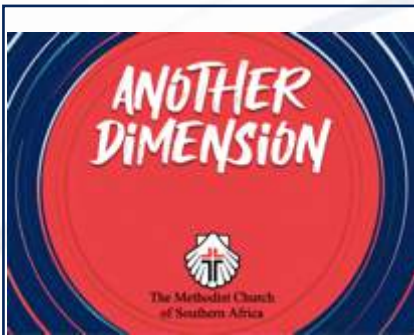


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The uPhondo Lwendlovu District encompasses the southeastern area of the Umzimvubu River and the north-eastern area of the Umthamvuna River, just before Port Edward. It extends northward to the Umzimkhulu River, with its boundaries aligning with the former Transkei border into Umzimkhulu and westward to the Mount Hargreaves Circuit. The District also includes Matatiele, Maluti, Kokstad, and Harding.

A meeting was held to determine the names of the two Districts. Clarkebury District chose to retain its historical name, "Clarkebury," in recognition of its rich heritage. For the second District, two names were initially proposed, including "Rev Palma District." However, this was opposed due to the existing Palmaville Circuit. As a result, the name "uPhondo Lwendlovu" was proposed and ultimately adopted.

The name "uPhondo Lwendlovu" carries deep historical and cultural significance. It is rooted in an event where three kings—Kumkani Faku of the AmaMpondo, King Ncapai of the amaBhaca, and the King Ngubencuka of abaThembu—came together, weary of war, and resolved to send emissaries to collect missionaries from Grahamstown to evangelise the Clarkebury area. When they (the missionaries) returned with the envoys, they were blowing "uphondo lwendlovu" (an elephant tusk as a trumpet) symbolising the arrival of the gospel.

The name "uPhondo Lwendlovu" thus serves as a tribute to this legacy of evangelism and God's continuing mission in the Eastern Cape.

Each District will encompass a defined set of Circuits:

Clarkebury District Circuits

1. 1301 Clarkebury
2. 1302 Kwantshunqe/Mqanduli
3. 1303 Emqhekezweni
4. 1304 Cwecweni
5. 1305 Bojane
6. 1306 Mtata
7. 1309 Wesleyville
8. 1310 Xora
9. 1312 Buntingville
10. 1314 King Victor Poto
11. 1315 Old Bunting
12. 1316 Tombo
13. 1317 Shawbury
14. 1319 Caba
15. 1321 Nyanisweni
16. 1322 Tsitsana/ Katkop
17. 1323 Fletcherville
18. 1329 Ngqeleni
19. 1331 Mbalisweni
20. 1334 Ntibane
21. 1350 eTyeni
22. 1359 Ncambedlana/Ncambele

23. 1362 Qunu
24. 1363 Ridge
25. 1365 Mthatha Central

Phondo Lwendlovu District Circuits

1. 1308 Pamlaville
2. 1324 Mount Frere
3. 1325 Osborn
4. 1326 Mvuzi
5. 1327 Mount Hargreaves
6. 1328 Colana
7. 1330 Mount White
8. 1332 Mvubukazi
9. 1333 Qaukeni
10. 1335 Etembeni
11. 1336 Rev Gideon Baqwa
12. 1337 Engwaqa
13. 1338 Rode
14. 1339 eDutyini
15. 1340 Mnceba
16. 1358 Brooksnek
17. 1341 Mfundisweni
18. 1361 Sipaqeni
19. 1343 Buttvile
20. 1364 Mbandana
21. 1344 Balasi
22. 1345 Ludeke
23. 1346 Ndlovu
24. 1347 Pathekile
25. 1348 Hlabati
26. 1349 Ndunge
27. 1351 Parlmertton
28. 1352 Dumsi
29. 1353 Matshona
30. 1354 Mandileni
31. 1355 Cancele

Leadership Election Process

In October 2024, all Circuits nominated candidates for the position of Bishop in their respective Districts. The March 2025 Mission Synods were tasked with electing District officials, including:

- Bishop
- Vice Chairperson
- Lay Leader
- Synod Secretary
- Statistical Secretary

A Connexional Team, comprising the Presiding Bishop, General Secretary, General Treasurer, Mission Unit Director, and Communications Unit Director, oversaw the election process.

In May 2025, the final Clarkebury District Synod will confirm and endorse the elected bishops and District officials. Conference 2025 will then formally approve the establishment of the two new Districts and affirm the elected leadership.

In November 2025, the new Districts will be officially inaugurated by the Presiding Bishop, Rev. Pumla Nzimande, and the new

Continues on page 3

bishops will be inducted. Their first responsibility will be to commission the newly elected District officials.

Distribution of Resources

The General Treasurer will oversee the equitable distribution of the Clarkebury District's resources, including:

- Assets and liabilities
- Movable and non-movable property
- Finances and other District-owned assets
- Guidance on financial management for Mission Groups and Organisations
- Training of treasurers and District Finance Committees

Governance and Structural Setup will be guided by the General Secretary in compliance with the MCSA Standing Orders and will include the set up of

District Executive Committees; Finance and EMMU Committees; Trust Property; Children and Youth Units; the Mission Committees and sub-committees etc.

Mission and Ministry Alignment

The Mission Unit Director will oversee the transition of mission activities to ensure alignment with the MCSA Vision and Mission. Focus areas will include:

- Mission Pillars and Focus Areas
- Continuity of mission programmes
- Care of Creation, Evangelism, Church Growth, Food Security
- Training and facilitation of mission initiatives

Mission Groups and Organisations

Under the General Secretary and Connexional Presidents, Mission Groups and Organisations will be restructured according to their respective

constitutions. These include: Women's Manyano; Young Women's Manyano; Women's Fellowship; the Young Men's Guild; Wesley Guild; Music Association; and the Local Preachers' Association. The incumbent Bishop will oversee the restructuring process and supervise the elections and appointments of officials within these organisations.

Conclusion

The division of the Clarkebury District marks a significant milestone in the MCSA's mission and ministry. The transition, guided by strategic planning and leadership, aims to enhance governance, financial management, and mission effectiveness across the two new Districts. The process will culminate in January 2026, when the Clarkebury and Phondo Lwendlovu Districts will officially begin their new chapter of ministry.

OFFICIALS OF THE TWO NEW DISTRICTS



Congratulations to Rev. Thulani Sonamzi on his nomination as Bishop of the Clarkebury District (2026-2031). This is pending Conference 2025 affirmation.



Congratulations to Ms Maureen Konyana, Mthatha Circuit 1306, for her election as District Lay Leader for the new Clarkebury District.



Congratulations to Rev. Nomvuyo Ntola, Ngqeleni Circuit, who was elected as the Vice Chair of the new Clarkebury District.



Congratulations to Rev. Xabiso Sebeni, Buntingville Circuit 1312, on his election as Secretary of the new Clarkebury District.



Congratulations to Rev. Mzubanzi Desmond Hlongwane, Mout Frere Circuit 1324, on his nomination as the Bishop for the Phondo Lwendlovu District. This nomination is pending Conference 2025 affirmation.



Congratulations to Ms Nompumelelo Alicia Thukwana, Ndunge Circuit 1349, on her election as the Lay Leader of the new Phondo Lwendlovu District.



Congratulations to Rev. Nolungisa Ndzume on her election as the Vice Chair of the Phondo Lwendlovu District.



Congratulations to Rev. Kareng Andries Matlawe, Gaukeni Circuit 1333, on his election as the Secretary of Synod of the new Phondo Lwendlovu District.

UPHONDO LWENDLOVU ONE DAY MISSION SYNOD STATEMENT

The Uphondolwendlovu District gathered at Mt Frere Circuit which is located on N2, in KwaBhaca, the town of Bhaca chiefdom, a home to one of our church stalwarts Bishop emeritus D.D. Dabula. The Bhaca people settled in this land in 1825 from the Lebombo Region. This is a nation with a great history and culture.

Wars were fought. To end the wars, God put wisdom on the then kings that 'Zakuphelimfazwe zonke ngezwi laKho Thixo, kwakulawula uxolo lodwa ngezwi laKho Thixo.' As a consequence, the delegation of kings and chiefs went to Grahamstown to persuade Missionaries to come to the then Transkei region to evangelise, the then traditional leaders did not wait to be Christianised, instead they were proactive. They brought Christianity with 'uphondolwendlovu', hence the name of this new District. As a result, the Methodist Church started to work in this region in the 1820s on the arrival of Rev. William Shaw. The wars ended indeed.

The Uphondolwendlovu One Day Synod converged during the Lent period, Jesus' journey to Golgotha, according to our Christian calendar. It was evident that God is journeying with us as Uphondolwendlovu as we experienced the showers of blessings throughout the Synod, and as we saw sunlight during the process of elections. On this day, history was written. For the first time we sat in a District gathering without our brothers and sisters from the new Clarkebury District. In the beginning, the mood was tense. Perhaps this was because of fear of the unknown, mixed feelings of anxiety and excitement, and election fever.

The Synod was graced by the presence of the Presiding Bishop Rev. Phumla Nzimande, Gen Sec Rev. Musi Losaba, Mission Director Rev. Siviwe Waqu, Lay President, Mr Xhanti Mhlubulwana, General Treasurer Mr Ranoi Sedumo, Communications Director Ms Bongi Moyo-Bango and the District Management Team led by the Bishop Rev. Noqayi.

On opening of the Synod meeting, the Presiding Bishop Rev. Nzimande lit the candle, and stated that God is the light and remains the light in the midst of all the atrocities. Rev. Noqayi conducted opening devotions, and took the scripture reading from the Psalm 46. The theme was "Be still and know I am God." – "Yekani nazi ukuba mna ndinguThixo." He conveyed a message of hope, that regardless of the ups and downs, the opposing forces, daily afflictions, trials and tribulations, God is still worth trusting. In his message, Bishop Noqayi stated that what we see today emanated from 2018 when the Church refocused on the Journey to the New Land of 1992, the programme which aimed to address the challenges of reconciliation and rebuilding in the post-apartheid era. It was in 2018 when the Church began to speak about multiplication and growth. A living organism splits to grow, he stated.

Clarkebury, the largest District in the Connexion, has now given birth to the new District Uphondolwendlovu. He spoke a blessing of growth and multiplication to the new District. He warned us against rebels and destructive forces.

The Presiding Bishop gave the ground rules for the journey of

elections, and stated that history was made as we witnessed the birth of a new District. She expressed her wish that we can be a church that listens and responds to the cries of the people, a church that is considerate and compassionate, as we become an alternative community. She also spoke about growth, referring to Biology 101, transformation and evolution. From what she gave us it was very evident that one ought to be balanced spiritually, socially, and academically.

Rev. M. Losaba, the General Secretary, shed light on the journey to this point. He stated that now we are witnessing the birth of a new District, the journey which commenced in the 2023 Conference when Clarkebury District delegation to the conference, led by Bishop Noqayi, presented their quest for division of the District. He stated that the Connexion has journeyed with Clarkebury as they prepared their readiness, focussing on three aspects; Resources, Mission, and Governance and Administration, with Clarkebury District Management Team at centre stage. In the process, boundaries were considered carefully and the division processes took place. Their journey is still to continue with the aim of empowering the new Districts with their newly elected leaderships.

The Presiding Bishop presided over the elections. The election process was peaceful and dignified.

For the new Uphondolwendlovu District Bishop, the name of Rev. Mzibanzi Desmond Hlongwane was the only name that was nominated by the Circuit Quarterly Meetings of the Circuits of Uphondolwendlovu. He was therefore voted as the Bishop unanimously with 182 votes. The name that was voted for as the Lay Leader was Ms Tukwana of Ndunge Circuit with 181 votes. The name of Rev. Ndzume was voted for as the Vice Bishop of the District with 178 votes. For the District Secretary, two names were nominated, being Rev. Matlawe and Rev. Kapiyana. The name of Rev. Matlawe was voted for with 141 against 43. This session was conducted with peace and dignity.

The Communications Director once again warned us about the way the so-called Methodists conduct themselves on social media, which dents the brand of our church. She expressed her wish that Uphondolwendlovu District should bear fruit that will last forever, that this District should bring honour to God with good conduct on social media.

It was in this Synod where we were taught that if leaders are to succeed, they need to work as a collective not as islands. We listened to a prophetic voice from the Bishop that for the sustainability of our District, our Circuit Superintendents, Ministers, and general membership need to take the issue of assessments very seriously.

The Presiding Bishop closed the Synod by delivering a moving and powerful message which challenged everyone to introspection. The text was from 1 Kings 6:7, "In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the site

while it was being built.” In her message she warned of shakey foundations, and that our District should be built on a foundation of mercy, love, and goodness. Which stone are you? It was silent when the temple was built. She referred to church as the workshop, the quarry which begins in the class.

Our quarry is the Word of God and therefore we need to live

by the Word of God before constitutions. Spiritually we were fed. It is now up to each one of us to go and introspect what one's role is towards making the District grow even stronger.

With this strong message the Synod was closed, and all delegates left for home, Circuits, and workplaces to submarine, *siyofukamela*. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

CLARKEBURY ONE DAY MISSION SYNOD STATEMENT

The one day Clarkebury Mission Synod was held at John Wesley Society, Circuit 1365, under the theme 'Awakening Prophetic Urgency and Agency – Becoming an Alternative Community'. The tone of the Synod was calm and prayerful. The Spirit of the Lord was felt during the District Bishop's Address when he mentioned that we need to let go of the past. We must not dwell there because God is doing a new thing.

The District Bishop urged the Synod to let God be God and not let go of God's hand.

The Presiding Bishop stated that as we are on a journey as the New Clarkebury District, the Methodists are with us in prayers. Both leaders of our church reminded us that God is calling us to be an alternative community that has a responsibility of shaping the world and

not be shaped by the world. God is calling us to journey with Him, find one another, work together, and create unity. We are called to form a new culture for this new thing, work hard to be a mission driven District, allowing ourselves to be God's eyes, ears, hands, and feet, not forgetting to care for the poor. We are to be a disciplined and a disciplined District. We are called to revive the church of Christ and be a revived District wherein there will be a multiplication of good things, subtraction of bad things that are against Christianity and development. A revived District with the addition of fruits of the Holy Spirit. All this will only be achieved through the Spirit of the Lord, not by our power or might.

Conversations are still going on in a number of matters including assets, mission, governance, boundaries, and finances. Other matters are to be taken

for arbitration.

The Spirit of the Lord helped us to successfully go through the elections and the following leaders were nominated: Rev. Sonamzi as District Bishop, Ms Khonyana as Lay Leader, Rev. Ntola as Vice Chair, and Rev. Sebeni as District Secretary. These names will be forwarded to the greater Synod and to the Conference. Other portfolios for appointments shall be discussed with the newly elected Executive members looking at the various skills needed.

In this new journey we need to have a connection with God, who is able to reveal what we do not know. In conclusion we were urged to let the work drive itself because it belongs to God who is in control. (Scripture reading Zechariah 4:6)

THE WAVE OF PRAYER SWEEPING ACROSS THE CONNEXION

By Rev. Vuyokazi Nontso

What started as a simple conversation between my Minister and myself, "I will put your name forward to be part of a group of District Intercessors. Praying for the Mission Congress is indeed a Pilgrimage of Spirit. My serving heart agreed without questioning much about what the Mission Congress is, what it is about, and I thought we would be praying for our District only. I decided that I would learn as I go. For me, when it comes to requests to pray or to preach, my Spirit resonates with the SeSotho Hymn; 'U nthome Mosebetsi ke o sebeletse...' there is no room for arguing or refusing.

Being part of the prayer warriors, praying for the Connexion, is an honour and a privilege; that we can stand in the gap, interceding for the upcoming work of this magnitude. I sensed we were a bit unsure as the group members, including myself. The brief tried to simplify what we needed to do, but what was still scary was 'the how'. The only comforting thought was that I would pray nonetheless – one can't go wrong praying, and at least focus the prayer to the nominated District for the week. Whatever the case was, I resolved that "the fervent

prayer of a righteous person avails much", as James 5:16 affirms as such.

My heart was put at ease when the Convener officially opened on 18 March 2025. That set the direction. Strangely, I had warm memories of 2021 when I convened daily devotions via a WhatsApp group for the Circuit LPA in my former Circuit. As horrid as the situation was, we determined that we would not roll over, focus on statistics, and suffer a spiritual and psychological death during the COVID pandemic, but would rather encourage one another in Word and prayer.

I believe we have settled in the routine, our Spirits and hearts are warmed to be praying without ceasing for the Connexion. This is fondly engraved in our spiritual journey.

I pray for all the intercessors in different Districts, to pilgrim light and high spiritedly, that even if we might not fully understand the depth and extent of what we're praying for, to pray nonetheless. It shall all be counted worthy!



THE METHODIST CHURCH
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

A PILGRIMAGE OF RENEWAL

The Journey to Mission Congress 2025



JAN - APR

PRE-SYNOD GATHERING OF ALL PILGRIM PEOPLE

- Circuit Mission Congress Facilitators and Mission Groups Meet
- COMs and other Circuit and Society gatherings allow for sharing and conversations
- District Collates insights and drafts a report Lenten Study Materials
- Days Of The People of God: Conversation and prayer



MAY

PREPARATION FOR SYNODS

- Districts finalise their reports and submit these to the Connexional Facilitators
- Reports will be reviewed and synthesised and common themes, challenges and opportunities identified towards informing a common congress agenda



JUNE - AUG

- Draft Congress Agenda
- Proposed Speakers
- Days for the People of God: Conversation and Prayer



JULY

CIRCUIT PREPARATIONS FOR CONGRESS 2025

- Elect Delegates to Mission Congress 2025
- Connexional Facilitators Report to CE
- Share Congress Agenda: plenary sessions; workshops etc.
- Highlight Key Note Speakers and Themes



AUG - SEP

CIRCUIT PREPARATIONS FOR CONGRESS 2025

- Build on the excitement and anticipation
- Prayer Wave
- Continued sharing of speaker bios

"One Mission, Many Voices: Speaking and Listening Together"

MISSION CONGRESS

ANNUAL CONSULTATION OF THE MISSION UNIT AND ECUMENICAL AFFAIRS UNIT

The Mission Unit and Ecumenical Affairs Unit hosted their annual joint Consultation at eMseni from 13-15 March 2025.

In the opening Devotions, a candle was lit for each District.

District Reports were received and Unit discussions held.

The Pilgrimage of Renewal: The Journey towards Mission Congress 2025 was also discussed.

These three questions guided the conversations:

- How does our church stand apart from the culture around us? And thereby becoming an alternative community?
- Are there ways we've conformed to the world rather than to Christ?
- What steps can we take to be more faithful to God's mission as God's people?



DEACONS' CONVOCATION

The Deacons Convocation was held from 10-13 March at the Padre Pio Retreat Centre.

The Deacons from across the Connexion gathered and had a wonderful time of conferencing, fellowship, discussions, discernment, and spiritual time with God.

They were joined by numerous friends of the Diaconate and wonderful colleagues.

They closed with a rededication service and Holy Communion led by Rev. Ryan Watt.

Thanks to all who made this time so special. The Warden, Rev. Fozia Madjoe, led them with much wisdom and love.

They departed with hearts full and ready to continue to do God's will through their individual callings.



FOOD RELIEF AND INTERVENTION FOR DESTITUTE STUDENTS OF LOVEDALE PUBLIC TVET COLLEGE

Under the Pastoral Oversight of King William's Town Circuit 309.

Students from Lovedale Public TVET College recently approached Rev. Luxolo Mantini, Circuit Superintendent Minister of King William's Town Circuit, along with the Circuit leadership, to share the devastating and traumatic conditions they are currently facing.

Many students come from disadvantaged backgrounds across various communities in the Eastern Cape. Some are from child-headed households, others are raised by unemployed parents, and many depend on social grants for survival. While most students are funded through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and their applications for the 2025 academic year have been approved, they have yet to receive their living allowances. As a result, they struggle to afford even the most basic necessities, such as food and toiletries, leaving them to beg or find other means of survival.

Importantly, this crisis affects not only Methodist students but those from diverse faith backgrounds.

The Church's Response:

In response to this urgent crisis, the Circuit mobilized support by collecting food and toiletries. Through its daily Soup Kitchen, hot meals were provided for the students, and the Outreach Ministry team, led by Rev. Makananda and Mr. Tom, personally delivered groceries and essential supplies. Alongside these efforts, the team offered spiritual encouragement, psychosocial support, and counseling to affected students.

Towards a Sustainable Solution: Student Food Bank:
Recognising that student hunger is a recurring challenge,

particularly in institutions of higher learning, the Circuit is taking steps toward a sustainable intervention. Following a call from MCYU Director, Rev. Koekoe, Circuits with pastoral oversight of universities and colleges are encouraged to establish Student Food Banks. The King William's Town Circuit has already begun planning for such an initiative to provide ongoing support to students at Lovedale TVET College.

Call to Action:

As we journey through this season of Lent, we are reminded of our calling to be a compassionate and supportive community. The Circuit urges members and all who are moved by this crisis to contribute towards the Food Relief Initiative by donating:

- Non-perishable food items (e.g., rice, maize meal, canned foods, dried beans).
- Perishable food items (to be coordinated for timely distribution).
- Toiletries (soap, toothpaste, sanitary products, deodorant, etc.).

Those willing to contribute can contact the Circuit leadership for more information on donation drop-off points and collection arrangements.

Expanding the Response:

The King William's Town Circuit also calls on all Circuits with universities and colleges within their boundaries to recognise the urgent needs of students and develop intervention strategies to support them.

Together, through prayer, generosity, and action, we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of these young people.



PILGRIMAGE OF RENEWAL LAUNCH: Buffalo City Central Mission Circuit 313

On 27 February 2025, at Trinity Society, the Superintendent, Rev. Dr Zabeko, invited Circuit stewards, Society stewards, Leaders of Mission groups, and Conveners of Mission Pillars to a conversation aimed at trying to discern God's call for our mission as a church at both Circuit and Societal level.

To reshape our thinking of mission work and to yield towards the journey to the Mission Congress 2025, he challenge us as leaders to ask ourselves:

1. What God-given talents do we have in our societies to advance the mission of God?
2. How can we advance God's mission using what we have?
3. What is it that we want to do in 2025 to advance God's mission?

Leaders were then tasked to take the feedback of these conversations back to their various constituencies and prepare for our Circuit Pilgrimage of Renewal Launch held on Sunday 9 March 2025.

We commenced our launch at Monument, Quigney where we assembled and were led in praise and worship by the Young Men's Guild (YMG) Vice President, Bawo Z Xhego.

The scripture of his opening devotion was Psalm 42:1, "As the deer pants longingly for the water brooks, so my soul pants longingly for You, O God".

The YMG Vice President urged us that just like a deer longs for water, we too as Christians should long for, and search for God.

He challenged us to reflect on our journey with God and to ask ourselves if we represent the mission and church of Christ in the world.

We then walked from Monument to Victoria Society where we would build our Altar of Stones as our Circuit pledged to join in discerning the mission of God in our church and the larger Connexion.



Opening devotions and praise and worship led by YMG Vice President



Pilgrimage journey from Monument to Victoria Society searching for the longing of our spirits as well as waiting for God to speak.

When we arrived at Victoria Society, each leader and church member was given a stone that they would place in our Circuit altar as a pledge.

Thereafter, Bawo N Ramncwana reminded us of the importance and the timelessness of stones. He reminded us that in biblical times, stones were used as symbols to mark areas of significance and areas of victory.

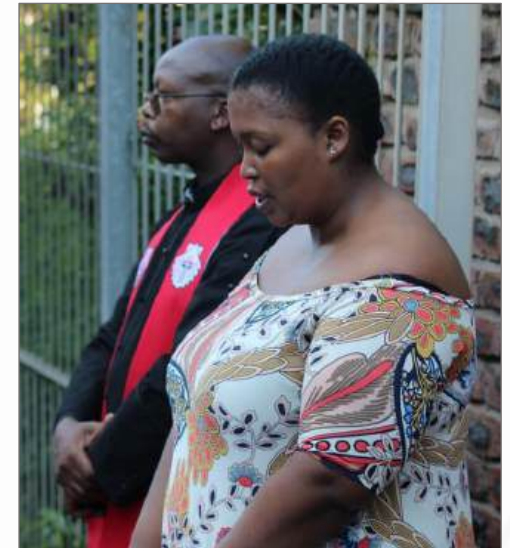
That in our African culture, stones were used by women to grind wheat and foods to feed their families.

He urged us to remember that just as significant and generational stones in the Bible and in our cultures were, that so would the stones that we would place in this altar of the pilgrimage of renewal.

The Superintendent together with the Circuit Mission Convenor, Education Convenor, and Mission Circuit Steward invited members of the church to a moment of call and response; a moment to reflect in gratitude for all that God has done for us as a church; a moment to repent for our iniquities and shying away from pursuing the mission of God rigorously and a moment of rededication to labour the harvest of God both as a journey towards Mission Congress 2025 and beyond.

The Superintendent and Circuit Mission Convenor called all Ministers, Stewards, Organisation leaders, Class leaders, and all members of the church to hand over their stones and place them on the altar created at the heart of Victoria Society. The significance of this altar is that generations to come will have a symbol of our Circuit's rededication and pledge to commit to discerning and doing the will of God.

Continues on page 10





The Circuit Mission Convenor thereafter presented the Circuit mission statement. This was a culmination of the discussions and conversations held at the Pilgrimage of Renewal Launch Preparatory meeting on 27 February 2025.

- Centralising mission drives to be conducted by the entire Circuit to create bigger impact as opposed to doing it as individuals or individual mission groups.
- Aim to do sustainable mission work instead of event driven mission work.
- Advancing mission drives that address current social ills and injustices. We will use mission work as a Circuit to respond to our Presiding Bishop's call for us to become an alternative community.

We pledge as a Circuit that today marks the beginning of our transformative journey toward the Mission Congress 2025 and our commitment to mission work."



The Circuit then proceeded inside the church for a brief service led by LPA Vice President Mama S Mageleni.

The scripture of her devotion was 1 Samuel 7:12, "Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, "Till now the Lord has helped us."

She encouraged us that the placing of our stones on the altar of mission was a powerful act and reminder of God's faithfulness and interventions in our lives.

She counselled that this scripture encourages us that while we plead for God to assist us in our mission journey and in the journey of life's challenges, that it also reminds us of how He has carried us and how He is yet to continue to help us as we continue to journey on.

She challenged us to go out and do God's mission despite our challenges, to be grateful for God's favour, and walk in strength knowing that God will give us strength to continue the journey to the promised new land.

She then proceeded to request that the church rises and verbally pledge to do the mission work of God towards Mission Congress and more importantly, beyond.

This service was concluded in prayer and benediction by the Superintendent.



Pilgrimage of Renewal Launch – BCCM Circuit 313 Pledge

"As the Buffalo City Central Mission Circuit 313, we pledge to do the will of God, to spread the gospel, bring back the "lost sheep", and to be Christlike in a society that is not. We pledge to perform what John Wesley calls acts of mercy of God and to dedicate ourselves to becoming a tangible expression of God's love to the world.

We pledge to yield to the call of the Pilgrimage of Renewal by:

- Relaunching and re-empowering our Mission Pillars and mission groups.
- Aiming to do mission work that's intended to reach both members in our church community as well as the outward community.



SANIBONANI: MY SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AS A YMG MEMBER

By Rev. Michael Vorster

At a District retreat which I led some years ago, I started the first session by encouraging all to spend time alone contemplating God. Immediately a hand went up from a black colleague who said that as black Methodists, spending time alone as suggested was not part of African spirituality (I had heard this before). He said that within the collective singing and worshipful rhythmic movements, each person experienced the presence of God in their own unique way. This was a helpful insight and enhanced my already limited understanding of being in the presence of God – Solitude on one's own was not the only way of experiencing solitude with God. One could experience solitude within the collective singing and rhythmic movements.

Do not get me wrong, I am not dismissing the value of sitting somewhere quietly on one's own, contemplating the presence of God, sometimes with guiding questions. A few times we were asked to write a poem or reflection and draw something – I still have some of my rudimentary attempts at drawing or painting, even though they are not master pieces. When I look at them again, they remind me of where I was in my relationship with God at the time – have I grown since then?

I was robed as a YMG member several years ago when I was still Bishop of the Natal Coastal District by Rev. TJ Fakude, having served my six-month probationary period. The robing took place during the Easter Convention in G2 Methodist Church, KwaMashu. For me, this was a significant moment in my spiritual journey.

I have attended many Young Men's Guild (YMG), Women's Manyano (WM), Young Women's Manyano (YWM), and Wesley Guild (WG) conventions. However, I would like to share the deepening of my spiritual experience during YMG conventions.

Each time I attend a YMG convention, my encounter with the God presence is not dissimilar to the moments of silent solitude (this is my experience and may not be yours).

Yes, I do attempt the rhythmic worshipful movements of moving from side to side and moving ones feet to the left and then to the right. When I get it right, it is an amazing experience of community. Everyone is in unison, yet the different harmonies, sound of the drums, the thumping of the cushion, the sound of the nsimbi's, and the occasional sound of a referee's whistle is all a reminder that we are not all uniform, yet we all bring a unique contribution. The constant deep baritone often gives me goosebumps. Amazing voices. God is present. This is why when the time comes to finish, when the fist is lifted in the air, there is great reluctance to return to their seats. Yet the heavenly mountain top transfiguration moment must come to an end (for the moment) and it's back to the valley of robust debate about finances and budgets.

Yes, there is always debate about the cost of conventions, and wrestling with how to maintain the event that could be of financial benefit to the hosting Circuit. I have, as Bishop,

witnessed this possibility when at one convention, in a relatively cash strapped rural Circuit, the YMG convention left a gift of R90 000 for the Circuit. This indeed is a constant challenge and of concern to each YMG executive. One of the major concerns, it would seem, is that when a convention in a Circuit is on the horizon, the giving for church goes down and the funds are diverted to the hosting of the Convention – the jury is still out on this perception. Often the loudest voices making these assertions come from those who have never attended a convention for more than thirty to sixty minutes, or not at all.

Conventions are more than funds and offer spaces of safety, renewal, and spiritual growth.

Some years ago, I attended a Women's Manyano convention in Umlazi. I met a member who I was told lived about one block away from the Convention site. She could have stayed at home, yet she chose to join others to stay in the rudimentary accommodation of class rooms. Why? Because being in this space was a place of respite and healing from an abusive husband. At least for a few days Mama could feel human again and in touch with her soul. Can one put a price on this? This kind of testimony can be told many times over.

Among the sea of faces singing with rhythmic dance, are traumatised souls needing respite and healing. Some come from peri-urban informal settlements where life is difficult to make ends meet. Some come from far flung rural areas where drought affects food security, and we can go on... Perhaps more opportunity needs to be given during conventions for members to share and process some of their experiences.

Why do many members only go to conventions and are irregular church attendees, one must ask? What is it about conventions that brings such as these to spend an entire four days, sometimes in discomfort, yet committed to participate? Why are many members prepared to pay to be there? (There are some disingenuous opinions that say that members are coerced – is this normative or an exception?)

Back to my spiritual experience.

Each time I attend, most times I am invited to sit on the stage with the executive. You may observe that there are moments when I stand and sing phonetically and when I do not know the words – you will see my lips moving and singing “*Ma maa ma maa ma ma.*” I was taught that in each song by the YMG there will be a moment when: ‘*ma maa ma maa ma ma*’ is sung. This, I am told, is a moment of invitation, an evangelical moment if you like, when anyone who does not know the words is included to be part of the collective. Anyone can sing this, even a non-singer like myself.



Continues on page 12

Also, there are moments when I remain seated and get caught up in the mesmerising sea of faces before me. Observing the in-tune, in-time feet movements. Not a foot out of step.

There are moments when I will be sitting with my face cupped in my hands, I am praying and feel that the experience is akin to what is said in Romans 8:26-27: *“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with groanings too deep for words. And God, who searches hearts, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”* Some may think I have fallen asleep, maybe?

The harmonious singing is the vehicle that moves me to this place. When eventually the singing ceases, I feel curiously refreshed. This is a segment of my YMG spiritual experience (I have written seven pages in cursive writing – and may share more in the future).



TRUE LEADERS DRIVE A BETTER LIFE FOR THEIR PEOPLE

By Rev. Dr William Leleki – Chairperson of the SACC in the Gqeberha Metro

True leaders are called to leadership by an inner conviction. Their role in leadership is not about status but about fulfilling their calling. Leadership is not merely a position; it is a full-time responsibility that requires immense sacrifice, perseverance, and even tears. At its core, leadership is about fulfilling a mission—moving people from one stage to another with love and purpose. True leaders must always demonstrate love for those they lead, inspiring them to envision a better future. People progress when they catch a vision of a brighter tomorrow.

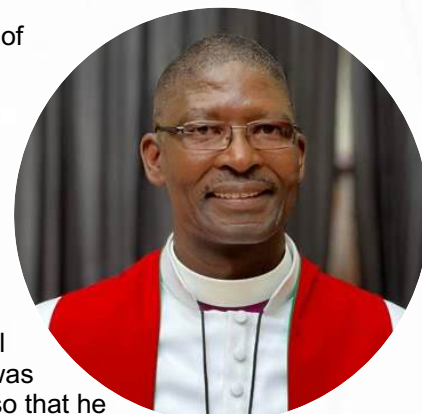
Leadership decisions should always aim to improve people's lives. When communities experience a decline in their quality of life, as we see in our Metro, it is often because those in leadership have forgotten—or ignored—the true purpose of leadership. Leadership grounded in love is not about flaunting wealth, wearing expensive clothes, or driving luxury cars. Instead, it is about standing with people in their struggles, helping them realise that the pain of moving forward is far less than the suffering of being trapped in poverty and hopelessness.

All leaders must recognise—rightly or wrongly—that they are the ones responsible for driving transformation. People desire change, but they often need the positive influence of a true leader to take the first step.

True leaders do not claim the benefits of success for themselves alone. Their success is measured by the progress and well-being of those they lead. A good leader is known by the people, and in turn, knows the people they serve. Building strong relationships is a mark of a leader who is motivated by love. Trust is the foundation of these relationships, and for leaders to earn trust, they must “walk the talk.”

Leaders who lead with love reflect the example of the prophet Ezekiel, who saw himself as both a shepherd and a watchman over the community. He emphasised individual responsibility before God (Ezekiel 18:1-20).

The ministry and teachings of Jesus also offer valuable leadership lessons. Jesus ministered meaningfully to those around Him, even in the face of opposition. Paul, too, had a significant pastoral impact in cities like Athens, Ephesus, Corinth, and Philippi. His messages addressed people's spiritual needs, and his leadership was defined by love—so much so that he urged Timothy to be loving toward everyone (2 Timothy 2:24).



Christianity places great importance on both individual and corporate gatherings, where leaders play a central role in guiding people. A true leader must develop the ability to lead public and private gatherings in ways that are meaningful and impactful.

A true leader is genuinely interested in people—their struggles, their joys, their abilities, and their readiness to receive help. Leadership demands empathy, a willingness to take initiative, and a commitment to reaching out to those in need.

A leader should be deeply involved in community life, attending meetings and engaging with people. Strong relationships allow leaders to remain approachable, even in casual settings like grocery stores, where community members may stop to share their concerns.

A leader who has walked with their people over time will develop an intuitive sense of what is needed in times of crisis. Their presence alone can provide comfort, even when they do not have all the answers (2 Corinthians 2:14, 16; Psalm 19:3; Job 13:4-5).

CHRIST CRUCIFIED!

By Rev. Maurice Fearn

Through neon sign, recorded voice, and colourful print we are constantly confronted with advertising slogans, designed to first attract our attention and then intentionally stir us into action. In a concise presentation we are given a summary of the product, the producer, the purpose, and the value which are intended to solicit our support or persuade us to make a purchase. It may shock us to be told that "Christ Crucified!" was the slogan of the Early Church, central in the preachers' messages, and repeatedly appearing in all the apostles' correspondence.

To attempt to unpack what lies behind and within this slogan is a mammoth undertaking beyond my capacity to consider. Multiple volumes have been written by outstanding scholars to explore the mystery, wonder, and meaning of this event. Sacred songs and music have been composed in response to what, in today's news bulletins, would be regarded as the atrocious public assassination of a man who spent his entire life releasing the disabled, healing the sick, opposing injustice, and doing good in the service of all.

"Christ Crucified!" is the arresting headline, or breaking news, which records an event of unspeakable brutality and horror. Or ... it can be an exclamation of sheer, awed awareness of a wonder of unfathomable depths, described in one New Testament letter as "foolishness to the Greeks and folly to the Jews, but for others the power and wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:23)

Come with me now to spend a few minutes at the scene, not as an incriminated onlooker, or reporter of accidents and murders, but as a pilgrim in search of a deeper, personal awareness of the luminous presence of the One who hangs on the centre cross, a presence so powerful it moved the heart of one of the two men hanging alongside him.

Here is the Maker of all that is, the Creator whose hands formed a million galaxies. Yet, whilst on earth, he placed mud on a blind man's eyes and touched a leper. Here the Giver and Sustainer of all life submits himself to the brutal ill-treatment, insult, and indignity inflicted on him by those he had created and loved. His death is the fulfilment of his purposeful, salvation-giving incarnation. He did not come to jump on a cross for publicity. He came to bring life, new life in God which could only be accomplished through love, both through his teaching, and through his way of living life united with God. He received all the rejection, the insults, and the inhuman treatment with an unshakable trust in his Father and an unchanging love for all. No word of retaliation, resentment, or rebuke passed his lips. In his submission the power of his love was proven and released in his compassion for his family, friends, and enemies.

"Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" – so goes the song. Let's go and stand in awe of him. Let us bow in humility before him and hang our heads in shame knowing we owe him an unpayable debt. Let us ponder the mystery of such divine self-giving. Let us acknowledge his steadfast fortitude in fulfilling the will of his Father. Let us open ourselves to receive and share with others his life-changing, loving Spirit. Let us



also sit in amazement, speechless in the presence of the Glorious One, stripped naked and bleeding, yet shining the light of infinite love amidst such agony, evil, and darkness. The Lord Almighty – unfathomable, unutterable beauty nailed to a cross.

We are told of a woman who entered an art gallery in Moscow. Passing through room after room displaying brilliant works of art, she was suddenly halted in her movements by a huge masterpiece painting of the crucifixion. After a long while during which she didn't move, she was approached by the uniformed gallery attendant who, as he approached, heard her whispering "He did it all for me. He did it all for me". You are there. We are there. What can we murmur in response? We cannot remain indifferent.

In his poem "Indifference", Studdert Kennedy wrote:

*When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged Him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and feet
and made a Calvary.
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns,
red were His wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days,
and human flesh was cheap.*

*When Jesus came to Birmingham they simply passed Him by;
They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die.
For men had grown more tender,
and they would not give Him pain;
They only just passed down the street, and left Him in the rain.*

*Still Jesus cried "Forgive them, for they know not
what they do",
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched Him
through and through.
The crowds went home and left the street without a soul to see;
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for Calvary.*

****We are profoundly grateful to the Fearn family for allowing us to continue publishing Rev. Maurice Fearn's writings, ensuring that his words—filled with wisdom and faith—continue to inspire and guide others. His life's work was dedicated to ministry, and through his articles, his voice lives on, touching hearts and shaping lives. Thank you for honouring his legacy in this way.***

POSITION AVAILABLE: TRANSLATIONS OFFICER

The Bible Society of South Africa's (BSSA) mission is to provide affordable Bibles for everyone, in their own language and in suitable formats, so that all may experience the life-giving message of the Word.

BSSA is seeking a **Translations Officer** who will be responsible for overseeing and supporting the work of the Department of Translations. This role is crucial in ensuring the accuracy, quality, and timely completion of Bible translation projects.

Prime responsibilities:

- The staff and activities of the Department of Translations are efficiently managed
- Translation projects are efficiently managed and deadlines are met
- Translated texts are checked for accuracy
- Ensure that projects remain within the budget. Responsible for compiling annual and project-term budget projections, as well as preparing budgets for all new projects.
- Ensure that stakeholders are informed of the progress of each project and that professional and accurate reports (progress, narrative and financial) are submitted on time.
- Queries regarding Bible translation are answered
- Translation projects are supported by academic research

Qualifications and experience required

- Master's Degree (preferably doctorate) in linguistics, cross-cultural studies, Biblical languages, or Biblical studies
- Good knowledge of NT Greek and Biblical Hebrew
- Minimum of one academic year of training in descriptive linguistics
- Knowledge of other official languages a recommendation
- Knowledge of translation theory and practice
- Practical experience in translation, translation checking, language editing, and proofreading
- Practical experience of the publication processes a recommendation
- Sound knowledge of the Bible

Competencies

- Loyalty and faithfulness
- Tolerance towards different viewpoints
- Good listener
- Willingness to learn
- Integrity
- Precision
- Visionary

Skills

- Computer literacy
- Competence in English and various other official South African languages
- Ability to grasp and learn the structure, phonology, orthography, etc. of other languages
- Good interpersonal skills, especially the ability to work in cross-cultural teams
- Ability to translate accurately and check translations
- Ability to read texts with understanding and do the necessary language editing (e.g. grammatical, orthographical, syntactical, and lexical corrections)
- Ability to proofread and work meticulously
- Ability to communicate and teach
- Ability to do research and present academic papers and articles
- Ability to lead, organise, motivate, and work with a team
- Ability to work accurately under pressure and meet deadlines
- Competent in Biblical languages
- Skilled in interpretation and exegesis
- Understanding the historical and cultural background of the Bible

If you are interested in the exciting and challenging post, please contact Lopke Blaauw at recruitment@biblesociety.co.za. Please include your salary expectation, the company offers a market-related remuneration package.

Applications close 4 April 2025.

WHAT TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN APRIL

April	04-14	Connexional Children and Youth Unit Global Action 4/14 Campaign	
April	05	Clarkebury Division Preparation Meeting	Mthatha
April	14-18	Holy Week	
April	15	Connexional Audit Committee Meeting	
April	16	Finance Unit Executive Meeting	Virtual
April	17	Maundy Thursday	
April	18	Good Friday	
April	19	Children and Youth Rallies	All Circuits
April	20	Easter Sunday	
April	21	Family Day	
April	22	Connexional Unit Leaders' Meeting	Virtual
April	23	District Trust Properties Secretaries' Consultation	Virtual
April	24	Prospective Ordinands' Examination	All Districts
April	24-25	District Trust Properties Secretaries' Workshop	TBA
April	25-27	MethSSoc Connexional Conference	Eastern Cape
April	26	Connexional Women's Fellowship Gospel Extravaganza	TBA
April	29	Human Resources Unit Board Meeting	Virtual

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY

Lent	Liturgical Colour: Purple
Fifth Sunday in Lent – April 06, 2025 Isaiah 43:16-21 – Psalm 126 OR Psalm 119:9-16 – Philippians 3:4b-14 – John 12:1-8	
Liturgy of the Palms – April 13, 2025 Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 – Luke 19:28-40 OR John 12:12-16	
Liturgy of the Passion – April 13, 2025 Isaiah 50:4-9a – Psalm 31:9-16 – Philippians 2:5-11 – Luke 22:14-23:56 OR Luke 23:1-49	
Monday of Holy Week – April 14, 2025 Isaiah 42:1-9 – Psalm 36:5-11 – Hebrews 9:11-15 – John 12:1-11	
Tuesday of Holy Week – April 15, 2025 Isaiah 49:1-7 – Psalm 71:1-14 – 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 – John 12:20-36	
Wednesday of Holy Week – April 16, 2025 Isaiah 50:4-9a – Psalm 70 – Hebrews 12:1-3 – John 13:21-32	
Holy Thursday (Tenebrae) – April 17, 2025 Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14 – Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19 – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 – John 13:1-17, 31b-35	
Good Friday – April 18, 2025 Isaiah 52:12-53:12 – Psalm 22 – Hebrews 10:16-25 OR Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 – John 18:1-19-42	
Holy Saturday – April 19, 2025 Job 14:1-14 OR Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24 – Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16 – 1 Peter 4:1-8 – Matthew 27:57-66 OR John 19:38-42	
Easter Sunday – April 20, 2025 Acts 10:34-43 OR Isaiah 65:17-25 – Psalm 118:1-2 14-24 – 1 Corinthians 15:19-26 OR Acts 10:34-43 – John 20:1-18 OR Luke 24:1-12	
Second Sunday of Easter – April 27, 2025 Acts 5:27-32 – Psalm 118:14-29 OR Psalm 150 – Revelation 1:4-8 – John 20:19-31	
Third Sunday of Easter – 04 May, 2025 Acts 9:1-6, (7-20) – Psalm 30 – Revelation 5:11-14 – John 21:1-19	
Fourth Sunday of Easter – 11 May, 2025 Acts 9:36-43 – Psalm 23 – Revelation 7:9-17 – John 10:22-30	



Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary NPC

Forming Transforming Leaders for Church and Nation

#1000@100 Campaign

We are on a fundraising drive to establish a movement of people who are passionate about Ministerial Training and Formation and who would like to commit to helping the Seminary achieve financial sustainability.

The #1000@100 Campaign is about mobilizing 1000 people to pledge a minimum amount of R100 per month for 12 months .

Please partner with us by using any of the following ways to make your donation:

*Online banking

*Debit order with your bank

*Deposit every month directly into the bank account below:

Account name:	Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary
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Please let us know about your donation so that we may acknowledge your generosity appropriately

Send email to: office@smms.ac.za or call 033 846 8600

SMMS is a Section 18A Company. Tax Certificate
will be made available on request

We thank You for your continued support!!!

IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Tanduxolo P T Sikotoyi
Rev. Godfrey D G Russell

*Loving, God, who brought us to birth, help us to live as those who are prepared for death.
Enable us to obey Your call to receive the baton and run the race set before us.
Thank you Lord Jesus that You are the author and finisher of our race.
Amen*

