



SMMS NEWS

Celebrating 10 years of forming transforming leaders for church and nation

AUGUST 2019

DR MARIE APPOINTED NEW SMMS PRESIDENT

The search for the new SMMS President is over!

This follows the appointment of former Academic Dean, Dr Rowanne Marie, as first female President of the institution. Dr Marie replaces Rev Vido Nyobole who goes back into retirement after serving as Interim President since July 2018.

In a statement, SMMS Board Chairperson, Dr Phumla Mnganga said Dr Marie has a proven leadership track record.

“She was the first SMMS staff person to be appointed and has functioned in various strategic positions since then, including as Registrar, Academic Dean and Acting President. As Academic Dean, Dr Marie has helped the institution navigate through the complex Higher Education regulatory framework, thus ensuring its continued registration and compliance. She is the architect and driver behind SMMS’ new Honours degree programme in Christian Leadership,” Dr Mnganga said.

She described Dr Marie as a scholar of note, who will lead SMMS into the future.

“Dr Marie is a highly respected scholar, researcher and writer who is passionate about gender justice and ministerial formation. She has published widely in internationally recognised peer reviewed journals. She has also been an external examiner at a number of local universities, including UKZN and Fort Hare,” she said.



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In line with the current affirmation and recognition of women that has seen women being elected to top leadership positions in the MCSA, Dr Mnganga noted that Dr Marie becomes the first woman to be appointed President since the founding of the seminary in 2009.

Dr Mnganga ended by expressing the Board’s gratitude to Dr Marie for accepting this demanding role and offered her Board’s full support to her and her team.

She said, “The Board thanks Dr Marie for availing herself to serve in this challenging position. We are delighted that a scholar and leader of Dr Marie’s calibre and experience will be leading SMMS into the future. We offer her our fullest support as she strives to ensure that SMMS continues to execute its mandate of forming transforming leaders for church and nation.”

Meanwhile, messages of congratulations began to pour in from far and wide following the announcement of Dr Marie’s appointment. In his message, SMMS Grand Chancellor, Justice Dikgang Moseneke also extended his “warm wishes and congratulations to the Chairperson and the Board of SMMS for finding a leader of Dr Marie’s ability, who has served the seminary with dedication over many years.”

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DR MARIE INDUCTED

The recently appointed SMMS President, Dr Marie, was inducted by the Presiding Bishop of the MCSA, Rev Zipho Siwa, on 15 August.

In her acceptance speech, Dr Marie expressed gratitude to the Methodist people for their confidence in her.

“I express deep gratitude to the leadership and the various organisations within the MCSA, the Board of SMMS, colleagues from academic institutions, family, friends and fellow pilgrims of the faith. I celebrate and honour those leaders who have gone before me, each of them leaving a legacy built on integrity, innovation, valour, creativity and diligence. I honour the ‘people called Methodists’, for the courage they have offered me to take the seminary into its future. As I take on the position of the President of SMMS, I do so mindful of the great responsibility entrusted upon me.

“Presiding Bishop, whilst many write and speak beautifully about church unity, about gender justice and equality and about other such pertinent matters, I note that under your leadership, the MCSA lives this out and models it, thus becoming a prototype for many to emulate,” she said.

Having been the very first staff person to be appointed and having served the institution for a decade, Dr Marie said SMMS has taught her many great lessons.

She said, “SMMS has become close my heart. Since the day of my appointment on 1 October 2008, I have watched it grow from its moment of inception into this strong establishment that it has become. This year, we



Methodist leadership lay hands on Dr Marie.

celebrate 10 years, and we never cease to be amazed at the grace and favour of the Lord over SMMS. Within the decade, we have accomplished much, such that we now occupy a recognised space within the academia and amongst various theological platforms. This great institution has, over the past decade, witnessed great women and men come and go; many of them now impacting church and nation tremendously. I have journeyed with SMMS through its tears and joys, its mountains and valleys, and each of those encounters live on as a thread in our tapestry and our story will not be complete without any of these experiences.”

Dr Marie also expressed gratitude to the student body and acknowledged the great sacrifices that they make to come and study at SMMS.

“You are the main focus of SMMS. This place is about you and for you and the 320 distance learners out there. Over the years of being part of the SMMS family, I have appreciated the respect and support from the seminarians - each one of you brings uniqueness to this village. The sacrifices you make, leaving the comforts of your home, of your family, and the security of your good employment are commendable. You are women and men who have taken the risk of leaving much behind so that you can be on the journey of becoming a formed and transforming leader for the church and nation,” Dr Marie said.

She also admitted her admiration of the leadership style of her predecessor, Rev Vido Nyobole, and wished him well in his return to retirement.

“You are my Father in the faith, my role model, my encourager, my strength and my inspiration. There are moments when the selfish side of me fears not having you around. Your gentle spirit became the wind beneath my wings. But I realise that both you and Mrs Nyobole need some well-deserved rest. Thank you for being part of our journey,” Dr Marie said.

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HALALA MBOKODO HALALA!

By Gillian Fox

It's time to walk through the door!

A door has recently been swung wide open. It leads into what has hitherto been a patriarchal domain, a domain that ensured that patriarchy could thrive and remain at the centre of society and at the heart of the church.

43 years ago the door was partially opened and less than 200 women have passed through it to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Of this number more than 50 have retired or passed on to greater glory, leaving approximately 150 women in service.

The door has now been opened by women who have struggled long and hard and who have step by step, opened the way for those who come after them. Change would not have been possible without such people. Many will remember and some will know from stories told of the cost of never giving up and pushing onward regardless.

As a woman, I celebrate the appointment of women into positions of leadership at the recent synods held around the Connexion, not forgetting the “firsts” who have preceded this moment: Rev Nomthandazo Purity Malinga, first woman Bishop and first woman Director of the Education Ministry and Mission Unit (EMMU) and Rev Charmaine Morgan, first woman General Secretary of the MCSA. There are many more who have continued to push against the door of patriarchy, and with each divine appointment of a woman, change takes place and the door opens just a little further.

In the aftermath of the 2019 synods, however, the door to ministry and leadership within the MCSA is now completely open and accessible to women, whether clergy or laity, who are called to walk through it, regardless of where God's calling leads.



Fox wonders what the impact could have been had women been allowed into ministry right from the beginning.

Rev Malinga, Presiding Bishop-Elect; Rev Yvette Moses, Bishop-Elect of the Cape of Good Hope Synod; Rev Faith Whitby, Bishop-Elect of the Central Synod and Rev Morgan, Bishop-Elect of the new Namibia Synod are women of great faith and love and are an example to all women and men throughout the Connexion. Their faith, hope, gifts and anointed ministries have brought them to a time such as this (Esther 4:14). Their presence in the Ministry of Word and Sacrament shatters the silence of submission and oppression of patriarchy and boldly proclaims that times are changing - a time where it is no longer acceptable to believe that women cannot be called, are not sent and are not anointed to fulfill the purpose which God alone has awakened within us, women and men alike.

I do not for one minute believe that for women, the journey to this point has been painless, easy and without sacrifice and compromise of themselves and those who support them. Recently the Theological Society of Southern Africa (TSSA) held a Leadership Conference of which *Women in Ministry* was one of the topics. The presenter, Rev Dr Martin Mujinga, noted that the women who have journeyed, compromised and have been hurt through rejection at the hands of their male counterparts. Church structures and members of the church, have resulted in these women “leading with bruises.” I believe the same to be true for every woman in ministry and leadership within the MCSA. Their obedience has come at a price which many will never know and others will never understand, and often the bruises are hidden.

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Women leaders at Dr Marie's induction. L to R: Dr Mnganga, Rev Morgan, Rev Malinga and Dr Marie.

STOREY 'BEGGED TO DIFFER'

Rev Prof Peter Storey 'begged to differ' with the status quo. He was a non-conformist and a 'candlelight that protested against the darkness of apartheid.'

This is how the South African Council of Churches (SACC) Senior Vice President and Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) International President, Rev Dr Frank Chikane described his fellow anti-apartheid activist when he delivered the eighth annual Peter Storey Lecture, on 10 May.

"Storey was called into ministry during the darkest time in South Africa when the racist apartheid system was being brutally enforced against the black majority, causing untold harm, pain and suffering. The challenges of the context within which he had to minister called upon him to be like a 'candle-light' which stood as a 'protest' against the 'darkness of the night'. He stood in that dark moment as a 'non-conformist' in terms of the traditions and stance of the Church at that time, and boldly said to the darkness, 'I beg to differ.'

"During that time, if you were white, you were expected to conform to the status quo. Storey boldly said to the darkness: 'I beg to differ.' He listened to his 'human consciousness' in the face of the brutality of the apartheid system and acted where he was expected to act to stop that brutality. What is radical about what he did is that he went beyond the immediate material interests of whiteness," Rev Chikane said.

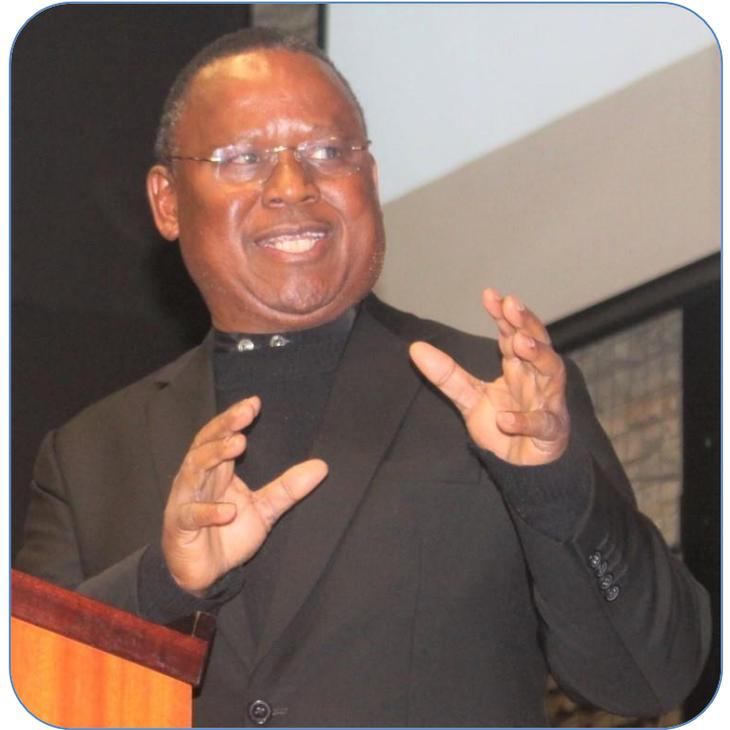
He said Storey's 'historical praxis' leapfrogged him from the normal dispensation of 'white innocence,' in the sense of unquestioning acceptance of the racist construct of reality to a 'dispensation of conscience' where the Spirit of God strives with humanity to be what God wanted humanity to be, causing him to fall out with some white members of his congregation.

Rev Chikane said, "He begged to differ with some of the members of his congregation with the result that a significant group of white congregants rejected his approach and left his church. The Church family that remained found a 'painful togetherness' and began to look more like God's future for South Africa.

"Storey did something close to what Amilcar Cabral defined as a kind of 'class suicide.' This involves listening to one's 'revolutionary consciousness' and the 'culture of revolution' rather than acting on its 'immediate material interests' as a social class."

He narrated numerous incidences in which Storey and other activists 'begged to differ' and became 'witnesses-in-chief' for the Church and the SACC.

Following in the footsteps of Storey and other activists of his generation, Rev Chikane said the SACC begged to differ with the democratically elected government in 2017 when it was clearly following a trajectory that would lead the country to its own destruction, and declared it 'morally illegitimate.'



Rev Chikane urges the Church to beg to differ with injustice.

He sent a stern warning to the defenders of state capture and the re-elected ANC: "I would like to warn those who intend to continue to defend the capture of the state and the shocking levels of rot that is coming through the various commissions. In the name of the Lord, they will not succeed as the nation has woken up to understand what their mission was about. I would like to warn them that they can only hurt themselves further if they try to persist in defending this indefensible and immoral project. I would like to warn those who have committed crimes or have been involved in this rot not to act in a suicidal way because of fear of going to jail. I plead with you not to bring down the government of the people together with them because you do not want to face the might of the law. This will not be allowed, and, can only add to the number of charges you will be facing.

"I would like to warn members of the ANC that they have the last chance to save their organisation and the country by becoming the first line of defence and root out the deep rot that is in the organisation. You are warned that preserving the unity of the ANC at the expense of the people will only lead to the demise of the ANC. The ANC cannot maintain its unity by doing everything possible to keep the rotten potatoes with the good, as the good will ultimately rot as well. Remove the rotten potatoes, clean the good potatoes and save yourselves and the nation. If the members of the ANC fail to clean up their house which affects all of us, then the people of this country must be the next line of defence."

He ended by encouraging the Church to continue the tradition of Storey and his compatriots and beg to differ with injustice.

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FACING THE FUTURE WITH COURAGE

“You have been fully equipped with the tools that are necessary for you to act as agents of transformation. Seize the opportunity and use the capacity that your theological training has afforded you to shape tomorrow today in order to change things for the better.”

That was the message of then SMMS President, Rev Vido Nyobole, to graduands during the eighth graduation ceremony, on 11 May.

The 2019 ceremony was the largest since the founding of SMMS ten years ago with 120 graduands receiving their certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Rev Nyobole said our world is searching for meaning of life and for security and urged the graduands to be the spiritual ‘avant-garde.’

“What the world is looking for is inspiration and inspiring leadership. The entire world is in desperate need of courageous, transforming leaders who have the knack to metamorphose our society from its current individualistic and parochial egocentrism, avarice and corruption into a community where *ubuntu* and *shalom* have become its hallmarks and the common good, no longer a utopian ideal. To attain this, courage will be an indispensable prerequisite.

“Indeed, the world is crying for credible, selfless, exemplary leaders who can provide inspirational, life giving, ethical and irreproachable moral leadership to a church that is at the cross-roads, a wounded, polarised and groaning world. It is expectantly looking for leadership that is embedded in truthfulness, kingdom values and bravery. You, who are graduating today, are the courageous leaders and thinkers the church and the world have been waiting for,” he said.

Rev Nyobole encouraged the graduands to ensure that the future of all people and ensuing generations will be bright and prosperous.

He said, “You are the leaders to whom the baton has been handed over and you need to run with it into the future, while a host of people will be following you hoping that you will lead them into a future where there is indeed ‘a better



Rev Nyobole urges graduands to be the spiritual ‘avante-garde.’

life for all’, not just a slogan. It is you and your generation who will hand the same baton over to the next generation of leaders.

“Given the current demise in which our world finds itself, it will take courage from you to stand up for what is right; it takes courage to remain who you are in the face of those who continually want to form you in their own image; it takes courage to remain voraciously prophetic and veritably true to your calling; it takes courage to make a difference when others have become indifferent and cynical; it takes courage, boldness and faith to walk with a resolute pioneering spirit.”

Rev Nyobole noted that the graduation was taking place in the year in which SMMS is celebrating its 10th Anniversary and paid tribute to Rev Seth Molefi Mokitimi, who modelled the kind of ‘transforming leadership’ the seminary hopes to emulate.

He recounted the journey that the seminary has travelled and expressed gratitude to God for what it has achieved in this short period of time.

He said, “The journey during the last ten years has not been a walk in the park. The passing decade has been characterised by many challenges, changes and turbulences, but by God’s grace we are able to stand tall, lift up our heads, clap our hands and shout with a voice of triumph with Samuel of the old, declaring: ‘Thus far the Lord has helped us.’”

Part of the group of 120 graduands who received their certificates, diplomas and degrees.



SILENT PROTEST MAKES STATEMENT AGAINST SGBV

The SMMS community joined the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)'s Gender and Religion Programme and Ujamaa Centre, as well as other gender justice organisations and activists, in the International Silent Protest to highlight the silence that exists in society and institutions of higher learning around sexual and gender-based violence, at UKZN's Pietermaritzburg campus, on 7 August.

For the whole day, the protesters had their mouths taped, while holding placards with messages that denounced rape culture, the dehumanising effects of gender-based violence and the stigma around abuse. The protesters also highlighted the hostile and inhuman treatment of victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

The protest created a safe space for survivors to disclose, often for the first time, their harrowing experiences of abuse, often at the hands of their loved ones.

They also engaged in exercises such as meditation, yoga, as well as arts and crafts as a way of venting their frustrations and emotions in a safe way.

After a day of activities at UKZN, the protesters then marched to SMMS for the "Unsilencing ritual" in which they declared:

"Today we were silenced. We chose to be in our bodies, without a voice, in solidarity with the many whose bodies



Protesters make a statement with placards and taped mouths.

are misused and abused daily. Today we were silenced in solidarity with broken and abused bodies. In this sacred space, we stand in the company of Jesus - who hanged on a cross, also in solidarity with abused and broken bodies. We remember that, while his body was being tortured, one of his last spoken "words" was: "I thirst". And that, we too, are thirsty... So, we remove the tape from our mouths and break our fast by taking our first sip of life-giving water..."

Survivors described participating in the silent protest as "an intense and liberating experience."

FAREWELL TATA



Charles Botha helps Rev Nyobole with his cap at the 2019 graduation ceremony.

As my days at the village come to an end, I cannot help sing an unending hymn of praise to my Lord and saviour who has graciously kept us in the palm of his hand since I was assigned to come and serve here.

The loyalty, cooperation and support I received from the Management team, staff and the entire seminary community made my interim tenure an enjoyable and fulfilling one. The Village has become part of my life. There are many things that I will miss about SMMS. Among these are times of fellowship during tea, chapel worship and time to read, write and reflect. What a tremendous opportunity the Lord, my God has afforded me as I run the last miles of my earthly journey.

Thank you Management team for being there for me and for holding my arm, like Aaron and Hur, so that we may prevail over many daunting challenges the Village faced from time to time.

I leave this place fully confident that I am leaving it in good, capable hands of competent, servant leaders who will thrive against all odds. My thoughts and prayers will always be with you.

Vuyani 'Vido' Nyobole (Rev)

NOT YET UHURU: READING PSALM 126 IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LAND DEBATE IN SOUTH AFRICA

By Xolisani Silolo

Christianity is one faith that dares to declare God's divine act of salvation as a means to reconcile God-self with fallen humanity and by extension, liberate the whole of creation from the bondage of sin.

While the concept of liberation may bring about joy and hope for Christians, for South Africans it carries a darker history; one informed by the legacy of the Apartheid era. Even after twenty-five years of the so-called Rainbow Nation, South Africans have mixed emotions about liberation. For some, due to the prevailing socio-political and economic context in the country, liberation is still an illusion and a myth. This might be because while we may be liberated, we are not yet fully liberated.

Biblical scholars give different perspectives on Psalm 126. They are however in agreement that this was a community lament that dates back from the time when the Israelites had returned from the Babylonian captivity. The Psalmist rejoiced in the Israelite return to Judah in about 538 BCE but laments and prays for a holistic restoration. Likewise, the South Africans who returned home from exile on 12 December 1991 felt as if they were dreaming. While the welcome was warm, the prospects were uncertain. Like the returning Israelites, they soon learnt that what they were returning to was political liberation without economic freedom; the wealth of the country was, and is still, in the hands of the minority. The Israelites were, as we are, a people liberated now and not yet fully liberated. This paradox is what has given rise to the call for land expropriation without compensation.

Without tending towards politics of the land, it is worth noticing that regardless of how one would like to romanticise the history of South Africa, the reality is that it is a history of the conquest of African land by Europeans. Motsoko Pheko (1984:1) argues in similar manner that "the root of apartheid is the story of a dispossessed people" and that the story of South Africa is "the story of stolen land, of bloodshed, colonialism and invasion." From the European perspective, when the colonisers arrived in the land that is now called South Africa, the land was empty. This has been used by the colonisers as one of their arguments for taking over the land that did not belong to them in the first place.

When the Dutch settlers led by Jan van Riebeeck arrived in 1652, the Khoisan and the Bantu people were already on the land. In fact, Leonard Thompson (1995:31) tells us that the Dutch used to buy refreshments from the Khoisan before they decided to establish their own refreshment station at the Cape in 1652. Archaeological evidence also corroborates that Black people lived in South Africa as early as 460 CE (Pheko 1984:4). Thus the land was not empty prior to the arrival of the White man. Where then does their claim to that land lie?

With this brief history let me return to the text under consideration. The returning Israelites were home but without the economic means to sustain their livelihoods. Like the



Silolo (far right) argues that the Church should return to rightful owners the land that it acquired through unholy means.

Africans, the Israelites had the land but on that land they "sowed in tears." They were on their land but were still under Persian rule. But I must be quick to point out that the real debate here is not about land, but about wealth. Whoever, has the land controls its mineral resources and until this day this wealth in South Africa is in the hands of the White minority. The Freedom Charter from which our Constitution is derived is clear that the land shall be shared amongst those who work it. But this is not the case; Blacks work the land, Whites enjoy the benefits.

What has drawn my interest in this topic is the very audible silence of the MCSA on this matter. This is a church whose vision is of a healed Africa for the healing of nations, and yet in all our synods there has been no resolution taken with regards to this issue. One would think that a church that has been founded on what we call the preferential option for the poor, would be the first to discuss this very vital issue of our time. When I consider that the Methodist Church is one of those denominations that arrived in South Africa during the colonial period in which both the state and the church were in collusion in the subduing and dispossession of the African masses, I cannot help but wonder if this is not the appropriate time for us to consider how we have earned the land on which our worship takes place? If the Church is quiet about this issue, who will play the role of the Psalmist and lament to God on behalf of the African child who is home and yet not home? Africa cannot be called our home while it is governed by others. The Church must speak out and if needs be return (to the rightful owners) what she herself acquired through unholy means so that it may return to its rightful place of standing with the poor, marginalised and exploited as those who represent a just God in an unjust world.

YOUNG, CHOSEN AND CALLED FOR THIS MINISTRY

By Nonhlanhla B. Mnisi



This makes me ask the question: Did I really choose this for myself? Or, did it choose me? I have lost count of all the attempts I have made to get out of this. I have tried to negotiate an alternative with the God I have come to know. I mean there is so much that I still need to do; so many things that currently need my attention. But no matter what I do or say, I find myself back here again. Again I ask: Did I really choose this? Or, did it choose me?

Before one begins with the candidature process, while still trying to understand this thing called a “calling”, many will try and use the words “Do not say you are too young” (Jeremiah 1:7a) to convince you to take the step towards ministry, but once you are inside, it becomes difficult to be a young person in a so-called “grown folk” arena. It is very exciting when young people join the ministry, and the congregation feels all warm inside when they see us on the pulpit on Sundays.

But the minute we become young people in ministry it is frowned upon. Once you are inside you need to act, speak and walk in a certain manner - one which is usually suitable for people who are well advanced in age. On a daily basis, you find yourself being torn between conforming to the given expectations and rebelling and therefore suffer criticism.

Is the church really ready for young people to be part of them? Is there really space for young people in the ministry, or does it only exist if we agree to behave like the grown folk who dominate the space? Fact is, God is calling young people - in their youth - into ministry. Expecting us to behave like middle-aged and senior ministers is simply an injustice to us. We are young and we bring our youth with us when we join the ministry. We cannot and we will not live up to those expectations. So expect us to shake your worldview to the core, expect us to be wild and playful, expect us to make mistakes, expect us to be normal, expect us to be human, expect us to be young. After all, that is all we can be. And that is what makes us the perfect vessel.

MARIE APPOINTED SMMS PRESIDENT

(Continued from Page 1)

Prof Gerald West of UKZN described the appointment as “ample testimony to the high regard in which Dr Marie is held, both within the seminary and outside,” adding that her “dedication and integrity have been light in difficult times.” His colleague, Prof Hebert Moyo described the appointment as “a well-deserved elevation.”

Pastor Renier Pelsler General Secretary of the Full Gospel Church of God said what makes the appointment so much more special is that Dr Marie is the first woman to hold the position. He said, “You [Dr Marie] do it with distinction and dignity. Your track record has come to prove your outstanding qualities.”

While noting that it will be a challenging responsibility, the Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa (ESSA) Board Chairperson, Pat Bruce said she prayed for Dr Marie that she

“be filled with the knowledge of God’s will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” Rev Frido Kinkolenge of the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) of the United Methodist Church (USA), described Dr Marie as the “pride” of GBGM’s new vision-oriented African continent.

From the United Theological College in Zimbabwe, Rev Dr Martin Mujinga said the MCSA “has turned the tables of patriarchy upside down.” Rev Teboho Klaas of the *Other Foundation* described the appointment of Dr Marie as “a timely elevation, very progressive for these our times and of ministerial and theological training” and added that he would continue to “soak you in my prayers as you lead this important institution, not only to the Methodist Church but also to the ecumenical body of denominations in South Africa and beyond.”

REFLECTIONS ON THE TSSA CONFERENCE 19-21 JUNE 2019

By Aletta Meyer

Six of the inaugural SMMS Bachelor of Theology (Honours) degree in Christian Leadership students attended the annual Theological Society of Southern Africa (TSSA) Conference in Pretoria during the mid-year break. The Conference theme was *The last shall be first: Theological and ethical reflections on (Christian) leadership*.

The three days comprised of a series of academic papers presented by both South African and international theologians. There were five plenary papers and thirteen parallel papers presented by well-known African theologians, among them Martin Mujinga (UCT), Wessel Bentley (UNISA), Louise Kretzschmar (UNISA), Ettienne de Villiers (UP), Jennifer Slater (UNISA), Gift Baloyi (UNISA) and Dion Forster (SU). The papers explored the various aspects of the complex field of leadership, especially Christian leadership. The diversity of papers presented ranged from servant leadership to toxicity of leadership.

Through their research we were invited to wrestle deeply with this multifaceted subject. The gap between the different fields can so easily be lost to both the church and the discipline of theology itself and these theologians routinely saw themselves as interpreters and explorers of contemporary issues that all leaders face. Methodists believe that everybody should be encouraged to lead, but this conference reminded us to pay more attention to scripture and the life of the church in our leadership.

The time spent was provocative and the results were enriching. Much of the conference shaped our minds and understanding and gave us new insights from these experts, who sought to explore alternative ways to the concept of Christian leadership and reminded us that the study of



SMMS students pose for a photo during the TSSA Conference.

leadership should serve the theological needs of the church and its ministers with relevance to contemporary situations. These scholars guided us down new avenues of the very issues that are often of primary concern to the church.

Throughout the conference we were aware that we were in the hands of great theologians who are experts in their respective fields, yet they never made us feel like our input was irrelevant and encouraged our participation. Because it was ecumenical, their approach to the larger Christian tradition was seeking to reclaim its riches and at the same time to acknowledge its shortcomings. I share their conviction that the work we do should be more contemporary, more faithful, and more radical, to the extent that it is more biblical, honestly wrestling with the demands of being Christian leaders.

MARIE INDUCTED

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In his message, the Presiding Bishop described Dr Marie's appointment as a "special moment in the life of the church."

He said, "Dr Marie was here before the seminary was here. We are grateful that you allowed the church and the seminary to use you in this way. Be assured of the prayers of the Methodist people as we accompany you on this journey of forming transforming leaders in such times as this."

In congratulating Dr Marie, MCSA General Secretary, Rev Morgan said Dr Marie has shown herself to be dedicated, steadfast and a prime leader.

She said, "We congratulate you on your appointment as President. We place a huge trust in you. In effect, the future of the church is in your hands together with your colleagues - and thanks be to God, you are in God's hands!"

Meanwhile, Rev Nyobole was acknowledged for agreeing to come out of retirement and be at SMMS when he was needed the most.

The Presiding Bishop thanked Rev Nyobole for standing in at a time "when the church and the seminary needed you the most."

SMMS Board Chairperson, Dr Mnganga said Rev Nyobole brought harmony and stability in the seminary community.

"Your leadership was exemplary. Your leadership style focused on team-work. You are both a visionary and a pragmatist. Thank you for sacrificing your quality time with your family to spend these two critical years with us," she said.

In response, Rev Nyobole acknowledged the support he got from the leadership of the church during his time at SMMS. He also acknowledged the support he received from staff and the Board.

"It has been my joy to serve. I am happy that Dr Marie has been given the mantle to lead. She is a formidable leader who will be able to take SMMS to another level. I have no doubt that she is the right person for SMMS at this time," he said.

CENTRAL SYNOD WOMEN'S MANYANO SHOW MOTHERLY LOVE

By Rev Dr Wesley Magruder

What's the easiest way to put smiles on seminarians' faces? Feed them, of course!

That is exactly what the Central Synod Women's Manyano did for the SMMS students on the weekend of 17-18 August. Sixty members traveled by bus to the Pietermaritzburg on a mission to provide encouragement, support, and sustenance to the student body.

The women brought R17, 000 (US\$1,118) worth of food stuffs for the student lunch program, and presented a cheque of R20, 000 (US\$1,315) to the seminary to be used to purchase more food.

SMMS provides a free hot lunch to every seminarian every day of the week, meaning the seminary serves 625 meals per week, at a cost of R18, 750 (US\$1,233).

But the value of the women's visit was not merely counted in financial terms.

"We (students) felt encouraged that people who do not know us came all the way from Johannesburg to show us love and support," said Monde Mchunu, Chairperson of the Seminarian Executive Committee (SEC). "In the African context, it is the mothers who make food for their children, and so they came here to feed us and show us that motherly love."

Mchunu and the SEC were also responsible for organising the welcome that the women received upon their arrival at the seminary on Saturday afternoon. Their first order of business was a worship celebration in the chapel, in which seminarians and visitors were each encouraged to share and give testimony.

The next morning, the women joined the seminarians in another worship service. This time, they made a special



Representatives of the mothers sing and dance as they handover the food items to seminarians.

presentation of R500 (US\$32.87) for airtime to the 17 seminarians who come from the Central Synod. Later in the service, the members of the Manyano knelt at the communion rail as the seminarians came forward and prayed for each of them.

It was a special morning for seminarian Gillian Fox, who comes from the Central Synod. "It is the first time they have come since I have been here," she said. "Every region of the church has a different flavor of worship. I found worshipping with them was hugely comforting. To hear that sound again was so good!"

STOREY 'BEGGED TO DIFFER'

(Continued from Page 4)

"For the Church, I would like to say that you cannot, but beg to differ when evil abounds. It is your Gospel imperative and the only way to remain the Church of Christ. As the Church of Christ you can only be a protest candle light in the midst of darkness, the darkness of midnight. You can only be the salt of the earth to

prevent the decay that is happening.

"The Church of Christ has not become what the Lord died for, and what the Lord expected it to be. The Church has become more of a reflection of the brokenness of society which the Lord died for. The Church has become the macrocosm of all these realities. As Peter was the Apostle to the Jews and Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles, we need an Apostle to the Church of Christ to help it rediscover this mystery that was revealed to Paul," Rev Chikane concluded.

In response to the Lecture, Prof Storey praised Rev Chikane and clergymen like Beyers Naudé who, he said, paid the highest price because they came from churches that rejected them.

He warned that religious people can do so much harm to God. "The only way politicians can be transformed is by a church that is not captured. The most important gift we, as church, can offer the world is to be different from it," he said.

Prof Storey urges the Church to be different from the world.

REMEMBERING NIKIWE MBILINI

By Ntobeko Dlamini

Introduction

The popular 18th century Methodist movement in England, spread and reached South Africa in 1816. After 156 years of mission driven by men, with women as passengers, the MCSA resolved to ordain women to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. The first woman, Constance Oosthuizen was ordained in 1976. In 2016, the MCSA celebrated 40 years of women ordination. Articles were written and published. Celebration events were held. Women were celebrated. However, no one took a moment to reflect on the ministry of Rev Nikiwe Mavis Mbilini, the first black woman who was ordained by the MCSA in 1985.

Call to ministry

In 1972 while completing her practical teacher's diploma at Clarkebury Institution, she felt that God was calling her to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. She was told that women could not be ordained as presbyters. Again, it was said that in the MCSA a woman who experiences a call to ministry had no other option but to become a Deaconess. So, she offered herself for ministry as a Deaconess and became the first black Deaconess in the MCSA.

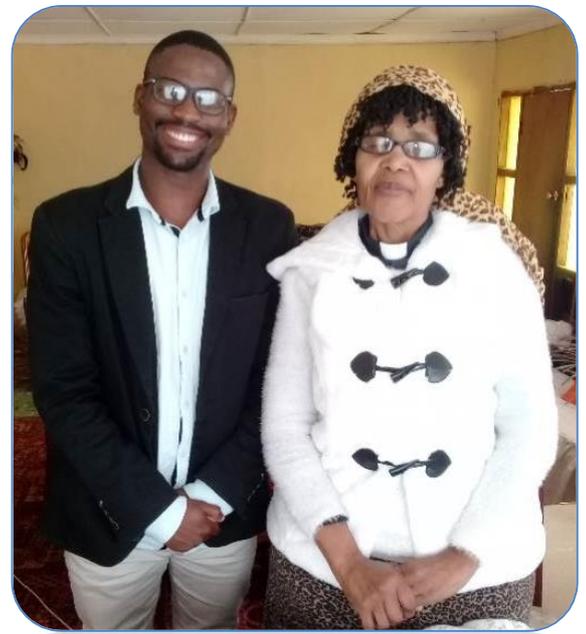
When the church opened the door for women, she candidated and was accepted by Conference in 1979 to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. When Mbilini joined ministry, she became unpopular among her colleagues. She recalls: "In 1979, when the church accepted me into ministry the response from the clergy was absolutely appalling, and enormous conflict arose." She was sent to the Federal Theological Seminary (FEDSEM) in Pietermaritzburg for training. She recalls that her colleagues were confused by what a woman was doing at a seminary.

Challenges at Harding

Mbilini was stationed at Harding, a small town in the KwaZulu-Natal south coast. Harding was a small station no one wanted to go to. Mbilini argues that she was sent there so that she would be frustrated and resign. It was a difficult time for her because the people of Harding had never seen a female minister before. People were divided. Many were against her, saying a woman could not preach "on top of their heads" as men. Opposition did not only come from her colleagues and the congregation, but also ecumenically. She was never accepted in the Harding ministers fraternal.

When she arrived at Harding, there was no manse. She was accommodated by the Ndlovu family in the deep rural village of Ikhwezi where she lived in a rondavel for three years while she made means to build the manse.

Mbilini arrived at Harding at a difficult time when the Methodist Church of Transkei (MCT) had just broken away from the MCSA. Most MCSA ministers and congregants in the Eastern Cape and around Harding left the MCSA for the MCT but Mbilini stood firm and never left the MCSA.



Dlamini poses for a photo with inkosazane yamaWeseli.

Asked about the convictions which kept her in ministry while there were so many challenges, she referred to the early church: "Those Christians were persecuted, exiled and killed, but they stood firm in their faith. If they had abandoned their Christian faith because of persecutions, we would not have a Christian Church today. As a pioneer, I knew that someone had to suffer for the coming generations to be free. If God had chosen me, so be it."

Mbilini the agent of peace

Mbilini was sent to Harding at a bad time when there were factional fights among the different tribal groups in the area. She recalls one incident: "People from Xhamini had a war with people from Nhlokoyenkomo. Some of our congregants were affected. I remember that they came in one of our congregants' house while they were sitting around the fire, took the father, grilled him on the fire and ate him in front of the children. They also shot and killed a child who was crying. It was horrific and traumatising because I always heard and read of such stories in the newspapers. As a minister I had to go and comfort and give hope to people in that situation. It was very risky since there was a war and very few people came to the funeral because they were scared, but I went there." She was able to stop the war between the two peoples through her sermons at the funerals. To this day, the people of Harding still speak fondly of her.

Education and development

While in Harding, she noticed the need for educating young children. She raised funds and established the first pre-school at Ikhwezi village. The pre-school began at one of the stewards' homes. As the number of children increased, three teachers were employed. Children were fed. She was able to raise funds for the salaries of the teachers and feeding the children who attended the pre-school. The pre-school was free and open to all children in the community.

Inkosazana

Many names were given to Rev Mbilini, but the greatest was *inkosazane yamaWeseli* (the Methodist princess). Let us remember the sacrifices of *inkosazana yamaWeseli* and honour her contribution to the ministry of the MCSA. Today, Rev Mbilini is retired and lives at her home in Cofimvaba.

SMMS IS YOUR SEMINARY! IT NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

By supporting SMMS you are playing your part in the formation of transforming leaders for both the church and nation.

Transforming leadership is vital if southern Africa is to achieve its potential and become a region that is fully healed, reconciled, able to address critical challenges, respect the dignity and basic human rights of all its people and deliver the essential and humanising services that characterise societies at their best.

If you share this vision, then you are the person we are looking for!

We are on a 'Friends of SMMS' Campaign to establish a movement of people who are passionate about ministerial training and formation and who would like to commit to helping us achieve our mission statement - forming transforming leaders for church and nation.

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HALALA MBOKODO HALALA!

(Continued from Page 3)

As a nego-feminist, I celebrate the men who have continued to push on during the struggles of the past, but especially the men who have come to realise that having women lead alongside them is not only biblical and spiritual, but was also a long time in coming. Socialisation has imposed and influenced generations for far too long into believing and accepting that a man should stand alone and be at the centre of ministry and mission. As a female minister in training, I look forward to labouring together with my fellow sisters and brothers in a one and undivided church, where it is acceptable and normal for each to lead from their own strengths and complement the other's gifts and strengths.

To be able to walk through this door only became possible because many people offered their time, energy and even their lives to open it. I wonder what the impact on God's people and the Kingdom would have been if women had been allowed into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament right from the beginning. I wonder...

WHEN YOU STRIKE A
WOMAN

**YOU HARM
HER**

*Women are not rocks.
I wish we stopped preaching
invincibility and get real
about our humanity*