

ALL ONE IN CHRIST

The United Church of Zambia held the closing service of worship for its Golden Jubilee Celebrations at Nkana Stadium, Kitwe on Sunday 17 January 2016. The weather was gracious to us on the day. On Saturday evening Mindolo Congregation hosted an Evening Prayer Service at the place where and on the anniversary when the UCZ came into being on 16 January 1965. This was led by Rev Kazovu, while Bishop Sinkala offered the prayers and Rev Silwenga preached on Visions and Dreams. The meeting continued amidst loadshedding and a heavy much-needed and much-prayed-for downpour of frontal rain.

We had left Lusaka on Saturday morning in the Synod Bus and together with many of the Synod Secretariat, Mr Lee Holland, a former Mission Partner and Africa Secretary of the United Church of Canada and the Synod Advisor, Mrs Victoria Silutongwe accompanied us. We were accommodated at a local guest house.

After breakfast on Sunday we were transported to the stadium and having cleared security, (My Sgian dhu remaining undiscovered!), we were directed to the Synod part of the stand at the Callow Pavilion. A comfortable black leather-padded three-piece suite and side-tables had been arranged for the President, First Lady and their entourage. They were to be the guests of honour. For the next hour or so the stadium gradually filled up until a congregation of thousands had assembled.



HE President Edgar Lungu
making his speech

The service began just after 0900h with a March Past by the Combined Boy's Brigade Band and the Girls Brigade Majorettes. The salute was taken by His Excellency, the Republican President, Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu and the Synod Bishop.

Rev M B Silwenga opened in prayer followed by the BB Band who then struck up the National Anthem. Rev B S Kazovu constituted the gathering to officially close the Golden Jubilee Celebrations which had reminded us of our oneness with God, each other and in Jesus Christ and had led us to recommitting ourselves to proclaiming the Gospel and further unity in the fullness of life. It commemorated the comings together of the Church of Scotland and London Missionary Society at Chitambo on 1 December 1945; they were then joined by the Union of Churches on the Copperbelt on 26 July 1958 at Mindolo. Finally on 16 January 1965 the United Church

of Zambia was formed at Mindolo with the Church of Barotseland and Methodist Missionary Society entering the then United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia.

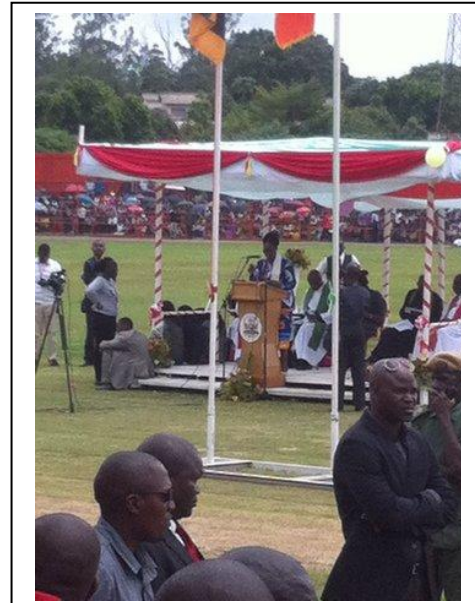
Deaconess Mabel Sichali together with 4 representatives from the Boys Brigade, Girls Brigade, Men's Christian Fellowship and Women's Christian Fellowship, as a sign of commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel for the next 50 years presented a Banner, a light and a Bible to the Synod Bishop and General Secretary. The Copperbelt Presbytery Bishop, then offered a Prayer of Thanksgiving.

The Call to Worship came from Isaiah 43:18-19, Nehemiah 1:18 & Hebrews 6:10, Rev Jane Kaluba and Rev Dr R Chimfwembe read these verses. The opening hymn was 'To God be the Glory.'

After this Rev Bishop C Nkonde gave a Prayer of Praise and Gratitude for our many blessings in this life. A time of musical ministry then followed, we enjoyed praise and worship songs from the voices of the WCF Copperbelt Choir and Mount Sinai.

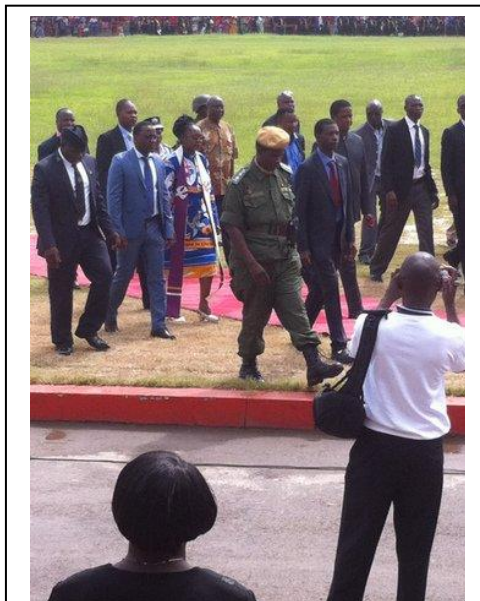
Then the Rev J Matembo led us all in the Prayer of Confession. The Administrative Secretary Mr Rodger Ng'ambi welcomed all the various parts of the Body and read the Intimations.

Rev Bishop Martha Siame, splendidly attired as one of Mpezeni's Ngoni Chiefs, and guarded by an Impi of similarly-clad Church Warriors offered the Prayer of Intercession before the General Secretary Rev Dr Peggy Mulambya Kabonde framed the UCZ Agenda for the next 50 years.



Peggy Kabonde General Secretary giving her speech

The main strategy would involve Missional Congregations with a strong ministry for children and young people. Economic justice and climate change were other areas to be addressed. However, the Church's core-activity was evangelism, sharing the good news and affirming life and life in abundance for all. In all of this Worship and Discipleship were essential to a public and private life of obedience and devotion to God. To fund this by faith and be sustained, the Church needed to be self-sustaining, self-propagating and self-governing and to rely on the overflowing grace and peace beyond human understanding, that which the world cannot offer.



Red Carpet for the President and Peggy Kabonde

Rev Bishop Mwape Chomba then led an Affirmation of Unity with responses from the congregation. A Prayer of Thanks was then offered for the opportunity the occasion afforded for a deepened spirituality for us all. This was followed by three representatives from the youth, MCF and WCF declaring in a prayer with the congregation a renewal of commitment.

The offering was then received and the Offertory Prayer given by Rev Bishop Edward Musonda. The Old Testament Reading came from Jeremiah 7:1-7 and was read by Deaconess Zulu.

Mr Holland then spoke on behalf of the UCZ's Partners in Mission. He was followed by the Synod Bishop Rev Mutale Mulumbwa who stressed the necessity of remaining united and spoke of the biblical mandate to pray for our leaders. He appealed for greater openness and opportunities for the Church and

Government to meet and talk with each other.

The President appealed to the Church to help keep the peace and maintain national unity, living up to the motto of 'All one in Christ'. He paid tribute to the Church's role in providing moral in-put, ministering through health and education facilities nationwide and its contribution to the gallery of national heroes and heroines. Zambia was founded on the principles and values they acquired at Mission Schools

The Rev H Silishebo, after leading the Congregation in a moving rendition of 'Tiyende Pamodzi' thanked the President and First Lady for gracing this historic occasion, wished them every blessing and stated that the Church was ready to play its part when called to.

The Rev K Kondolo, the Rector from the UCZ University College read the second reading from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 10:25-27.

Mrs Esther Lungu, the First Lady, read the third lesson which came from John's Gospel 10:7-10. These verses include the UCZ's Theme for 2016, "Christ lead us to fullness of life" Here the Good Shepherd asks his flock to contrast the life he offers with that offered by the thieves and robbers.

The Rev Benson Chongo was supported and encouraged before preaching by the congregation singing and dancing him into the pulpit. In his sermon he called for the Government to address the people's social and economic concerns and the Church would pray for the Government in this in all of its arms.

Rev L Chibuye then gave a Prayer of Dedicatiom to a Life of Perfection and Service.



The First Lady



Eastern Presbytery Bishop in Ngoni attire

The Service quietly moved into Holy Communion where the celebrant was Rev Chrispin Mbalazi. Teams of Ministers and Elders then distributed the bread and wine to the Communicants seated in the stands.

The winning ticket was drawn by the Republican President who graciously handed the Mini-bus prize to the UCZ University College. It was gratefully received by the Rev Kondolo on behalf of the College

The Closing Hymn was: The Church's One Foundation and Rev Bishop Patrice Siyemeto gave the Benediction and thereafter the Synod Bishop dissolved the Assembly.

A late buffet lunch was arranged at the Edinburgh Hotel for the Guests of Honour and other invited

guests. As she was leaving the first Lady who had visited Mwandu last year greeted Ida and asked about the trafficked children we had been looking after, she had met them on her visit to the Mission.

We then left Kitwe and set off back to Lusaka in the Synod bus, arriving both safe and well tired and elated around 2330h.