United as Christian Witnesses

On 31 October 1517 – 500 years ago – the Reformer Martin Luther pinned his 95 theses on a church door in Wittenberg, Germany, and insisted that the church of that day should reform.

Exactly 500 years later, on Tuesday 31 October 2017, the churches who train their students at the University of Pretoria, came together in the Musaion on the Tukkie Campus. During a beautiful ceremony they expressed their unity, and together signed a document “A United Christian Witness in Southern Africa: Let Us Be One”.

URCSA was one of the churches who attended and signed the declaration. We were represented by the Moderator, Prof Leepo Modise. He was the one who signed on our behalf. Also present from our church was the Actuarius, Rev DP Carelse, and Prof C Landman.

This document makes profound statements. One of the things the churches promise is “to speak out on intolerance, hate speech, injustice and the abuse of religion”. They also agree to work in unity “to demonstrate the love of Christ by reaching out to those who are living without hope.”

This was indeed a day on which history was made anew. The church divided 500 years ago, and for good reasons the Reformed churches came into being. However, now is the time to unite, and restore the body of Christ.

This was the message on 31 October 2017.

New publication on Belhar

Both the previous and the present Moderators of URCSA are Professors in Theology. They have now put their skills together and edited a new book on the Belhar Confession.

In the next issue of URCSA NEWS we shall publish a review of the book, as well as information on where you can buy the book. In the meantime our hearty congratulations go to Prof Leepo Modise and Prof Mary-Ann Plaatjies van Huffel, as well as to all the authors who made a contribution to the book.

URCSA is proud of you.

Best wishes for 2018

Reggie Nel: A new Dean with new dreams by Christina Landman

I would not really call Prof Reggie Nel a dreamer. No, he is a visionary with an action plan, a plan based in reality and on this earth. However, he makes other people dream! He makes people dream of the new and exciting things that are coming to Stellenbosch. Here Prof Reggie has been appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Theology from 1 November 2017.

On 24 October this year, a few days before his departure to Stellenbosch, Prof Reggie made time in his heavy schedule to sit down for an interview with me. I have been working at Unisa with Prof Reggie for the past 12 years, and in the URCSA for the same time. I always thought Prof Reggie has a keen mind for the church order. He has good management skills. He works well with people on grassroots level, and even with academics! I work with him in a youth programme, where we talk with young people on how they see the role of the church in helping them to move from the margins to the centre of community life. During this interview I would find out why Prof Reggie is so good with young people, something that equips him excellently for his job as Dean where he has to manage the training and aspirations of young theology students.

Prof Reggie was born in 1966 in Piketberg, near Malmesbury in the Swartland. His father was a minister in the (then) Dutch Reformed Mission Church, Rev DA Nel.

After finishing his matric at Luckhoff Secondary School, he first studied a BA in Physical Sciences, or as we call it in Afrikaans Liggaamsoefeninge. He was an excellent sportman. Cricket was his game. However, he soon decided to answer to the call of becoming a dominee.

Prof Reggie was the first – and for a long time the only – brown student who studied at the Faculty of Theology at Stellenbosch. In 1992 he became the first student to finish his theological training here who was not “white”. My goodness, that was 25 years ago.

Looking back to this time, Prof Reggie can honestly say that he was not impressed with the contents of the courses. It was very “Dutch Reformed”. Actually, it was very European and not grounded in the context of Africa at all. Although this was 25 years ago, he thinks that changes are still to be made to focus on Africanity in Africa.

In 1993 he became the minister in the Rynse Kerk in Stellenbosch, which was considered part of the DRMC. He ministered here for five years, before becoming the coordinator of the Joshua Student Movement in 1998. Now you see where he gets his skills to work with the youth!

After two years he joined Technicon SA as a lecturer and became a tentmaker minister in Riverlea in Johannesburg. In 2005 he enrolled for his doctorate with Prof Klippies Kritzinger at Unisa. He finished his DTh in 2013 with the title “An African Missio-Ecclesiology with uniting youth movements”. Prof Reggie confirms that this was an academic highpoint in his life, working with the contextual theology he was always looking for.

Why did he apply for the deanship at US? It is because he takes the partnership between the US and URCSA seriously, says Prof Reggie.

And why does he think he has been appointed there? He thinks it is precisely because of his emphasis on Africanisation in his presentation.

And how is he going to assist in the Africanisation of the Theology Faculty of US? The curriculum should reflect that we are in Africa, he says, and we should integrate the work of colleagues from the rest of Africa in our training.

Prof Reggie imagines a future where everybody would build relations while on their way to the unknown. And, of course, Prof Reggie says, white people have a place in and obligation to help build this imagined future. His passion, says Prof Reggie, is to manage diversity and to reconcile cultures.

It seems that the future of Stellenbosch lies in realising the values of the Confession of Belhar – unity, reconciliation, justification – in order to overcome the bitterness of apartheid.

We wish you God’s peace and wisdom, Prof Reggie.

The year 2017 has been full of events and surprises. What will always be remembered of 2017, are the Reformation 500 celebrations. During this year we celebrate the reforms in the church that took place after Martin Luther “published” his 95 theses of what was wrong with the church in 1517.

However, we did not only celebrate 500 years of reformation. We also came together as different churches and started the unification of the church. Over 500 years the church scattered into many churches. This year we started a process of reaching out to one another so that, hopefully in less than 50 years from now, we will no longer look at one another as enemies and strangers.

I dedicate the Editor’s page for this edition to Prof. Reggie Nel. Born a “Swartlander” and spending the past 20 years north of the country, he has now returned to Stellenbosch to become the Dean of the Faculty of Theology.

The Editorial Team of the URCSA NEWS wishes its members a blessed new year. May our good Lord bless and keep you. May God touch your hearts and live in your minds. May you grow spiritually, and may the world be a better place because of you.

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Nuw publikasie vol herinneringe bekendgestel

‘n Baie spesiale bundel verhale van predikante vanuit die VKG en die destydse NG Sendingkerk is onlangs deur Christelike Lektuurfonds uitgegee.

Die bundel het nie net die ervaringe van dié predikante gedurende hulle bedieningstyd in die apartheidse jare. Soms is dit komies, maar soms is dit gewoon net skokkend en hartseer.

Die die bundel opgeneem is, en ds Jurie en van die ander skrywers het CLF versker dit is nie die laaste vertel van die hierdie losbare verhale nie.

Prof Koopman skryf op die buiteblad: “Dit is nie verhale wat ons vasgектet hou aan dié verlede nie. Dit is verhale wat ons wil leer uit die verlede sodat ons ‘n beter toekoms kan kwaat.”

Die boek is de hand van CLF beskikbaar op R80, postgeld uitgesluit. Stuur ‘n e-pos aan order@clf.co.za of skakel op 021 873 6964.

RE-ADVERTISEMENT
OFFICE OF THE URCSA GENERAL SYNOD
GENERAL SECRETARY POST

The Office of the General Secretary: General Synod of URCSA is vacant. Such appointment is a performance-based contract for a period of five (5) years. The General Secretary is responsible to manage and lead the General synod strategically to realize the vision and mission of URCSA.

The Office of the URCSA GENERAL SYNOD is an equal opportunity, representative employer. It is the intention to promote representivity (race, gender and disability) in the Church through the filling of positions. Candidates whose appointment will promote representivity will therefore receive preference. Persons with disability are especially encouraged to apply. An indication of representivity profile by applicants will expedite the processing of applications.

APPLICATION: Forward your application, stating the relevant reference number to:

URCSA GENERAL SYNOD OFFICE, MAMELODI,
PO BOX 582, 1400, SOUTH AFRICA

Closing Date: 1 October 2017

NB: This is a RE-ADVERTISEMENT and applicants who applied with the first advertisement, must apply again.

GENERAL:
Applications must be accompanied by a recently updated comprehensive CV and certified copies of qualifications, Driver’s License and Identity Document, service certificates of previous employers stating occupation, proof relevant experience in the field of the post. The copies must be correctly certified on the copy itself, not at the back. The certification must not be older than 3 months. Qualifications and driver’s license submitted will be subjected to verification checking with relevant institutions. Should you be in possession of a foreign qualification(s), it must be accompanied by an evaluation certificate from the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). Please take note that faxed, e-mailed and late applications will not be accepted. Applications must be mailed timeously. Late applications will not be accepted or considered. Correspondence will be limited to shortlisted candidates only. If you have not been contacted within 3 months of the closing date of this advertisement, please accept that your application was unsuccessful.

The UNiting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) General Synod is under no obligation to fill a post after the advertisement thereof and reserves the right to re-advertise after a shortlist is compiled.

POST: GENERAL SECRETARY: REF NO: GS 02/09/2017
SALARY: See URCSA General Synod Scales and benefits (Contact Moderator for details)

CENTRE: URCSAGENERAL SYNOD OFFICE, MAMELODI,
PRETORIA

REQUIREMENTS:
A relevant qualification or equivalent experience in the field of management is required.

• The candidate should be a member of URCSA

• Ability to develop a strategic vision and mission for the office.

• Leadership and management competencies as demonstrated through administrative competence, good interpersonal and communication skills and problem solving, judgment and decision making abilities.

• Knowledge of the integrated ministry model and the current operation of URCSA in relation to its Church order and regulations in all levels.

• Knowledge and understanding of eccumenical relation and partnership.

• Ability to provide innovative leadership in initiating, developing and reviewing financial and administrative strategies.

• Ability to lead and manage a diverse group of ministers, staff members, ministers and members in general.

• Provide guidance, intellectual stimulus and professional leadership to heads of departments within the office.

• Demonstrates competencies and skills in change management and transformation in URCSA.

• Proven experience in liaising with external stakeholders at national levels and beyond.

KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS:

• Participate in constructing a new ethical and servant leadership in URCSA in general

• Develop creative and innovative approaches to transform URCSA’s core business

• Establish URCSA as a leader in corporate, ecclesiastical governance and the promotion of sustainability

• Foster a service-centered and high performance culture through effective talent management

• Oversee effective implementation of URCSA operational plans

• Enhance service excellence, quality and efficiencies through effective use of technology, processes and systems in line with URCSA’s Church order and regulations

• Practice professional citizenship

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

• To be present in the congregations and assemblies of the church as a spokesperson for the church’s mission, a pastor and a listener to the needs and opportunities that are before the church in its various contexts of ministry

• To provide vision, counsel, and support to assist the work of the General Synod and the General Synodical Commission, including reports with recommended actions

• To enable ministries and governing bodies to be guided by clear priorities, goals, and objectives that can direct the allocation of resources in the implementation of the church’s mission

• Financial Administration, properties and other related matters as well as supervision over office personnel

• Work with staff and the Finance Manager to prepare a comprehensive budget

• Keep record of income and expenditure. All moneys received, shall be banked at a registered bank that approved by the ministry for Finance and Administration

• She/he shall be an additional member of the Ministry for Service and Witness

• She/he shall be the scribe and additional member for the Ministry for Finance and Administration, Executive as well as the Synodical Commission

• He / She shall be responsible for the safekeeping of all monies, documents, books, correspondence and other properties connected to the office

• Handling archival material of the Synod together with the scribe and become the ex – officer of the Ministry for Publication and Archives

• In assistance to the scribe, handle the general administrative responsibilities of the Synod like Publications, Printing, sending minutes, Notices etc as it may be instructed by the Synod, General Synodical Commission, the Ministry for Administration and Finance as well as the executive commission of the latter

• Oversee, the payments of all expenditures after having satisfied him/herself of the legitimacy thereof

• Oversee the implementation of the human resources policies, procedures and practices including the development of job description for all staff

• Oversee the efficient and effective day to day operation of the organization.

• Implement a performance management process for all staff which includes monitoring the performance of staff on an ongoing basis and conducting an annual performance review

• (Oversee, ensure that) the payments of affiliation fees to the Ecumenical bodies

• Compiling statistics and information for the Year book and report accordingly

• He/ She shall prepare a budget for the office present to the Synod and or General Synodical Commission for approval

• Liaise and correspond with the Ecumenical Partners

• Handle any other matter as may be instructed by the Synod, Synodical Commission as well as matters tabled in this Regulation

• The General Secretary presents a report of his/her responsibilities to the Synod or the General Synodical Commission.

ENQUIRIES: Rev Prof LJ Modise
TEL: +2782 949 4164
Email: moderator.gs@urcsa.org.za

On 5 November 2017 the DRC Pretoria and the URCSA Melodi ya Tshwane publicly expressed their intention to establish a single united congregation. An elaborate statement of intent outlining the two congregation’s commitment to concretize the unity process was signed during a joint communion service commemorating 500 years of the Reformation under the theme: Standing where God stands.

The stories of these two congregations have been weaved together for many years, but in 2016 as ministers of the two churches we started having regular meetings about specific ministries in which we committed ourselves to join hands and work together for unity, justice and reconciliation in the city. After some time of working on this concept, we found ourselves confronted with the question: why not take the decisive step and unite once and for all? Sitting around the table, we realised that we all agree that this is indeed what we believe should happen.

Being convinced that this is what we were called to do, we suddenly realised that we had no idea what this would mean broadly speaking. How do we unite a congregation of the Uniting Reformed Church and the Dutch Reformed Church? What decisions do we need to take? What do we need to think about? So many things came to our minds like the relationship between ministers, the processes, buildings, personnel, liturgy, language, pension funds and finances. These were some of the tough but genuine issues that we needed to tackle head-on.

The Interim Church Order came at the right time, and provided a very helpful framework within which we found our way. However, congregations are also unique and there is a lot that the Interim Church Order did not stipulate, answers had to emerge from our contexts. While we agreed on the clear process, we also realised that this is a step of faith in which we cannot wait until we have answers on every bit of detail. Truly, we needed to proceed in obedience to our calling and the scriptures.

Concerning the way forward, we decided that at our next church councils’ meetings, there should be observers from the other church council in attendance. We told ourselves that God willing, by 31 October 2020 there will be a single unified church council. Furthermore we will also form two committees. One will work out details around property, finances, personnel and other support ministries, the other will start to work on our joint ministries.

We are aware that for many years the process of church unity has been paralyzed and we felt that if we don’t take the initiative, no one will do it on our behalf. For this reason we invited leadership from our general synods to come and witness this wonderful occasion which they themselves encouraged in one of their recent pastoral letters. Our hope is that others can see that it is possible to take the next step. But in this time of deep divisions and bitter rivalry in our country, this journey is also our commitment to respond faithfully to Jesus’ prayer for unity. Just like Paul, we are unshaken in our conviction that we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength (Phil. 4:13).
URCSA consults with European churches at Leipzig

When our Moderamen went to Leipzig in June 2017 to attend the WCRC meeting, they also met with two German churches and the Belgian Church which are partners of URCSA. URCSA has worked with these churches for many years, and at this meeting they planned to do even more exciting things together in the future.

Of the two German churches, the ERK was represented by Thomas Fender, and the Church of Lippe by Dietmar Arends and Stefanie Rieke-Kochsiek. Marc Loos, an old and trusted friend of URCSA, attended on behalf of the United Protestant Church in Belgium. The URCSA moderamen members present with Prof Modise, Rev Betha, Rev Julius, and Rev Carelse. The Dutch Church (PKN - Protestant Church of the Netherlands) who is also a strong partner of URCSA, was excused.

The churches confirmed their intention for intense exchange and cooperation. A few of the plans put on the table and accepted are:

1. A booklet will be compiled of twenty years of partnership. Congregations will also be asked to contribute to this.
2. A date and place during 2019 will be determined where these 20 years of partnership will be celebrated and evaluated. People of all the partnership churches will be invited, especially those who host projects sponsored by these churches.
3. The partnership churches will invite each other to their synods. The Synod of the Church of Lippe will probably be in November 2018, and can be combined with a visit to the Belgian Synod which will be from 17 to 18 November 2018.
4. A conference on the Belhar Center is to be combined with a visit to the URCSA General Synod of 2020.
5. The churches will engage in exchange programmes, pastoral and otherwise. The Church of Lippe emphasized its intention to become a partner in the CAP Camp programme.
6. The meeting also agreed that at times of celebrations, partnership churches will invite each other to attend.

500 years Reformation Service in Witsieshoek Presbytery

On the last Sunday of October 2017 (29/10/2017), URCSA Witsieshoek Presbytery and NG Kerk in Afrika Bethlehem Presbytery held joint reformation service and celebration at Lefika in Qwaqwa. This service was a milestone and history in the making towards unification of our church.

The question of unity is not only about words but action. And, this reality was graciously observed during this service in Witsieshoek. The scripture reading was from the book of Genesis 45: 1-8.

The preacher of the day was Reverend TT Hlalele from URCSA Phuthaditjhaba. Rev. F Lebakeng from NG Kerk in Makoane gave historical background on reformation in 1517 as propagated by Martin Luther. He emphasized the following:

Sola-Scriptura
Sola-Gratia
Sola-Fidei
Solus-Christus
Soli-Deo Gloria

The service closed at a very high note and we all committed to celebrate this day annually (Marching forward).

Compiled by Rev Dingane Mosili and Student Theologian KG Makona.

Announcement: CWL CWL Congress will be held as follows:

23-25 February 2018 / Venue: Aviator Hotel / Kempton Park
The Christian Men Ministry (CMM) of the Northern Synod held its 2017 Prayer Weekend from 8 to 10 September 2017 in Nelson Mandela Hall in Hammanskraal north of Pretoria. The theme of the Prayer Weekend was based on 1 Samuel 3:9-10:

“Speak, Lord, I am listening.”

**Day one**
The official programme started around 19:00 after many members arrived and it ended around 23:00. Northern Synod Deputy President Mr. SS Ngubeni performed the opening and welcoming words while the President PMK Tladi acknowledged all the Reverends present on the day.


The evening was also graced by bo mma Moruti and Northern Theological Seminar (NTS) students. Other ministers arrived during the following days.

**Day Two**
The second day of the Prayer Weekend had three parts. The first part was led by Mr. Mofokeng, the second part by Mr. Mathabathe and the last part by Mr. Foko of Bojanala.

The highlights of the day included the Outreach project, chain prayers led by URCSA Ministers and the robing of new members. Several other Ministers joined on this day including Dr. SD Maluleke, Rev. Essau, Rev. Molawa and others.

The day started well with the sermon delivered by Rev. Monyatsi Tshediso from Witbank Congregation with the theme: “Speak, Lord, for your Servant is listening”.

There was a revival and CMM did what it is known for i.e. worshiping through songs and dance. The mood was electrifying.

Ntate Mathibe JS of Bojanala (Dep. Chair) gave an announcement on the outreach project. He indicated that the house CMM is building in Motla is at roof level but should be completed before the end of the year.

CMM then visited the family. It was a hot day but the heat did not stop CMM from singing and dancing.

Members then returned for lunch and afterwards had chain prayers led by reverends and other Ministries.

**Day Three**
Activities on the last day of the Prayer Weekend were mainly a sermon and Holy Communion. The difference of the sermon on this day compared to previous days was that it was attended not only by CMM, but also in attendance were different congregations within the Hammanskraal Presbytery. Reverend KA Kwape shared the sermon of the day still under the weekend theme.

The host Minister in Hammanskraal being Reverend EMK Maphike delivered the Holy Communion. After the Sunday collection, the president of NS and GS CMM gave a vote of thanks to all the people who made the Prayer Weekend such a success. Around midday, the conference was over and people departed the venue.

The Northern Synod CMM Prayer Weekend 2017 under the Theme “Speak, Lord, I am listening” was a huge success. This is a sign that CMM is alive and healthy.

Amen
The 2017 CWM General Synod Congress

Over 439 delegates and 150 observers from the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) and the Christian Women Ministries (CWM) gathered at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg on July 13 to 16, to attend one of the most elevating 2017 General Synod CWM congresses. The congress theme was:

... by the grace, we shall witness to the nation (Acts 1:8).

The official opening ceremony was preceded by a procession led by the URCSA Alra Park Brigade with colorful congregation and presbytery banners displayed. The presence of the URCSA General Synod Moderator, Prof. Reverend Leepo Modise, who opened the congress and shared information on the 500 years of celebrating the Reformation during the Gala evening, was highly appreciated by all. Likewise, the Congress was blessed with the presence of General Synod Actuarius (Rev. Peter Carelse) and the General Synod Chairperson of the Core Ministries of the Congregational Ministry (CMCM – Rev. Jacky Molawa).

In delivering her congress opening address, President Mathlodi Teu reflected on the road travelled from the Port Elizabeth CWM General Synod Congress to the Boksburg one. She also emphasized that the congress is pivotal in ensuring spiritual growth, engaged in a learning process and learning from one another. In line with this, she urged all CWM sisters to move out of their comfort zones and act on the CWM motto within the broader context of the changing times – Women in the Service of Christ and His Church. In line with our Congress theme, she stressed that as we will be witnessing to the nation,

It is essential that we reach out to everyone and most importantly attract them to the CWM Ministry and the church as a whole. She also challenged CWM members to act on the social issues experienced by the nation in terms of women and child abuse, gender injustices, drug and substance abuse, economical injustices and others. She finally urged all women to go back home and confront these issues and give them the attention they deserve, in that way we begin to have a purposeful mission as CWM.

One of the key social issues the congress focused on was homosexuality in church. The URCSA family needs to appreciate the fact that the General Synod has commenced the dialogue and went further to invite the regional synods, presbyteries and congregations to do the same. Hence our URCSA General Synod Actuarius, Rev. Peter Carelse, made an informative homosexuality presentation to the CWM members gathered at the congress. He provided members with historical background, which dates back as far as 2005, including the decisions (decision 93 and 94 of 2008) that were taken at the time. The dialogue will continue as per the General Synod resolution.

The congress delegates made a noteworthy mark when they distributed over 1 000 sanitary towels to young school girls. Our appreciation goes to all the CWM members who went all out to ensure that this project was a success, and most important, the 1 000 set target was exceeded. At the end of it all, it was heartening to witness the handing over of the donated sanitary towels by the CWM GS President, including the donated books.

At the end of it all, the new General Synod CWM Leadership was elected as follows: President: Dr. Mathlodi Teu (Northern region); Deputy President: Vuyokazi Vinqi (Cape region); Secretary: Denise du Plessis (Namibia region); Deputy Secretary: Dina Lekoala (Free State and Lesotho Region); Treasurer: Puseletso Lekota (Southern Region); Additional Members: Ann Isaks (Phororo Region) and Phindi Ngema (KwaZulu Natal region).

The congress closed with a sermon led by Rev. Reggie Nel, serving of the Holy Communion led by Rev. Yvonne Maruma and vote of thanks by the incoming President Teu. Appreciation goes to the outgoing CWM General Synod Executive Committee for successfully organizing such a huge congress, and the Southern Region for hosting all of us so well.

The congress closed with a sermon led by Rev. Reggie Nel, serving of the Holy Communion led by Rev. Yvonne Maruma and vote of thanks by the incoming President Teu. Appreciation goes to the outgoing CWM General Synod Executive Committee for successfully organizing such a huge congress, and the Southern Region for hosting all of us so well.
Licencing of theology students from Stellenbosch University

PLAQUES UNVEILED:
The Mahlakung URCSA Congregation unveiled three plaques at their local congregation. It was also a welcoming ceremony for MmaMoruti Katime into the congregation of Mahlakung.

The ceremony started with an early morning march from the Beacon High School where the congregation began to pray after being relocated from the Lefika Congregation to the new Mahlakung Building in Kudumane Village. This occasion was blessed by the presence of the former Moderator of the General Synod, Professor ST Kgatla and the former Actuarius of the Free State and Lesotho Regional Synod, Reverend Langa Fokase.

The occasion was well attended by members of the local congregations as well as members from congregations as far as Polokwane and Bloemfontein. The preacher of the day was Reverend Langa Fokase from URCSA Bloemfontein West. Reverend Mohoje from Kroonstad Constantia URCSA acted as chair. Compiled by Rev. Dingane Mosili and Student Minister Makona KG.

Youth reaches out to Alet Pretorius

Outreach means the extent or length of reaching out and by understanding this, the youth under the Tshwane Presbytery, together with Rev Ramokgadi, decided to reach out to Ms Alet Pretorius and help her, with among other things, to paint her house.

Ms Alet Pretorius finished her studies at Stellenbosch University. She was at Laudium and started the Melodi ya Tshwane congregation together with Prof Klippies Kritzinger. She has served the Tshwane Presbytery with distinction and for many years acted as Scribe of the Northern Synod.

Ms Pretorius is in a wheelchair, which inhibits her from doing all she want to. The outreach was therefore initiated so that the youth can understand what it is to reach out to somebody and stand where God stands.

The day was filled with laughter, joy and brotherly and sisterly love, where the youth from the Tshwane Presbytery painted and had loads of fun with Ms Pretorius.

This is only the beginning, the youth said and promised to be there for her whenever she needs somebody.

The following students from Stellenbosch University were licenced as proponente during a beautiful ceremony in the Groote Kerk in Cape Town on 22 November 2017. We wish you the Lord’s blessings!

From left to right:
Ms. Babalwa Sifuba
Hadley J. du Plessis
Enrico C. Beyers
Anda Nyondla
Zukile Bloro
Derick Mathys
Thembinkosi Mene
Andrew Oliphant
Granville Saaiman
Mzwandile Kalipa

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NTS NEWS

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR NTS FROM CONGREGATIONS

During 2017 the seminary did not arrange a fund-raising event (mokolokotoane) for the Northern and Southern Synods, as in the past. Our only fund-raising venture was the gala dinner in April 2017. At this late stage of the year, we urgently request all congregations of our two supporting synods (who have not yet done so) to transfer their annual contribution of a minimum of R2,100 (as in the past) into the NTS account. The future of our church depends on a constant flow of new candidates entering the ordained ministry. A disturbing number of congregations (more than 40% in some presbyteries) do not have ministers at the moment, so it is urgent to recruit and train more ordained workers.

The banking details of NTS are:
ABSA Bank; Code 632005; Account number 1150155009; Account name: URCSA Northern Theological Seminary; Reference: Name of your congregation.

GLOBAL INSTITUTE OF THEOLOGY

In July this year, two postgraduate NTS students, Katleho Mokoena and Monyane Ntai, attended the Global Institute of Theology (GIT) that was hosted by the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). They report as follows:

“The Global Institute of Theology 2017 was an intensive short-term academic programme designed to give theological students and lecturers from all over the world an opportunity to learn, teach, and do theology in an inter-contextual and ecumenical way, situating the theological task in local, regional and world contexts. The Global Institute of Theology took place in two phases, first at Wuppertal and then at Leipzig. At Wuppertal there we attended an academic programme (lectures and classes) offered by experienced lecturers from different parts of the world. It was attended by 50 students (women and men) from all continents who are preparing for Christian ministry at a theological school related to a WCRC member church. It also included some fresh theological graduates preparing for higher theological studies and pastors in their first years of ministry who were recommended by WCRC member churches.

During the second phase at Leipzig, we as GIT students participated in the WCRC General Assembly as observers, because we were not delegates. This provided an opportunity for us to learn through encounters with church leaders, eminent scholars, theologians and activists who were present at the Assembly. This was a unique experience. It broadened our horizon on how to view life and to apply the theologies that we have learnt. We were able to engage theologically about our respective contexts, and the challenges we are facing. The experience made us all aware that Reformed theology is quite a broad concept that is applied differently by different regions and continents.”

Mi Ntai and KK Mokoena

15TH ANNIVERSARY OF NTS

On 9th February 2018 the Northern Theological Seminary will be 15 years old! It was established on 9th February 2003 by the joint curatorium of the Southern (Transvaal) and Northern (Transvaal) Synods, as the continuation or resumption of the Turfloop Theological Seminary, which had been closed in April 1999. Over the past 15 years, NTS has produced 76 proponente, most of whom are actively serving in congregations of the URCSA today.

The opening service of NTS in the new year will take place on Sunday 18th February 2018 at 10:00 in the Melodi ya Tshwane congregation. Three things will happen during that service: a) the annual opening of the seminary; b) the licensing of new candidates (proponente); c) the 15th birthday of NTS.

The programme of the day will be announced in the new year, but please diarise the date already. The alumni of NTS, in particular, are invited to attend this festive occasion. Let us give thanks to God for 15 years of grace and growth!

Students representing South Africa at the GIT. Back: Nina Muller van Velden (DRC) Middle from left to right: Doret Niemandt (DRC), Montane Ntai (URCSA), Nobuhle Mbata (DRC), and Marco Koch (DRC), Front: Katleho Mokoena (URCSA)

Students part of WCRC and GIT

Two of the Northern Theological Seminary students, Monyane Ntai and Katleho Mokoena, participated in the Global Institute of Theology (GIT) in Wuppertal, Germany from 9-27 June 2017 and attended the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in Leipzig, Germany from 28 June - 7 July 2017. The Global Institute of Theology is an intensive short-term academic programme designed to give theological students and faculty from all over the world an opportunity to learn, teach, and do theology in an inter-contextual and ecumenical way, situating the theological task in local, regional and world contexts. Being part of the GIT and WCRC program was certainly a life long experience in the ecumenical world. The GIT was not only academic related but also consisted of sight seeing around Germany: visiting an ancient castle in Schloss Burg, Henkel company, a museum of early industrialization, the church in Barmen where the Barmen Declaration was written, as well as the Frederick Engels house. Sundays were days when students visited local congregations to experience the different worship services around Germany. The GIT happens every two years and it is encouraged that URCSA theological students become part of the life changing experience.

NTS Students graduate

On the 7th of September 2017 three students from the Northern Theological Seminary graduated at the University of Pretoria. Michael Mohlomonyane graduated his honours in Theology while Katleho Mokoena and Elvis Mofokeng graduated their masters degrees in Theology. We wish them all the best in journeys of becoming future proponents of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa.

Pictures: Michael Mohlomonyane, Elvis Mofokeng, and Katleho Mokoena
A reflection on the NTS Logo

The NTS (Northern Theological Seminary) logo expresses the seminary’s values and objectives, in line with the ministerial formation policy of General Synod. The following features can be highlighted.

Like the URCSA logo, the NTS logo is surrounded by an incomplete ring, which expresses commitment to the unfinished business of church (re)unification in South and Southern Africa.

The name of the seminary. When the establishment of NTS was approved by the Synodical Commissions of the Southern Transvaal and Northern Transvaal Synods in September 2002, there was a long debate on its name. Some people felt that it should be named after a person like Beyers Naudé or another key leader in the history of the URCSA, but eventually the proposal of the geographical name “Northern” was approved. This name wasn’t chosen because the seminary belongs to the Northern Synod, because in 2002 the Northern Synod did not yet exist. This seminary is “Northern” in relation to the other three formation centres of the URCSA.

Power And Accountability

Power can be defined as the ability to exercise influence and authority in the physical, mental or spiritual. Synonyms for it include strength, vigor, capacity, authority and majesty. Authority is the right to use power or to act (see Mark 3:15, Acts 4:33). All these synonyms sound to me as virtues we as leaders in URCSA are reminded of.

BIBLICAL EXPRESSION OF POWER

The Bible is very explicit about the source of power. “Yours O Lord, is the greatest and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours” (1 Chr 29:13). Jesus Christ stresses this point in the Lord’s prayer (see Matt 6:13). Believers (URCSA) in particular need to remember this truth in our times when many others claim power.

I think we should avoid to see power, like energy. We tend to see it as finite resource-something to cling to and not shared. But Jesus clearly demonstrates that power can be shared without the sharer loosing authority (see Luke 10:1-22, Mark 16:15-18). Paul too, demonstrates this character in his relationship with his colleagues like Timothy, Silas, Titus and Apollos (see 1 Thess 1:1).

Paul’s message of power clearly shows how God manifests Himself through His spirit to motivate people to worship Him than them remain clinging to power. Hence he says in verse 6: “You became imitators of me and you were examples to those of every other church”.

Power and the believers are instructed to turn away from those who have only form but deny its power (2 Timothy 3:5). God’s power enables His people to be the witnesses to the nations (Acts 1:8).

ABUSE OF POWER

Somehow on a certain level, power can be abused, even in the church corridors. And to greater extent and intensity of the power exercised by the leadership of a congregation or mission agency. In that sense, the greater the need for accountability. Christian leaders are to be reminded that there are personally accountable to God (see 2 Sam 12:1-4, Rom 14:12).

BIBLICAL EXPRESSION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is rooted in the acknowledgement that God is the source of power and that He controls life and human resource (see PS 24:1). This means it requires good stewardship to account how power is used by each one of us.

Failure to awareness of our vertical accountability will results with casual leadership. We must remember that those who follow durable leaders are also responsible for the decision to accept them as leaders. Old Testament history explicitly tells us that the fortunes of the Israel nation fluctuated in accordance with who was leading them. We must be of the knowledge that history may judge us if we fail to differentiate between vertical and horizontal accountability.

RampUp – PERSONS WITH DISABILITY AT HOME IN THE CHURCH SOUTH AFRICA

“At church, I don’t feel that I’m really included. I’m not welcomed at the choir and I’m not asked to serve in a leadership role. It seems people in the church pity me all the time.”

As a young girl, Nomsa had polio which affected her legs. She walks with crutches. She graduated five years ago and has been working as a receptionist at a big company, which awarded her the prize for “Staff member of the year” in 2016. However, Nomsa’s talents aren’t recognised by her church, where the focus is on her disability. People assume that she doesn’t have anything to offer.

“It is estimated that 95% of all persons with disability are not reached by churches.”

The RampUp project provides resources to churches to help them become disability-friendly communities of believers. The website www.rampup.co.za outlines strategies for inclusive churches and potential inclusion of persons with disability. RampUp celebrates the role of people with disabilities in the church. The active inclusion of persons with disabilities means that the church can:

- Dispel myths about the causes of disability
- Promote a positive view of disability and people with disabilities
- Develop a deeper understanding of the Biblical view of disability
- Demonstrate how people with disabilities can play a positive role in the life, work, witness and leadership of the church.

The website gives guidelines on how to implement inclusion, by, for example, creating awareness of the needs of people with disabilities. There are Bible studies on stories about disabled people in the Bible. How did Jesus interact with disabled people? Did Jesus heal all disabled people? The image of God is visible in all human beings, including those with disabilities.

Once a year, Churches can celebrate the inclusion of persons with disabilities on Disability Awareness Sunday, the last Sunday of August every year.

It is important to note that power and accountability mean more than being subject of control. This undisputable fact will enable us of empowering the people of God for mission and worship life than power use. We are to adhere to the biblical pattern of power and accountability as Christian leaders in order to restore and enhance public trust for more souls to be won. We cannot afford any further leaders deficit because of power clinging like our contemporary emperors. As a Christian Church (URCSA), let us use God-given power for its God-given purpose.

Rev Lesetja Raboshagka
(URCSA Hlanganani-N S)

Dzani has a more positive experience of the church – something all churches should strive for:

“In my church my paralysed legs don’t exclude me. I’m accepted as a human being like all the other members. Where necessary, they make provision for me to participate in all church activities.”

Kindly consider the situation of persons with disabilities in your church and community. Do they feel included?

We invite you to visit the RampUp website www.rampup.co.za. You can learn many new things and your church may grow!

Contact us at ern@tlm.co.za or 012 345 4915
Nkhoma Museum: Celebrating God’s faithfulness

The story of Nkhoma Museum is that of the manifestation of God’s faithfulness to humankind that whatever is indeed bound on earth is done likewise in heaven. The museum was put together first in 1989 during the centenary celebrations of Nkhoma CCAP Synod. The aim of having the museum in the synod was to keep memories of all the seasons the church had gone through since the day it was established in 1889. No wonder among the artifacts is the timeline indicating dates of important events in this church since its inception. Loads of other artifacts reflect on the work of the church throughout time. They come to over two hundred and fifty in total! You will find portraits of founders of the CCAP church in central Malawi, old medical equipment used in mission hospitals, cups used during a holy communion in 1887, a typewriter used to translate the Bible into Chichewa, the foot of a marauding elephant shot by missionaries in the 1960s and many more.

Another amazing thing about this museum is that it was put together by people who, though greatly interested in history, were not professionals in preservation of the past. They include the retirees Rev. Kilion Mgawi and Dr. Chris Blignaut – a long time eye specialist at Nkhoma Hospital and their company. The work of professionals such as Marlene Schoeman, a former archivist at the Dutch Reformed Church in Stellenbosch who was there with her husband Henoch, came very late in the process, nevertheless her contribution proved to be equally important.

In 2015 the management of the museum changed hands from the direct care of the general office of the Nkhoma CCAP Synod to Nkhoma University (NKHUNI) whose Vice Chancellor Prof. Hoffie Hofmyer, is a church historian himself. Following this, daily operations of the museum came into the hands of the appointed director, Innocent Gondwe – member of the faculty of education in NKHUNI. More faculty members became involved in a committee that looks into policy development and other museum business. Earlier this year, NKHUNI led efforts to refurbish the museum. It was common knowledge that from 2009 services at the museum had gone into oblivion and its building was deteriorating. Funds and materials were made available by the university under Hoffie while the expertise came from varsity staff and the Schoemans. In a purely academic tradition, the university has proceeded to establish centres for study in a side room next to the museum building. They include a Centre of Oral History and Memory, Environment and Climate Change and Information Ethics.

When May 2 2017 came, all roads in Malawi led to Nkhoma Museum where its rededication was held. The director of culture in the ministry of Tourism and Culture in the Malawi government graced the occasion. Many synod gurus were present together with anyone who had a name in NKHUNI. When all was said and done, this occasion of giving another kiss of life to the museum became a reminder of God’s faithfulness throughout the ages as a guarantor of the needs to humankind.
Rev D R Kgachen was inducted as minister of Malelane congregation on Saturday 28 October 2017.

Reverend Tebogo Sebego was ordained in Bronkhorstspruit URCSA on 28 May 2016

Rev Mooketsi Patrick Matsepee was ordained in Mamelodi East on 3 June 2017

The Free State and Lesotho is all new: The Free State and Lesotho Synod met in Welkom from 2 to 8 October 2017. During a fruitful sitting a new Moderamen was chosen. They are BC MOCHEROANE (Scribe) PK MOTOTO (Actuarius) TG LEKOLA (Assessor) MTJ LETSIE (Moderator).

Correction: In the previous URCSA NEWS it was stated that Rev Pieter Grove attended a synod meeting of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church where he heard for the first time that a synod expressed itself on racism as a sin. It was indeed a synod meeting of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. Apologies for the mistake!

The 2017/2018 Word and Worship is now available at R200, postage excluded, from order@clf.co.za.

See www.clf.co.za for more products and free pamphlets.

Word and worship is a must-have-for-worship-preparation. It is a resource for clergy and congregations, prepared by clergy in ministry, written by writers from across the ecumenical spectrum. The publication provides liturgical and sermon outlines based on the Revised Common Lectionary readings, using the format of gathering, proclaiming, responding, celebrating and sending.