

Office: 021 712 8609
Email: sg@churchunitycommission.org
Website: <http://churchunitycommission.org>



PO Box 30534
Tokai
7966
16 Lowlands Ave
Tokai 7945

CHURCH UNITY COMMISSION

'that they may be one as we are one – so that they may be brought to complete unity.' (John 17:22-23)

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The year 2020, a year of the coronavirus pandemic, brought a myriad of challenges to the church as we grew to know it. The primary challenge being the restrictions on gatherings led the church to find innovative ways to meet, worship and serve.

Under these restricted conditions the CUC continued its meetings using Zoom as a medium. Through this medium we successfully managed to gather United Churches and some regional leaders, where we had considerable progress with the affairs affecting these congregations. The progress includes a research project that has been undertaken and is led by the Unit for Innovation and Transformation: Ekklesia Stellenbosch University.

The meeting highlighted challenges faced by the united congregations deterring progress in mission and ministry. Of these challenges the most apparent is difficulty in appointing ministers. Others include lack of denominational representation in the Trust Committee and lack of support from the regional leaders (Presbytery Moderators, Diocese Bishops and Synod Bishops). All of these lead to difficulties in constitutional compliance. The office of the secretary was therefore requested to review the model constitution and make suggestions.

Through zoom, the CUC also hosted the first Ascension Day service. This was the first service organized by the CUC with full participation of the leaders of the churches.

With the lockdown creating difficulties in travelling Rev Paul Verryn led a series of Zoom meetings engaging in topics relating to Gender Based Violence, Agriculture & Food Security, and Clergy Care. This became a platform that brought together a strong relationship between Regional Council of Churches and the CUC. Role players include advice officers, traditional leaders; churches; medical practitioners and some NGO's such as Harambee. Ideas emanating from the platform helped role players to effect mission and ministry in their spaces of influence.

New Member Churches

The Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa (NELCSA), under the leadership of Bishop Hörst Muller who represents NELCSA in the Central Committee, formally applied for membership with the CUC after years of being observer members. The next step required is for the member churches to formally receive the application, by responding to the resolution below.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church / Cape Church raised interest in applying for membership. The Central Committee awaits the formal application from the church.

Officials: Chair Rt Rev Charles May – Vice Chair Revs; Kim Brown, Heidi Petersen – Secretary General Rev KM Makubalo

Member Churches: Uniting Presbyterian Church SA – United Congregational Church SA – Evangelical Presbyterian Church SA – Anglican Church SA – Methodist Church SA – Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk SA

Observer Churches: Catholic Church SA – Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church SA – Uniting Reformed Church SA – Ethiopian Episcopal Church SA – Moravian Church SA

Elections

In November 2020 The Central Committee elected a new chairperson in Rt Rev Charles May, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of the Highveld and the liaison Bishop of ACSA to the CUC Central Committee since 2013. He takes the chair for a 3 year term ending in 2023 after Rev Dr. Peter Langerman who served in the position for the past 8 years.

For the first time since inception, the CUC elected women ministers as vice chairpersons. The Revs Heidi Petersen of the UCCSA and Kim Brown of the UPCSA are to serve in this position for a 3 year term ending in 2023.

Goals for the Year 2021

The following are set as goals to be achieved in 2021

1. Concluding the research work w.r.t. the United Congregations
2. Review of the United Congregations Model Constitution
3. Holding an Ascension Day Service led with the Leaders of the churches
4. Establishing a Mediation Panel on issues of Unity, Reconciliation and integration
5. Sponsoring Academic Research on subjects relating to Church Unity and the work of the CUC and Ecumenism
6. Hosting Webinars relating to Church Unity

Recommendations

The wise words of Pope Francis are very pertinent in these challenging and uncertain times: *“At this moment in history, marked by the ecological crisis and grave economic and social imbalances only worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, it is all the more important for us to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters.”*

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic is yet to be fully realised by the churches, especially among local congregations. The need for solidarity and unity has always been expressed in history and is foundational in scripture.

The mutual acceptance of ministry in the CUC covenant is an important tool that can be used to mitigate the impact of the pandemic we are still under.

Therefore the Central Committee recommends that member churches make use of the covenantal agreements to advance mission and ministry at the local level beyond the pandemic. Where there is a significant loss of resources, ministerial agency and reduction in membership, it would serve local congregations well to seek ways of working together, guided by the covenant for the sake of God's reign and not denominational survival.

Grace & Peace



Rev Sikawu Makubalo

General Secretary

Church Unity Commission

Officials: Chair Rt Rev Charles May – Vice Chair Revs; Kim Brown, Heidi Petersen – Secretary General Rev KM Makubalo

Member Churches: Uniting Presbyterian Church SA – United Congregational Church SA – Evangelical Presbyterian Church SA – Anglican Church SA – Methodist Church SA – Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk SA

Observer Churches: Catholic Church SA – Northeastern Evangelical Lutheran Church SA – Uniting Reformed Church SA – Ethiopian Episcopal Church SA – Moravian Church SA