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SMMS NEWS

Forming transforming leaders
for church and nation

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KUMALO BOWS OUT OF SMMS WITH GRACE AND DIGNITY

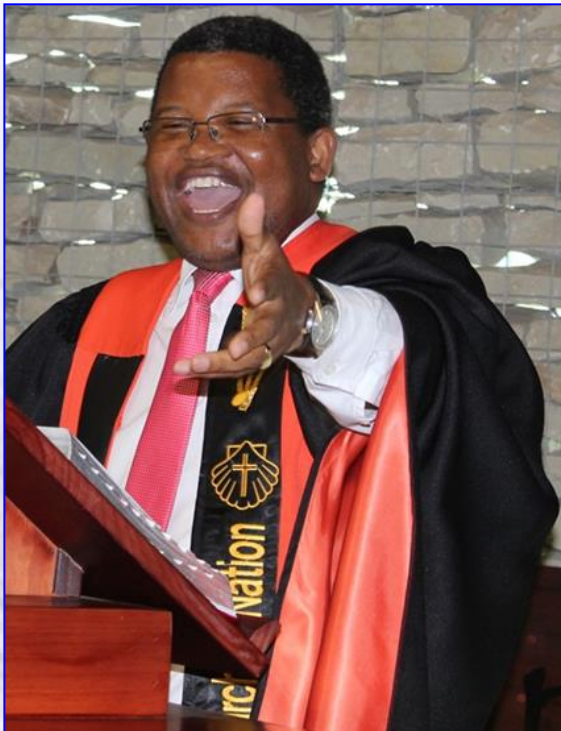
Outgoing SMMS President, Rev Prof Simangaliso Kumalo, has expressed gratitude to the Methodist people for having given him the opportunity to lead the institution.

Prof Kumalo was reflecting on his two-and-half year tenure at the helm of the seminary.

“I really appreciate that I was given the opportunity to lead SMMS. As one who has been involved with SMMS since its conception, it was quite humbling to be given an opportunity to make a contribution. It has been a good time of learning for me. I have learnt a lot in terms of understanding institutional leadership. I have received so many lessons that will see me into the future. I do hope that I have been able to make a contribution that will be long-lasting and that will see the institution move forward,” Prof Kumalo said.

He paid special tribute to some individuals, offices and organisations in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) whom he said offered him tremendous support.

“I am grateful to a number of people, too numerous to mention, who have been supportive of me and our work at SMMS.



Prof Kumalo preaches during the 2017 Valedictory service.

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Particularly, I am grateful to the Presiding Bishop, Rev Zipho Siwa, for having supported me from the beginning by encouraging me to apply for the position and for walking alongside me continuously. I will forever be grateful to him. Many bishops were also behind us in an impressive way.

“I am also grateful to a number of leaders of departments and organisations of the church who were supportive of the institution. Some of them visited SMMS to donate money and groceries. I also celebrate a number of circuits especially from the Pietermaritzburg area who visited SMMS. The Natal West District has been phenomenal in its support for us. I am really grateful for the support given by Bishop William Dlamini. Our achievements could not have been possible had it not been for the hard-working SMMS staff. They have done tremendously well despite their over-extended work load. I am grateful to each and every one of them,” Prof Kumalo said.

Asked about some of his successes as President, Prof Kumalo said, the language of the church is not that of ‘success’ but of ‘faithfulness.’

He said, “I always believed that SMMS should be a world renowned institution of high academic standards. That meant it had to come out of its denominational cocoon. To that end, we hosted six international conferences that attracted scholars from all over the world.

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KUMALO BOWS OUT OF SMMS

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“That in many ways profiled SMMS as an institution that is producing and disseminating knowledge at a higher level than at a very basic and limited denominational level where seminaries usually are at. If you go to institutions of theological education abroad, there are scholars who know SMMS and have been to SMMS.

“Secondly, I always encouraged SMMS academics to take research seriously and to participate in and present papers at academic conferences held at UKZN and other institutions. I must say that one of our achievements is that four of our academics became research fellows at UKZN and are producing and disseminating knowledge on behalf of UKZN and the benefits also trickle down to SMMS. It also means that our academics are respected in their respective fields.”

Hitherto, SMMS did not have a good name within the Methodist Church with all sorts of negative stories circulating about the institution. Prof Kumalo said one of his tasks was to repair that reputational damage.

He said, “There were always negative comments from Methodists in every issue of *The Dimension* about drunkenness, immorality, and many other vices at SMMS. Even SMMS graduates did not have a good story to tell about the institution, yet these are the people we would expect to be ambassadors who mobilise resources for the sustainability of the seminary.

“One of my earliest responsibilities was to go from synod to synod, from one district to another to talk about SMMS and invite people to buy into the story of SMMS and to develop pride and ownership of this great place of learning and formation. I also addressed conventions and other meetings of the Connexion as a representative of SMMS. These efforts have made SMMS to be appreciated and respected.

“The development of the communications office which continuously published promotional material, the newsletter, the annual report without fail, as well as updating our social media platforms and the website regularly, was an attempt to send out positive messages about SMMS and indeed these messages are reaching the Methodist people. Suddenly Methodists are positive about SMMS. Since then, we have not read even a single negative article about SMMS in *The Dimension* or anywhere else. That does not just happen by itself, it happens because work has been done to repair the damage to the SMMS brand.”

Prof Kumalo said one of his achievements was to introduce the distance learning programme which has taken high-quality theological education to the comfort of students’ homes.

“One of our achievements was to start the Higher Certificate in Christian Ministry (HCCM) programme. We felt there was a need to take theological education to the homes of those who want to study but cannot be physically present SMMS.



Prof Kumalo poses for a photo with Prof Dion Forster in Bamberg, Germany.

In the 2018 academic year, the programme has an enrolment of over 327 students spread across the Connexion. 25 students from the first intake of HCCM graduated this year.

“When I came to SMMS, the student enrolment was just about 86. Today we have 112 seminarians taking classes on a daily basis. All in all, SMMS has close to 500 registered students. We have also seen a growth in the number of highly qualified private students who resign from their jobs to come and study at SMMS,” he said.

In the area of resource mobilisation, one of the key performance areas of the President, Prof Kumalo said he is leaving SMMS in a much better financial position than he found it.

He said, “We have grown the resources that come to the seminary. We have grown the ‘Friends of SMMS’, people who give money to SMMS on a monthly basis. With the Project Legacy Builders, we were able to raise over R1.2 million within such a short space of time and bought a house for student accommodation.

“Previously, SMMS had never raised money for student bursaries. This year, for the first time in the history of the seminary, we have put aside a substantial amount of money that we have raised so that we can assist students with bursaries for meals.”

Prof Kumalo said one of his areas of emphasis was forging partnerships with other institutions of theological education as well as social justice organisations.

“During my time at SMMS, I prioritised partnerships so as to mobilise support for the institution. We established new partnerships and strengthened existing ones.

PROPHETIC PRAXIS IN A CHANGING CONTEXT

“Please engage in the practice of praxis and do so as part of your prophetic ministry because a prophetic voice without disciplined action and reflection only has noise value.”

This was the plea of Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), to delegates attending the seventh annual Peter Storey Lecture, under the theme *The prophetic praxis in a rapidly changing context: The doing of God's will in society - The Evangelical task of the oikoumene in South Africa*, on 11 May. The paper was read by Prof Mokhele Madise of the University of South Africa (UNISA).

Bishop Mpumlwana said prophetic praxis is necessarily in favour of the underserved and least cared for adding that the question that the church needs to ask itself is where it locates itself between those at the top and those at the bottom of the social pile.

He said, “The Jesus Manifesto of Luke 4 is a startling introduction of the Jesus prophetic model, for the benefit of the least in society. This means that the church in prophetic praxis must be incarnated in the context of the least of the people. The Word is mediated through cries of the poor and the oppressed. Christ is the Word, and in that sense, Christ is mediated through the cries of the poor and oppressed. In different words, Gustavo Gutierrez wrote: ‘To know, that is to say, to love Yahweh is to do justice to the poor and oppressed’.”

He contrasted prophetic praxis with what he calls ‘royal consciousness’, a church that uncritically provides religious legitimization to the prevailing power structure.

Bishop Mpumlwana observed: “In today’s church in South Africa, clergy climb on top of each other to gain access to politicians and provide uncritical endorsement of their political positions, all in the name of God and Christ’s church whose image they represent.”

He said theology must engage the economic, social, and political context to which the theologian is called, not just to interpret reality, but to change it. He added that the South Africa that the church is being called to minister to has a context that gives an immediacy to the call for the church to read the signs of the times and respond after the manner of God’s will.

“Twenty four years into democracy, we are seeing signs of the political cliff towards which we are blissfully hurtling as a society, as our political parties, absorbed in their immediate self-interests, are using us the citizens as dice to throw in their dangerous political gambles whose outcomes will extract their costs from the ordinary citizen. The governing ANC appears to have abandoned its original ‘for the sake of the people’ value system, to become a ‘for the sake of the ANC’.



Prof Madise reads Bishop Mpumlwana’s paper.

“That then has degenerated progressively to ‘for the sake of my faction’ and ‘for the sake of the leader of my faction’, resulting in the dangerous war-lordism that will make the tragic experiences of the 1980s look and feel like a Sunday School picnic. Things are moving in the direction of each political chieftain grabbing his/her piece of the political space, hoping to make off with a sizeable enough part to control,” Bishop Mpumlwana said.

The more political quagmire the nation wallows in, he said, the deeper the economic pit into which it will sink.

“Stats SA says that some 55% of South Africans live in poverty. Some 30% of the population is on social grants; some 10 million people live in shacks, with little or no hope for decent living any time soon. Each year we throw into the ‘job market’ half a million young people who get out of high school with no capacity for any meaningful role in the economy - unemployed and unemployable, but ready for any action: marches and looting, rallies, T-shirts, sloganeering and soundbites,” he said.

Bishop Mpumlwana said the context of post-apartheid South Africa is quite depressing because, in contrast to the apartheid days, it does not have the energising hope for a ‘future’ in the promise of a post-apartheid society.

“South Africa is in a state of flux, with much that has changed and is changing in the political, social and economic contexts. With the challenges of our context where we now add the huge contestation over land; and where religious escapism by especially poor people gives rise to much abuse, it seems good to open up the question of what it means for the church to do God’s will in such a society. Walter Breuggemann suggests that the church’s preaching is ‘a chance to summon and nurture an alternative community with an alternative identity, vision, and vocation, preoccupied with praise toward a God we Christians know fully in Jesus of Nazareth,’” he said.

“CHURCH MUST SPEAK TRUTH TO THE CHURCH” - STOREY

The dominant narrative has been that the church must speak truth to power but it is time that the church speaks truth to the church, according to Rev Prof Peter Storey.

Prof Storey was responding to the Peter Storey Lecture, written by the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana and delivered by Prof Mokhele Madise, on 11 May.

“I hear a lot of talk about the church speaking truth to power, of course it must. I think it is much easier for the church to speak truth to power than for the church to speak truth to the church. We have to speak truth to the church,” Prof Storey said.

He spoke against the tendency of churches seeing themselves as better than others adding that by so doing they are worshipping themselves.

Prof Storey said, “The question is not ‘Are Methodists different from other churches?’ Rather it is ‘Are Methodists different from the status quo?’ Every church is severely tempted to worship itself, to become its own idol so that ministry is seen as perpetuating and enlarging this thing called church. God does not even understand that kind of church. If we become boastful about Methodism being a form of Christianity which has had social impact - and it has - let us remember that like any other church, we become fat and comfortable, and when that happens we lose our way. The question is what Steve Biko asked: ‘When will the church start following Jesus?’ When will the church stop worrying about itself and start following Jesus?”

He said the authenticity of a faith is judged by its attitude towards the poor and was quick to warn the church against spiritualising Jesus.



Prof Storey dispels the myth that prophets are only found in the church.

“At the end of the day, the way I judge a religion is how its teaching and its action touch the poor and the marginalised. I have observed how we repeatedly try to spiritualise the message of Jesus. In following Jesus, we try to be religious about him. Not once did Jesus ask us to be religious; he just asked us to follow him and do what he did.

“When John Wesley set up the class meetings where people gathered on Sunday afternoon, the first question they asked one another was ‘What have you done in the past week to help the poor?’ But three or four decades later when Methodists started to become respectable, they did not like that question anymore. They dropped it and started asking another question which was much easier to answer: ‘How is it with your soul?’” Prof Storey said.

He ended by dispelling the myth that God’s prophets are only found in the church.

“Never believe that God’s prophets are only found in the church. I think some of God’s best prophets are cartoonists. I think Zapiro will be right up there next to Elijah, Jeremiah and Isaiah, because he has been one of God’s prophets in our country. He tells the truth; he pricks the proud and pricks their bubble. And so let us read carefully what God’s prophets like Biko have said. He grew up in the church and he had the courage to speak truth to the church, not just to power. We like it when he spoke truth to power yet we are not so happy when he spoke truth to the church,” Prof Storey said.



Delegates give Prof Storey a standing ovation after his response.

SA IN SERIOUS LEADERSHIP CRISIS - MOSALA

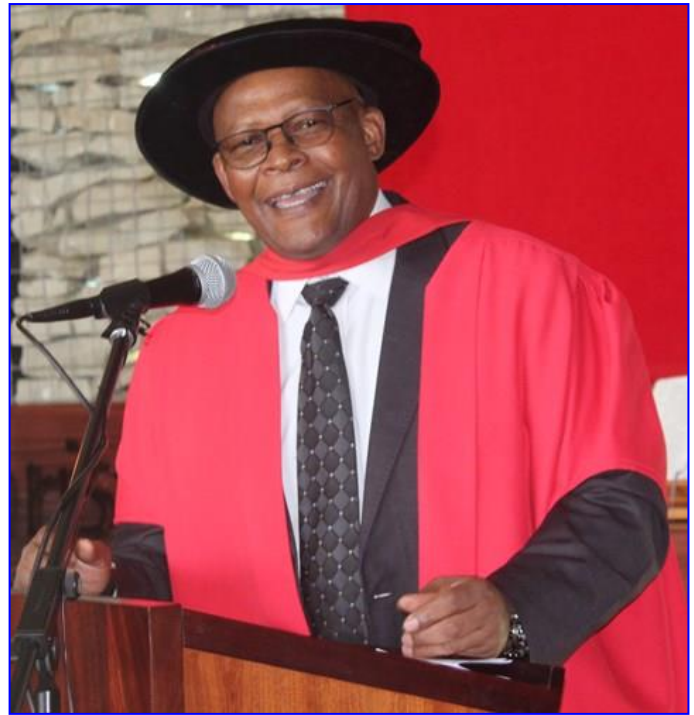
Addressing graduands during the seventh annual graduation service, on 12 May, Rev Prof Itumeleng Mosala noted that in the last 10 years, South Africa has been in a crisis of leadership whose effects are noticeable everywhere in the South African society.

“That crisis extends to every facet of our lives and society. It is in our education system; it is in our churches and it is in our companies. It is everywhere in our society. It is particularly of concern in the black community. Black South Africa is experiencing a pervasive spiritual crisis. It is at a cross roads,” he said.

Prof Mosala listed some South Africans who have demonstrated leadership in the past and lamented that with the current crop of leaders, we cannot tell what leadership is anymore.

He said, “In the days of the struggle, we had a sense of what leadership is. When Rev ZR Mahabane, a Methodist minister for well over sixty years, became President of the African National Congress (ANC) multiple times beginning in the 1920s, we could tell what was meant by leadership. When Rev Seth Mokitimi became the first black President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa more than 200 years after the arrival of the Methodist Church in this country, we could tell what leadership is.

“When Robert Sobukwe, a Methodist preacher, became the President of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), and who in March 1960 led thousands of people in a march against the white settler colonial state and its pass laws, there was no confusion of what leadership is, there was clarity about what leadership was and we knew what leadership meant. When Jeff Masemola of the PAC, the longest serving political prisoner at Robben Island, together with Nelson Mandela and others emerged stronger and determined with deeper love for their people and land, we were not confused about the meaning of leadership.”



Prof Mosala laments the quality of leadership in SA.

But now, he said, we cannot even tell who our leaders are. Prof Mosala added that the problem is not so much about the quantity of leaders as it is about their quality.

“The problem is not that there are no charismatic and talented people and leaders who can rise up to be recognised as leaders. In fact there has been an exponential growth of well-qualified and very talented new leaders in South Africa. The quantity is there. The problem is the quality,” Prof Mosala said.

This year witnessed a record sixty graduands as the first group of the distance learning programme, the Higher Certificate in Christian Ministry (HCCM), also graduated.

MORTALITY

When death comes I will not fight
I will reach out for her on the death floor
And dance passionately with her as I did with life

When she is done
Twirling me around she will hand me back to life
My true dance partner

Hello death, I long to dance with you but our song
is not playing yet

Life and I are still caught up in the rhumba our
waltz will have to wait

By **Matheko G Masola**



NEEDED: A CULTURE OF PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Outgoing SMMS President, Prof Simangaliso Kumalo, has urged Africans to develop “a culture of progress and development” in the way they run and view institutions of higher education.

Prof Kumalo was sharing his experiences after a recent visit to Wesley House at the University of Cambridge, one of the world’s oldest and most prestigious universities, where he was on a six-week fellowship.

“It was refreshing to be at an institution that was built over 800 years ago and I marvelled at how they have been able to maintain and sustain it from one generation to the next. The university has survived for this long because people on that side of the globe take institutions of education seriously. I learnt that it is critical for us in this part of the world to appreciate the supremacy of institutions of learning that carry the possibilities of development and progress of citizens. The development of our people depends very much on these institutions.

“I saw windows that are still intact 300 years on. They have not been broken in 300 years. But here, institutions cannot last for more than five years without us burning them down. We have developed a culture of activism, of striking and destroying buildings, breaking windows and doors all year round. People demand services and then they burn schools. This does not make sense. Where else in the world do you have people who think of burning schools? How are we going to progress if we use the little resources that we have to repair what we would have destroyed during strikes? While the rest of the world is progressing, we are delaying ourselves with this behaviour. On our campuses we still put up notices telling students not to litter and keep our campuses clean. Why do we still have to remind students at tertiary level about such basic things?

“At Cambridge I saw library books that are over 200 years old. When you open them, there is not even a single page that has been marked by a pencil. They are as clean as they were when they first came into the library 200 years ago. People there have internalised the culture of respecting public resources,” Prof Kumalo said.

He castigated the “victim mentality” that pervades much of our discourse: “We always see ourselves as victims of somebody or somebodies and we say we are not progressing because of that. We must stop this excuse. I think we need to do introspection; we need to look into ourselves critically and challenge ourselves. Look at our universities and how they are fast deteriorating. Some will argue that it is because we do not have enough money to run them. I argue that it is not about money. It is a culture of taking care of institutions that we have not developed. There is a level of sophistication that we need to be able to run institutions.



Prof Kumalo shares a light moment after preaching at St Paul's Anglican Church in Cambridge.

“Cambridge has survived all this while because people have matured in their appreciation of education and in running institutions. They have moved beyond the thinking that education is just for one to acquire a job and live a better life to appreciating education as a culture that promotes development and progress. That has become part of who they are. That has shaped their outlook and their conduct both individually and corporately. They understand the significance of what it means to have well-being and what is needed to build the pillars of well-being in society.”

Prof Kumalo also noted that administrators and stakeholders of institutions ought to put institutions first, ahead of their own egos.

He said, “When you reflect on the administrators of these institutions that have survived for so long, you get to see that on their agenda has always been the institution rather than their individual preferences and egos. We must learn to put institutions ahead of our egos and agendas. Institutions are more important than individuals. Individuals come and go but institutions remain.”

We can also develop this culture through education, exposure and interaction with institutions in the developed world, Prof Kumalo said.

“We should appreciate that we need to learn from other cultures. Of course they are not perfect. They have many shortcomings of their own. We may hate them but the fact is that they are far ahead of us. It is true that we do not want to be recolonised but maybe we have taken the whole idea of decolonisation too far because some of the trends and systems of the former colonisers are actually good for our progress to catch up with the world.

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TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM IN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS

There is overwhelming evidence that the church in Africa generally has been at the forefront of perpetuating and promoting homophobia. The influence of the church is so strong that it basically shapes people's views on issues that it pronounces on.

For most Christians in Africa, the issue of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) is one that is hardly discussed as it is already settled by the dominant orthodox position: homosexuality is a sin, condemned in the strongest possible terms by God's Word. Consequently, members of the LGBTIQ community are stigmatised and do not feel at home in churches. Research shows that the majority of them feel that the church is worse than the secular world in accepting and welcoming them.

Yet the church is supposed to be a life-affirming community in which everybody, in spite of their age, race, gender, sexuality, nationality or ethnicity feels at home knowing that their dignity is acknowledged and respected. But, on pseudo-moral and theological grounds, members of the LGBTIQ are seen as the "other" by the majority of African Christians.

The situation is not helped by seminaries and theological institutions that train ministers of the Word. The issue of the LGBTIQ has hitherto, not been in the curriculum of almost all theological institutions and seminaries on the African continent.

This is not surprising because even non-controversial contemporary issues such as ecological justice, conflict, peace and reconciliation are not adequately covered, if at all they are.

Studies show that the majority of theological institutions in Africa use out-dated curricular copied and adapted from Western institutions with new material added on an ad-hoc basis. In most cases, it is often left to the initiative of the individual lecturer to add new material as they deem fit.

Studies also suggest that even fewer theological institutions have a clearly defined curriculum development framework within which to develop their curricular. Moreover, most of the curricular are not context specific, thus do not address the immediate concerns of churches and communities.

Thus, it is critical that a deliberate effort be made to develop a curriculum development framework and (re)write the curricular in seminaries with an inclusive focus in mind. That way addressing homophobia does not become an addendum to the training that students already receive, but actually becomes part and parcel of the seminary curriculum.



Rev Teboho Klaas of The Other Foundation explains the rationale of the project at an anti-homophobia Working Group meeting.

It is against this background that SMMS accessed a grant from the *Other Foundation*, a philanthropic trust that advances equality and freedom in southern Africa with a particular focus on sexual orientation and gender identity, to convene a regional conference that will bring together representatives of seminaries and theological institutions from southern Africa to empower them with the competence on how to design a curriculum development framework for ministerial training within which they will be able to develop their own curricular that will be LGBTIQ-competent and inclusive.

It will not be possible to expect the trainee ministers to be inclusive unless the curriculum is inclusive. If theological institutions are effectively transformed to be truly inclusive, the impact in our churches and communities will be notable. Seminary graduates will be expected to address homophobia in a way that leads to tangible social change in their churches and communities. Theological institutions will also be empowered to conduct an "inclusive audit" of their curricular to ensure that they are truly inclusive.

The conference will be held during the mid-semester break in September.

Meanwhile, as part of the project, SMMS hosted a three-day seminar on *Gender Justice, Human Sexuality and Inclusive Ministry* facilitated by Anele Siswana a clinical psychologist and lecturer at the University of Johannesburg during the annual vocational intensive in June. Seminarians hailed it as an eye-opener that helped to dispel some of the myths they had about homosexuality and members of the LGBTIQ community.

LAND EXPROPRIATION WITHOUT COMPENSATION?

By Ntobeko Dlamini

I welcome the motion of land expropriation without compensation, although it has been long overdue. However, there is still a huge debate over the question of compensation. The questions that revolve in my mind as far as the issue of compensation is concerned are: Who then shall be compensated? Why shall they be compensated? By whom shall they be compensated?

As a history student, I have learnt that 'history is the teacher of life'. For a nation to be able to make correct national decisions on the ownership of land, it has to understand its history first. Without history, we are a dead nation. In history we study the past to understand the present in order to predict the future.

Long before colonialists arrived in Azania (colonially called South Africa), people had more than enough land for dwelling, cattle grazing, farming, etc. We should note that the people of Azania were robbed of their land long before the Native Land Act of 20 June 1913. Land was first stolen in 1652 on the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck who established a station in the Cape without permission from the people of Azania and killed Chief Qora of the Khoi who resisted the Dutch colonial invasion and settlement in Azania.

Thousands of Africans died fighting for their land. These heroes include King Moshoeshoe, King Sobhuza II, Adam Kok, Chief Bambatha, Robert Sobukwe and many more unsung heroes. The question now is: Why did they resist and fight for their land? It is because they knew that land is life and that land is priceless. They would rather die fighting for their land than to live without their land. They knew that people without land had nothing permanent in life. In that case, land meant everything to them.



Dlamini poses for a photo after graduating with a BTh.

Of course, land means everything. Where can you build a house if you don't have land? Where will you grow food if you don't have land? How can you be a nation without land? Factories are built on land; timber from which furniture is produced is made from trees planted on land; sports are played on land; food is grown on the land. Land is important. That is why colonisers travelled many miles from the West to steal the land of Azania because land is life. That was injustice to the people of Azania. Please do not mistakenly think I regard all whites as oppressors. However, they are beneficiaries of stolen property.

In that case, should there be compensation for land expropriation? No, there should not be compensation for the expropriation of land. It cannot be correct to buy land that was colonially acquired. Today, not only Black people are citizens of Azania, but different kinds of people are. Therefore all land shall belong to the state. Land shall be expropriated without compensation for the equality of all people who belong in Azania.

REMEMBER US

Do not rest in peace
pick up our story and journey on
do not lose a word
do not drop a syllable
do not betray our pain
do not speak of our joy
as an afterthought
tell it like it should be told
tell them that the hills are still green
so are our wounds
tell them that Africa is still
a tapestry of hope

those whose hands
do the stitching have grown
dangerously weary,
send to us new tailors
we too are on our way
when you get to that Great Place
do not do to us
what we did to you in this life
remember us
*Lefaseng la Modimo
oa badimo ba rena...*
(In the land of the God of our ancestors)
remember us

By Matheko G Masola

THE LAND STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA: FROM INDIVIDUALISM TO COMMUNALISM

By Lwamkelo Michael Gwaxaza

The land issue in South Africa is a challenging one and it can build or destroy the country. The history of our nation reveals pain and wounds that have been caused by land issue. The question that comes to mind is: Is land meant to destroy or to sustain its people? The way the land was taken away from the hands of indigenous people dehumanised them and made them feel inferior. History also informs us that the land was in the hands of a tiny minority which still persists today. The sad part is that people were not given opportunities to share their views on the land as they were forced to leave.

Such pain has raised a lot of noise in the country especially among the young generation. This noise has been tabled in Parliament and has been discussed. During discussions one can easily hear different views on this matter. It is during these discussions that one sees danger if this matter is handled without proper care. Different political parties share their views on this matter others being radical while others try to nurse this matter so that it does not harm others. Expropriation of land without compensation is a crucial issue. It needs people not to be quick with conclusions. Rather people should be concerned about the future of the country.

Others have proposed challenging mechanisms in dealing with this matter. We have heard others propose land grabbing. This raises a number of questions especially in a new South Africa. Some of the behaviours that rise up when people deliberate on this matter seem to be that of the jungle. The reality is that justice should take place. We don't dispute that but things should be handled in a peaceful manner. If land is to be expropriated, it should not be done in a manner that hurts others. The people of South Africa should not be divided by land rather it should unite them. Land should be used for the benefit of all. It should sustain its people.



Son of the soil - Gwaxaza argues that land should unite rather than divide South Africans.

When people share land together as a nation that means we return to our roots as Africans.

Living together in unity and caring are things that we cherish as people of the nation. Living together and benefiting from the land takes us through our African values. It reminds us of *Ubuntu* which teaches us to care for others. This notion has the power to take our country forward in being a better place for all who live in it. *Ubuntu* teaches us to move away from being individuals; rather it informs that one belongs to a community. We are not against expropriation of land but we caution against being driven by emotions. Rationality should be key in handling this issue.

NEEDED: A CULTURE OF PROGRESS & DEVELOPMENT

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“When world renowned Cambridge physicist, Prof Stephen Hawking died, I was in Cambridge. Donations that were collected at his funeral were used to buy food for the poor and the homeless in the city, not to feed the mourners. There was no feast. It was just tea and cake. The bulk of the donations went to the poor. That is progress. Progress is not buying expensive caskets, having a huge motorcade of black cars or having a huge feast at a funeral. That is not progress. It takes people who have developed to a certain level to know what progress is and what it is not.

“I hear some people say we want to do things ‘our own way’. But what is ‘our own way’ in a global society? Probably the one thing that is African is *Ubuntu*.

Even that is just a rhetoric. If it was real, we would not have fought all those ethnic wars in the past. *Ubuntu* was not obliterated by whites; they found us fighting with one another. It was the survival of the fittest in the middle of *Ubuntu*. So it has got its limitations and we need to accept that. I do not mean that it cannot add value but I mean that it is not a magic pill that we sometimes make it. So even what is our own needs what is from others. Thus exposure to these institutions, interaction with international scholars will enable us to move forward. For a small emerging institution like SMMS to be associated with Wesley House which has been around for decades adds immense value to the institution,” Prof Kumalo said.

QUEST FOR FOOD SECURITY

Access to sufficient food is a right of every South African. South Africa is reportedly nationally food secure. However, the reality is that relatively high levels of household and individual food insecurity still exist. Many South Africans are vulnerable to food insecurity, leading to nutritional problems including stunting, low body weight, and micronutrient malnutrition.

More than two decades into democracy, it is a scandal that millions of South Africans should sleep on an empty stomach, while millions of children go to school hungry when there is a lot of food being thrown away every day and better still, when they can grow their own food.

To this end, SMMS acquired a grant from the DT Hudson Charitable Trust to implement a food security programme in and around the City of Pietermaritzburg. The project will involve collecting excess food from supermarkets, hotels and other eateries and distributing it to needy communities.



Brentwood Pre-primary School pupils pose for a photo with some of the food sachets.



Seminarians pack food sachets for distribution to the needy.

Already SMMS has partnered with *Arise Against Hunger*, an organisation working in the area of food security, to pack and distribute food parcels to a pre-school in Tumbleweed.

Another aspect of the partnership with the DT Hudson is to empower seminarians on food sovereignty, food security and eco-theology issues generally. Seminarians have embarked on organic vegetable gardening project. The aim is to empower them with practical skills on how to grow their own food crops using the tyre garden model, a method that is not harmful to the environment, is not labour intensive and does not need a lot of land.

It is hoped that the students will implement these learnings in their Circuits and communities and will teach others to do the same, once they have graduated from the seminary.

Experts in the area of food security will also be invited to conduct lectures, workshops and seminars with seminarians on this important topic.

LIFTS AND STAIRCASES

By Matheko G Masola

Maybe we chose the lift for we did not want to contemplate a journey that would ask questions of our prejudices

Maybe we chose the convenience of the lift so we can shut its door in the face of those who saw a glimpse of what might be as we passed them by in the lobby of our self-importance.

Maybe we chose the lift over the staircase, for we did not wish to encounter another human being ravaged by the decisions of those who ride on lifts running out of breath

What if we had been brave enough to walk up the stairs?
Perhaps we would have found others coming down and a momentary peace would have visited upon our shoulders

If we took the stairs maybe we would have met souls on the staircase landing and life stories would have been shared.

But we chose lifts instead of staircases



UNITED IN MINISTERIAL TRAINING AND FORMATION

By Rev Thulani Ndlazi (Secretary: SA SYNOD-UCCSA)

On behalf of the SA SYNOD-UCCSA I would like to start by expressing our Congratulations to the Rev Prof Simangaliso Kumalo on his appointment as a Fellow of Wesley House, the Methodist College in Cambridge.

The gospel according to John informs us that our Lord Jesus Christ prayed that His disciples should stay united (John 17: 6-26). The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) have been cooperating in not only promoting Christian unity by word but also by actions for many decades. From co-founding of the Church Unity Commission (CUC) to the co-founding of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), unity in action between the MCSA and UCCSA has always been demonstrated.

After the demise of the FEDSEM, of which, among other church denominations, the MCSA and UCCSA were co-founders, the UCCSA took a decision to charge its five synods to establish centres of theological training and ministerial formation in their respective synods (countries).

The SA Synod of the UCCSA (SA SYNOD-UCCSA) established the UCCSA House of Formation (HoF) in Pietermaritzburg. It was by such a divine coincidence that the SA SYNOD-UCCSA established the UCCSA House of Formation in the same town as the MCSA's SMMS. It is by God's preordination that both SMMS and HoF are not only located in Pietermaritzburg but also share membership in the Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological Institutions. Our affiliations to the Cluster further strengthen our ecumenical partnership.

The UCCSA's HoF in Pietermaritzburg is an institution with a clear focus on theological training and ministerial formation. The late Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr wrote in his *Purpose of Education* that, "Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education". We feel blessed by the partnership that we have with SMMS because it helps us as the Congregational church to chaperone the characters of our ministerial candidates through ministerial formation and sharpen their theological skills through theological training.



Rev Ndlazi participates in an SMMS-UCCSA bilateral meeting.

This partnership has successfully produced eight UCCSA ministerial candidates. Unfortunately, two of them were called to higher service due to ill-health, and may God bless their souls. There are twelve UCCSA students for ministry who are registered with SMMS currently. We are very encouraged by our partnership in ministerial formation and theological training which is still going strong. We look forward to more training and ministerial formation of many more UCCSA's prospective ministers at SMMS, *Deo volente* (God willing).

May the prayer of our Lord, that we should be united, be fulfilled in this partnership between the UCCSA and MCSA.

May God bless the UCCSA and MCSA.



UCCSA students at SMMS pose for a photo with Rev Joey Naika.

REFLECTIONS OF A SEMINARIAN ON THE “CAPTURED” PHENOMENON IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Khulani Mngomezulu

“Waking up in the realisation of state capture in a captured society.”

This was a tweet I came across one day. Long even before the Public Protector’s report on State Capture was released, the nation was struggling to come face-to-face with the reality of ‘state capture’ and what it could mean for our nation. The notions of ‘capture’ had for some time been part of the discourse within society, and with it were the various understandings of what should and should not be considered as capture. Soon after the release of her report, various institutions of government were suspected of capture, and from that was a list of officials that were considered ‘captured’ and the suspicions of even people outside of state. If there was a time when answers were even more scary than the questions, this was the world that South Africans woke up to.

“If the state could be captured and we did not know, what else could be captured that we do not know of?” Thus, people started speculating (or maybe I should say the news media started speculating for the people). The provincial government may be ‘captured’, the municipality maybe ‘captured’, your councillor maybe ‘captured’, the school your child goes to maybe ‘captured’, and therefore even the education that they are receiving may also be ‘captured’.

Soon enough the speculating found itself at the door of the church and even at the feet of the pastor, or the preacher. The nightmare though is, if the church and/or the minister is ‘captured’, that may mean that the Gospel message is ‘captured’. Could this be? And if it is, who is the ‘capturer’?

In a world where the state is captured, who could be the ‘capturer’ of the church? Those who love their history state that the concept of a ‘captured’ church is not a new phenomenon. They consider Constantine to have perfected it, and through that process the church enjoyed great prominence and protection of that symbiosis. It is suspected that the church throughout history has at various times been compromised because of its relationship with power (royal or political). Whatever one’s feelings may be on Christendom, it is gone. Today’s questions are no longer about whether the church and the state should have a relationship; there is a consensus that there should be one. However, the vital question is what kind of relationship should that be? “Though there are very many nations all over the earth, ...there are no more than two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities, ...one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God... To the City of Man belong the enemies of God, ...so inflamed with hatred against the City of God.” Saint Augustine’s allegory of the two cities is considered as a substantial contribution to the early debate on the separation of church and state.



Mngomezulu poses for a photo with Dr Ken Chisa after graduating with a BTh.

It is considered as one of the earliest concepts of what the relationship of the church and state should look like.

According to Aernout J. Nieuwenhuis, there are various models that are used to explain the relationship between church and state. “These models normally run from more to less separation between state and religion.” Throughout time there have been various discussions about this relationship, with varying views yet the crux of the debate can be simplified (for the purposes of this reflection) into three perspectives.

Firstly, those who believe that church should stick to ‘playing church’ and leave the state and issues of the state alone. Secondly, those who believe that the church is a social commentator on all issues and thus from time to time needs to be the voice of conscience to issues in society. Thirdly, those who believe the church as an agency that “speaks truth to power” to ensure that the weak and the poor are not exploited and that justice is served.

Thus, the question is not about the state ‘capturing’ the church or the church ‘capturing’ the state that my reflection is engaging, but rather it is: what is the role of the MCSA in the society that woke up and found itself, its resources and its institutions ‘captured’? I am of the view, which may not be shared, that the MCSA was reflecting on these dynamics of its relationship with state and political power and the conceptual ideologies of their mission and ministry when they engaged on the resolution of chaplains in political parties. In 2016, Conference made two very important resolutions that speak to the relationship of the church and the state or political power, especially on the role of the church in society.

Firstly, it affirmed “the prophetic witness and action of the Presiding Bishop in responding to political and public issues” in its resolution about strengthening democracy and justice in South Africa.

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KUMALO BOWS OUT OF SMMS (ctd from Page 2)

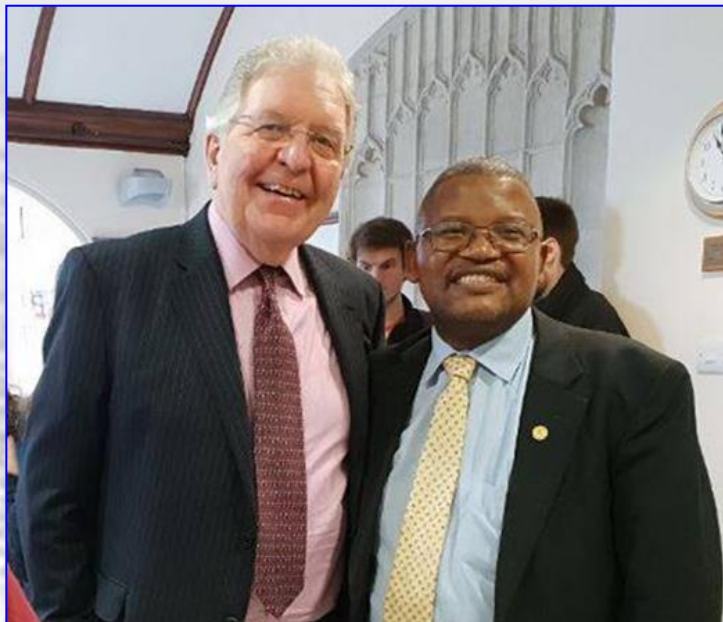
“Apart from the partnership with institutions in the Pietermaritzburg Cluster of Theological institutions, we also connected with theological institutions overseas. There had been a partnership with the Duke Divinity School (US) but it had collapsed. And so we revived it. We also formalised and strengthened partnerships with the Perkins School of Theology, Vanderbilt and Emory universities. Emory University sends two of its Master of Divinity students to SMMS for their practicals.

“Worth special mention is the partnership we developed with Wesley House of Cambridge University. Although there had been a relationship but it did not have direction. We strengthened it and interesting things are coming out of it. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being worked on that will see two students from MCSA get full sponsorships to go to Wesley House to do their PhDs. We also agreed that any of our academics can be sponsored by Wesley House to go there on a sabbatical or on short term research projects. That is something worth celebrating.

“Over and above these, we also established strong partnerships with faith-based and philanthropic social justice agencies that have provided resources that have enabled us to introduce seminarians to some key social justice issues. The Other Foundation and the DT Hudson Development Trust have sponsored work in the areas of human sexuality and food security respectively. Through their generosity, we have empowered seminarians with skills on how to address such issues in their ministry. We also work closely with the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council,” Prof Kumalo said.

On the future of SMMS, he said, the seminary has to collaborate with other institutions, particularly public universities adding that on its own, it will not hold for long.

“The doors of collaboration have to be opened as wide as possible. The idea of SMMS being maintained and sustained by the Connexional plate is not futuristic.



Prof Kumalo poses for a photo with Dr John Barrett, former President of the WMC during a recent visit to the UK.



Prof Kumalo addresses the 2018 graduation service.

I am not convinced that the seminary will hold for long if it solely depends on the contributions of the church. It needs to link up with other institutions and public universities because these are better-resourced since they benefit from the public purse. Particularly, SMMS has to collaborate with UKZN and that will enable it to benefit from UKZN’s resources. This is not a new message. The reason it was built in Pietermaritzburg is so that it collaborates with UKZN. I believe that ultimately all seminarians should be registered with UKZN for their academic programmes while the seminary focuses on the formation programme,” he said.

Prof Kumalo said SMMS must also develop partnerships with other denominations to increase student numbers and to share costs of ministerial training.

He said, “We need to attract new students by forging partnerships with other denominations. One of our achievements is that we signed MOUs with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA), the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the United Methodist Church who are training their students at SMMS. It is their institution of choice. It is in establishing these partnerships that we can share the ever-escalating costs. If we undermine these partnerships thinking that we can go it alone as SMMS, we will be making a huge mistake and we will not go anywhere. SMMS will collapse.”

As a parting shot, Prof Kumalo said, overall, he has achieved “incomplete success” and would be more than willing to make a contribution should he be called upon to do so.

He said, “We have achieved things that still need to be taken forward by others to be brought to fruition. As for me, I did my best to be faithful to the dream and vision of those who conceived and built SMMS, people like Rev Ivan Abrahams, Prof Neville Richardson, Dr Simon Gqubule, Prof Peter Storey, Rev Ross Olivier, Dr Mvume Dandala and many others. I sought to be faithful to their dream and vision. I sought to be faithful to the dream and vision of the Methodist people. I sought to serve to the best of my ability to take the institution forward and will forever be grateful to God for the opportunity.”

PRODUCE FRUIT IN SEASON AND OUT OF SEASON - PB

Presiding Bishop, Rev Zipho Siwa, has urged seminarians to produce fruit both “in season and out of season”.

Rev Siwa was preaching in a service to welcome the first year seminarians, in January.

“When you become a preacher, preach in season and out of season and be careful that at any moment you do not become like the fig tree that Jesus cursed. It was out of season.

“When you are out of season, you become this huge mountain on the people’s journey to encounter God. Instead of encountering God, they encounter you - a mountain that stands on the way of their relationship with God,” Bishop Siwa said.

Sharing his thoughts on the incident in which Jesus and his disciples discuss the cursed fig tree (Mark 11: 20-25), the Presiding Bishop said the fig tree, like the temple, was a symbol of God’s blessings.

He said, “Jesus uses the fig tree as a metaphor for what he had just done in the temple; he had overturned the tables of the money-changers and whipped people with a *sjambok*. The temple, like the fig tree will not be restored. It will wither if the people continue to behave in the way they are doing. It will dry up and even when the time for figs comes, it will not be able to bear fruit. When the symbol of God’s blessings withers, where shall people find their hope? When the place we look up to dries up, where shall we place our hope?”

When in verse 23 Jesus talks about *this* mountain, Bishop Siwa said, he is being specific. He is not referring to any other mountain.



Bishop Siwa urging seminarians to produce fruit in season and out of season.

He said, “The mountain which Jesus was referring to was the temple which had become a centre of Jewish life and drawing people to it and the dominant activity in it was milking them and holding their minds at ransom in an oppressive way. It had become oppressive and exploitative. The temple had become bigger than God. It had become God. It had become like a fig tree that was out of season.

“The mountain Jesus was talking about is a mountain of spiritual hunger, which in our context manifests itself in woundedness, violence when people tear each other apart, lack of respect for human life, corruption, the mountain of the water crisis in Cape Town and lack of regard for the environment which exploits God’s creation. That behaviour has to change. That mountain has to move.”

“Is there a mountain in your life that is troubling you? If you say to *that* mountain, ‘Move’, if you place that mountain before God, it will move,” Bishop Siwa ended.

REFLECTIONS ON THE “CAPTURED” PHENOMENON IN SOUTH AFRICA

Continued from Page 4

Secondly, it resolved to stop all appointments of “ministers as chaplains to political parties” while firmly stating its conviction that the ministry of the church “extends to all spheres of life including social, economic, political and environmental.” These two resolutions were further anchored by the resolve of the church to direct DEWCOM, its theological ‘juggernaut’, to further engage and reflect on the prophetic and pastoral nature of the ministry of the church in political and public spaces, and possible expressions of this ministry by developing “a guiding theological document and practical tools that will shape” the response of the church to this ministry.

I, personally, am keenly awaiting this document to see how the church is reflecting on its mission and ministry. There are various theological discourses that DEWCOM may decide to bring in this engagement. There is the ecclesiological discourse that speaks of the nature of the church and thus from this understanding what could we say of the relationship of church with state and political power.

There is an arena of public theological discourse that sees faith engaging justice, the environment, good governance and society. Within public theology, we can draw on how the church effects its mission and ministry in society. There is a political theology discourse that encourages engagement of theological concepts in relation to society, politics and even economics. Within political theology we can derive a charter for the church in society led by the state or political power. There is a prophetic theology discourse that sees the church as a bearer of truth for a world in need of saving, and within this discourse we can reflect on what is “prophetic witness”, “prophetic voice” and “prophetic ministry” of the church. There is a biblical theological discourse that would draw understanding from scripture about the relationship between church and state.

There are many more theological discourses that DEWCOM could draw from to enrich this engagement, and as a seminarian who is about to be sent, I wait in anticipation as I am to employ and effect this understanding in the community that I am being sent to. In the wake of the capture notion, it is important that society can rely on the church and my role in the church without the fear that I may be serving other interests beyond the ministry and mission of the church in society.