

Partnership visit to Methodist Church Southern Africa 20th - 27th November 2017

Aims

- To meet with MCB Mission Partners – Steve and Jane with the District Bishop at Johannesburg
- To meet with the General Secretary of MCSA – Rev Charmaine Morgan to discuss partnership issues
- To meet with the Mission unit staff and outgoing Mission Director – Rev Dr Kenaleone Ketshabile
- To meet with the Principal of Theological Education by Extension in Southern Africa (TEESA)

It was a pleasant surprise to land at Johannesburg International airport greeted by a beautiful, warm and sunny morning. Two days earlier, it was on the news that part of Cape Town was covered in snow. My airport experience was nice and smooth and I was picked up by Jane Day, one of MCB mission partners serving with Methodist Church Southern Africa. I then had a quiet day having learnt that my dad passed away that weekend and later got more details about his funeral that was to take place in December 2017. May his dear soul rest in peace.

Meeting with Germiston District leaders

The next day, Jane, Stephen and I went for a meeting at the District Bishop's office. Unfortunately Bishop Jonathan was not available but he sent two District representatives in addition to Rev Dawn Brown – the Superintendent of Germiston. Steve shared how working at Germiston Church for the first three years had many challenges due to existing circumstances before their arrival. The main issue was addressing disunity as a result of conflicts. The watershed moment came when a new way of leading the society was formulated to permit the various Christian groups to operate within agreed operational frameworks approved by the District Office. This was to promote accountability and improve relations with the church minister – Stephen. The operational guidelines for the pilot programme was included in their church constitution and approval received from the Conference. The hope is to promote *unity in diversity* by improving pastoral sensitivity for various Fellowship groups in South Africa.



Rev Dawn Brown with Rev Stephen Day at the District Office in Johannesburg



Jane and Stephen Day in their residence at Germiston

Stephen said the situation has improved even though few members still left the church to set up an independent church elsewhere. They have been through rocky and rough experiences however they have learnt the significance of **strengthening relationships** among all church members. Jane shared how they now intentionally meet at each other's homes for meals to reinforce connections and validate each other. In addition to that, the church roof was replaced after 35 years and members are being encouraged to use their talents and skills to assist the less privileged in the church.

At the start of this new placement that starts in January 2018, Steve will be responsible for a cluster of societies within the circuit namely – Dukathole, Goodhope, Germiston and Graceland and he plans to work closely with church stewards plus existing leaders to develop relationships within and between the societies in the circuit. Two of the societies were located in townships and two in urban areas. Alongside other MCSA colleagues, he hopes to grow young leaders, improve his Xhosa language, develop missional attitude by building a strong missional

community, initiate a succession plan and share his 2020 vision for the next three years with stakeholders. Jane, as a trained Baptist minister, wishes to continue ministry alongside Steve as well as assist at MCSA Mission unit once a week if needed. She plans to continue working on the *Women in Leadership* programme with women ecumenically to improve relations at all levels. The Women in Leadership programme aims to equip, encourage and empower at various leadership levels through creativity, communion, courage, connection, compassion and building godly character.

Meeting with MCSA General Secretary

MCSA Presiding Bishop –Rev Zipho Siwa was very busy with the duties of the Head of South African Council of Churches in association with preparing for the ANC National Conference taking place in January 2018 when I visited. However I had meetings with the MCSA General Secretary – Rev Charmaine Morgan at MCSA Connexional office. We discussed how to effectively manage the transition of the Mission Director – Dr KK and the incoming post holder in January 2018 after he leaves. There were outstanding issues with existing MCB grants for MCSA District (namely Namibia) plus the implementation of the new MCB grant timetable.



Charmaine Morgan –MCSA Gen Sec with Doug Swanney – MCB Connexional Sec in Johannesburg



Vicky – Childcare Coordinator

We discussed the possibility of exchange programmes between youths and ministers and I received few MCSA heritage resources. In turn, Charmaine wishes to visit the New Room at Bristol, England for inspiration on her next visit to the UK. Later that evening, Steve, Jane, Charmaine and I met with Doug Swanney – MCB Connexional Secretary who was visiting MCSA. It was a great opportunity to listen to MCB mission partners and appreciate their contributions in promoting cross-cultural relationships within MCSA. We also discussed the various Methodist Fellowship models plus the significance of developing *Memoranda of Understanding* between the Methodist Conferences.

Meeting with ex-NMA beneficiary – MCSA Childcare co-ordinator

I met with Vicky Sikhakhane - the MCSA Childcare Coordinator. She shared how all

MCSA Districts now have their safeguarding policies, and training of ministers, children ministry workers, care givers and outreach workers are ongoing. She recently expanded the scheme to include disabled persons and she seizes this opportunity to train probationers on the rights and needs of Sunday school children before they graduate. MCSA aims to provide child friendly and safe churches through informing, empowering and training child care and children ministry workers. Few other duties Vicky does are screening, vetting and building the capacity of thirty one child care workers as well as supervise interns. There were two gap year interns from Germany serving in Namibia. In addition, the German embassy in South Africa is pioneering a pilot volunteer exchange programme with South African youths. Lastly, Vicky was designing leaflets for the December holiday period which was their summer. Efforts were being made to prevent children’s deaths in pools, baths, at sea-sides, and those left in vehicles in the hot South Africa weather. There had also been reports of increased road accidents fatalities involving children at the start of school holidays and the Childcare desk was responding appropriately. It was thrilling to see how this ex-NMA post continues to make significant contributions to MCSA Conference, thanks be to God!



Dr Kenaleone Ketshabile - MCSA Mission Director

Meeting with MCSA Mission Unit Director – Rev Dr Kenaleone Ketshabile

It was good to meet with KK and extend official goodbye as he takes up his new post as the Bishop of Bloemfontein and Namibia in January 2018. He was very grateful for the support received from MCB over the years and how our

partnership had improved the Mission unit during his tenure of office. He was thankful for the SALT sponsorships plus ongoing NMA grants for three posts within his unit. He shared his vision to promote youth empowerment across MCSA conference in tackling the urban – rural migration that has resulted in crimes among dissolution youths. He hopes to hand over the reign of affairs to his successor in few weeks' time and hopes MCSA Mission unit could send the youth empowerment proposal for consideration in future. It was good to meet with all Mission unit staff for lunch with Steve and Jane present at the Mission unit office. Cheerio to KK after eleven years as Mission Director.

Meeting with the Principal of Theological Education by Extension in Southern Africa



Craig Dunsmuir – TEE SA Principal in Jo'burg

It was good to see Craig Dunsmuir, the Principal of TEESA after few years. He was looking much slimmer and I later realised he had been away for some time but recently resumed back to work. Craig was excited to share about TEESA newly launched online courses because over 2,500 prospective students had registered. There has been a dip in enrolled student numbers with the termination of TEE short courses, however the new online course appears promising. The four courses were foundational courses for equipping anyone anywhere for Ministry – *A person called by God; Called to share good news, Serving in and through the Church and the World in which we serve*. These courses are offered to laity in addition to theological programmes for ordained ministry. Other related resources were shared with me. Craig mentioned that ongoing partnership with MCB has been very helpful in supporting the development and implementation of the new teaching programme. The meeting was very informative and I was offered the opportunity to test drive the distance learning programme and give my feedback. I hope to take up the offer 😊.

I made a visit to Cape Town which is over 800 miles from Johannesburg. This was to see the climatic challenge caused by the prolonged drought in Cape Town affecting farmers and rural dwellers. There was severe water rationing at Cape Town during my visit. As a result, the Municipal government was to implement an effective water management strategy for the region. I plan to liaise with MC Southern Africa to consider emergency relief support in response to drought if required. Thank you.



Drought affected terrain along motor way in Cape Town

Jeremiah 17 ⁷ "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. ⁸ For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit (NKJV).

Thank you

