

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa Newsletter: January 2013

MISSIONARY APPOINTED UCCSA COMMUNICATIONS AND JUSTICE ADVOCACY OFFICER



We are happy to announce that Miss Jennifer Ayana McCalman of the Council for World Mission (CWM) partner church Guyana Congregational Union (GCU) is now engaged as Missionary to UCCSA in the role of Communications and Justice

Advocacy Officer. The Missionary appointment is the achievement of one of our key strategic directions for “Increasing Commitment to Solidarity, Prophetic Witness and a quest for Justice.” : see *Evaluation of the Vision Plan 2006-2011 and Proposal of the Mission Support Fund p. 19, 20*

Ayana arrived safe and well in South Africa on January 10, 2013 and commenced work on January 14, 2013. UCCSA’s ecumenical partner CWM will support this Missionary appointment for an initial period of two years to December, 2014. Ayana is single and unaccompanied on this assignment.

Ayana is a native of Guyana, South America and was born into and raised in the Christian faith. She is trained as an Attorney-at-Law and has been a legal practitioner for 7 years. Ayana has demonstrated her passion for God’s justice and has served in her local church GCU as well as internationally within the Caribbean Region of

CWM and as a Deputy Moderator in Trustee Body of CWM. She has also actively worked with ecumenical partners such as the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). She was one of the speakers at the Keynote event of the Uniting General Council in June 2010 which brought together the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). She also served as one of the Leaders of the Youth Empowerment Section at the WCRC Uniting General Council.

Ayana’s key roles as Communications and Justice Advocacy Officer will include responsibility to: develop and manage communication strategies for UCCSA; ensure the production and circulation of the UCCSA Newsletter; manage the UCCSA Website and other social media tools; and to advocate and engage persons in order to conscientize them on issues of justice.

Ayana will be based at Central Office at the Joseph Wing Centre in Johannesburg but she will also travel as required by the Officers to cover the work of the various Courts, Units and Ministries of the Church.

We give thanks to God for the skills and experience Ayana will bring to UCCSA at this season of its journey and offer her our best wishes for her life and work with the UCCSA.



'My UCCSA Plan' Launched!
- Praised as an Investment in Life.
By Ayana McCalman



Rev Dr. Prince Dibeela, General Secretary, UCCSA
Making opening remarks

On Saturday January 19, 2013 about 150 persons including members of local congregations, young people and church leaders from across the Central Region gathered at the Founders Memorial Congregational Church at Newclare for the inaugural launch of the 'My UCCSA Plan' Comprehensive Family Funeral Cover. The programme began at about 10:30 am with worship lead by members of the Trinity Congregational Choir. There was much singing and celebration in and thanks to God for the new UCCSA venture.

The 'My UCCSA Plan' is a comprehensive family funeral insurance cover which offers affordable funeral cover for persons within the Local Congregations of UCCSA and across the countries within which the UCCSA is present. Monthly premiums for the family funeral cover range from R77 for R10,000 funeral cover; R97 for R15,000 funeral cover and R117 for R20,000 funeral cover. Policy holders who subscribe to the 'My UCCSA Plan' will also receive value added benefits including Vehicle Access, Body repatriation, Airtime, Electrosure and rewards and discounts from the Mahala Loyalty programme. Extended family options are also available.

The 'My UCCSA Plan' is a partnership between UCCSA and South Africa's leading insurance company Hollard, Micro Insurance Specialist -The Best Funeral Society (TBFS) and Ulwembu Financial Services who will act as administrators of the 'My UCCSA Plan.'

Rev Dr. Prince Dibeela, General Secretary of the UCCSA, in his opening remarks to participants at

the launch reminded them of the rich heritage of the UCCSA. He told participants at the event that the day's event was the result of about a year of negotiations and planning. "We ought to be proud of the UCCSA brand. This brand belongs to grandmothers and grandfathers in Soweto, Newclare, Gleemore, KwaZulu, etc. It belongs to the community" he said. Rev Dibeela further added that the launch of the venture would give UCCSA an opportunity to participate in a life affirming economy rather than only depending on traditional forms of giving only. He said "We want to do big things- scholarships, living wages for Ministers and to participate in the suffering and struggles of the community".



A section of the gathering at the launch

Randall Mocke one of the Directors of Hollard presented an overview of 'My UCCSA Plan' Family Funeral Cover and answered questions of participants ranging from how to apply, how to receive additional funeral insurance cover with the 'My UCCSA Plan' and the claims procedure.

The 'My UCCSA Plan' Launch was preceded by the training of young persons as promoters for the 'My UCCSA Plan' on January 17, 2013 at the Joseph Wing Centre.

The training was facilitated by Ulwembu Financial Services. Mr. Sibusiso Kunene



CEO of Ulwembu Financial Services in his presentation of the Roll Out Strategy for the 'My UCCSA Plan' identified the employment opportunities which UCCSA has sought to create for its young people through the 'My UCCSA Plan.' The young persons who are trained as promoters will also receive as incentive commissions for the number of persons who they subscribe to the 'My UCCSA Plan.

Rev Basil Manning UCCSA in his closing remarks at the event reminded those gathered that in the midst of life there is death and encouraged participants to be better prepared for the future and provide for their families in the instance of death. He further reminded them that participation in the 'My UCCSA Plan' is an investment in life because of the opportunities for job creation for young people; income generation to support the mission work of the Church and the provision of long term income for sustainability of the operations of UCCSA.

Persons were able to register and apply for the 'My UCCSA Plan' at the Launch. Thando Nxabanisa, a young person who was trained as an agent and promoter for the 'My UCCSA Plan' was pleased with the turnout at the launch and also had high praise for the quality of training she received. She was excited that she had already registered two clients at the launch.

The next launch of the 'My UCCSA Plan' will be held on Saturday February 2, 2013 in the Teemane Region at Kuruman. Further launches for the 'My UCCSA Plan' are also set for Algoa in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana.

Support UCCSA by getting registered for the 'My UCCSA Plan' today. If you wish to know more about the UCCSA Plan contact the representative in your local church or contact the Hollard Call centre at 0860 101 003.



From L-R Rev Basil Manning, Nomvula, Sibusiso, Khanyi, Tanya, Wellington, Florence, Randal, Majaha, Martin

Photo credit: Edmand Otladisa



South Africa Synod Appoint New Synod Secretary



As from 1 January 2013, Rev. Thulani Ndlazi started his responsibilities as the new South Africa Synod Secretary. Rev. Ndlazi was appointed by the Synod Conference that met in East London during July 2012.

Rev. Ndlazi is not only an ordained minister but also an exceptional leader who brings to the SA Synod his expertise in people and program management, resource development and execution of theologically based ministerial and projects strategies. He holds a BA in Theology (Honors) and a Master of Arts in Religion (MAR) which he obtained from the former University of Durban-Westville and Lancaster Theological Seminary (Pennsylvania, USA), respectively.

Before coming to the SA Synod, he worked as Program Manager at Church Land Programme (CLP) since 2004 and was based in Pietermaritzburg. Here Thulani started the first ever Land Matters Project (LMP) which dealt with land struggles and rural development. The LMP which was initially a joint project of the KZN Church Leaders Group, KZN Christian Council and CLP. Work done by the LMP, resulted in international lobbying campaigns and numerous victories in court cases of poor rural families who otherwise would not have seen justice being done in their favor. It was also instrumental in helping many rural families secure their land tenure and getting involved in food sovereignty campaigns (promotion of access to and food production). Some rural activists were assisted with accessing university education. Together with the Ujaama Center of the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal (UKZN), Rev. Ndlazi facilitated a research project that led to the production of Land Bible Studies Series which is available in three languages, that is, English, Zulu and Portuguese. Among other academic papers Ndlazi contributed a piece on "theology and land" to the first ever to be published *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*.

Besides working for and also playing leadership roles in numerous ecumenical non-profit organizations, Rev. Ndlazi has extensive experience in leadership positions within the KZN Region (UCCSA) as Director of Fellowship of Vocation program, where he was responsible for the enquirers and theological training of our student ministers. He also served as KZN Region's Glebes Committee chairperson which deals with property management of the church's land in KZN. At the time of his appointment as SA Synod Secretary, Rev. Ndlazi was serving as the Moderator of the KZN Region, pastor of the Regional Council (*pastor pastorem*) where he was responsible for the overall ministerial and spiritual well-being of the KZN Regional Council and presided over ordinations and inductions of ministers. Ndlazi facilitated a process that led to the establishment of the Land and Development Desk of the KZN Region which also from time to time assists the UCCSA on church land matters.

Rev. Ndlazi made the decision to resign from his position with Church Land Programme when the SA Synod appointed him as he felt called to chart a new path of servant-hood ministry. His motivation, passion and skill set uniquely fit the mission of SA Synod — empowering multitudes of individuals and local church communities to partake in God's ministry in the SA Synod and transforming their lives and securing their children's futures in the world where there is an ever-widening gap between those who count and those who do not count.

Rev. Ndlazi is married to Ms. Thelma Vito-Ndlazi.

As the SA Synod welcome Rev. Ndlazi, we want to express sincere gratitude to Mr. Aubrey Classen for his tireless service and leadership as Synod Secretary over the past ten years.

Rev. Ndlazi can be contacted on:
secretary@sasynod.org.za or **073 181 6617**.



Know Your Church!

UCCSA LEADERSHIP

			
Rev B Manning - President	Rev Dr MP Dibeela – General Secretary	Mrs F Norris - Treasurer	Rev H Pillay - Immediate Past President
			
Rev P Strydom – President-Elect	Prof T Masihlelo – Investments Chair	Rev M Mothibi– TMC Director	Rev A Ntshakang - Mission Council Convenor

UCCSA YOUTH LEADERS:

UCCSA Youth Convenor: *Mr. Greyling Koopman*
Botswana Synod: *Super Teise*
Mozambique Synod: *Sergio Pascal*
Nambia Synod: *Aroshelle Meyers*
South Africa Synod: *Mfanafuthi Shezi*
Zimbabwe Synod: *Bhekinkosi Sikhosana*



Old Missionary Hospital Threatened with Closure!



McCord Hospital

Bringing Care, Hope & Excellence

Dear UCCSA Family, is there a means by which our church, would be able to say or do something in defense of McCord Hospital? The church and the hospital are linked in the past and present. We must do something to ensure there is a future

relationship. It is our heritage that is being closed down! Let us do something to save it!

The Board of Directors of McCord Hospital issued a statement on 18th January 2013 in which they said that *“On the 31 March 2013, the grant funding received from the Department of Health (DOH) will come to an end. McCord has not received notification of an intention to renew this funding. As a result of the loss of this grant funding, McCord loses its licence to operate as a state-aided hospital and cannot afford to continue operating. Further, the financial support of the DOH allowed McCord to offer significantly discounted healthcare services to the public. The Hospital management team has explored numerous avenues to avoid the closure of the hospital, none of which are viable in present circumstances”.*

McCord Hospital, over a century old, was founded by American Board missionaries. The hospital has been providing quality, affordable medical care to Durban's people for 102 years. The American missionary surgeon, Dr James McCord, opened McCord Hospital in May 1909 to provide medical care to the Zulu people of Durban, South Africa. The hospital is now a centre for health education, training and research locally and internationally, and has an impact well beyond its size and location.

McCord Hospital has had a profound impact on South Africa's political, health and educational

history. In the 1950s, the Apartheid regime's implementation of Bantu Education devastated Inanda Seminary by removing its subsidy and closed Adams College. Now McCord Hospital is preparing for closure due to the removal of its state subsidy.

McCord Hospital's value extends far beyond health care, and therefore beyond its patients and the budgets they require. McCord Hospital is a heritage institution, for both the United States and South Africa.

McCord Hospital is a Struggle Site, as are other sites that American

Congregationalism influenced such as Inanda Seminary, Adams College, Steve Biko's offices on Beatrice Street, the Bantu Social Centre, Albert Luthuli's home, Pixley ka Seme's home and John Dube's home. McCord Hospital is not only a national landmark that tells the story of a multi-racial institute's dogged struggle against Apartheid, but it is a viable and functioning hospital that is still desperately needed. Preserve the past. Preserve the future. Keep McCord Hospital alive.

I pray for some kind of coalition to stop the liquidation/closure of the not for profit McCord Hospital, if only for the short term. If the issue is complex, which I do not doubt that it is, should not all parties get together and work together to save the situation and *not* rush to liquidate and/or close?

If the Hospital can be saved, then major power brokers (parliamentarians, chairs of boards of directors, wider church leaders, MECs, patients, past and present cabinet ministers, DGs, unions and academics) will all have to come together and suspend the closure in the immediate term and work together to resolve the crisis in which the hospital finds itself.

*Rev. Dr. Scott Couper,
Development Manager Inanda Seminary*



Churches celebrate Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



At least once a year, many Christians become aware of the great diversity of ways of adoring God. Hearts are touched, and people realize that their

neighbours' ways are not so strange.

The event that touches off this special experience is something called the **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**. Traditionally celebrated between 18-25 January (in the northern hemisphere) or at Pentecost (in the southern hemisphere), the Week of Prayer enters into congregations and parishes all over the world. Pulpits are exchanged, and special ecumenical celebrations and prayer services are arranged.

Ecumenical partners in a particular region are asked to prepare a basic text on a biblical theme. Then an international group with WCC-sponsored (Protestant and Orthodox) and Roman Catholic participants edits this text and ensures that it is linked with the search for the unity of the church.

Drawing on the Indian churches' experience of Christian disunity in the realities of casteism, churches around the world are celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with a particular focus on justice as integral to the unity they seek.

Developed by an ecumenical group gathered by the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in India, the preparatory resources for this year's week of prayer focus on the theme, "What does God require of us?" (Micah 6:6-8).

"The theme of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity challenges us to rethink Christian discipleship in terms of 'being shaped by God's presence with' and 'as following God's engagement in' the most unexpected agents and aspects of human life," said the Rev. Dr Peniel Rajkumar from India, a newly appointed WCC programme executive for inter-religious dialogue and cooperation.

"The theme has the potential to draw together churches to celebrate Christian unity in a manner

which extends the idea of Christian unity to embrace the idea of God's radical hospitality, and thereby redefine it along the lines of justice, kindness and humility into prophetic solidarity," he added.

"The theme 'what does God require of us' challenges us as Christians and churches across the world to follow the 'God of life', into the paths of justice and peace by committing ourselves to the cause of justice, while communicating kindness and cultivating humility," said Rajkumar.

Global celebrations for the week of prayer

Churches together in Britain and Ireland celebrate this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity considering the theme a call for churches to "respond to the obligations to act justly in the world". Partnering with the charity Christian Aid, they put the theme in relation to Christian Aid's global work on poverty and advocacy for justice.

The Micah text which provides the overarching theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was also taken up by the European Evangelical Alliance in the material for their week of prayer "Walking with God in humility and joy" (13 to 20 January). This led to many evangelical churches in Europe developing their own meditations, selection of Bible texts, services and prayers.

In some countries such as the Netherlands, for a number of years the two weeks of prayer have been taken up as a thematic whole by the churches. This provides a focus for prayers for unity at the beginning of each year for Christians from churches of diverse backgrounds. This year's theme of walking humbly with God and responding to the call to justice was also welcomed by churches and Christians engaged in the worldwide Micah Challenge.

Churches in Jerusalem also are holding ecumenical celebrations throughout the week of prayer. One such service was at the Anglican Cathedral of St George the Martyr in Jerusalem. The service titled "Walking in Conversation" was based on the road to Emmaus story from Luke 24.



Covenant and Commitment Sunday



"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6: 6-8 NRSV).

With this quote from the prophet Micah, who was so fired up with the concern for justice, we introduce the Covenant and Commitment Sunday which always takes place on the first Sunday of February. It is normally preceded by a Week of Prayer, Bible Study throughout the UCCSA. Churches are called upon to come together in house groups or ward meetings for weekday meetings for Bible Study, fellowship and meditation on the suggested Scripture readings. The week's Bible Studies should lead to the renewal of our Covenant during the Covenant and Commitment Sunday service. The focus for this year is the UCCSA theme, "Christ is Calling Us: Participating in Suffering and Struggle". This is a potent call to struggle for justice in view of the large number of people who are still being denied basic human needs like: food, shelter, health care, basic education, equality and development in general. The six Bible Studies, should help us to unpack the theme and lead us to an act of Covenant and Commitment to the struggle for life in fullness as God intended it to be for all people and creation. **The Covenant ideal** is integral to the identity and Mission of the UCCSA, which was born out of Covenant when the founding bodies of LMS, American Board, CUSA (1967) and the Disciples in 1972, came together in solemn covenant and pledged to: "**worship, work and witness together in the fellowship of the United Congregational**

Church of Southern Africa for the building up of the body of Christ and the manifesting of the reign of God on earth" The reign of God cannot be manifest when there are still many signs to the contrary such as rampant injustice and greed with its by-products of poverty, hunger, malnutrition and the general degradation of life in a "dream continent like Africa," that is blessed with all the resources to make life a joyful experience. When we talk of the reign of God, the implication is that any bother human system that tries to place itself in the place of God and stifles life out of people is therefore an abomination and the church should resist it. The words of the Lord's prayer, "**your kingdom come**" are a plea for us to actively engage the all the forces that are life-denying. Covenant Sunday should therefore bring us back to our roots as a community that is prepared to engage the idolatrous forces that are involved in expunging life out of God's children and creation. While the text and the spirit of the UCCSA Covenant (see *Order of service on page*) remains unchanged, a more contextual rendering of it is expressed through the Commitments to the type of actions that will lead us closer to the fulfilment of Micah's words: **He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**

General Prayer

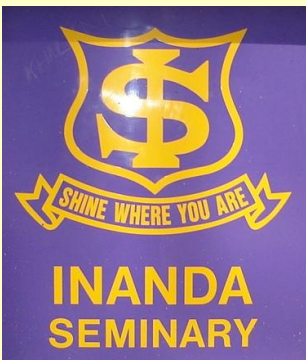
"Surprise us O Lord, with your presence; renew our sense of wonder and give us peace and courage to live as your people with a culture for justice and respect for the integrity of all your creation.

Strengthen us to serve our fellow human beings, especially the poor, widows, refugees and aliens and the down-trodden people in this world until at last your reign of justice and peace has become a reality on this earth. May you be glorified in us as in Jesus Christ, in whose name and power we pray. **Amen.**"

(From UCC Prayer Book)



Historic School Receives Historic 2012 Matric Results



Founded in 1869 and under the auspices of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Inanda Seminary has always provided an excellent education for black females. The Seminary was the first school for black females to offer a matriculation course in 1944 and examination in 1945. Since 1945, the school often received very high matriculation results. A 100% pass rate was not uncommon, even in the 1940s when the students took the same exam as white students (Joint Matriculation Board).

Despite a long history of high matriculation results, Inanda Seminary's 2012 results are truly historic. While the 2012 100% Pass rate for the 73 entries was to some extent expected, the 100% Bachelor's rate is a first in the school's illustrious history, just surpassing the 2011 95% rate. Perhaps even more impressive is the school's 190 subject distinctions, almost doubling the 99 earned in 2011.

The school's Dux, Hellen Muzira, received an incredible seven subject distinctions. Not far behind, six other students received six distinctions each. Eight students received five distinctions each and eleven received four distinctions each. Over 60 students achieved at least one distinction.

The school's Principal since 2003, Judy Tate, believes strongly in team leadership and attributes the school's unprecedented results to the school's dedicated staff. Yet, the Principal's leadership is clearly the inspiration for the staff's strong work ethic and high standards as the Bachelor's rate has steadily increased during her tenure.

Bongi Dlomo, the Chair of the Board of Directors and member of the National Parliament, attributes the school's incredible success to a strong Christian ethos, independent status and beautiful verdant campus in which the 400 boarders reside and study. Inanda Seminary is a member of the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa, the Historic Schools Restoration Project and the South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition. The school is a flagship site along the *Woza eNanda* Heritage Route.

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"Christ is Calling Us Roadshow" ***Coming To Your Area Soon!***

A Series of visits are planned over the next few months to all our Synods and different regions. The purpose of the visits (Road Shows) are to meet with a wide variety of ministers, church leaders and UCCSA members at grass-root level. During these events UCCSA representatives will share information regarding the restructuring and other issues regarding the vision of our denomination. The Road shows will provide information sharing opportunities where the participants would be able to engage our leaders on any issue. The idea is to dispatch representatives of the UCCSA to local

churches where they will have fellowship, share information and worship together. Those interested to join in on the Road show can contact the denominational office for information.

- 1-3 February (Teemane Region)
- 1-3 March (Algoa Region)
- 15-18 March (Botswana Synod)
- 19-21 April (KZN Region)
- 2-5 May (Zimbabwe Synod)
- 14-19 May (Peninsula Region)
- 28-30 June (Namibia Synod)



Please send all Contributions to:

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Events to Remember and Pray For

- 1-3 Feb Road Show to Teemane Region
 - 3 Feb Covenant and Commitment Sunday
 - 5 Feb Assembly Planning Meeting (Mmabatho)
 - 8-10 Feb UCCSA Mission Council Meeting
 - 23 Feb UCCSA Investments Committee
 - 15-17 March UCCSA Officers visit Botswana Synod
 - 18-21 March UCCSA Executive (Botswana)
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Please note the Change to Date of Assembly
 The Assembly hosts, the North West region in the South Africa Synod has requested that the UCCSA Officers Visits and the Assembly be moved from 9th-17th September 2013 to **19th-27th September 2013** in Mmabatho.

