

NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER 2021

In this issue:

- Annual Meeting and Some Updates
- Standing Firm for the Truth
- Mukhanyo's Educational Achievements
- Profile: Richard Muhire
- Alumnus Profile: The Life of Rev. Godwin Ale

Annual Meeting and Some Updates

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down some ministry matters, Mukhanyo is thankful that most of its activities could continue. Dr Brian DeVries, Principal, stated in Mukhanyo's annual report that the college is well-positioned by God's grace for at least the next five years.

At the annual general meeting held virtually on 24 July 2021, Dr DeVries reported that the recent unrest did not affect Mukhanyo's Durban Advanced Learning Centre or the Johannesburg Campus, the two cities where most of the riots took place.

In addition, on 27 July contact classes at the five centres/campuses started for the second semester, only a week later than originally scheduled and two days after South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, made the re-opening possible by relaxing some restrictions.

According to the 2020 Annual Report, both semesters last year were completed successfully with minor scheduling and procedural changes, although many classes had to take place virtually during the lockdowns. The lecturers were able to spend more time than usual developing teaching material, especially more and better study guides at all levels. In addition, software for student records and learning management was further expanded.

From a financial point of view, things worked out well during 2020. Expenses were cut by 10%, to 2019 levels, during the lockdown to plan reduced donations. Indeed, income from African sources decreased, but income from other sources increased somewhat – something to be thankful for. The result was that total income increased by 2,2% compared to 2019.

For 2021 and beyond, further growth is expected in respect of academic quality and spiritual formation of the students, additional contact students, expansion of student support systems and further material development.

Considerable growth is expected in distance student groups of which there are some 85 already – of which more than 10 are outside South Africa.

Did you know . . . ?

- Mukhanyo offers theology and education programmes at various levels. Some programmes are unaccredited short courses and five programmes are fully accredited qualifications in South Africa. For more details, see <https://www.mukhanyo.ac.za/programmes.html>.
- All these programmes are serviced by 35 lecturers across the five centres/campuses, as well as 150 facilitators servicing about 85 distance learning support centres.
- Mukhanyo gave away almost a million rand in bursaries last year!
- Good progress has been made in material development with the updating of more than 75 study guides, many of which are in the final draft phase. Additionally, many theological elective modules (in the fields of education, preaching and apologetics) are near completion.
- The graduation ceremony in March 2021 included many firsts: a total of 91 graduates, the first Higher Certificate graduates, the first BTh degree graduates from the Pretoria and Johannesburg centres, and the first BTh Honours graduate.
- Mukhanyo's social impact in local communities includes students involved in community work, conferences and workshops to help people from local communities, especially aimed at women, the youth, financial skills, Christian counselling, social work, etc.

Standing Firm for the Truth

What to do about all attacks on the true faith in Africa? Various speakers at the Consultation agreed that firstly the Bible must be known and understood. In addition, one has to be conscious of the results of these influences in Africa such as self-serving leaders, corruption, poor economies, oppression, etc. It must be realised that only the Bible speaks authoritatively in a relevant way in any given situation.

How can one equip students against the Prosperity Gospel? Rev. Antonio Coppola, pastor of the Covenant Waterfall Presbyterian Church and manager of the Mukhanyo's Durban Advanced Learning Centre said it must be realised that the Prosperity Gospel links up well with the worldview and practices of African Tradition Religions. The Reformed theology of sola gratia, the atonement of Christ and God's covenant are uniquely able to equip students against this pervasive error.

To be able to refute the Prosperity Gospel, there must be a total commitment to the Word of God, the true preaching of the Word (sola Scriptura), and a realisation of God's sovereignty and the willingness of God's children to suffer.

Defending the True Faith

God's Word does not change but its application does, according to Dr Siegfried Ngubane of the Serving in Mission organisation (SIM), also a keynote speaker at the Consultation. The present trend is for theology to move away from the truth; religious experiences replace Scripture away from Christ and his Word. But Africa's theology should be based on the knowledge of God's revelation and inspiration. Doctrine should be taught from God's Word about our God who directs us to know Him, love Him, do His will, and live for His glory.

The question one must always ask oneself is what the Bible says in a specific situation. The questions we ask are rooted in our experiences, cultural beliefs and worldviews, but one should be very careful regarding so-called contextualisation; we must not adjust sound Biblical doctrine to suit people's preferences. True faith is based on true knowledge, regardless of the time and part of the world.

Mentoring Spiritual Warriors

How many Christians see themselves as contenders and fruitful spiritual warriors? Do lecturers prepare theological students as such? This was asked by Prof. Henk Stoker of the Theological School Potchefstroom at Northwest University in Potchefstroom, South Africa. Through an approach of gentleness, humility and respect, we must be prepared to defend the Christian faith to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope we have in us through a well thought through explanation and rebuttal.



Dr Brian DeVries addressing delegates at the Consultation

Remember, hearts and minds have to be won, not an argument. We are in the world to be contenders, the salt and light of the world.

In the light thereof, it is the job of Christian pastors and teachers to train students how to discern between right and wrong. This discernment requires skill, according to Rev. Atwebembeire. Much damage is done by so-called prophets who give wrong advice and draw people away from institutional churches. The key is a pastor's preaching: to teach, motivate and grow his congregation to be informed and equipped. Discernment is a necessary fruit of discipleship.

To promote the mentoring of well-equipped church leaders, Bible colleges and seminaries should restore the integrity of the house of God, promoting interaction, synergy, and working together, according to Dr Ngubane. In practice, this means stopping the sale of fake qualifications by fraudulent "Christian" institutions.

This unity also implies that there should be clear agreement on the essentials of the church's mission to navigate through and around minor issues. Institutions should trust each other. An African proverb states if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.

Guarding Against Future Compromise

Many institutions and universities throughout the world have started as Bible schools and Christian places of learning, but through the years have become compromised and secularised. How can Christian institutions today guard themselves that it will not happen to them? This topic was presented by Dr Brian DeVries, principal of Mukhanyo Theological College. He listed five common causes of compromise: counterfeit teachers, doctrinal syncretism, academic hypocrisy, institutional blindness, and various external pressures.

Some defences against compromises include:

- Stay focused on the goal, teaching the gospel, making disciples, serving the church, and equipping future leaders to be God's witnesses.

- Guard your institution's spiritual relationship with God by keeping a close watch on yourself and your teaching. Fight idolatrous pride and deadly unbelief, and motivate humility and truth.
 - Promote a culture of biblical integrity and spiritual virtue. Be incorruptible, overcome evil with good, and seek institutional piety, spiritual godliness and doctrinal soundness.
 - Continuously defend the Biblical mission of theological education, church-based ministry and practical Christianity.
 - Create and maintain structures to spiritually protect your institution by building fences for the future, for example by formulating the right selection criteria for appointments.
 - Consider what your institution's legacy will be in a hundred years from now, and research what is happening to your students now.
- Remember: we are strong together when standing on the Word. God our Father has promised to provide. The Holy Spirit unites and empowers us. And Christ is praying for us to remain faithful. What more do we need? And what will you do to implement these ideas?



Visit the TEASA website for information about the 2021 event (www.teasa.co.za) and to download the audio recordings of all the keynote addresses and some of the afternoon discussion topics. You can also register online for next year's event planned for 14-16 June 2022, the Lord willing.

Mukhanyo's Educational Achievements

Student retention and throughput rates are a global phenomenon facing higher education that dates back to the 1960s, and currently remains a critical concern, worldwide. It is a particular concern to stakeholders at tertiary educational institutions, who are continuously concerned about improving the throughput rates of registered students.

The throughput rate at tertiary institutions is defined as the percentage of students who register for a module or course and pass the prescribed examination. It is a predictor of the number of years a student takes to complete the degree/diploma/certificate course for which they are enrolled.

In Africa, there are numerous impediments to the improvement of throughput rates at tertiary institutions. These include broad socio-economic and political issues, sluggish progress in a country's development and the influence of encumbrances such as underdevelopment and poverty, on throughput rates.

Juxtaposed to these impediments are compounding factors such as poor preparation for higher education, lack of commitment among students, unsatisfactory academic experiences, the lack of social integration on campuses, financial and health issues, the lack of support structures, the lack of education among parents and family responsibilities. All of these factors have an impact on low student throughput, often culminating in prolonged study periods or the termination of studies.

These negatives frequently have serious implications for the funding of students' education. Such funding often takes the form of grants allocated, either to institutions or

directly to students. In some cases, this funding comes from private donations.

By contrast, Mukhanyo has, in the past few semesters and, despite the impact of the COVID pandemic, achieved an overwhelming throughput rate of around 90%. This has been confirmed across degree/diploma/certificate programmes. What is particularly gratifying is that student performance has been enhanced through Mukhanyo's dedicated teaching and learning support facilities, and the success of the academic and social integration of its students. This has been achieved through the tenacity and dedication of staff and students, in pursuit of Mukhanyo's goals.

The impressiveness of these achievements, both at the academic, personal and social support services level, augers well – we believe – for the future of its funding support, which Mukhanyo receives both from local and international sources.

We praise God for this phenomenal progress and the tenacity and commitment of all stakeholders to this outstanding achievement.

(written by Prof Patrick Palmer, director on Mukhanyo's board and chairman of the Education Portfolio committee)



Profile: Richard Muhire

To run an organisation such as Mukhanyo, it would never do to have theologians only. Mukhanyo is not a small organisation anymore, with its three campuses, two advanced learning centres, some 85 distance learning support centres and well over a thousand students. So there must be well-qualified people looking after things such as administration, finance, logistics and facilities. One such person is Mr Richard Muhire, the Academic Administration Manager.

Richard was born in Rwanda, moved south with his parents and four siblings, and now lives in KwaMhlanga, close to the Mukhanyo campus. In the evenings he's studying for a B.Com. (Financial Management) at UNISA.



Richard and the Academic Admin team

Although he was born in a Christian family and did confession at the age of 18 to please his parents, he admits that he didn't really have a relationship with Christ. However, he kept on reading the Bible and attending church services.

That was until 2015 when he, by God's grace, was brought into a personal relationship with Christ and started living a Christian life. As he says: "It's been a great journey". Today he's a member of Family of God Ministries Church in KwaMhlanga.

How did he find his way to Mukhanyo? Nothing extraordinary. He completed high school in KwaMhlanga, knew all the time about Mukhanyo, but worked in the hospitality industry and ran a small business on the side. Then someone told him Mukhanyo was looking for a librarian and an IT assistant, so he applied.

He was appointed: "It is a great pleasure to work for a ministry that is equipping pastors for ministry and I am glad I took that step by applying because it gives me so much joy to serve God's children".

From the library, he started serving as the manager of the Academic Administration Department. What are his longer-term plans? He hopes to have a family of his own, to finish his degree and to use it in serving the Lord in whatever area He will lead him.



Richard Muhire

Alumnus Profile: The Life of Rev. Godwin Ale

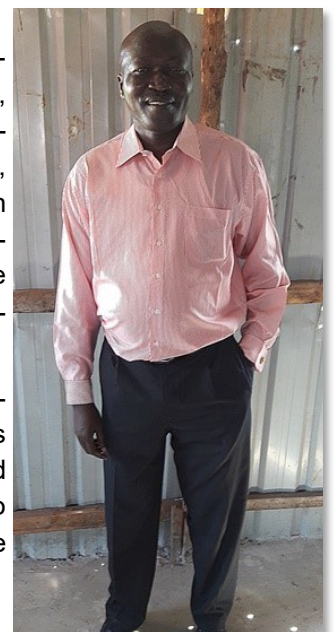
Today Godwin Ale is a pastor in the Reformed Churches in Sudan. How he got there is a story of how God providentially leads His people.

When he was a young boy, his mother took him and they fled from Sudan to Kenya. The train was stopped by soldiers and Muslims started killing all men and boys on the train. His mother dressed him as a girl and he was saved. He grew up in a Kenyan refugee camp where he went to school.

In 2004, Godwin was able to come to South Africa and became a street vendor in Johannesburg. He then joined a multicultural Reformed church, the Good News Community Church in Hillbrow. Through their help, he was able to study at Mukhanyo and completed a BTh degree. He later returned to South Sudan where he became pastor of the Sudanese Reformed Church in Yei.

The congregation in Yei, however, could not support him so, thanks to his degree and his in-service experience at Mukhanyo, he was appointed by the South Sudanese government as Director of Refugee Affairs. But he also continues to serve as a tent-maker pastor.

Godwin hopes to be able to continue his theological studies through distance facilities and wants to establish a Mukhanyo distance study group in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.



Rev. Godwin Ale