

## Partnership visit to Southern Africa from 23<sup>rd</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2015

- Aims** – To meet with the senior leadership group of Methodist Church Southern Africa (MCSA)  
 To visit British Methodist mission partners serving in Johannesburg  
 To meet Nationals in Mission recipients in Lesotho and South Africa  
 To meet with the other MCB partner –Theological Education by Extension in Southern Africa

### Johannesburg visit

- **Meeting with Nancy Herron – Justice and Services Connexional Coordinator**

Nancy is a National in Mission recipient and focuses on justice and social issues in Southern Africa including politically motivated issues spiraling out of control. MCSA provided humanitarian aid to victims of the 2012 mining saga and in 2015 Nancy met with British Methodist representatives concerned about the mining issues in

Johannesburg. Through the mediation, MCSA met with the investors and considered how to include employers in future negotiations as well as introduce chaplaincy among miners. Nancy mentioned that since she took up this post, churches at local levels are responding and acting positively, MCSA offers a voice for xenophobia and human trafficking victims. In addition it provided space for families and victims to thank their communities where support and protection were offered. There were still ongoing challenges about human rights and inter-tribal conflicts the church needs to address. Well, Jesus warned us that in this world we shall encounter trials and tribulations but we should be of good cheer because He had overcome the world!



Nancy Herron – Justice and Services co-

- **Meeting with another National in Mission Appointee in Johannesburg – Siyabulela Tonono –Justice and Services field assistant**

Siya focussed on human trafficking and gender based violence rife in the field. His job was to advocate and create awareness in addition to providing training circuits and district. The Manyano demonstrated support for xenophobia victims by organising 16 days of activism. There has also been solidarity for xenophobia victims particularly as connexionalism was challenged when people from Mozambique, Swaziland and Lesotho were victimised by South Africans yet all are members of MCSA Conference. Siya expressed the need for training to address ignorance of the problems and how best to respond. One of his challenges is lack of local champions to address issues and help train people in contextual situations.



Luxolo with Siya – both NMA recipients

- **Meeting with Rev Luxolo Martini – Connexional Youth Co-ordinator**

Rev Martini was a NMA recipient but the funding has ended. It was good to know that the programme is still ongoing especially with unemployment within South Africa is projected to be 55 – 60% and higher in Mozambique and Swaziland. There is support for youth economic, development and empowerment programmes running to help develop business plans for creative ideas and liaise with private or government agencies for guidance and mentoring. The church works closely with National Youth Development Agency. Another initiative is to have winter schools in June – July plus Saturday classes to assist students with Mathematics, Sciences, Accounting and English. Interested unemployed youths would be asked to work in rural areas and skills could also be adopted to befriend children in care in Methodist homes.

### Meeting with Jane and Stephen Day – MCB mission partners

I was picked up by Stephen and Jane at Johannesburg International airport. I later visited the new Connexional office where I met the NMA beneficiaries plus other MCSA staff. Stephen and Jane are both ministers though Jane works two days a week at MCSA Mission unit. She has been assigned to work on *Women in Leadership*, and a conference

for women from seven ecumenical South African denominations will be held in November 2015. Stephen works as a minister at Germiston Methodist Church and has witnessed growth numerically and spiritually at its congregation.



Together Stephen and Jane hope to promote unity in diversity at the church and uphold integration in the midst of insecurity and division in surrounding communities.

- **Service at Germiston Central Methodist Church, Johannesburg**

Listening to the combined Shona and Xhosa choirs singing Acapella at the start of the service was amazing. It was like listening to angels singing, my heart was beating even though I did not understand the lyrics, I knew the Spirit of God was here. Within a short time, the whole church was full, the Manyanos in red, those about to be confirmed in white and the rest of the members in colourful attires. Twenty seven new members excited

to get confirmed at this combined services with over 250 people attending. We sang in English, in Shona and in Xhosa. We prayed in English, in Shona and Xhosa. It was a true picture of unity in diversity in spite of terrible stories of xenophobia in South Africa. We embraced, we laughed, we danced, we greeted each other and worshiped God together. Steve Day welcomed everyone and greeted us in four languages and also prayed in various languages. Jane followed suit, introduced the Church stewards stepping down and the new ones serving as from next year.

There was a buzz in church. Many came to greet and thanked MC Britain for sending Steve and Jane to Germiston Central Methodist Church. Both young and old, South Africans and other nationals commented how the church had changed over the past months. Tension and bickering had reduced, the three Sunday services now had more members attending, there were more interactions across services, the cell groups were increasing in size and number, the word of God is an important and central theme and the Holy Communion services were well attended. Many who had left returned and formalised their memberships. Thank you, thank you, thank you were common words from those we visited in their homes and at church. It was delightful to see partnership yielding positive results in Southern Africa. During my greeting, I mentioned that Rev Cleopas Sibanda from MC Zimbabwe was now serving in the British Conference too. There is one Body; there is one Spirit, one God, one Faith and one Baptism. Where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty. .... and in His presence, there is joy for evermore.



Jane and Stephen Day – MCB mission partners

- **Visit to Lesotho**



MC Lesotho members with Vicky at Teyateyaneng

First time in Lesotho, it was a very early start. Vicky Sikhakhane and I left on the plane from Johannesburg at 6.40am and landed in Maseru just before 8.00am. We were picked up and went straight back to the manse where many church members were waiting to meet us. Apparently they thought we were visiting the prior Monday due to miscommunication with MC Southern Africa Connexional Office and I wondered if an elaborate welcome had been arranged then.

It was a joyous day for the Lesotho Methodists. For many years there was prolonged conflict in the Methodist Church Lesotho and the estranged minister that took the MCSA to court lost his case. For the first time in over twelve years the church members could access the manse and prepare it for guests. Rev Sotu showed me round the premises and mentioned that the society was considering an income generation proposal to raise funds. Rev

Sotu benefits from the National in Mission programme and has managed to bring stability to the Methodist Church at Maseru. The Catholic Church is a dominant denomination with over 90% of the population being members and Methodists were relatively few. Rev Sotu started in 2012 and since then the church had grown from forty five to seventy members. Most of the former members left when there was conflict within the Methodist Church and members were mostly the aged and the unemployed. Very few members could afford to support the church hence the minister had no payment for internet service, telephone services, transportation or accommodation. Despite this situation, there was another society at Teyateyaneng of about twelve adults that grown in number to 30 members. The Methodist Church had become more visible with Rev Sotu currently being the Chair of the Ecumenical forum and it was formally recognised in the education circle that Methodist High School was highly reputable and there were other primary and secondary schools across Lesotho.



At Maluti Mountain Preschool with MCSA

to have a vegetable garden to boost nutrition and introduce children to agriculture at an early age. Rev Rampa visits the locality from time to time but sometimes had to ride a horse because of the terrain and far distance. Rev Rampa is a female MCSA minister doing a remarkable job supporting and encouraging community and staff members living here.

Before leaving Lesotho, we visited a small poultry project funded by the Wales district years ago and this is still going on. It was managed by the elderly Manyanos – Women Methodists in Mafiteng. There were over 200 birds laying eggs and proceeds from egg sales support the project and helps maintain the church led by Rev Rampa. The two elderly ladies with Rev Rampa were remarkable in the use of this dilapidated building to house the birds and feed. I am afraid the birds were caged but in a clean and hygienic environment with limited space. Any profit supports the Methodist Church at Mafiteng.



Preschool children at Matilu mountain

### Meeting with MCSA Senior Leaders at their new Connexional Office at Burma, Jo'burgh

- I met with the Presiding Bishop – Zipho Siwa; Gen Secretary – Charmaine Morgan and Director of Mission – Kenaleone Ketshabile.

- I brought greetings from the British Methodist Conference and informed them that Gareth Powell was our new Secretary of Conference.

- I listened to the brief report about the successful meeting of the African Methodist Council held in Ghana and sponsored by the World Mission Fund where Human trafficking and refugee crises issues featured. Charmaine represented MCSA at the meeting and she also mentioned the report from the African Methodist Youths movement seeking support for workshops on *Entrepreneurial initiatives* and job creations for African youths. South Africa is expected to host their next meeting.



Zipho, Bunmi, Charmaine and KK – MCSA leaders

- Zipho as the Head of the Christian Council of Churches of Southern Africa, mentioned the recent visit of MCSA ministers to Zimbabwe following the xenophobic attacks and how he proposed to strengthen the collaboration between MC Zimbabwe and MCSA. He asked for support from World Church Office with regards to the Chimoio placement managed by Rev Malcolm and Gina Oliver – MCB mission partners. I confirmed that they had both ended their contracts. However since Chimoio town, a Mozambique town on the border of Zimbabwe was a significant station with many Zimbabweans living in the locality; it was a good place to demonstrate Connexionalism and discourage xenophobia. Further discussions would ensue to promote our tripartite partnership.
- MCSA leaders were pleased with the contribution and performance of MCB mission partners – Stephen and Jane day serving in Johannesburg.
- We discussed further operatives and entertained requests for youth exchanges and possible childcare mission personnel in future
- MCSA celebrates 40 years of Women in Leadership in 2016 and Jane Day plans to assist in future events

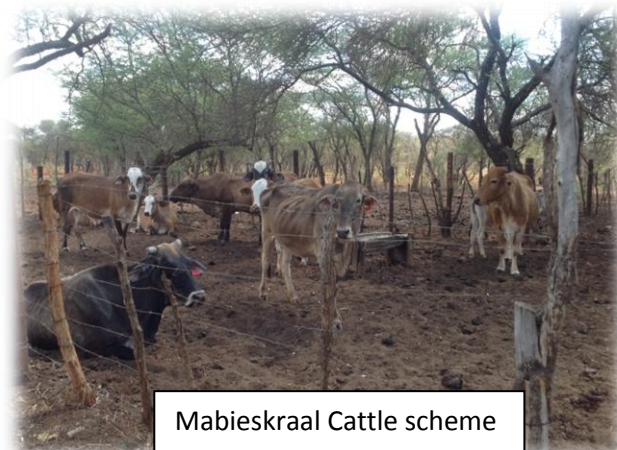
### Self-sustainability in action at Mabieskraal



Mabieskraal Methodist Church

As a learning exercise, I had asked for stories and viable initiatives managed by local churches. I had the privilege of visiting an agricultural project in Mabieskraal, in Limpopo District –North of the Country with Pearl Moroasui. It was over four hours drive and the villagers were excited to see us. The project was managed by Mr Jethro Pooe who had a cattle ranch of his own. When the church ran into difficulty in raising funds for their church building, the members thought what next? Most of the members were either unemployed or farmers and they had already contributed several times yet the church building had not progressed. Mr Pooe, having recently moved to the village asked if any of the local farmers could contribute a heifer each. Four other people in addition to him did and they started with five heifers. He raised the oxen

alongside his. After a few years, five became ten as he got his bulls to service the cows. During famine, they lost four, he personally lost ten but they persevered. Now they maintain a core of ten cows, replaced older cows with younger ones and used the proceeds for Church. The church building is now completed though extensions for a kitchen and the minister's office were in progress. Society members agreed to pay 10% of all proceeds to circuit headquarters. Mr Pooe's selfless sacrifice in proving land, care and medication for the cattle has been crucial to the success of this project. He in return buys the excess calves at a tender age of one month off the church. It is a win-win situation though purchase of the calves is open to other church members. He attributed the success to stepping out in faith when God gave him the idea. This proves that God in His infinite mercies is able to provide seed to the sower and



Mabieskraal Cattle scheme

bread to the eater as and when required. What a gracious God and the beautiful people of Mabieskraal!

### Visit to Theological Education by Extension College, South Africa

It was a delight to meet with Megan Baxter and Craig Dunsmuir and other staff members at the TEE College in Johannesburg. Megan had visited the Methodist Church House in London on a few occasions and I initially met Craig at the Pan African TEE conference held in Ethiopia in October 2014. There were two volunteers from the United Church of Christ and Disciple of



Craig and Megan at TEE College

Christ Congregation from the United States serving at TEE College and the staff managed library services, administration, facilities and academic departments. The college serves ecumenical churches as well as train Methodist lay preachers. It delivers higher certificates in Theology, a Bachelor degree (BTh), a diploma and two short-course programmes. The HCert Theology course covers seven subjects namely Children Ministry, Youth Ministry, Christian Proclamation, Christian Proclamation, Christian Leadership & Management, Pastoral Care, Church Growth and Christian Worship. Course delivery is by distance learning and study materials and assignments; both written and practical tasks are provided either by post or online. Tutoring is provided locally by participating churches. Each module lasts sixteen weeks though shorter online courses are being considered for future applicants. The college celebrates 40 years of existence in 2016.

Thank you  
Dr Bunmi Olayisade  
Africa Partnership Coordinator