

Probationers' Conference 8-19th March 2010

The first of two conferences for the Probationers of 2010 was held at the Rocky Valley Conference Centre near Johannesburg. In all 16 Probationers took part in the two week programme which had as its central theme "The Church". This theme was chosen because of its centrality in so much that pertains to the formation of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. Throughout the conference Probationers were reminded that:

1. The Church belongs to God.
2. The members of the Church are God's people.
3. The Minister's calling comes from God.
4. The gifts of *Pastoring* and *Teaching* are given by God (Eph. 4:11).
5. A minister is ordained to proclaim God's Word.

The only thing that is asked of the Minister is *obedience*; obedience to God and to the decisions of the Church taken under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit.



Enjoying a tea break.



Shared accomodation.

The Probationers were evaluated in their sermon preparation and in their leading of worship and given constructive feedback. Other issues of priority included the study of passages of scripture with a view to sermon preparation.; an in-depth look at the sacraments of baptism and communion and a look at the standard Order of service from the perspective of Isaiah's meeting with the Lord (Isaiah 6:1-9).



Church design is important.



Prof. masango & Thabo Noti

The new Confession of Faith for the Uniting Presbyterian Church (Manual of Faith and Order chap. 2) was presented by the Convener of the Committee that formulated it. Rev Doug Bax explained its historical background and drew attention to the special structure and literary needs for the Reformed Confession relevant in Africa. Other presentations included: church design; vestments; church records; ministry of exorcism; chairing Session meetings; recognizing trauma in congregants and some techniques in counseling.



Rev Ramulondi and Diepsloot Ministry.



Lunch at Diepsloot

In additions to teaching sessions, some excursions to places of special ministry and important landmarks were also included. The church premises in the informal settlement of Diepsloot were visited where the minister, Rev Ramulondi explained the various programmes of up-liftment taking place on the premises. Likewise, a visit to the George Harrison Park took place so as to acquaint the Probationers with the first gold diggings which eventually gave rise to the city of Johannesburg and which also resulted in the many social consequences related to the need for cheap labour.





Looking at the birth place & date of JHB.

Steps from first gold diggings.

In order to familiarize Probationers with the structures of the UPCSA, a visit to the Central Office took place where they were able to meet each member of staff in his/her office and learn about their particular responsibilities and challenges. Later the same day a visit to Constitution Hill took place. It is a site encompassing both the sad and unfortunate past of the Apartheid era as well as the hope for a just future. The Probationers therefore had the opportunity to visit the prison cells where some prominent men and women were held and also had the opportunity to see the Constitutional Court, the highest decision making body of the land.



Go outpreach & teach!

For the final supper before returning to their respective and varied homes, the Probationers were taken to St Columbas Church, Parkview where a wonderfully prepared meal was thoroughly enjoyed. The closing communion service was led by Rev Chris Judelsohn who commissioned the Probationers to minister and share the good news wherever they has been placed.

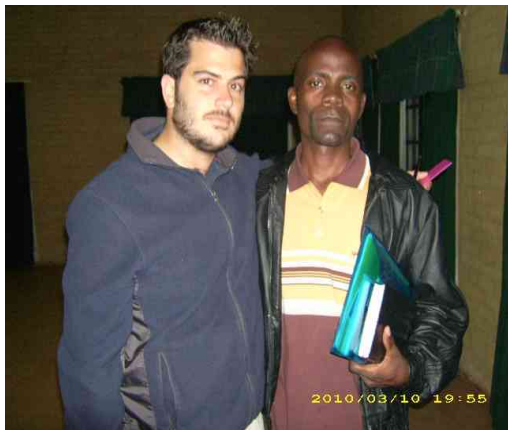


Singing a Zambian song at St Columbas.

Some of the comments received from Probationers included: “This Probation conference was like a year at university condensed into two weeks.”; “ In the Probation week I have really felt and seen the oneness and unity of the church of God.”; “Thank you so much for giving us an opportunity to grow. The conference brought so many different gifted people into our midst that we will be able to view our ministry in a broad way.”; “The choice of programme topics and of speakers was brilliant.”; “Could we have more time on sermon preparation and also time to reflect on and digest all the information that we received.”

The Probationers who took part in this conference were:

Solomon Surumwe; Natalie Hayes; Dikobe Molaba; Nonyamezela Tati; Masauso Nyirenda; Alistair Anquetil; Kim Brown; Sonye Banda; Sibusiso Zungu; Maurice Matyityi; Jacob Manda; Wandila Songca; Frikkie Botha; Kanyiso Walaza; Innocent Mabaso; Thabo Noti



New friendships.