & Thursday, stopped for 2 weeks and returned on 11-12-2009 to continue treatment.
04-01-2010 – had another BMA done
11-01-2010 – results from previous BMA sent to JHB, doctors were concerned because they’ve tried every available chemo treatment for children but it was not helping and at this stage was calling it the “Clever Cancer”. They have now started her on a chemo treatment that is stronger and more aggressive.
19-01-2010 – started chemo for 5 days, 5 different types as well as 2 citribine injections per day,…
24-01-2010 – due to have another LP to see whether chemo is working, but doctors decided to complete chemo treatment and then do the LP.

Michaela has just turned 5 and when asked by doctors and nurses how she copes, Leona responded by telling them that it is through prayers and that she praises and thank God every day for another minute that he has given Michaela and believes that they will never fall short of His glory because our God is a living God and the Prince of Peace and Healing.

An appeal from Leona: the doctors have urged us to appeal to all persons, especially “coloured” people, to consider being tested for bone marrow compatibility because if the chemo does not work, Michaela will need a bone marrow transplant (for more information on testing u can go the website of the Sunflower Fund at www.sunflowerfund.org.za or 0800 12 10 82).

Michaela and Leona worship at the Woodlands UCC in Pietermaritzburg. Our appeal to you is to keep this gorgeous little girl and her family in your prayers. We trust and pray that the test results will show that she is in remission.

**Acute myeloid leukemia (AML)**, also known as acute myelogenous leukemia, is a cancer of the myeloid line of blood cells, characterized by the rapid growth of abnormal white blood cells that accumulate in the bone marrow and interfere with the production of normal blood cells. AML is an overproduction of immature myeloid white blood cells (blast cells).

One third of all childhood cancers are leukemia and less than a quarter of these are AML and affects children of any age, and girls and boys are affected equally.

**Bone marrow aspiration**
Bone marrow aspiration is the removal of a small amount of tissue in liquid form for examination and the bone marrow is usually removed from your pelvic or breast bone but occasionally another bone is selected.

**Lumbar Puncture**
A lumbar puncture (also called a spinal tap) is a common medical test that involves taking a small sample of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) for examination.
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<td>Ms Elizabeth Cele retires after working for the Church or close to 40 years</td>
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The back pew

WILL YOU PLEASE PICK UP ALL YOUR CLOTHES?

10-06-2006

LEPERS ... I HEAL LEPERS

GOOD THING I FOUND YOU GIDEON ... IT SEEMS SOMEONE HAS BEEN HIDING ALL YOUR BIBLES IN HOTEL ROOMS

06-10

IT JUST SAYS “DON’T”

09-19-2003

How to Run From God

By Jonah

HOW COME THE WAITRESS GETS 15% AND GOD ONLY GETS 10%?

11-5-2005

THINGS BASED UP ON GUARDIAN ANGELS AFTER AIR BAGS WERE INVENTED

02-18-2005

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

SOUTH AFRICA SYNOD

May God’s grace be with you!