

TSHWANE PRESBYTERY - Moderator's Report: 18/08/2007

Greetings my brothers and sisters in Christ

I look forward to gathering as a family again at our Presbytery Meeting on 18/08/07. This is important in creating a sense of community and ensuring effective and appropriate decision-making for congregational growth, so please make every effort to represent your congregation at this Meeting.

Since writing my last Presbytery Report, some fairly major events have taken place. The relevant information is briefly provided below.

1. **Mandla Hlongwane**

Rev Mandla Hlongwane passed away on Saturday morning 11/08/2007 after a very long illness and extended hospitalization both in Johannesburg and in Barberton. The date for the funeral is Saturday 18/08, which is the date of our Presbytery Meeting. Rev Ndoda Mbuyisa kindly visited the family with me in Soweto on Wednesday 15/08. In discussion with the family, it was agreed that Rev Dr Graham Duncan would officiate and preach at the funeral, with Revs Micah Nthali and Patrick Nyauza attending the funeral as our official representatives from Tshwane. An official letter of condolence from our Presbytery will be read at the funeral and time for a brief memorial will be scheduled during our Meeting.

2. **Presbytery Pedal Project**

As you know, the Pedal Project culminated at St James, Matsulu with our Presbytery Meeting on 19/05/07, where our "pedalling Pastor" Theo Groeneveld reported back to the Council by means of a PowerPoint presentation. However, monetary contributions continued to be received after this date and further visits were made to those congregations not included in the Pedal Project route. The purpose of these ongoing visits was to include the "stories" for all our congregations in the proposed Pedal Project information booklet and CD for Tshwane Presbytery.

At the time of writing this report, congregations visited after completion of the marathon include:

- Thumedi Makgahlela, Atteridgeville on 05/06
- St Francis, Waterkloof on 06/06
- Centurion West, Rasslouw on 09/06
- Highveld, Centurion on 10/06
- Jonas Lediga, Atteridgeville on 30/06
- Trinity, Lynnwood on 11/07
- Saints, Lyttelton on 22/07
- St Columbas, Hatfield on 29/07
- Mamelodi East on 05/08
- St Marks on 12/08.

Theo Groeneveld offered to provide the "stories" for Emmanuel and Grace, as well as those congregations visited on the Pedal Project route where I was either ill or absent, namely Rustenburg, Garankuwa and Mamelodi Gardens.

This leaves only three congregations still outstanding:

- St Andrews, Pretoria where the race started and excitement was running far too high at that stage to set aside quiet time to listen to their "story"
- St Thomas, Hammanskraal where there was insufficient time during the Pedal Project itself to do justice to their "story"
- St James, Matsulu which was fully occupied with hosting the May Presbytery Meeting and celebrating the dedication of their new sanctuary to allow time for their "story" to be told.

Drafts of the stories will be sent to the relevant congregations for their approval/modification before printing the booklet, which I am hoping to finalize in time for our November meeting. Additional photographs and the PowerPoint presentations will also be written to CD for purchase, the costs of both the booklet and CD to be determined at our August Meeting.

Visiting all the congregations in our Presbytery has been an amazing joy and blessing as I witnessed the love and generosity of the people and the hand of God at work in so many different ways in each local community, from the wealthiest to the humblest. It was also truly an opportunity to celebrate our diversity – we appear to be the most diverse of our UPCSAs Presbyteries!

Many thanks to all who made this wonderful experience possible and who offered hospitality, love and generosity to Theo and I during the Pedal Project.

If we are to derive maximum benefit from this project as a Presbytery we will need, during our strategic planning workshop in October, to carefully and prayerfully:

- identify how many congregations we can afford to subsidize and which ones would benefit most from resident Ministers
- consider how to identify and approach the best candidates for these appointments
- plan appropriate training for participating congregations and church leaders in

- poverty alleviation and sustainability
- congregational growth.

3. Dedication of Church Sanctuaries

Since our last Presbytery Meeting, we have set apart two new church buildings, ie:

- St James, Matsulu on 19/05
- Centurion West (CPC) on 21/07.

We celebrate these two events with joy and thanksgiving ever mindful of the blessings that God has showered upon these congregations. May these facilities continue to bring blessings in abundance not only to the congregations concerned, but more importantly to the wider communities around them, to the honour and glory of God's name!

4. Ministers' Conference at Eston

Only about half of our Ministers, including our Probationers, attended the Conference at Eston from 28 to 31/05. This was a spiritually revitalizing time, with quality input from the two guest speakers:

- Rev Dr Coenie Burger, now the immediate past Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), who led our daily Bible study on Paul's letter to the Ephesians
- Rev Dr Daniel Louw, also of the DRC and a lecturer from Stellenbosch University, who gave a series of talks on pastoral theology as a theology of affirmation.

There was a good turnout of UPCSA Ministers (over 200) and it's a pity that more of our Tshwane Ministers did not attend as it was time very well spent.

The event culminated with Holy Communion on Thursday evening, when a prayer of dedication was said by our Moderator, Rev William Pool, for our new Ministry Secretary, Rev Dr Eddy Germiquet.

5. St Andrew's Centenary Celebrations

I attended the Flower Festival at St Andrew's on Saturday 09/06 and enjoyed tea and cake in their tea garden. The flower arrangements, donated by neighbouring congregations, were magnificent and the event seemed to draw a fair number of people.

This was the first in a series of special events to celebrate St Andrew's centenary. Other centenary events scheduled to take place this year include:

- an organ recital by Eddie Davey on Sunday evening 16/09
- a film festival on Sunday evening 14/10
- a Christmas carol service on Sunday evening 25/11
- a Sunday morning service of praise and thanksgiving on 02/12.

Please publicize these dates in your congregations and try to support St Andrew's by attending as many of these events as possible.

6. General Assembly Executive Commission

Violet Moshao and I represented our Presbytery at the General Assembly Executive Commission in Orlando East from 17 to 20/07. The Moderator's opening address for this event was "The Unity of Our New Church" and this theme permeated almost all of the proceedings, sometimes with positive overtones and sometimes negative. One or two sessions, sadly, were marked by strident discord.

On the whole, however, the consensus mode of decision-making was used quite effectively throughout, with three sets of sessions, namely:

- informative sessions during which questions for further information and clarity were raised
- Insaka groups, where the various reports and proposals were discussed and proposals formulated/reformulated where necessary
- decision-making sessions where consensus was sought with regard to the proposals discussed by the insaka groups during the previous session.

A deadlock was reached on two items on the agenda where those in the minority would not cede to the overall mind of the Council. This posed somewhat of a procedural problem and threatened the sense of unity.

Commissioners to last year's General Assembly were reminded to complete their own evaluation of the consensus mode of decision-making and to submit their comments to the Assembly Business Committee as soon as possible so that this new approach can be further honed before the next General Assembly in September 2008.

Some major milestones were achieved during the Executive Commission, especially with respect to:

- the acceptance of our new Confession of Faith after seven years of dedicated work by the Doctrines Committee with Rev Douglas Bax as the Convenor
- the outstanding chapters for the UPCSA Manual of Law and Procedure following painstaking work by the Manual Committee under the convenorship of Prof Alistair Kerr.

Important dates for action by Presbytery include:

- 18/08/07 : identify at least one delegate from our Presbytery to attend a workshop, together with the Convenor of the Ministry Committee, on models for ministry in the UPCSA in October
- 31/08/07 : list due from the General Assembly Finance Committee of outstanding loans for which Presbytery has stood surety and is, therefore, liable for payment of the debt
- 09 & 10/10/07 : workshop on models for ministry in the UPCSA at St Augustine's Theological College in Linden
- 31/10/07 :
 - congregations to report to Presbytery re Minister's complete emoluments for 2007
 - audited statements for Presbytery for year ended 31/12/06 to Maintenance of the Ministry Committee
- 30/11/07 : Presbytery report to Maintenance of Ministry Committee re Ministers' full emoluments
- 21/01/08 : submission of
 - reports concerning Changes in the Ministry for the period 01/05 – 31/12/07
 - in memoriam minutes for the above period
 - applications from Ministers to retire.
- 25-26/03/08 : next Executive Commission
- 1st Quarter 2008 : Renewal of Commitment (Mnqophiso) Service for all congregations
- 31/03/08 : submit returns to remits concerning (Appendices as per ExComm documents)
 - the Declaration of Standards and Ministers' Vows under par 7.50 of the Interim Manual
 - the "Order for a Minister's Ordination and Induction/Appointment to a Charge" in Appendix A
 - the "Order for a Minister's Induction/Appointment to a Charge" in Appendix B
 - the "Narratives of Procedure" in Appendix D
 - the "Order for the Baptism of Children" in Appendix E
 - the "Order for a Congregation to Reaffirm the Covenant" in Appendix F
 - the Elders' Vow in Appendix G
- 31/05/08 : submit return to remit concerning the "Order for the Ordination and Induction of Elders" in Appendix G.

The following matters should also be noted:

- All Presbyteries were encouraged to be more diligent in timeously submitting returns to remits. (Our Presbytery has an embarrassingly poor record in this regard.)
- It was agreed that those elected to serve on the General Assembly and Presbytery Courts would also serve on the Administrative Review Panels.
- A total amount of R4 727 only was raised in 2006 for the PEF by Tshwane Presbytery (both congregations and UPWF), while awards totalling R7 942 were paid out to our Presbytery. Our contribution to the PEF has been steadily declining (R11 560 in 2004, R7 157 in 2005, and R4 727 in 2006).
- Christmas Day, Good Friday, and Ascension Day are now recognized by the UPCSA as paid religious holidays for all its church office staff, and congregations are encouraged to hold worship services on these days.
- With the adoption of our new Confession of Faith, this now replaces the Westminster Confession and Twenty-four Articles of Faith as our UPCSA subordinate standards.
- An Imbizo will be hosted by the UPCSA General Secretary on our Manual after its publication, participants to be decided at the March 2008 Executive Commission.
- Presbyteries are encouraged to address issues pertaining to congregations in their bounds moving out of CBDs and vacating church buildings.
- The Ministers' Marriage and Family Care Committee has been instructed, in consultation with Presbyteries and the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee, to evaluate issues pertaining to the wellness and care of Ministers and to report back to the March 08 Executive Commission.
- Minimum monthly stipends for 2008 have been set as follows:

0-5 years of service :	R3 676
6-15 yrs	R3 973
16-25 yrs	R4 351
26-35 yrs	R5 050
+36 yrs	R5 576.

The recommended minimum monthly travel allowance is R2 600 and the minimum pulpit supply fee is R300. (Please note that Interim Moderators are not eligible for stipends or pulpit supply fees, but their travel costs to and from congregations where they serve are to be covered.)

- Members of the Long Leave Fund may use their accumulated balances to reduce their debt with the UPCSA.

- The Committee dealing with centralization and equalization of stipends has been instructed to speed up the process and Presbyteries are encouraged to discuss this matter.
- With respect to JSR and Life Concerns:
 - All UPCSAs are encouraged to resist any attempt to legalize actions intended to “terminate the life of an innocent person” whether by the patient, physician or others.
 - Members are referred to pp 389-391 of the 1998 PCSA General Assembly papers for practical guidelines to post-abortion care and healing.
 - Ministers, Elders and members are encouraged to read the book “Matters of Life and Death” by John Wyatt.
- With respect to HIV/AIDS:
 - The church is encouraged to
 - preach holiness and abstinence
 - expose the myths, lies and injustice associated with HIV/AIDS
 - demonstrate grace and practical expressions of love and compassion in Christ Jesus
 - challenge the stigma attached to the disease.
 - The church leadership is encouraged to take the lead in knowing their status.
 - Those doing research or post-graduate studies on HIV/AIDS are encouraged to use the church as a case study.
 - Congregations and Presbyteries are encouraged to develop activities based on the following programme:
 - Jan-Mar : VCT
 - Apr-Jun : Training of counsellors
 - Jul-Sep : Capacity building (widows)
 - Oct-Dec : Orphans (OVC).
- Convenors of Fellowship of Vocation and Ministry Committee, and Ministers are reminded to make use of the “Fellowship of Vocation” booklet
- Presbytery is urged to appoint a Stewardship Convenor and to submit the name of this person to the Assembly Stewardship Committee.

7. Consistory at Rocky Valley

The General Secretary, Rev Dr Vuyani Vellem, attended our Consistory Meeting at Rocky Valley on 25/07. An in-depth interactive Bible study of Mark 2:1-12 was carried out in small groups with each group representing one of the role-players in the text. The relevance of this text and the model of the church that it presents were discussed with reference to the church today, especially the UPCSAs and its vision and mission, with Rev Vellem concluding with a brief presentation.

Attendance was quite good with about 20 people in attendance, including our four probationers, four elders, our Presbytery administrator, and 10 ministers. Unfortunately, an official evaluation wasn't carried out, but the response of participants seems to have been reasonably favourable.

Our next consistory meeting is scheduled to take place at Rocky Valley on Thursday 30/08/07. A similar interactive small group Bible study is suggested on a different theme. Please notify Susan in advance for catering purposes.

8. Synod Meeting with Highveld and Egoli Presbyteries

A meeting of Presbytery Moderators and/or Clerks of Tshwane, Highveld and Egoli Presbyteries was held on 31/07/07 to discuss the possibility of establishing a Synod. However, the overall consensus was that it would be unwise to create any additional structures and formalities at present. It was therefore agreed that an informal working relationship and occasional social events would be considered between the three Presbyteries, leaving Tshwane open also to explore a similar relationship with Limpopo Presbytery if so desired.

Informal feedback from Limpopo through Rev Dianne Vorster indicated a similar resistance to creating any further formal structures. It was not appropriate to explore the possibility of an informal relationship since the conversation with Rev Vorster was purely social.

The following areas of possible co-operation with Highveld and Egoli Presbyteries were discussed:

- REMITS: Workshopping remits together for a greater cross-pollination of ideas
- INTERIM MODERATORS: Sharing Interim Moderators for vacant congregations across Presbytery boundaries taking into account physical distances
- PRESBYTERY COURTS: Establishing one Court and Administrative Review Panel for all three Presbyteries, thus requiring only one Minister and one Elder per Presbytery and also allowing for greater objectivity in dealing with matters of discipline

- ADMINISTRATOR: Sharing a full-time Administrator between the three Presbyteries. This idea also sparked off the thought that several churches in close proximity could share an office with associated resources – space, staff and equipment.
- CHURCH DEVELOPMENT: Combining our Church Development/Growth Committees for greater impact re mission and evangelism.

It was finally agreed to present these options to our respective Presbyteries to discern the mind of our respective Councils and, if acceptable, to pursue three with immediate effect, ie:

- one combined Court/Administrative Review Panel
- a joint Church Development Committee, with the three existing Committees initially meeting together to discuss the feasibility of this idea
- a joint Consistory Meeting in Kempton Park on Reformation Day 31/10 with Doug Bax invited to workshop the new Confession of Faith with all three Presbyteries.

9. Ministers' Spouses' Forum

This was held in Ethekwini Presbytery from 29/06 to 01/07. Unfortunately my husband, Alaster, was the only spouse from our Presbytery to attend this event, which is a pity since issues such as the centralization and equalization of stipends, stewardship and the use of ours spiritual gifts, the plight of Ministers' widows, and training for Ministers' spouses, among others, were debated.

10. Ecumenical Relationships/Events

CHURCH UNITY SERVICES & THE GLOBAL DAY OF PRAYER

I attended several ecumenical prayer gatherings in Centurion as part of Church Unity Week in the lead up to the Global Day of Prayer. I was unable to participate in either the final Church Unity Service at St Alban's Cathedral in Pretoria or the Day of Prayer event that was hosted at various venues around Tshwane on Sunday 27/05 as my husband and I had taken a long overdue weekend off. However, Wonke Buqa attended the service at St Albans on my behalf.

URBAN THEOLOGY CONFERENCE

This Conference, which was hosted by the Institute for Urban Ministry on 10 and 11/07, dealt with the "oikos" theme and the changing nature of urban ministry. The speakers included:

- Fr Andrew Warmback, an Anglican priest from Pinetown who has just completed his doctoral thesis on "Constructing an Oiko-theology: The environment, poverty and the church in SA"
- Prof Nico Botha, Associate Professor in the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology at Unisa
- Rev Johann Meylann, of the Lutheran Church in Pretoria who has just completed his doctoral thesis on Biblical concepts of justice
- Rev Dr Simango Kumalo, a Methodist Minister from KwaZulu-Natal and lecturer in practical theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Various issues pertaining to the changing nature of urban ministry were discussed, including the increasingly transient and cross-cultural composition of congregations in our central business districts, calling for a creative approach, inter alia, to stewardship and the management of church resources.

BOOK OF HOPE

A letter was received from Transforming Tshwane inviting our congregations to participate in an initiative called "Book of Hope SA" to reach the children in Tshwane with the Gospel. Unfortunately, this correspondence was received only in the second week of July and training for local leaders was scheduled for 21/07 and 04/08, leaving insufficient time to raise this incentive at Presbytery. Perhaps this kind of event should be handled by our JSR Committee rather than the Moderator, so that there can be a quick response to such events.

11. Students for the Ministry

Various meetings have been attended by myself and Theo Groeneveld at the instigation of either the Convenor of the Ministry Committee, Rev Dr Mamabolo Raphesu, or the new Ministry Secretary, Rev Dr Eddy Germiquet, concerning the general care and well-being of our Students for the Ministry at the University of Pretoria. It is anticipated that written correspondence in this regard will be received from the Ministry Committee.

12. Church Associations

MEN'S CHRISTIAN GUILD

At the invitation of the MCG, I attended its Tshwane Presbytery Special Conference Meeting at St Andrews on 02/06 where some of the outstanding annual reports were presented and outstanding business dealt with. A monetary gift was made by the MCG to the Pedal Project and we thank them for their support in this regard.

Further debate took place concerning the issue of uniforms and it was ultimately agreed that Tshwane MCG would accept both uniforms and that the new UPCS badge for the MCG would serve as the unifying symbol.

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

I was asked to address the Annual Meeting or our Tshwane Youth, but there was a conflict of dates with our August Presbytery Meeting. I asked that the Youth consider an alternative date. No notification has been received to date in this regard.

13. Pulpit Swop

It appears that most of our Ministers and Congregations participated in the pulpit swop on 15/07. Please would those for whom the specified date was unsuitable make the necessary arrangements for their pulpit swops to take place before the end of November 2007.

14. Pastoral Care

Six of our Ministers and Commissioners have been contacted telephonically or visited pastorally since our last Presbytery Meeting and our Pastoral Committee may need to address certain issues.

Proposals

It is proposed that

1. the report be received.
2. PEDAL PROJECT:
 - 2.1 Copies of the Pedal Project booklet be made available to congregations for purchase at the November Presbytery Meeting at a cost of R..... each.
 - 2.2 CDs of the Pedal Project photographs and PowerPoint presentations be made available for purchase at the November Presbytery Meeting at a cost of R..... each.
 - 2.3 Adequate provision be made at our strategic planning session in October to:
 - identify congregations best suited to the placement of subsidized Ministers for one year
 - consider how to engage these congregations and gauge their support of the Project
 - consider how to identify and approach the best potential candidates for this purpose
 - plan and implement an effective training programme for these Ministers and Congregations on poverty alleviation, sustainability and congregational growth.
3. ST ANDREWS: Congregations be encouraged to publicize and support St Andrews' centenary celebrations as outlined in this report.
4. EXECUTIVE COMMISSION:
 - 4.1 Our Commissioners to last year's General Assembly be encouraged, if they have not already done so, to submit their evaluations of and comments on the consensus mode of decision-making as used at this event.
 - 4.2 Presbytery notes with concern the divisive atmosphere that sometimes characterizes our UPCSAs meetings and consciously commits to making every effort to build a sense of unity and family.
 - 4.3 Presbytery identifies one delegate to attend the workshop on models for ministry in the UPCSAs on 09 and 10/10 at St Augustine's Theological College in Linden together with the Convenor of our Ministry Committee.
 - 4.4 Our Treasurer consider the list from the General Assembly Finance Committee of outstanding loans for which our Presbytery has stood surety and notify the Executive Committee at its next Meeting of the total debt to be paid.
 - 4.5 Congregations be instructed to submit their Ministers' complete emoluments for 2007 to Presbytery by no later than 31/10/2007 and that these be relayed to the Maintenance of the Ministry Committee at Central Office by no later than 30/11/07.
 - 4.6 Our audited statements for 2006 be submitted to Maintenance of the Ministry Comm. by 31/10/07.
 - 4.7 Presbytery note the remaining deadlines for 2008 listed in the report and take the necessary action to meet these.
 - 4.8 Congregations be encouraged to respond to the notices concerning:
 - the Presbyterian Educational Fund (PEF)
 - Christmas Day, Good Friday and Ascension Day
 - minimum stipends for 2008
 - JSR, Life Concerns and HIV/AIDS
 - recommended use of the FoV booklet.
 - 4.9 Presbytery addresses the issues of:
 - timeous returns on remits
 - congregations moving out of CBDs and vacating church buildings
 - discussing the centralization and equalization of stipends
 - appointing a Stewardship Convenor and notifying the General Assembly Stewardship Committee.
5. CONSISTORY: Ministers and interested Commissioners note that the next Consistory Meeting is at Rocky Valley on Thursday 30/08 from 09:00 to 15:00.
6. WORKING WITH EGOLI & HIGHVELD:
 - 6.1 Presbytery establish a combined Court/Administrative Review Panel with Egoli and Highveld Presbyteries.
 - 6.2 Our Church Growth Committee arrange to meet with the equivalent Committees from Egoli and Highveld Presbyteries as soon as possible to explore options for co-operation between the three Presbyteries in this regard.
 - 6.3 Presbytery agree to a joint Consistory Meeting with the other two Presbyteries in Kempton Park on 31/10/07 to workshop the new UPCSAs Confession of Faith with Doug Bax and that our share of the associated costs be approved for this purpose.
7. PULPIT SWOP: Ministers/Congregations who have not yet done their pulpit swop be urged to do so before the end of November 2007.