

**THE CRADLE OF CONGREGATIONALISM IN THE LOWER  
ORANGE RIVER VALLEY 1902-1952. A CHURCH HISTORICAL  
STUDY**

HENRY WILLIAM DANIEL VAN DER LINDE

Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY**

In the

Faculty of Theology

Department of Ecclesiology

At the

University of the Free State

Promoter: Prof. Dr. R.M. Britz

BLOEMFONTEIN  
November 2009

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ix
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1. Introduction: Commencement of mission work in the lower Orange River Valley	1
2. The Rev. Christiaan Wilhelm Heinrich Schröder	3
3. Change in the character and composition of the mission	5
4. The schism	8
5. Advent of Congregationalism in the area	15
6. Conclusion	19
<b>CHAPTER 2: CONSOLIDATION</b>	<b>22</b>
1. The term of office of the Rev. Alexander Stewart, 1902-1917	22
1.1 Introduction	22
1.2 Education	25
1.3 Conclusion of Stewart's ministry	26
2. The interregnum, 1917-1923	28
3. The term of office of the Rev. S.A. Horne, 1923-1927	31
4. Conclusion	38
<b>CHAPTER 3: AN ERA OF GROWTH 1930-1942</b>	<b>40</b>
1. Introduction	40
2. The consulentship of the Rev. Saul Damon, 1930-1933	40
3. The first call to the Rev. Damon	44
4. The first 9 years of the Rev. Damon's ministry in the North-western Cape, 1933-1942	46
5. Combined Church Council meetings	47

6. Church extension: Prieska	52
7. Church settlements	56
8. The term of office of the Rev. Bertram Nicholas Windvogel	62
9. The development of outstations	67
10. African work	70
11. Conclusion	74
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE ROAD TO DECENTRALISATION 1943-1946</b>	<b>76</b>
1. Introduction	76
2. Resignation of the Rev. Damon	77
3. Domestic matters	80
4. Events leading up to decentralisation	80
a) Reception of the Rev. King	91
b) Kenhardt manse	91
c) Prieska	92
d) Kalahari outstation	95
e) Exchange of plot	95
f) Settlements	95
5. Outstations	96
6. Settlements: Bloemsmond, Witputs and related matters	98
a) Bloemsmond	98
b) Head Committee	99
c) Proposed sale of Witputs	100
7. The first Secondary School for people of colour in the North-western Cape	101
8. Denominational matters	108
a) Church union discussions	108
b) Visit of the chairman of the C.U.S.A.	113
c) European work	114
d) C.U.S.A. Council	117
9. The roaring forties	117

10. Conclusion	123
<b>CHAPTER 5: THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE</b>	<b>125</b>
1. Introduction	125
2. Kenhardt Church	127
2.1 The period of the Probationer, J.W. Stilwaney	129
2.2 The period of vacancy, 1948-1950	131
2.3 United Primary School	133
2.4 The call of a minister	135
2.5 The term of office of the Rev. S. Damon	136
2.6 Domestic matters	138
2.7 Outstations	138
2.8 Golden jubilee celebrations	141
3. Keimoes Church	145
3.1 Introduction	145
3.2 Domestic matters	148
3.3 Outreach	150
3.4 Outstations	152
3.4.1 Kalkfeld and Tsumis Park	153
3.4.2 Kalahari outstations	154
3.4.3 Vyebos-eiland outstation	154
3.5 Enlargement of the church building	155
3.6 Golden jubilee celebrations	157
3.7 Conclusion	158
4. Upington Church	159
4.1 Introduction	159
4.2 The Beerwinkel episode	160
4.3 Domestic Matters	162
4.4 Exchange of outstations	163
4.5 Women's Association	164
4.6 Other important events	165
4.7 The Rev. Samuel Bimray's term of office	167
4.8 Prieska	172
4.9 Upington United Primary School	173
4.10 Soutputs school	174
4.11 The baptism issue	175
4.12 Bazaar and tithing issues	176
4.13 The financial situation	178
4.14 Ministry to the outstations	179
4.15 Invitation by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church	180
4.16 Other miscellaneous matters	180
4.17 Kenhardt's Church Council request	181

4.18 Resignation of the Rev. Bimray	181
4.19 School Committee	182
4.20 Some concluding observations about the term of office of the Rev. S. Bimray	183
4.21 The brief period of vacancy	184
4.22 The planning of the golden jubilee celebrations and other relevant matters	185
4.23 The call of a minister	188
4.24 The first year of the Rev. H.W.D. v.d. Linde's term of office	190
4.25 Jubilee celebrations and other relevant matters	192
4.26 Bond repayment issue	197
4.27 Visit by the Government Commission	198
4.28 Prieska branch	199
5. Conclusion	200
<b>CHAPTER 6: THE SETTELEMENTS – A CRITICAL EVALUATION</b>	<b>202</b>
1. Introduction	202
2. The Witputs issue	202
3. Leasing of Witputs	206
4. Prospecting at the settlements	207
5. The post Witputs era	212
6. New admissions	219
7. Tenants	220
8. Properties outside the settlements	223
9. General assessment	227
<b>CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>232</b>
1. Introduction	232
2. General observations on	
2.1 The schism	233
2.2 The advent of the Congregational Church in the area	234
2.3 Consolidation	235
2.4 Post-Stewart era	237
2.5 The Rev. Saul Damon's term of office	237
2.5.1 African work	238
2.5.2 Prieska	238
2.5.3 Education	239
2.5.4 Decentralisation	239
2.5.5 Outstations	240
2.5.6 Golden jubilee celebrations	241
2.5.7 Church settlements	241
2.5.8 The eventful decades	244
2.6 Post decentralisation era	245

<b>APPENDIX I</b>	250
<b>APPENDIX II</b>	255
<b>APPENDIX III</b>	257
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	269
<b>SUMMARY</b>	272
<b>OPSOMMING</b>	275

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Original DR Mission Church building	2
Rev. Alex Stewart	3
Rev. C.W.H Schröder	5
Upington Congregational Church building	17
Upington manse	29
Rev. S.A. Horne	38
Rev. Saul Damon	44
Prieska United Congregational Church	55
Present Congregational Church building, Prieska	55
Foundation stone, Prieska Church	56
Paballelo Congregational Church foundation stone	72
Present Congregational Church Building, Paballelo	73
Original Manse, Paballelo Church	73
Rev. L.C. King	86
Original Kenhardt manse	92
Bloemsmond School	99
Original Carlton van Heerden High School building	107
Carlton van Heerden High School staff and learners, 1943	107
Kenhardt Church building	128
Kenhardt Church hall	128
Map (I)	141
Original Keimoes Church	146

Original Keimoes manse	147
Map (II)	147
The Rev. S. Bimray	172
The Rev. H.W.D. van dervii Linde	192

## **KEY TERMS**

South African Church History

History of the Congregational Church;

Congregationalism

Uppington

Kenhardt

Keimoes

Church Settlements

Education

Saul Damon

Lower Orange River Valley

## PREFACE

The intention of this study is to investigate the involvement of the Congregational Church in the North-western Cape. This area was served since the 1870s exclusively by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. Up to the time of the Congregational Church's entry, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was the only Christian denomination conducting mission work among the indigenous people living there. Scientific research has been conducted by the Rev. J.A.J. Steenkamp for the Dutch Reformed Church which is reflected in his M.Th. dissertation accepted by the University of Stellenbosch. The title of this dissertation is: *Die Christelike sending langs die benede Oranje met besondere verwysing na die werk van die N.G. Kerk in Korannaland.*" This source is listed in the bibliography of this study. On the contrary no research has been undertaken by the Congregational Church reflecting the circumstances which led to its entry into this field and its contribution to the upliftment of the community.

There are only two commemorative brochures dealing with the history of the Congregational Church's work in the North-western Cape. The one was written by the Rev. S. Damon entitled: *Die verhaal van vyftig jaar van Congregational Kerk werk (sic) 1902-1952.* It was written in popular form and intended for the member in the pew and also to mark the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the local churches in 1952. The other brochure was written to mark the 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kenhardt Congregational church. It was entitled: *Kenhardt Congregational Kerk, 1902-1979.* The author is not mentioned. Furthermore, there is the unpublished autobiography of the Rev. Damon which was written to coincide with his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. It is entitled: *Lewenservaringe van eerw. Saul Damon oor die afgelope eeu.*

In addition to these there are still two other applicable books: the one was written by the Rev. G.P. Ferguson entitled: *C.U.S.A. The Story of the Churches of the Congregational Union of South Africa.* It was published in 1940. It was not a scientific treatise but a popular history of the denomination and intended for the member in the pew. For a long time this was the only history available on the origin and work of the denomination in this country. The other publication was jointly written by the Revs. D.R. Briggs and J. Wing: *The Harvest and the Hope. The Story of Congregationalism in Southern Africa.* This book was not intended as a scholarly study of the

period covered in it, but in the words of the authors, it provided a “broad sweep” which “will fill the immediate need for a narrative of Congregational work and witness in this subcontinent”. (Briggs & Wing 1970, 9). At best it was an attempt at providing background history of the three participating bodies who were engaged in Church Union discussions. These were the Congregational Union of South Africa, the London Missionary Society and the Bantu Congregational Church. (The latter developed out of the work of the American Board Mission in Natal). In 1967 the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa came into being as a result of this merger. But even in this book not much has been written about the Congregational work in the North-western Cape.

The works referred to above represent the sum total of research done in recent years on the history of the Congregational Church’s involvement in the area. The contention is therefore that there is real need for more thorough research on the subject. Against this background this study was undertaken, and although there is no claim to completeness, it is a modest attempt at making some contribution towards remedying a deficiency which existed for far too long in Congregational historiography.

The main archival sources consulted are listed in the bibliography. These include minute books of the Church Councils and members’ meetings of the local churches, as well as the minutes of the Head Committee of the Settlements. Furthermore, baptismal registers and marriage registers which are still extant were examined. Relevant material in the State Archives in Cape Town and the Dutch Reformed Church’s Archives at Stellenbosch and relevant published material in the Public Library, Cape Town were also consulted. The secondary sources listed are the published works dealing with the general South African history and among these were publications of a specialized nature. These include R.E. van der Ross’s, *The Rise and Decline of Apartheid* and M. Hommel’s, *Capricorn Blues* as well as other literature listed.

Interviews were conducted, but the limiting factor there was that all people who had had direct dealings with events during the early part of the century, are no longer with us. The writer was therefore confined to conduct interviews with people who lived a few generations after the events. This is a serious limitation. By covering the first half-century of the Congregational

Church's involvement in the North-western Cape, a start has been made which I hope will open the way for more scientific research on the period subsequent to 1952. I found the work of the ministers who served in the area interesting and stimulating. Among them was the Rev. Saul Damon who, in his life-time has earned the title of 'Pioneer of the North-west' by the people who knew him. The extent of his work in the provision of schools, the development of church settlements and the extension of the work to an area far beyond the boundaries of the North-western Cape, have been dealt with. The incorporation of the African section of the community as part of his ministry has also been given attention to. The work of the other ministers of the denomination who served churches after decentralisation was also dealt with since they too left indelible footprints, in the words of the poet, "on the sands of time"<sup>1</sup>.

The attempts during the 1930s by the three denominations - the Congregational, the Methodist and the Presbyterian Churches - to unite organically, received attention. This was done because the local churches in the North-western Cape, like elsewhere, were also invited to express their opinion on the issue. The "Roaring Forties" as that period is referred to in this study, had made, to a limited extent, an impact mainly on the teachers' corps in the area. This was dealt with mainly because two leading members of the community at Upington accepted nomination on the Coloured Advisory Council is Rev. S. Damon & Mr. A.J. Ferreira.

One cannot express one's thanks adequately to all those who have made this thesis possible. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to the following who contributed to the completion of this study: Prof. R.M. Britz under whose guidance the research was conducted. His constructive criticism and helpful suggestions are highly appreciated. Furthermore, my thanks go to the staffs of the Dutch Reformed Church Archives at Stellenbosch University, the State Archives at Roeland Street, Cape Town and the South African Public Library in the Gardens, Cape Town. The ministers of Upington, Keimoes and Paballelo churches I wish to thank for giving me access to the local church archives.

They are Revs S.C. Britz, F.T. Du Plessis and J.A. Stuurman. I also wish to include Mr. T. Siwa of Kenhardt church as well as the Rev. Dennis, Jagers of Prieska who made relevant documents

---

<sup>1</sup> The quote is taken from H.W. Longfellow's poem 'A Psalm of life'.

in these churches available to me. Among other members of the clergy and laity who assisted me I wish to include Messrs. F.S. Mouton, a former secretary of the Upington church, the Rev. C. Groenewald, a former minister of the Paballelo church, the Rev. D.M. Abrahams, a former minister of the Upington church, Mr. Piet Nel of Bloemsmond as well as Mr. M Rabie.

I also wish to place on record my thanks for the help received from a number of people who assisted me with the final preparation of the material. They include the typists, Mesdames P. Briggs, P. Petersen, Miss M. Jansen and Mr. R.J.P. MacNicol. I wish to thank Messrs. Jeffrey Abrahams and Ed Smith for taking the photographs which are included in this thesis. I wish to thank also Mrs. Marie Braam for proof-reading the material.

Finally, I wish to express my appreciation to my wife, Susan, who gave me the much needed encouragement during my period of research.

H.W.D. van der Linde

Bellville

March, 2009.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Commencement of mission work in the lower Orange River Valley

Initially the first group of people to settle in the North Western Cape in the vicinity of the Orange River were Khoi groups known as Korannas. They moved from the Cape mainly because of pressure from whites who also trekked in the same direction, in search for better grazing. Like the Korannas, they found in the area near the River, sufficient water and pasturage for their livestock (Stewart, 1952, p 33). For some time this area was referred to as Korannaland.

Another group of people entering the area from the Colony was a coloured or mixed group known as Bastards<sup>1</sup>. More will be said about them later on. In 1876 the Cape Colonial Government made a treaty with two principal Koranna leaders in terms of which the boundary of the colony was to be “the most northerly permanent stream of the Orange River”. The problem that arose was that “the most northerly permanent stream” as defined in the treaty changed from year to year and both Koranna and San groups continued to seek their old grazing and hunting grounds (Marais, 1937, p 93). Friction developed among the groups when stock farmers accused the Korannas of stealing their cattle and sheep.

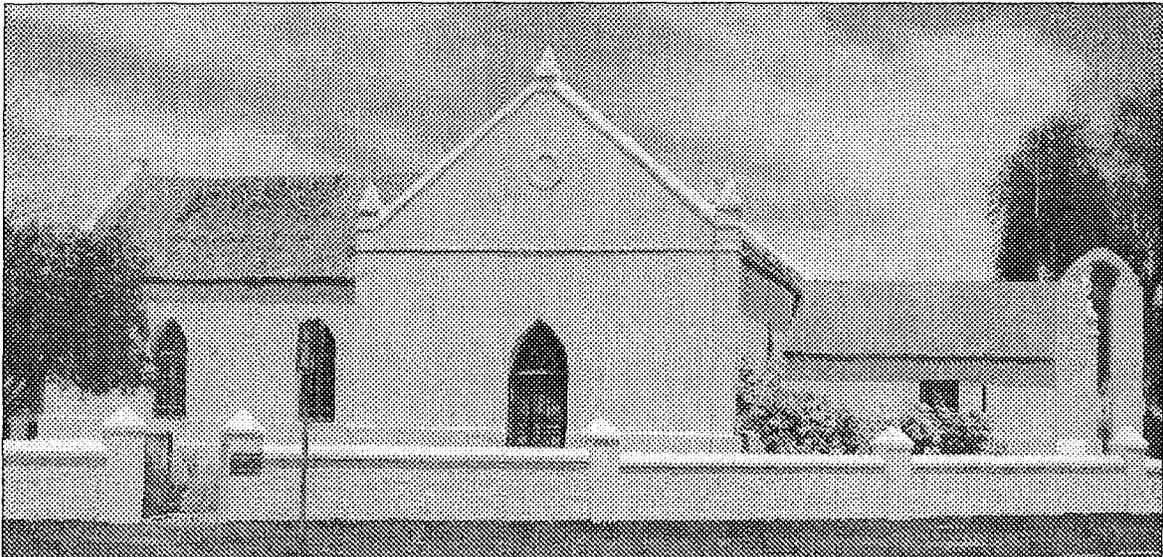
The commencement of mission work was the result of a combination of factors. There were people within the ranks of the white stock farmers who were of the opinion that mission work in the area would lead to a more stable situation. One of the farmers, a certain Kuhn who was an elder in the Dutch Reformed Church, took the initiative by soliciting the aid of other farmers to subscribe to the salary of a missionary to be stationed in Korannaland (Du Plessis, 1965, p 293). Once the money was collected for the

---

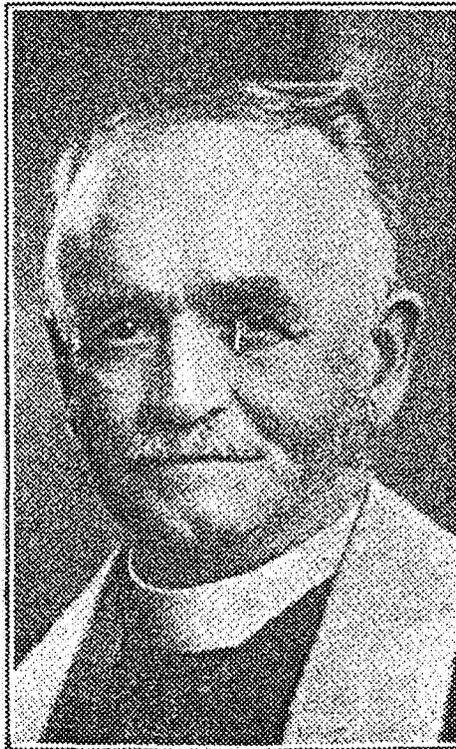
<sup>1</sup> The name “Bastards” has a negative connotation nowadays. But the particular group preferred it to distinguish them from other groups.

purpose it would be easy to persuade the Church authorities to supply a missionary.

It must, however, be borne in mind that the request for a missionary came, in the final analysis, from the people themselves. Klaas Lukas, a Koranna captain, who moved into the area somewhere in the 1870s, realising the importance of literacy for his people, sent a deputation in 1871 to the mission station at Amandelboom (present-day Williston) where the Rhenish missionaries J.H. Lutz and C. Schröder worked, requesting a missionary “to work among his people”. Schröder then approached the Dutch Reformed Church and offered his services to them if they had a placement for him. The Inland Mission Committee of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa received Klaas Lukas’ request but they did not have a missionary available from their own ranks to be placed at Koranaland at the time. Schröder’s approach to the Inland Mission Committee came in the nick of time. He was then accepted as missionary and appointed to work among Klaas Lukas’ people in the lower Orange River area (Stewart, 1952, p 53).



*Original Dutch Reformed Mission Church Building*



REV. ALEX STEWART.

*Rev. Alex Stewart*

## **2. The Rev Christiaan Wilhelm Heinrich Schröder**

It is important at this stage to make a few observations by way of introduction about the man who was appointed missionary among the Korannas. Schröder was South African born but of German descent. His father, the Rev. J.C. Schröder, was the Rhenish missionary at Wupperthal in the Western Cape. There Christian was born on 15 December, 1836 (Laubscher, p 1). As a young man he was sent to Worcester to be trained as a carpenter. After completing his training he proceeded to Cape Town to work, but after a severe attack of smallpox he decided to offer for the mission field. In the 1860s he taught at mission schools at Amandelboom, Schietfontein (present day Carnarvon) and later at De Tuin, south of Kenhardt. Before Schröder's departure for the Koranna mission he married Miss Lucia Kuhn, a daughter of M Kuhn of Amandelboom on 7 August 1872. On 13 October 1872 he was ordained as missionary at Worcester. It is of interest to note that the clergy who took part in the service of ordination were the Revs. Andrew Murray, J.H. Neethling, William Murray, H. Sutherland, C.H. Kuhn, B. Budler and L.F. Esselen.

The last three were apparently Rhenish missionaries.

When Schröder arrived at Olyvenhoutsdrift – the original name of Upington – early in 1871 Klaas Lukas was away on a hunt. Schröder then proceeded to Kakamas where he made contact with another Koranna captain, Klaas Pofadder. The latter tried to persuade him to start a mission station at Kakamas instead, but when Schröder returned to Olyvenhoutsdrift he realised the potential of that part of the area for agricultural pursuits, and he decided to settle there. There is no record that Klaas Lukas ever adopted Christianity, but he maintained a good relationship with the missionary (Stewart, 1952, p 54).

Schröder then set to work by erecting a place of worship and a manse on a site allocated to him by the Koranna leader. At this stage the other group referred to earlier on, entered the scene, viz. the people known as Bastards. They were of mixed descent made up of the descendants of former slaves, Khoi and white. With their sheep and cattle they moved from areas in the Cape Colony such as Victoria West and Carnarvon districts. While Schröder worked at Carnarvon, many of these people numbered among his parishioners (Stewart, 1952, p 53). When they approached the Orange River near Olyvenhoutsdrift they sent a deputation to Klaas Lukas to ask his permission to bring their starving animals over the Orange River. He readily acceded to their request and they then came in their numbers to what became their new home. Schröder then ministered to these new arrivals as well. Apparently the first church building erected on the site offered to them was not adequate in view of the increase in numbers of his congregation. Hence a new church was erected on a level site overlooking the Orange River. Schröder with his knowledge of carpentry played a major role with the erection of the church and manse. Men, women and children all co-operated with the erection of the building (Stewart, 1952, p 51).



*Rev. Schröder*

*Rev. Schröder*

### **3. Change in the character and composition of the mission**

As mentioned before, the mission was started originally as a Koranna mission station. But problems arose when Koranna and other indigenous groups continued to seek their grazing and hunting grounds which were now taken by white and Bastards newcomers. The Korannas, in retaliation, drove off the cattle of whites and Bastards alike (Marais, 1939, p 93). It led to armed clashes in 1878 and 1879. Under these circumstances the missionary's position became very difficult. There was even a plot to kill him and his family but it was timeously discovered by one of the farmers, Frederick Strauss of Matjies River. He alerted the missionary and the matter was reported to the nearest police outpost at Kenhardt. Schröder and his family then moved to Kenhardt for security reasons (De Villiers, 1950, p 4). Then the so-called Klaas Lukas war broke out. Government troops were sent from Cape Town to deal with the situation.

Captain McTaggart was in charge of the regular troops. He set up his camp outside Upington and it is still known to this day as McTaggerts Camp. The war dragged on and

placed quite a heavy strain on the provincial Government's resources. The cabinet became disturbed because the campaign lingered on, costing the Government ten thousand pounds (R20 000) a month with no end in sight.

It was then that the Special Magistrate, J. H. Scott, suggested that the Bastards be armed since they were familiar with the country and they also knew the Khoi. This the colonial government acceded to and with the aid of the Bastards the colonial troops expelled the Korannas from the area. At Scott's suggestion, the colonial government decided to establish landless farmers in Korannaland (Marais, 1939, p 94). The settlement was then renamed Gordonia after Sir Gordon Sprigg, the then prime minister of the Cape. Gordonia now became a Bastard settlement; the idea was that they would safeguard this part of the frontier against Khoi and San infiltrators. Furthermore, the Bastards had to undertake to keep the islands of the Orange River clear of undesirable people. In terms of this arrangement the Government stipulated that only Bastards would qualify as landowners or whites who attached themselves to them.

Scott justified this arrangement on the grounds that there were at the time a considerable number of dispossessed, landless Bastards in Bechuanaland, some of whom had fought on the side of the colonial forces against the Korannas and that they had been promised land. He further contended that the bastards were amenable to control, more so than even the white farmers. The implication of these developments was that the character and composition of Schröder's congregation changed from a Koranna to a predominantly Bastard mission church.

Schröder's ministry at Olyvenhoutsdrift was interrupted in 1879 when the Mission Committee of the Free State Dutch Reformed Church called him to the pastorate of Witziesshoek. There he laboured with a fair measure of success among the Basuto people until April 1883 (Laubscher, p 1). During his four-year absence from Olyvenhoutsdrift the congregation was ministered to by the Revs. Sterrenberg, W. P. De Villiers and G. Schonken respectively (De Villiers, 1950, p 5).

In 1883 Schröder was called back to Olyvenhoutsdrift. This second term of his ministry, which lasted until 1900, was significant because of developments with which he was directly associated. He realised that the Orange River could fulfill the same function as the Nile in Egypt. With the aid of two whites who settled in the area, viz. Messrs J.H. Scott and J.J. Lutz, a canal was built to lead water from the River to the adjacent land. In that way tracts of land near the river could be brought under irrigation. Schröder was very much involved in this project. The work was commenced in August 1883 and it was completed some 20 months later (Laubscher, p 2). The furrow was 22.4 kilometers in length and had an average width of two meters.

Olyvenhoutsdrift was now renamed Upington after Sir Thomas Upington, the then Attorney General of the Cape. The completion of this ambitious irrigation project was no mean achievement. The ground below the canal was divided into agricultural plots and Bastard families were settled there. On these plots they cultivated grain, fruit and vegetables (Marais, 1937, p 95). Schröder was also responsible for the erection of a watermill at Upington which became a source of revenue for the church.

Although all these developments seemed to augur well for the Bastards community living in the area, Marais made a very pertinent observation when he noted that the Bastards failed to maintain themselves. What further contributed to this was the fact that the Government made no attempt to prevent the Bastards from selling their agricultural land which they held on individual tenure, to whites. Moreover, some were thriftless and inclined to be extravagant, which resulted in them spending more than they made. The situation was further aggravated when unscrupulous traders and other whites issued debts in bonds and landed property and when these could not be met, the properties were sold. This accounts for the fact that a number of these properties changed hands. Once a number of whites obtained a footing among the Bastards, the character of the community was destroyed (Marais, 1939, p 95).

With whites settling in fair numbers in the area Schröder initially gave spiritual oversight to them as well. By 1893 a separate congregation for whites with a Dutch Reformed

Church background was started at Upington. The Rev. A.G.T. Schoeven was stationed at Upington as the first resident minister (Laubscher, p 3). It needs further to be observed that Schröder was also involved in the establishment of a labour colony at Kakamas. Whilst this is another chapter in the colourful life of the Rev. Schröder, it is not strictly part of this study.

#### **4. The schism**

It is important to consider the causes which led to the split within the Dutch Reformed Mission Church at Upington. Factors which contributed to the ultimate split include the following: firstly, the Rev. Schröder agreed in 1875 to serve in a part-time capacity on the Poor Relief Commission,<sup>2</sup> since the Church had decided to start a labour colony at Kakamas Drift. Whilst Schröder was perhaps a very good choice, given the experience he gained with the irrigation of land along the Orange River in the vicinity of Upington, it did not augur well for his ministry.

In his fairly comprehensive study the Rev. W. Steenkamp made mention of the fact that Schröder's parishioners complained that he could not do justice to his work as their minister while he divided his time and attention between the two areas of responsibility (Steenkamp, 1953, p III). That it did affect his work is evident from a letter bearing 99 signatures of members sent to the Commission under whose jurisdiction mission work fell. In it they petitioned the Commission to take steps to ensure that their minister confine himself to his pastoral duties in the Gordonia district. Unfortunately the Commission did not do anything about it, which is to be understood since Schröder's appointment was at their request. The commission considered the work at Kakamas Drift as both necessary and urgent.

There can therefore be no doubt that the dual position Schröder held affected his work in the church adversely. This is reflected in a drop in the members' subscriptions or church

---

<sup>2</sup> The Afrikaans term is: Armsorgkommissie.

“Dues”. The result was that the Church Council had to fall back on other sources of income to balance its budget, such as the revenue generated by the watermill. Furthermore, Schröder could only pay the Keimoes church a visit once a month.

Another factor that deepened the rift between minister and congregation was Schröder’s involvement in party politics of the day. In 1899 he agreed to stand as candidate for the Afrikaner Bond Party in the constituency of Prieska. From both white and coloured sections of the community the suspicion came that the Rev. Schröder no longer cared much for the interests of the Coloureds. Moreover, the coloured community was totally opposed to the Bond Party. Schröder was nominated unopposed and thus became a member of the old Cape Parliament. The Mission Committee<sup>3</sup> did have reservations about this step of Schröder since they felt that it would harm his work as a minister in the area. He was, however, adamant that his motivation was not personal gain or prestige but only the material and spiritual wellbeing of the people.

His next cardinal blunder was when he tried to solicit the support of his congregation for the party he represented in Parliament. In the commemorative brochure issued by the Congregational churches in the Northern Cape on the occasion of their golden jubilee celebrations in 1952, the Rev. Saul Damon made mention of a special meeting of the congregation held on 25 August 1898 chaired by the Rev. Schröder.<sup>4</sup> The meeting started with a devotional address based on Ezekiel 37:7: “So though a son of man, I have set thee a watchman into the house of the Lord; therefore thou shalt bear the word of my mouth, and warn them from me.” (AV). In his address he pointed out the flaws of the Rhodes Party and by contrast the advantages of the Party he represented. The meeting was adjourned to enable the people to decide which party in Parliament they should support.

The next meeting was, however, a stormy one and ended in uproar; some of the flock

---

<sup>3</sup> Afrikaans name: *Sending Kommissie*. *Sending Kommissie* is truly translated (Mission Committee).

<sup>4</sup> The brochure referred to is entitled: *Die verhaal van vyftig jaar van Congregational Kerk werk (sic) in die Noordweste, 1903-1952*. The author, though not mentioned, was the Rev. Saul Damon indeed.

never entered the church again (Stewart, 1952, p 67). The episode did not lead to a formal split within the church but it was indicative of unhappiness among many parishioners in the church at their minister's involvement in party politics. While these developments took place the spiritual life of the church suffered. Schröder admitted, for instance, in 1899, that attendances at prayer meetings had declined, which was a symptom of the low spiritual ebb the church had reached at the time (Steenkamp, 1953, p 115). He also admitted that the erstwhile good relationship which existed between the Dutch Reformed Church or "Mother Church" and the Mission or "Daughter Church" was no longer present. That was also the case of the relationship between the white and coloured sections of the community. So whites, for instance, showed reluctance in giving financial support to the Mission church as they had done in the past.

The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) brought matters to a head. After the fall of Pretoria and Bloemfontein, conventional warfare effectively came to an end. This ushered in the second phase of the war, namely, the unconventional or guerrilla phase. For the British as well as Republican forces, the Cape was important. There was, for instance, the rail link between Cape Town and the Republics. For the British it was important as a means of communication to transport reinforcements, ammunition and equipment during the war. Moreover, the Cape had a reservoir of manpower for British and Boer forces alike. Thousands of the Cape Afrikaners were commandeered to serve in the British arm, but it did not prevent fair numbers of so-called Cape rebels from joining the war on the Republican side (Bart & Scholtz, 2003, p 318). During the later part of the war the British increasingly made use of coloured and black colonials to fight on their side. This resulted in a deterioration of relations between Afrikaners and particularly the Coloureds.

The Northern Cape was important for the Republican forces because of its proximity to the Free State. Consequently commandos from the Free State under Commandants Jooste and Steenkamp moved into the area and hoisted the Republican flag at Upington. Schröder sympathised with the Republican forces and agreed to serve as chairman of a newly created Council of war. Possibly he laboured under the impression that he could serve the interests of his parishioners better if he aligned himself with the Republican

cause (Laubscher, p 4). He told the people that their ties with Queen Victoria were severed and that they were henceforth under the control of the Free State and subject to its laws. This was a very risky move given the fact that the people always felt indebted to the Queen who gave their royal assent that the Gordonia district be proclaimed a Bastard area.

Then followed an incident which changed the course of events dramatically. An impetuous officer rode to the hotel and gave "orders" that rations and forage for an advance of 500 men be arranged immediately as troops would arrive within two days' time. The troops did not arrive; only the officer and his men. But the bluff succeeded and the Free State commando fled the district as they feared that they would be no match for 500 trained men (Stewart, 1952, p 67). Schröder fled but he was arrested at Kakamas Drift on 2 April 1900. The charges brought against him were that he sympathised with the northern Republics and that he was therefore a Cape rebel (Steenkamp, 1953, p 115). He spent seven months in prison in Upington. But, when it was rumoured that Boer commandos were on their way to Upington to rescue him, he was secretly moved to Kenhardt one night. After a month, however, when it became clear that there was no substance in the rumour, he was brought back to Upington. Thereafter he was taken to Tokai prison in Cape Town where spent a year on parole. On 30 September 1902, he, together with other rebels, was sentenced to nine months imprisonment and a fine of £500 (R1,000) (Laubscher, p 4).

At the end of the war in 1902 the British adopted a conciliatory position and Schröder, together with others, was granted amnesty. But he was then a broken man in spirit and in health. What was particularly humiliating to him was the fact that the people who testified against him in court and the prison guards included coloureds who numbered among his own parishioners. While still in detention Schröder tendered his resignation to the Mission Committee as minister of the Upington Congregation on 11 December 1900. The Mission Committee accepted his resignation and expressed appreciation for the work he had done in the area.

The Mission Committee then sent the Rev. Daneel to take charge of the work. Both the Committee as well as Schröder erroneously laboured under the impression that a schism could be avoided if a successor could be appointed immediately. Unfortunately, matters by then had reached the stage where a split was inevitable. The Rev. Daneel could not take over immediately; in the meantime, matters developed to the point where a return to the situation prior to the Anglo-Boer War was no longer possible.

From the correspondence<sup>5</sup> of the Rev. D.W. Drew, a Congregational minister, and the commemorative articles the Rev. A. Stewart wrote for "The Congregationalist" in 1952, the following picture emerged. After the arrest of the Rev. Schröder the Upington Church Council met where a decision was taken to sever ties with the Dutch Reformed Church and to instruct their legal advisor to ask the Mission Committee to transfer the Church property consisting of the site and buildings, to their local trustees. According to a letter the Rev. Drew wrote to Dr. Andrew Murray, this meeting took place prior to his (i.e. Drew's) visit to Upington. How it happened that the Church Council approached the Congregational Union of South Africa (C.U.S.A.)<sup>6</sup> for a minister becomes clear from the correspondence the Rev. D.W. Drew conducted with Dr. Andrew Murray, referred to earlier on. The Upington Church Council first approached the local Agent of the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.) Mr. David Mudie, in Cape Town with the request to supply them with a minister. It is to be observed that although the L.M.S. had withdrawn from the bulk of its mission work in South Africa, from the 1840s onwards it still retained some of its mission work in the Northern Cape (cf. Van der Linde, 1993, p 418).

When this request of the Upington church reached Mudie, he referred it to the General Secretary of the C.U.S.A. since his Society did not operate in the Northwestern Cape. On receiving this request, the General Secretary of the C.U.S.A., the Rev J. P. Ritchie, acted cautiously since it was neither his denomination's policy nor its *modus operandi* to interfere in the work of another denomination. He first appealed to the Dutch Reformed

---

<sup>5</sup> The correspondence referred to is deposited in the Dutch Reformed Church's Archives at Stellenbosch.

<sup>6</sup> The old name of the Congregational Church was the Congregational Union of South

Church authorities to engage in some discussion in order to arrive at an amicable arrangement between the two denominations. Ritchie offered to send a person to the area for the duration of the war without prejudice, and that the matter be reviewed after the end of the war. The response from the Dutch Reformed Church authorities was a negative one. They contended that the properties were theirs and that they could not sanction any minister of another denomination to interfere in their work. Furthermore, they pointed out that not all the people who belonged to the church joined the breakaway group. They also argued that there was enough room in the area for the Dutch Reformed Church to minister to its people.

It may be observed that subsequent developments showed that they were correct in their contention that there was room for both Churches to operate in the area.

The C.U.S.A. Executive Committee then sent the Rev. D.W. Drew to conduct an on the spot investigation about the situation at Upington. The report of Drew's visit and his findings are still extant.<sup>7</sup>

Drew arrived at Upington after the middle of March 1901 and spent 10 days there. On his arrival he found that the meeting referred to, had already been held, where the decision to terminate the congregation's links with the Dutch Reformed Church was taken. This decision was confirmed at two successive meetings. The first was a meeting of principal members and elders of the local church. This meeting took place on 28 March 1901. At that meeting, the Commandant, Major Birkebech, was present as well as the Rev. D.W. Drew. There the following resolutions were passed:

- 1) That the congregation sever its ties with the Dutch Reformed Church, the reason being that the people were dissatisfied with the leadership and in particular that partiality of the Church. The people desired more freedom with the planning of the

---

Africa (abbreviated C.U.S.A.)

<sup>7</sup> The report referred to appeared in a letter Drew wrote to Dr. Andrew Murray dated 1 May 1901.

education of their children as provided for by the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>8</sup>

- 2) That the Inland Commission transfers all church properties including the land where the mills were erected to trustees appointed by them.
- 3) The meeting mandated the Rev. D.W. Drew to meet with the Inland Commission with a view to execute these resolutions (Steenkamp, 1953, p 120).

The elders who signed these resolutions on behalf of the congregation were A. Louw, Johs Zwart, Job Jansen, J Diergaardt, and D. Mouton. The properties referred to were those held in trust by the Inland Commission and consisted of the church, the manse, the teacher's house and the watermill and irrigated land near Keimoes.

These resolutions were confirmed at a meeting of the whole congregation – i.e. as many as lived within easy reach of Upington, held on the first Sunday of April 1901. Drew mentioned in his correspondence with Dr. Andrew Murray that he was present at both meetings but that he withdrew before voting took place. This was obviously done not to create the impression that he might influence the voting.

In pursuance of the request of the meeting of 28 March 1901 Drew made attempts at contacting the Inland Mission Committee so that he could explain the position from his perspective, but he was unsuccessful in arranging a meeting with the Committee. He then tried to set up a meeting between himself and the Rev. W.R. Alheit of Ceres who was chairman of the Inland Mission Committee. When this failed, Alheit advised him to put his case in writing to the Committee. He preferred, however, to address the Commission personally, so he tried to solicit the aid of Dr. Andrew Murray to facilitate a meeting between himself and members of the Inland Commission. But this failed as the Commission was not prepared to depart from the position it took as referred to earlier on.

---

<sup>8</sup> This refers to an objection parents raised against the Rev. Schröder with regard to the teaching of English in mission schools under his control. He was apparently not in favour of it. The objection was brought to the attention of the Education Department in August

In fairness to the Inland Commission (a Mission Committee), it is to be observed that a genuine attempt was made to persuade the dissident group to return to the fold. The Rev. D.S. Botha was deputised to conduct a survey in order to ascertain the extent of the schism and to persuade the dissident group to return. But he reported that the elders of the group consistently refused to meet him (Steenkamp, 1953, p 124). Their reason was that they had broken with the Dutch Reformed Church and saw no purpose in engaging in any further discussions (Stewart, 1950, p 6). Botha's finding was that not all the people had joined the breakaway group; a small section remained loyal to the Dutch Reformed Church, and that they were cared for by the Mother Church. How many people remained loyal to the Church is difficult to determine. The Rev. D. de Villiers in his commemorative brochure listed seven members (De Villiers, 1950, p 6). It may conceivably be seven families but there are no reliable statistics available either to confirm or refute this figure.

While the Dutch Reformed Mission Church resumed the work at Upington and the surrounding areas, the Rev. Schröder returned to the town but no longer as their minister. He resumed his duties as superintendent at Kakamas in 1903. The remnant of the loyal group in the congregation who retained ties with the Dutch Reformed Mission Church was replaced under the care of the Rev. J.W.L. Hanekom. By 1905 Schröder's health deteriorated to such an extent that he was compelled to relinquish his position at Kakamas. He died on 18 February 1912 and was buried at Upington (Laubscher, p 5).

## **5. Advent of Congregationalism in the area**

When it became clear that the break in the Upington church was final and attempts at resolving the problems proved futile, the Executive Committee of the C.U.S.A. deputed the Rev. James Ramage, the minister of the Paarl Bethel Congregational Church, to pay a visit to Upington in order to find direction about the best way forward. He reported, after visiting the area, that the split was a *fait accompli* and that the people who had severed

---

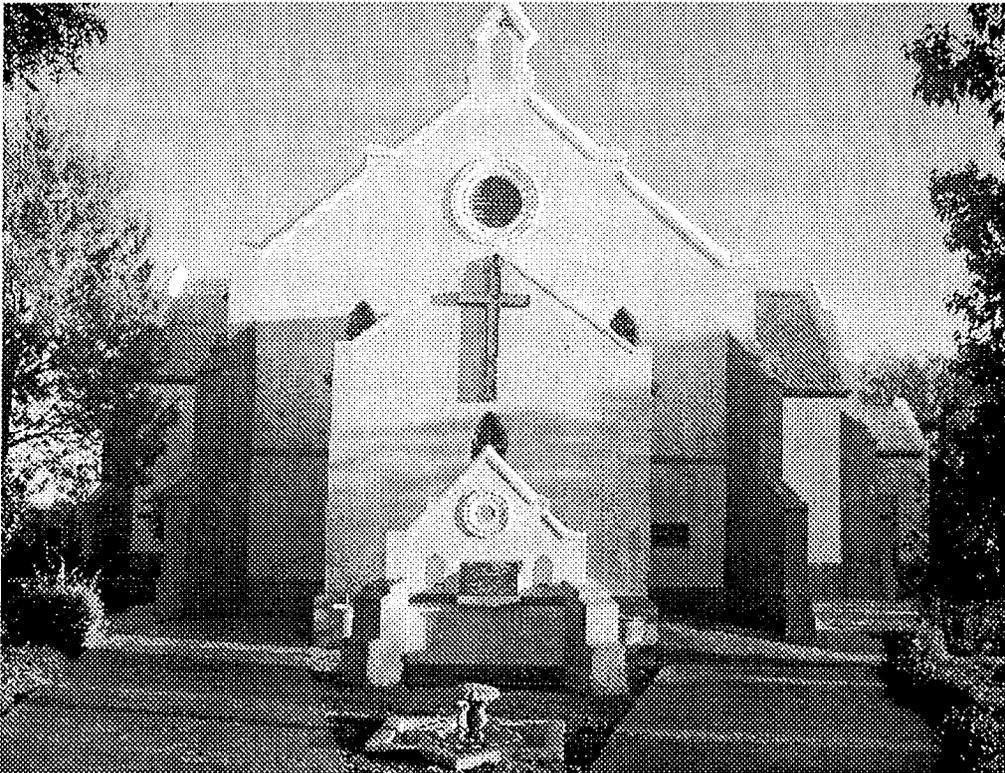
1900 (Steenkamp, 1953, p 119).

ties with the Dutch Reformed Church needed pastoral care. The Executive Committee then accepted the group into the Congregational Union as an associate church. Permission was then given to them to extend a call to the Rev. Alexander Stewart, the then minister of the Heidelberg Congregational Church in the Cape. Stewart came out to this country in 1898 from Scotland to minister to the Heidelberg Church. Almost his entire ministry which extended over 52 years in this country was spent in coloured work (Briggs & Wing, 1970, p 226). He acquired a facility in Afrikaans and this was possibly a strong consideration why the Executive Committee suggested him to minister to the group.

Stewart accepted the call to Upington and in January 1902 he took final leave of his congregation at Heidelberg. In an article published in "The Congregationalist" of 1952 under the heading: "Were those the days?" Stewart related vividly his experience of the journey he and his family made by ox-wagon from Heidelberg to De Aar and from there by train to Prieska (Stewart, 1952, p 68). The journey to De Aar had to be covered by ox-wagon as it was the nearest rail link from Heidelberg to Upington. From De Aar they were escorted by a convoy of Border Scouts, i.e. coloured troops under white officers. The entire journey was covered in three months and a week, and they arrived at Upington on 20 April 1902 where they received a warm welcome from the people and were then taken to the teacher's house since Mrs. Schröder and her family was still in the manse. From there they were taken to the church and were informed that the building belonged to the people and that he (Stewart) was to conduct services in the building.

After the termination of the Anglo-Boer War, the Dutch Reformed Church, through the Inland Commission, returned to Upington and resumed its work among the faithful remnants. The problem was that the church building was now used by the Congregational or Independent group as they were then referred to. A request to the Rev. Stewart and his Church Council to vacate the premises was not heeded since they believed that the property was vested in the local church. It was believed that the people would return to the fold once the question of the ownership of the property was settled.

The background to this property issue is referred to in the article written by the Rev. Stewart to which reference was already made (Stewart, August, 1952, p 55). It would appear that the Church Council took a decision when the government passed transfer to individual land owners in the area, that the property used by the Church be transferred, as well as being held in trust by trustees appointed by them. The Rev. Schröder, who was to arrange for the implementation of this decision, suggested to the attorney that the said properties be vested in the Inland Commission. The Church Council was apparently oblivious of this development hence their insistence that the properties were vested in the local church.



*Upington Congregational Church*

The Inland Commission then applied to the Supreme Court in Cape Town for a *rule nisi* so as to enable the members loyal to the Dutch Reformed Church to repossess the buildings and to worship there. The application was opposed by the Congregational Church. The case was heard in the Cape Supreme Court in December 1902. The plaintiff

was Wilhelm Rudolph Alheit, chairman of the Inland Commission, and the defendants were Alexander Stewart, the Congregational minister, and Job Jansen, J. Zwart, Albert Louw, Daniel Mouton, Lewis Kotzee, J. Diergaardt and A. van Rooi – all members of the Congregational Church Council. The Court's finding was that the property in question was vested in the Inland Commission. It therefore ruled that the defendants should vacate the properties at both Upington and Keimoes immediately. The plaintiff was also awarded costs. This brought the problem of the ownership of the church properties to an end.

The option now open to the Congregational group was to start litigation against Schröder for failing to implement the Church Council's decision on the property issue. But a civil case would have been costly bearing in mind that the church already had incurred a lot of expenses with the case referred to. Moreover, even if they were to have been successful in a case against Schröder it would not have been a foregone conclusion that they would have regained the properties. Also, Schröder was still in prison at the time. Purely on humanitarian grounds it was perhaps best not to pursue the matter.

This whole case brought the Congregational group to the crossroads. The keys of the church were handed over on demand to the Messenger of the Court. An application to the Church Council of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church to hold a farewell service in the church building was refused (Stewart, 1952, p 69).

The Congregational Church members then held their first service after vacating the church building on a plot under peach trees. After the service the Rev Stewart explained to the people how the court ruling and its implementation affected them. The choice the people had was either to return to the church where they had worshipped before, but it would have meant returning to the Dutch Reformed Church, or alternatively to stay out. He made it clear that they should not consider him; a call could easily be arranged for him to another Congregational Church. His furniture was in any case at that time still at De Aar. After some discussion a senior member of the congregation proposed that they stay out and start afresh. This the meeting enthusiastically endorsed. They then had to

find new premises to erect a sanctuary. The Feris family who owned a property near the River to the west of the existing building offered a piece of ground for the erection of a church and a manse.

The day after the meeting volunteers went to the islands on the river to chop poles while others cut reeds and the material was transported by wagons to the site. By the end of the week a temporary structure was completed approximately 15m x 9m and it was roofed. The Sunday, exactly a week after they had vacated the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, the temporary sanctuary was filled by enthusiastic worshippers. Down at Keimoes, some 48 kilometers from Upington, the Diergaardt family donated a site in Kruger Street where the church building was erected later. At Kenhardt the Congregational group also had to vacate the church belonging to the local authorities and erected there a place of worship. The present church building at Upington was completed in 1904.

## **6. Conclusion**

Looking at the events which led up to the schism in the Upington church and the advent of Congregationalism in the area the following observations can be made.

Firstly, the break in the church was the result of dissatisfaction between the minister and his parishioners; all evidence supports this contention. The unpopularity of the minister was unfortunately transferred to the denomination he belonged to. Admittedly attempts were made from both sides to avoid a split but these were unfortunately too late to alter the situation.

Secondly, the Congregational Union did not interfere in the situation; it entered the scene at the request of the group who seceded. After attempts at resolving the problem failed, the denomination took the group under its wing. Yet, despite this unfortunate development, it would appear that the relationship between the Rev. Stewart and his Dutch Reformed counterpart was reasonably good. The Rev. Alheit referred, for instance, in a letter to the Inland Commission Committee dated 6 February 1903 that he made

contact with the Rev. Stewart on a few occasions and that it was on a very friendly level. Rev. Alheit made a very significant observation in this letter when he mentioned that the real cause of the problem which led to the schism was racial – “Niet Boer versus Engelsch maar blank versus gekleurd”. Evidence of a fairly good relationship on the personal level between the clergy was shown when the Rev. J.A. van Niekerk was inducted as resident minister at Upington; the ministers present on that occasion were the Revs. C. Schröder, the emeritus missionary, Carel van der Merwe, and A. Stewart of the Independent or Congregational Church.

In conclusion, two final observations: firstly, the secessionist group who joined the ranks of the Congregational Union was known as the “Independent Church”. There is a history behind this designation going back to 18<sup>th</sup> century England with the rise of the Free Church tradition, when the name “Independents” was used to emphasize the fact that the members of this group had separated from the Anglican or State Church of the day (cf. Walker, 1958, p 407ff). Here in this country the name was again used in connection with mission churches that were under the L.M.S. but had decided to stand on their own feet and sever ties with the parent body.

Here in the Northwest Cape the Congregational group was known as the “Independent Church” since they broke ties with the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. From the 1940s onwards the name “Congregational” gained more common acceptance and “Independent” was tacitly dropped. Secondly, the Congregational or Independent group joined the C.U.S.A. as an associate local church. In terms of the constitution of the C.U.S.A. an “associate Church is a Church which enjoys spiritual fellowship with the Union (i.e. the C.U.S.A.) but which has not accepted the Constitution” (C.U.S.A. Constitution, p 13). After the experience the Congregational group had with this property issue and the subsequent outcome of it, the perception arose that acceptance of the denomination automatically implied the vesting of the church’s fixed properties in joint trustees, three of whom were nominated by the denomination and three by the local church. Whilst this was not necessarily the case since the local church in the Congregational tradition has always enjoyed the right to decide on the vesting of its properties in its own way, the

perception persisted. It is against this background that the decision of the churches of the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts to joint as associate churches must be seen.

## CHAPTER 2

### CONSOLIDATION

#### 1. The term of office of the Rev. Alexander Stewart, 1902-1917

##### 1.1 Introduction

The task of establishing and consolidating Congregationalism in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts fell to the lot of the Rev. Stewart. He was faced with several important challenges when he arrived at Upington on 20 April 1902. One was to erect a sanctuary on the site donated to the church by the Feris family. His introduction to the church was quite different to normal Congregational practice. He was not formally inducted as there was no other Congregational minister to officiate at such a service. But on the first Sunday service after his arrival, one of the elders welcomed him and his family on behalf of the church.

The disruptive effects of the Anglo-Boer War and the ensuing schism in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church was evident. There were young people to be enrolled in the confirmation class and couples to be married. This all fell to the lot of Stewart to handle. Hence within the first month he had 200 people in the confirmation class; weddings for a number of months averaged three couples per week (Damon, 152, p 7).

The plans for the erection of a church building at Upington were prepared by the Rev. William Dower, minister of the Union Congregational Church, Port Elizabeth. The building was completed in 1904. The situation at Keimoes was similar to that of Upington. The Supreme Court ruling on the ownership of the church property at Upington also applied to Keimoes. The people who aligned themselves with the Independent or Congregational group left the church. On the site given to them in Kruger Street by the Diergaardt family a temporary wattle and daub structure was erected instead of a permanent building. But before the building could be completed the First World War broke out in 1914. That caused a delay in the building operations.

Work on the building was resumed only after the end of the war in 1918. The result was that the building was only completed in 1923 during the ministry of the Rev. S. Horne, the successor of the Rev. Stewart.

As far as the status of the Keimoes church is concerned it needs to be observed that it was regarded as a branch of the Upington church (Stewart, 1952, p 55). Keimoes members were expected to attend, for instance, quarterly communion services at Upington. But the Keimoes church enjoyed a fair measure of autonomy. They elected their own Church Council and held their own members' and council meetings. The minutes of these meetings and the decisions taken there were reported to the Upington church (cf. Upington Church Minutes, 25.01.1919). There are indications though that Keimoes people were not always happy with their subordinate status in relation to the Upington church. A case in point was when, in 1919, one of the elders, Br. N. Theron, suggested that consideration be given to the severing of ties with the Upington church. He argued that it would enable the church to be more self-sufficient instead of being tied to the Upington church's apron strings (Ibid). Nothing was mentioned about this matter in subsequent meetings, which does suggest that there was not sufficient support for this idea. Obviously, at the time Keimoes would not have been able to support a minister on a full-time basis.

The Kenhardt church, by contrast, was always treated as a separate church; it was some 140 kilometers from Upington and that was perhaps one of the main reasons why it enjoyed complete autonomy. However, Kenhardt was served by the Rev. Schröder prior to the schism. It was not unaffected by developments at Upington and when the Rev. Stewart moved to Upington under escort of the Border Scouts, they had to pass through Kenhardt. The reason for this roundabout route was that Upington was not linked to De Aar by rail. The railway line from De Aar to Upington was only completed in 1915. When Stewart passed through Kenhardt he was approached by elders of the local Dutch Reformed Mission church with the request that he should serve them as well. It appeared that quite a number of the congregation was prepared to join the Congregational Church particularly since they were like a flock without a shepherd.

Stewart could not give them a definite answer since the war was not yet over but he promised to pay them a visit at a later stage. When he did go to Kenhardt he had a meeting with the people who decided to align themselves with the Congregational Church. This meeting took place in the home of one of their old members, Sr. Hanna Charles.

In her home they held services initially; afterwards they used the Dutch Reformed Mission church building. But when the Dutch Reformed Church resumed its work in the area they had to vacate the premises. The solution for them came when the local authorities made plots available to those people who did not own properties in the town. This enabled the church to acquire a site in the area where a temporary structure was erected to hold divine services on Sundays, and during the week it served as a school classroom (Kenhardt Congregational Kerk brochure, 1902-1979, p 4).

The permanent building was completed in 1911. The inscription on the foundation stone is in Dutch and simply states that it was laid to the glory of God.<sup>1</sup> The date of the establishment of the church is given as 1902 and the completion of the building itself 1911. There was also the Old Testament text “Ebenezer” (1 Sam. 7:12, OV). The name of the person who laid the stone is not mentioned; in all probability it was laid by the Rev. Stewart.

The authors of “The Harvest and the Hope” noted that Stewart introduced Congregationalism to the local churches of Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt since the people who came over from a Dutch Reformed church background were not familiar with Congregational practices (Briggs & Wing, 1970, p 224). But it needs to be observed that the Rev. Schröder who started the work in the area came from a Rhenish background and he introduced the practice of congregational meetings where deacons and elders were elected (De Villiers, 1950, p 7). This, incidentally, is common practice in the Congregational tradition. The Rev. de Villiers in his commemorative brochure referred to earlier on, mentioned that the Upington Dutch Reformed Mission church only became truly Dutch Reformed in character and system when the Rev. J.A van Niekerk was

---

<sup>1</sup> The inscription of the foundation at the main entrance of the church: Independent Kerk Gesticht 1902. Hierdie Steen is gelê ter ere van God Gebouwd 1911 Eben-Haezer.

introduced as resident minister at Upington in 1904. Prior to his arrival the church was run along Rhenish lines (Ibid).

In that respect, it was not too difficult for the Rev. Stewart to introduce a Congregational system of church government. But he followed, in many respects, the mode of ministry used by the Rev. Schröder. He retained, for instance, the offices of elected elders and deacons with which the people were familiar. This system remained in operation throughout the period covered in this study. The congregational or church meetings remained a regular feature and according to the minutes of the three churches these meetings were well attended.

## **1.2 Education**

An important feature of the work of a minister in a non-white church was the provision of schools where children in the parish could acquire at least a basic education. This was another important task of the Rev. Stewart, namely, in each of the three main centres under his care. The problem he had to face was the recruitment of qualified teachers to run the schools. The Gordonia district was quite far from the main centres in the country. In 1902 he managed to obtain the services of a qualified teacher from Johannesburg to teach at the Upington mission school. But this teacher did not stay there long; after the end of the Anglo-Boer War he returned to his home in Johannesburg. An approach was then made to an African teacher fully qualified to teach there. But he was not prepared to come to Upington because of the town's isolation. For a while Stewart managed to obtain the services of an English-speaking lady to teach in the school. But when she left, he had no alternative but to teach in the school himself although he held, at that time, no teaching qualification. He then entered for the T.3 examination of the Cape Education Department. The T.3 certificate was the minimum qualification laid down by the Department of Education for candidates who wished to equip themselves for the teaching profession. He passed this examination and thereafter he could be appointed on a permanent basis as principal of the school in 1909.

He was then able to prepare suitable candidates to equip themselves and who passed Standard 6

(Grade 8) for the T.3 examination. The reason why the Department of Education allowed primary school principals in the province to train teachers in mission schools was because of a lack of training schools for coloured candidates. This was referred to in the report of the Superintendent-General of Education in 1906 (SGE Report, 30.09.1906, p 26). Among the teachers who received their training during this time that he was principal were: Martin Jansen, Johanna van Rooi, Henry van Wyk, Nicolas Swartz, Ragel Coetzee and Katrina van Wyk. In this way, Stewart was able to meet the need for teachers in the three mission schools under his management. By 1917 when he left the Northwestern Cape there were three qualified teachers at Upington, three at Kenhardt and two at Keimoes mission schools respectively. With the improvement of the staffing situation Stewart could then relinquish his teaching duties and devote his full time to his ministerial duties.

The management of these church or mission schools was entrusted to school committees elected by the respective Church Councils. There is a reference in the 1919 Upington Church Council minutes to a committee of six members elected to manage the school (Upington Church Council minutes, 19.05.1919). The Church Council also fixed the school fees the parents had to pay for their children who were attending school. This ranged from 2 pennies (2 cents) per child per week in the sub-standards to a shilling (10c) per child in Standard 6 (Grade 8).

After Stewart's departure from Upington the Cape Education Department encouraged mission schools operating in the same towns to amalgamate so that resources and manpower could be pooled. For that reason the Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt mission schools under the Dutch Reformed Mission and Congregational churches amalgamated and became united schools.

### **1.3 Conclusion of Stewart's ministry**

In the course of time it became clear that the work was too much for one person to manage. Quarterly communion services were held at Upington and Kenhardt. The growth in membership claimed more time and attention of the minister. In 1918 the Kenhardt church alone had a communicant membership of 400 (The Congregationalist, April 1918, p 11). The congregation

was scattered, covering a radius of 160 kilometers. The situation was no different in the case of Upington and Keimoes. The obvious solution would have been the settlement of a resident minister there. But the congregation was at the time not in a position to support a minister of their own.

Concerning his work in Gordonia and Kenhardt, the Rev. Stewart wrote, in retrospect, some 38 years after he left there: “ministering to such a large flock was not an easy task. There was no railway then, motor cars had not been heard of, travelling was by ox-wagon or ox-cart and most of the visiting was done on horseback” (Stewart, 1952, p 69).

At times he was away from home for a month on end. The overall situation was that his parishioners were scattered over an area of 240 kilometers and from north to south 480 kilometers. On top of it the extreme heat of Gordonia caused Mrs. Stewart’s health to break down. In 1917 he thought it was wise to consider a change, and when a call from his former church at Heidelberg, Cape was extended to him, he accepted it. He held his last Church Council meeting at Upington on 23 July 1917.

At that meeting a committee of 20 Church Council members was elected to supervise the affairs of the church during the period of vacancy. The meeting appointed the brethren H. Jansen as chairman, P. Theron as secretary, and C. Jansen as treasurer. It was also decided to inform the Executive Committee of the denomination of the resignation of the Rev. Stewart and to request them to appoint a consultant to serve the church until a minister could be settled there (Upington Church Council minutes, 23.07.1917).

That brought to an end the pioneering ministry of the Rev. Stewart, but as will be seen later, he afterwards did quite a lot of deputation work for the denomination in the area because of this long association with the people and the way he related to them.

## 2. The interregnum, 1917-1923

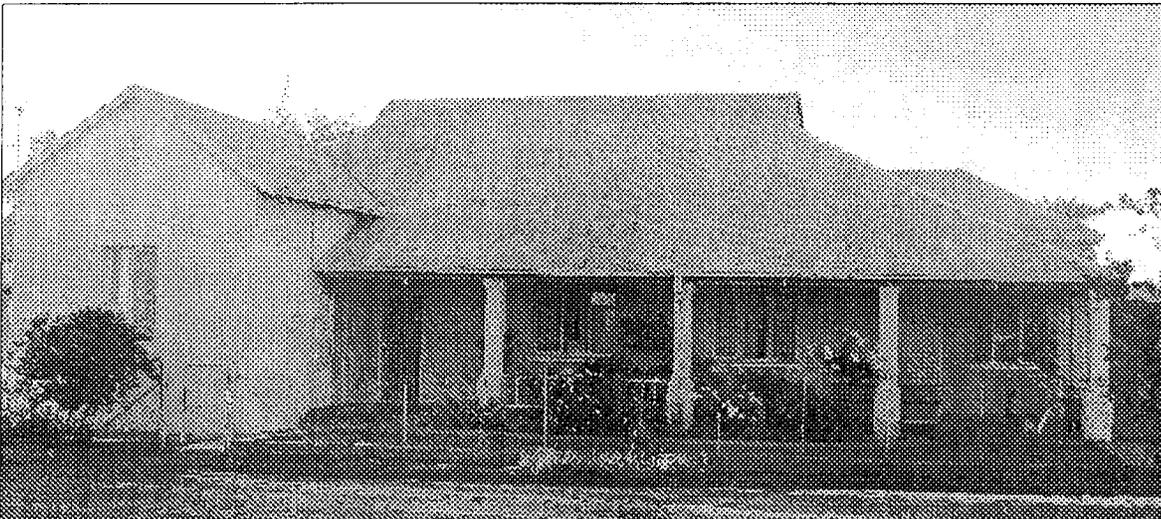
One of the problems the churches had to grapple with after they fell vacant was division within their own ranks. This was a direct result of the absence of a resident minister who could have dealt timeously with problems and difficulties which were bound to arise. Whilst there are several references to divisions within the churches, the nature of them was not spelt out. In his unpublished memoirs the Rev. Damon made mention of the situation he found in the Uppington church in 1931. The dissension in the church led to group formation; one section of the congregation supported the Church Council whilst another section opposed them (Damon, 1990, p 11). This is the only specific reference to the nature of the problem.

When the Rev. W.H. Lloyd paid his first visit to Uppington church in 1918 he had to deal with a division in the church (Member's meeting minutes, 20.07.1918). This division was resolved when the secretary of the denomination, the Rev. William Angus, visited the church together with the Rev. Lloyd. In the report submitted to the Executive Committee of the denomination there is a reference to this problem. It stated simply that the Rev. S. Angus and Lloyd were instrumental in settling a long and acrimonious trouble in the church (The Congregationalist, Sept. 1918, p 12). There is also a reference to divisions within the Kenhardt and Keimoes churches which reared its ugly head from time to time. The Rev. Stewart also played a part in settling problems in these churches. In the 1922 report of the Executive Committee mention was made of Stewart's visit and the role he played in healing divisions in churches of the area (The Congregationalist, March 1922, p 2). It did appear, however, that the settlement of these disputes did not last while the churches were served by consultants who could only pay occasional visits to the area.

During this period of vacancy the churches were served by several consultants for brief periods. The first was the Rev. A. Sampson who acted as consultant for the year 1918. He was at the time minister of the Colesberg Congregational Church (Briggs & Wing, 1970, p 249). He was succeeded by the Rev. W. H. Lloyd for the period 1919 to 1920. The Rev. Lloyd came out to this

country from Wales in the United Kingdom in 1907 to start his ministry in the Franschhoek Congregational Church. In 1912 he accepted a call to the Bethel Congregational Church at Paarl where he spent the rest of his time in the active ministry until his retirement in 1948. In 1923-1924 he served as chairman of the denomination (C.U.S.A. Year Book, 1966, p 8). In 1920 the Rev. G.F. Parker who served the Bethelsdorp Congregational Church acted as consultant for that year. In January 1921 the Rev. J. Rogers who was then minister of the Ebenezer Congregational Church, Johannesburg, acted as consulent. The Rev. G.P. Ferguson served the churches in the Northwestern Cape for a quarter – April to July 1921.

Ferguson was South African born and had a long period in the ministry spanning some 50 years. He was also elected to the office of chairman of the denomination for the period 1928-1929. The Rev. W.S. Gouws who served the Pniel church acted as consulent for just April 1922. What strikes one about the interregnum period is the number of consulents and the brevity of their stay. In some instances it was limited to a single visit. Whilst it is true that these consulents did what was humanly possibly given the short duration of their stay, it could never be an ideal or lasting solution for any vacant church. It is the considered opinion that the discords referred to could not be dealt with adequately because of the constant changes of consulents.



*Upington Manse*

Apart from the divisions which surfaced from time to time, the Upington church also had to provide a manse for the minister they were going to call. The situation was that the church had bought a house in the town after the Rev. Stewart had to vacate the manse of the Dutch Reformed Mission church. In the course of time the church ran into arrears with installments. The result was that they eventually lost the house (Damon, 1952, p 2). The need to build a manse on the site in Mission Street was discussed during the consulentship of the Rev. Lloyd. He advised the Church Council to work out an estimate of the cost of the erection first. At that meeting in January 1919 the council also asked the Rev. Lloyd to serve them as consulent until 1920.

At the January 1920 meeting of the Upington church a decision was taken to extend a call to a minister to serve the three churches and a deputation was appointed to discuss the proposition with the Kenhardt and Keimoes Church Councils respectively (Members' meeting minutes, 19.01.1920). The matter was taken further at a later stage when it was decided to extend a call to the Rev. G. Parker. The stipend offered was £250 (R500) per annum and a further allowance of £20 (R40) per annum. Since the Upington church did not have a manse at the time it was decided to accommodate him temporarily in the Keimoes manse until the Upington manse was completed (Members' meeting minutes, 19.07.1920). But the Rev. Parker declined the call and the vacancy remained.

The Church Council then decided to invite the Rev. G.P. Ferguson to pay the church a visit. This visit took place in July 1921 (Church Council minutes, 02.07.1921). During that visit he also acted at the same time as consulent. He advised the Church Council to consider the possibility of calling a resident minister. He also suggested that they should invite the person they might have in mind to pay a visit to the church first. This would enable them to make personal contact with the minister and he, in turn, could acquaint himself with the extent of the work. Thereafter, a call could be extended. The matter should also be discussed with the Keimoes Church Council and thereafter it should be referred to the Executive Committee of the denomination.

The next development was when, during January and February 1922, the Rev. Alexander Stewart

was sent by the Executive Committee of the denomination to visit the churches of the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts (Keimoes members' meeting, 16.01.1922). During the visit Stewart informed the church that there was concern in the denomination particularly about the number of vacancies in coloured and African local churches with very little hope of finding ministers to fill these vacancies in the foreseeable future. The denomination therefore decided to send the Rev. G.P. Ferguson on a recruitment mission to the United Kingdom. He was to visit theological colleges where Congregational students were trained for the ministry. Naturally the churches of the Northwestern Cape were included among these vacant pastorates (cf. *The Congregationalist*, Oct 1912, p 8).

After sharing the information with the Upington Church, Stewart advised that they should consider calling a minister to serve all three churches at a stipend of £350 (R700) per annum plus a free manse. Of this amount Kenhardt could contribute £100 (R200) and the balance was to come from Upington and Keimoes churches.

Furthermore, it was clearly understood that the minister would devote most of his time to Upington and Keimoes churches. The meeting then decided that the Rev. Ferguson be requested to recruit a minister for the work in the Northern Cape as he was due to go to the United Kingdom by the end of 1922 on this mission. This recommendation of the Church Council was endorsed by the members' meeting (Upington members' meeting, 23.01.1923). In July 1922 the Rev. Stewart again paid the churches a visit. On that occasion he informed them that the Rev. Ferguson had acceded to their request.

### **3. The term of office of the Rev. S.A. Horne, 1923-1927**

The man recruited for the work in Gordonia and Kenhardt was the Rev. S.A. Horne, a young Scotsman from Aberdeen and fresh from college. He trained at the Scottish Congregational College at Edinburgh. He was apparently a popular student and was elected by his fellow-students as senior student (*The Congregationalist*, March 1923, p 8). In order to acquire a working knowledge of Afrikaans, given the fact that his parishioners were thoroughly Afrikaans

speaking, he spent the first three months at the home of the Rev. and Mrs. W.H. Lloyd at Paarl to acquire a facility in the language. He left for Upington on 4 January 1923 in the company of the Rev. G.P. Ferguson. Ferguson's status in the denomination at the time was Union Representative.<sup>2</sup> Because his call was a joint one there were separate inductions at each of the main centres. He was well received judging by the attendances at each church. The attendance at Keimoes was particularly good; on that occasion 400 people sat at the Lord's Table. Horne was able then to conduct the services at each church in Afrikaans (*The Congregationalist*, March 1923, p 9).

One of the problems confronting Horne when he started his ministry at Upington was the unsatisfactory financial situation of the church. Upington and Keimoes churches had a combined debt of £1,000 (R2,000) which was for the most part debt of buildings. The main reason for the churches' inability to redeem it was periodic droughts.

Furthermore, the wages of labourers were very low (*The Congregationalist*, March 1923, p 19). Moreover the churches did not have a system of church contributions. The bank balance of the Upington church stood at a mere 3 shillings and sixpence (35c). The roll of the church had dropped to below 1,000 members which was another effect of the long period of vacancy. The challenge the new minister had to face, given this bleak situation, was enormous. Coupled to this was the fact that he was entirely new to the situation. Initially he made a good impression on the people. They were particularly impressed with his mastery of the Afrikaans language. He apparently had a heavy work schedule at his arrival there. At Keimoes he baptised 40 babies and there also confirmations and marriages and some house visitations (*The Congregationalist*, March 1923, p 8). What was also encouraging was that with the first visit to Keimoes the income of the communion service amounted to £53 1s 0d (R107.10).

The financial problem seems to have been an ongoing one. In January 1924, it was reported that

---

<sup>2</sup> The office of the Union Representative was a precursor of the office of Moderator. Ferguson was the first to be elected to this office. His duties included periodic visits to churches and to submit reports to the Executive Committee.

there was a shortfall of £123 (R246) on the minister's stipend (Upington members' meeting minutes, 05.01.1924). At the April quarterly meeting it was reported that the expected shortfall on the minister's stipend would increase by June to £154 (R308). Attempts were made to address the problem. One was to appeal to the denomination for assistance by the granting of 5 shillings (50c) discount on every pound (R2) raised by the church to repay the debt. There is an indication that the Western District Association did extend a helping hand by making a grant-in-aid available to assist the church to meet the minister's stipend (The Congregationalist, June 1924, p 14).

In 1924 there was apparently some improvement in the financial situation, so much so that the churches could inform the District Association that they would not need a grant-in-aid that year. But this improvement was only temporary. The following year it was reported under "Church News" in the official magazine of the denomination that the Executive Committee had held a frank discussion with the Rev. Horne on the financial situation of the Upington church. The content of this discussion was not mentioned except that it was noted that the Rev. Horne was "faced with a difficult financial situation" (The Congregationalist, September 1925, p 19).

In 1926 the Executive Committee sent two ministers – the Rev. G. Crawford Stanley, chairman of the Congregational Union, and the Rev. E. Morgan – on a deputation to meet with the Upington Church Council. The hope was expressed that the recommendation of the deputation would lead to a solution of the financial problems the church wrestled with (The Congregationalist, September 1926, p 6). Whilst details of the recommendations were not given in this report, in the magazine there appeared a reference the following year that the church managed to reduce the debt of £1,000 (R2,000) to £700 (R1,400). In January 1927 the Upington church adopted a plan for the speedy clearing of the debt. It was hoped to repay it in full within two years (The Congregationalist, March 1927, p 15). The plan was to levy each member with an amount of £1 10s (R3); in this way the church would be able to settle the debt (Members' meeting minutes, 18.04.1927).

The Rev. Horne had another practical problem to contend with, namely transport. He appealed to

the denomination to provide him with a car so that he could visit his scattered parishioners on a more regular basis. However, no help from this quarter was forthcoming.

It needs to be noted that the ministry of Horne in the area was not limited to efforts in resolving the financial problems of the church. It was during his ministry at Upington that the Women's Association was started in 1923. In 1927 there is a reference to Boy Scouts and Girl Guide branches which were started in the Kenhardt church. In February 1927 the Scouts and Guides were decorated at a special meeting with Good Attendance bars, Sunday School medals and Distinguished Conduct Stars. The ceremony was quite new in the area and it made a very good impression on the church community.

The other departments in all three churches were active. The Women's Associations functioned well. They freely donated items like table covers and lamps when money was needed. The Keimoes Women's Association donated a handsome communion set to the church (The Congregationalist, March 1927, p 15).

At the July 1927 meeting of the Upington Church Council the Rev. Horne informed them of his intention to resign as resident minister since he had accepted a call to the Bethesda Congregational Church, Port Elizabeth (Church Council minutes, 16.07.1927). He was due to be inducted in his new parish on 4 October 1927.

This was regretfully noted. In order to deal with the situation occasioned by his resignation the Church Council decided not to let the manse after the Rev. Horne's departure so that it could be used to accommodate the consulent during the period of vacancy. One of the rooms could be used as an office for the church secretary.

Since the church still owed the Rev. Horne some arrear stipends, the Council decided to approach the creditors with a view to writing off part of the debt owing to them. It was further decided to negotiate with the Rev. Horne to grant the church part of the arrear stipends owing to him (Church Council minutes, 24.09.1927). This matter was further discussed at the October

meeting of the Church Council where it was reported that the widow, Carolina Izaaks indicated willingness to make a donation of £30 (R60) towards the reduction of the debt. The acting chairman, the elder Marthinus Jansen, intimated that he was prepared to make a payment of £100 (R200) towards the debt owing to one of the creditors, Sr. Sara Jansen (Upington Church Minutes, 15.10.1927).

At the November 1927 Church Council meeting the Rev. G. P. Ferguson was present. He informed the meeting that the denomination appointed the Rev. Horne as consulent of the Upington and Keimoes churches (Church Council minutes, 22.11.1927). This would also enable the churches to repay the arrear stipends still owing to the Rev. Horne. In May 1928 the Rev. Horne paid his first visit to the Upington church in his capacity as their consulent. On that occasion his wife accompanied him. He was apparently unmarried when he was minister of the Upington church. One of the senior elders, Brother Marthinus Jansen, warmly welcomed Mrs. Horne on behalf of the Church Council; she in turn responded suitably in English (Members' meeting minutes, 19.05.1928).

The relationship between the Upington and Keimoes churches remained close. In the June 1928 Minutes there was a reference to the first combined meeting of the Upington and Keimoes Church Councils. These combined meetings of the Church Councils of the three churches became, in later years, a regular feature. At the November 1928 quarterly meetings of the Upington church the Rev. Stewart paid them another visit. He explained to the church meeting that he was asked by the denomination to meet with the church in order to find a solution for the repayment of the long outstanding debt which came a long way. Part of the debt was the result of loans the church raised from the estates of a few of the members. After an in-depth discussion the meeting decided to ask the denomination to take over the debt owing to the estates of Sara Jansen, C van Wyk, the widow Izaaks and Hans van Rooi.

The Upington church undertook to repay the denomination at a rate of not less than £10 (R20) per quarter, i.e. four instalments per annum. The attorney, J. W. van Coppenhagen, would be asked to forward the church's title deeds to be kept by the denomination. He was also to be

asked to receive the money paid in by the church and forward it to the creditors and the denomination on the basis outlined by the Rev. Stewart. The title deeds of the church were to be kept by the denomination until the church had paid off the debt (Uppington members' meeting minutes, 03.11.1928). This decision was approved by both the denomination as well as the attorney. At the January 1929 meetings, chaired again by the Rev. Stewart, thanks were expressed to the denomination for the assistance it had agreed to give the church (Uppington Church Council minutes, 19.01.1929).

At the meeting it was also decided to pay £30 (R60) on the debt owing to the denomination. Since the church still owed arrear stipends to the Rev. Horne it was agreed to pay him £5 (R10) as installment on the money owing to him. At the April 1929 quarterly meeting the Rev. Horne visited the church as their consultant. It was then decided to rescind an earlier decision on the manse and it was decided to let the manse to the school principal, F. van Rooi, for a quarter at a rental of £1 (R2) per month. The spare room would be available for the assistant teacher at a rental of 10 shillings (R1) per month on condition that he applied for it. It was also decided to install electric lights in the church (Members' meeting, 20.04.1929).

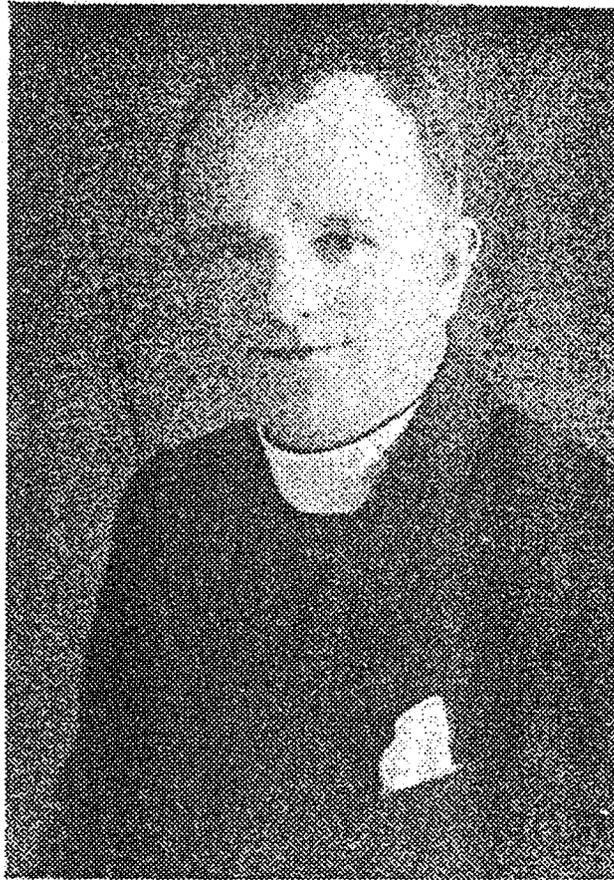
With the next quarterly meeting in July the tennis club applied to the church for permission to have a tennis court on the site. The request was granted on condition that they pay a monthly rent of 3 shillings (30c) and furthermore that no matches be scheduled for Sundays (Church Council minutes, 27.07.1929).

In April 1930 the Congregational group of churches was honoured by a visit of the chairman of the Congregational Union of South Africa, Dr. Charles Anderson. He was a medical practitioner in Cape Town and a prominent layman in a local church and in denominational circles. He was introduced to the meeting by the Rev. Horne. In his response to the welcome he received he made mention of his missionary background. His grandfather, William Anderson, was the missionary at Griquatown in the 1800s. His grandfather then moved to Pacaltsdorp where he spent a long time in the service of the people. His father, the Rev. B. E. Anderson was minister at Oudtshoorn where he served the church for nearly 52 years. He stressed two social issues in

which the church should become involved, viz. the role of the church in combating alcohol abuse and working out ways and means of keeping young people in the church as so many are lost to the church when they grow older (Members' meeting minutes, 24.04.1930).

It needs to be noted that while Keimoes and Upington churches were served by the Rev. Horne as consulent this time the Kenhardt church could not be included. The problem was that Horne could only set aside two Sundays per visit for Upington and Keimoes respectively. He was prepared to fit in a mid-week communion service for Kenhardt but the people found this unacceptable since many of their members worked on farms in the district. Under these circumstances the denomination asked the Rev. S. Damon, who was at the time minister of the Worcester church, to serve the Kenhardt church as consulent. This he acceded to since the Worcester church agreed to release him for one weekend per quarter to serve the Kenhardt church (Damon, 1987, p 170).

At the October 1930 quarterly meetings the Rev. Horne informed the churches of his intention to relinquish the consulentship of Upington church. By then the church had finally settled the outstanding debt on his stipend. His departure brought an end to the pioneering era and it opened the way for a new exciting period. The Rev. Horne had a stable ministry in the Bethesda church, Port Elizabeth.



Rev. S.A. Horne

(From a commemorative brochure  
printed at Upington in 1952)

*Rev. S.A. Horne*

#### **4. Conclusion**

In some respects the Rev. Stewart had to start from scratch when he commenced his ministry at Upington and the surrounding areas in 1902. The work had to be rebuilt after the disruptive effects of the Anglo-Boer War and the schism. He also had to assist the people to develop a new

identity as far as the church was concerned since they then became part of the Congregational family. In picking up the threads he displayed tact in that he did not introduce drastic or sweeping changes in his style of ministry. He followed the pattern of church government used by the Rev. Schröder. In that respect the people experienced a continuation of the ministry that they were accustomed to.

With the passage of time Stewart realised that the work came increasingly difficult for one person to manage. The economic situation compelled the churches to share one minister. The solution would have been decentralisation but that option was only taken in the late 1940s as will be seen later. The financial problems the churches experienced stemmed from the economic situation the country had to face in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War, the First World War and in particular the great depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Moreover, the Northwestern Cape was in the invidious position of being isolated from the main centres of the country because of its geographical situation. It affected, for instance, the staffing position of the primary schools; qualified teachers from towns and cities were reluctant to work in these outposts of civilisation. The denomination at that time also had a shortage of ministers and that accounts for the decision to send the Rev. Ferguson on a recruiting mission to the United Kingdom. The training of an indigenous ministry at Fort Hare in conjunction with the other sister denominations only took shape in the 1930s.

After the departure of the Rev. Stewart the interregnum which followed caused internal dissensions in the local church. This was mainly due to a lack of leadership and it was aggravated by the frequent changes of consuls. Despite several well-meant attempts at resolving difficulties, stability was only restored during the Rev. Damon's term of office, first as consul in 1930 to 1933, and thereafter as resident minister. This confirms the contention that the solution lay with the settlement of a minister who was on the spot and who could deal expeditiously with the problems as they arose. The 1930s ushered in a new and exciting era in the history of Congregationalism in the Northwestern Cape but this will be dealt with later.

## CHAPTER 3

### AN ERA OF GROWTH: 1930 – 1942

#### 1. Introduction

The twelve year period, 1930-1942, is important in the development of Congregationalism in the Northwest Cape. It coincided in the early 1930s with the great depression that hit the country very hard. Many of the people in the area who owned farms came to the end of their resources as a result of periodic droughts and debts they incurred which they could not repay. Consequently, many lost their farms and were compelled to join the labour market at a time when unemployment was rife. Under these adverse circumstances the Church, and in particular the Congregational Church, played an important part in lending a helping hand where possible.

#### 2. The consulentship of the Rev. Saul Damon, 1930-1933

The vacancy in the Upington and Keimoes churches occasioned by the resignation of the Rev. S.A. Horne, to which reference was already made, left a void to be filled. Although he served the churches as consulent from Port Elizabeth for a limited period, eventually he relinquished the work and by 1930 they were left vacant again. At the time the Rev. Saul Damon of Worcester served the Kenhardt church as consulent. In October 1930 the Upington church invited him to come over to them and conduct a service during one of his visits to Kenhardt. In May 1931 he visited the Upington church and conducted a service there (Damon, 1990, p 10)<sup>1</sup>.

At this stage it is appropriate by way of introduction to make the following biographical observations about the man who played such an important role in the life and work of the Congregational Churches in the North-western Cape. With justification he has been referred to as a pioneer of the North-western Cape, bearing in mind, however, that he was human. Saul Damon

---

<sup>1</sup> The source referred to here is an unpublished memoir written by the late Rev. Damon to mark his 100th birthday which was celebrated on 15 March 1990. The biographical details, unless otherwise stated, are taken from this memoir.

was born on 15 March 1890 at Mount Frere in the Transkei. The family from his father's side was also slaves imported from Indonesia. The coloured community living at Mount Frere was mainly Congregationalists ministered to by two ministers, the Revs. W. Dower and W. Murray. They were in charge of the Griqua work in the Kokstad area. Saul was baptised at the age of two years by the Rev. Murray. His parents moved later to a place called Roza near the town of Qumbu where there was a mission school for children of Griqua descent. There he started his school career at the age of six. His parents then joined the Anglican Church as there was no Congregational Church in the town. When his parents moved to Butterworth he enrolled at the local African school. During that time he learnt cabinet-making, a skill which stood him in good stead in later years when he was in the ministry. Because his parents were keen that he should receive a good education he enrolled at the Scottish Mission Seminary at Blythswood where he completed Standard 8 (Grade 10) then known as School Higher.

He ascribed his conversion to the help he received from the Methodist Missionary, a Mr. Enticott, who was stationed at Umtata. Part of their missionary's duties was to run the catechumen class for young people. Since Saul Damon was reasonably conversant with Xhosa he could act as interpreter for this missionary. His brother, who lived in Durban, then persuaded him to come to that city. There he managed to get employment at a butcher's shop and then he joined the local Congregational Church and became active in the Sunday School, the church choir and was eventually elected secretary of the Church Council. This congregation was served by the minister of the Aliwal Street church, the Rev. J.W. Glover. During a visit of the Rev. Charles Phillips of the Ebenezer Congregational Church, Johannesburg, the Rev. Glover introduced Saul Damon to him. He told Phillips of his wish to enter for the ministry and with his help (Phillips), he was admitted to Adams College at Amanzimtoti which was a private Congregational institution run by the American Board Mission. He started his training there in 1918 but it was quite a sacrifice to study full-time at a residential institution as he was then a married man with family responsibilities. He did, however, receive a study grant of £10 (R20) per annum and in October 1921 he successfully completed his training.

The Congregational Union of South Africa held its annual assembly at Durban that year and as was the custom in those days, students who completed their training for the ministry were

ordained at Assembly. Saul Damon was ordained in 1921. His first call was to the Tyburn Street Congregational Church and the Beaconsfield Congregational Church both in Kimberley. He served these two churches from 1921 to 1924 after which Tyburn Street church severed ties with him and later on closed down altogether. He continued to serve Beaconsfield Church until 1928 when he accepted a call to the Worcester Congregational Church. He served that church for the period 1928 to 1932 (cf. C.U.S.A. Year Book, 1958, p 92).

With his first visit to the Upington church in 1931, to which reference was already made, the Church Council tried to prevail upon him to resolve a division that had developed in the church during the vacancy. But he pointed out to them that he had no mandate from the District Association to interfere in the domestic affairs of a local church not served by him. However, after his departure for Worcester, the Upington Church Council requested the Western District Association (WDA) to appoint him as their consulent. This he acceded to since the Worcester church agreed to release him one weekend per quarter to serve the Upington church. On that basis he served the church for the period 1931 to 1933 (Damon, 1990, p 10-11).

After assuming duties as consulent one of the first matters he had to deal with was the discord in the Upington church. This he managed to resolve with his first visit. Since an important function of a consulent, in terms of the constitution of the denomination, was "to assist the Church in obtaining a minister", the Rev. Damon set about preparing the churches in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts to extend a call to a minister (c.f. C.U.S.A. Constitution, 1965, p 29).

In the meantime, the financial position of the Upington church improved to such an extent that it was decided early in 1932 to settle the outstanding debt of £300 (R600) that had hung like a millstone round the neck of the congregation for so long (Upington members' meeting minutes, 13.02.1932).

The response of the people to the idea of calling a resident minister for the work in the area was also very positive. At the May 1931 meeting of the Upington Church Council the Keimoes church members present indicated willingness to co-operate with Upington and Kenhardt churches to call a minister for the three churches. The Keimoes church was even prepared to

contribute £80 (R160) per annum towards such a joint ministry. It was then decided to take the matter further later that year (Upington Church Council minutes, 09.05.1931).

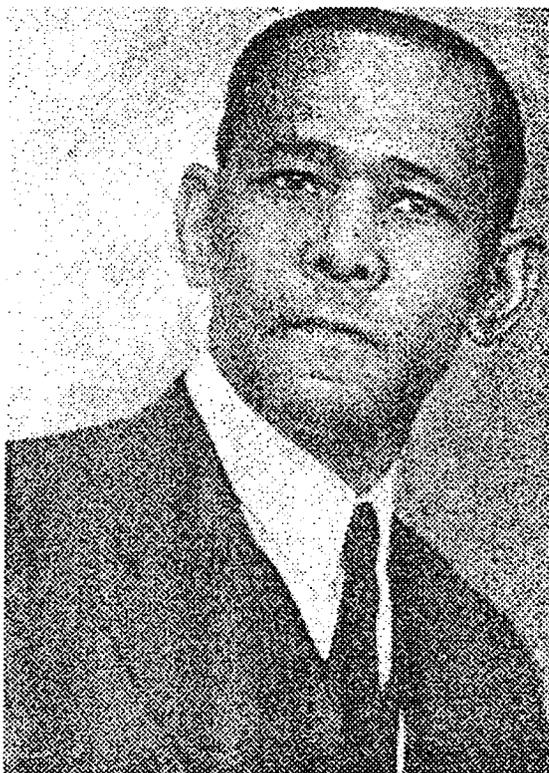
Throughout his ministry the Rev. Damon placed a high premium on the church's role in the provision of basic education to children, especially in outlying areas where facilities were lacking. At the May 1931 meeting of the Church Council, to which reference was already made, he pointed out that where a church provided schools it could qualify for a state subsidy of £5 (R10) per child on condition that the child attended school regularly. His contention was that schools could be important means of uplifting the people and that the church could benefit also by it in the process.

Another matter he drew attention to was that the church should seriously consider the appointment of evangelists to assist the minister particularly with house visitation and other pastoral duties. The motivation for such a suggestion was that a consulent with the limited time at his disposal during quarterly visits could not minister to the people as he otherwise would have liked to. Consequently the work suffered.

It needs to be observed that the denomination made provision for two categories of evangelists. The one was the "Union Evangelist" i.e. the person who received training at a recognised institution and was eligible for placement or appointment in a local church where he would work under the supervision of an ordained minister. These evangelists were listed in the Year Book of the denomination. The other category was the "District Evangelists"; they received no formal training but had to meet the requirements set by the District Association (c.f. C.U.S.A. Year Book, 1958, p 29).

What the Rev. Damon apparently had in mind was to recommend suitable people for appointment as District Evangelists. They could be included on the pay-roll of the church at a remuneration rate of £3 (R6) per month. Three people from the ranks of the Church Council were identified as possible candidates, viz. the brethren Richard (Dick) Murphy, Jan Zwartz and Hendrik Losper (Upington members' meeting minutes, 19.05.1931).

However, at the August 1931 meeting of the Upington church it was reported that the brethren Dick Murphy and Hendrik Losper had declined the nomination as Evangelists. The meeting then decided to drop the subject of appointing Evangelists. As a matter of interest it needs to be observed that at that particular meeting the Rev. J.C. Abrahams who was at the time resident minister of the Harrington Street Congregational Church, Cape Town was present. He was a personal friend of the Rev. Damon and during his visit to the churches in the North-western Cape he attended the quarterly meeting at Upington church. His contribution to the discussion was significant; he pointed out to the members that they should not become complacent and expect elders and deacons to shoulder the work in the church; they too had a responsibility to meet (Upington church members' meeting minutes, 08.08.1931).



*Rev. Saul Damon*

### **3. The first call to the Rev. Damon**

At the August 1931 Church Council meeting of the Upington church it was decided to convene a special meeting of the three churches with a view to call a minister (Upington Church Council

minutes, 08.08.1931). This special meeting took place in November 1931 at Upington. The Rev. J.A. Perry was appointed by the Western District Association to chair the meeting since the Rev. Damon's name was mentioned by the Church Council for consideration. In his introductory remarks Perry made mention of the Rev. Damon as a possible candidate, failing which the Rev. D.B. Adendorff could be considered as an alternative.

The meeting decided, however, to extend a call to the Rev. Damon and if the call was accepted he was expected to commence duties on 1 July 1932. The chairman suggested that the churches could apply for a grant-in-aid of £100 (R200) from the denomination and a further £25 (R50) for his removal expenses. The stipend offered would be £280 (R560) per annum of which the Upington church was to contribute £120 (R240) and the Kenhardt and Keimoes churches £80 (R160) each.

The question of a manse for the minister was then raised. There were, as far as can be ascertained, rooms on the church site which were used by the previous minister as a manse and afterwards let to the school principal. The idea would be to restructure and enlarge these. The Upington church was prepared to complete half of the work from its own resources and then to apply for a loan from the United Building Society for £600 (R1,200) at an interest rate of 6% to complete the work. The loan would then be repaid at a rate of £50 (R100) per annum plus interest. The meeting felt that work on the manse should start immediately (Upington members' meeting minutes, 06.11.1931). By early 1933 the manse was completed and the loan was repaid in full (Damon, 1990, p 11).

However, in spite of the keen expectations the people had to have the Rev. Damon as their resident minister, they were informed at the February 1932 meeting that he had declined the call. The situation then reverted to what it was before; he continued as consulent of the churches. Nevertheless, the work showed, in general, encouraging progress. The Women's Association of the Upington church was active and by 1932 their membership stood at 93. The meeting also took note of the fact that the consulent had applied to the Education Department to sanction the establishment of a school on the farm Swartkop just outside Upington (Upington Church Council minutes, 12.11.1932).

In February 1933 the matter of a call to a minister came up for discussion again and since the name of the Rev. Damon was mentioned in the Church Council, the Western District Association appointed its Moderator, the Rev. John Mullineaux, to chair a special meeting at Upington for that purpose (Upington special member's meeting minutes, 13.05.1933). At that meeting it was unanimously decided to extend a call to the Rev. Damon as minister to serve the three churches. It was therefore a joint call. The stipend offered was the same as before, viz. £280 (R560) per annum plus a free manse. If the call was accepted he was expected to commence duties not later than 1 January 1934.

#### **4. The first 9 years of the Rev. Damon's ministry in the North-western Cape, 1933-1942**

This second call was accepted and the Rev. Damon officially started his ministry on 1 January 1934 although he arrived with his family at Upington on 29 December 1933. On arrival they received a warm welcome from the people and for the next 15 years he served the churches most of the time single-handedly. Relief came in 1945 when Keimoes and Kenhardt churches separated from Upington and called their own ministers. During the years 1940 to 1942 an assistant minister was settled at Keimoes, as will be seen later, but thereafter he had to shoulder the work all by himself.

His ministry ushered in a new and exciting chapter in the history of Congregationalism in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts. Reference was already made to his stand on the church's role in the provision of schools. The writer recalls instances where the Rev. Damon encouraged parents to send their children to colleges and other tertiary institutions for further education. There are even cases where he assisted financially in so far as his resources permitted, to educate young people.

When he took over there were primary schools under the control of the churches in each of the main centres (cf. Damon, 1990, p 12). It became, however, one of his important objectives to open schools on farms and on the state settlements along the Orange River and elsewhere. A case

in point is the opening of a school on the farm Bloemsmond near Keimoes. This farm belonged at the time to the Beukes family who were all members of the church. In 1934 the Rev. Damon reported to the Upington Church Council that the owner of the farm was prepared to make a piece of ground available for school purposes (Upington Church Council minutes, 30.01.1934). A primary school was started there and this was one of several schools in the district that the Rev. Damon was involved in. At the end of his term of office there were no fewer than 27 church schools spread along the Orange River and on farms in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts (cf. Damon, 1990, p 12). In other respects there was also good progress discernable. In 1935 the church hall at Upington was completed at a cost of £425 (R850) and it was dedicated on 3 August that year. Earlier the foundation stone was laid by the Rev. Damon. This hall served for a long time as classrooms for the united primary school, and the principal, Mr. F.S. van Rooi, an elder of the church had his office in the building. Apart from educational purposes the hall was also used by the church for functions and other church activities outside school time (cf. Upington members' meeting minutes, 06.07.1935).

On the church site there was a tennis court used by a local club and in 1935 permission was given by the church meeting for the building of a second court. The condition was that no matches should be played on Sundays. The rental was fixed at 5/- (50c) per month. On the personal level the Rev. Damon suffered a set-back in 1938 when his eldest daughter, Isobel, severed ties with the church and joined the Seventh Day Adventist Church. This was an experience he never fully came to terms with.

On a more positive note, in 1938 he completed his first four years in the service of the churches of the Northwest Cape as resident minister. Suitable reference was made to it at the January 1938 members' meeting at Upington (Upington member's meeting minutes, 01.01.1938).

## **5. Combined Church Council meetings**

The system of combined Church Council meetings became a regular feature during the Rev. Damon's term of office. The need for such meetings was felt since Upington, Keimoes, Kenhardt and later the branch at Prieska were served by the same minister. These churches had historically

much in common and although they fell under the Western District Association (W.D.A.) of the Congregational Union of South Africa, their isolation in terms of distance from other local churches in the Cape Peninsula made fellowship very difficult as the W.D.A. had its headquarters in Cape Town and its member churches were concentrated mainly in the Western Cape as far as Worcester. The churches of the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts were geographically close to each other. It was therefore logical for them to meet periodically as a group where Church Council members could discuss matters of common concern such as some uniformity in respect of church discipline. Furthermore, a common position could be taken by the group on issues of Church union and the associate status of the local churches. It also fostered fellowship among them.

These meetings were held at six month intervals and each church elected its own representatives to attend. The venues of the meetings were held in rotation and the travelling expenses to the meetings were met by their respective churches. These combined meetings did not supersede the local church meetings; each church retained its autonomy. It would appear that the churches did not send the same number of delegates to the meetings; for instance at the 1939 combined Church Council meeting representation by the three churches was as follows: Keimoes had 20 delegates, Upington 26 and Kenhardt 7. Presumably each Council had the same number of votes.

That year (1938) the Rev. Damon received a call from one of the Congregational churches at Port Elizabeth and he intimated that he intended considering it. The response of the three churches was very revealing. They decided to convene a special meeting where this matter could be discussed. One of the senior elders, Martinus Visagie, was elected to chair this meeting. There it was unanimously decided to appeal to the Rev. Damon to decline the call. The meeting recognised that he worked under tremendous pressure because of his heavy work-load: he had to carry the brunt of the responsibility of the three churches single-handed. The meeting felt that consideration should be given to the calling of a second minister as an assistant who could ease the pressure on him (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 16.12.1938). To their relief the Rev. Damon informed the Upington members' meeting in December 1938 that he had declined the call (Upington members' meeting minutes, 13.12.1938).

Another matter dealt with by the combined Church Council meeting was the official visit of the Rev. Alexander Stewart to the Northwest Cape. That was to take place during his term of office as chairman of the denomination. This was obviously an honour to host the minister who pioneered Congregationalism in the Northwest Cape at a time when the denomination bestowed their highest honour on him (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 16.12.1938). The meeting decided to employ a chauffeur to take the Rev. Stewart to the places included in his itinerary at a remuneration rate of 2/6 (25c) per day. Details of his itinerary were then discussed. Tentative arrangements for his visit were discussed at a subsequent meeting. The idea was that he should include visits to Kenhardt, Regkyk – a farm just outside Kakamas which was an outstation of Kenhardt – and then Keimoes as well as the Orange River state settlements. He was to spend on Sunday at Upington; furthermore, a dinner was to be arranged in his honour and the three churches were to be responsible for the expenses of his visit. This was a very tight schedule and the limited time of his stay made it impossible for him to include a visit to Prieska.

At the April 1939 meeting of the combined Church Council the final details of his visit were worked out. He was to arrive at Kenhardt on 10 May and the following day he was to pay a visit to Regkyk. On Thursday 12 May he was to visit the Keimoes church and from there he was to proceed to Bloemsmond; on Sunday 15 May he was to proceed to Upington church where he was to conduct the morning service; the same afternoon he was to leave by train for Cape Town (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 07.04.1939). This was an historic visit for the churches in the area especially since a man of his standing and known to most people could pay them an official visit as chairman of the C.U.S.A.

A matter of concern to the churches was raised at the March 1940 meeting of the combined Church Council, viz. the question of a formal dress for Church Council members. The guidance coming from that meeting was that the frock-coat customarily worn by deacons and elders was quite appropriate. However, it should not be made compulsory (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 22.03.1940).

An important issue the churches of the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts had to face was the question of whether they should change their status by adopting the constitution of the

denomination or not. A request to that effect came from the denominational headquarters to consider changing their status from “associate” to “constituent” churches. The matter was thoroughly discussed at a combined Church Council in March 1939.

This was a very sensitive matter for the churches in the area, given the historical circumstances which led to the severance of ties with the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. The meeting decided, however, not to adopt the constitution of the C.U.S.A. But the churches pledge their loyalty to the denomination even though they preferred to remain associate churches (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 22.03.1940).

The need for a constitution for the local churches was also dealt with by the combined Church Council meetings. As far back as 1931 the Rev. G.P. Ferguson had drawn up a model constitution for Afrikaans-speaking local Congregation churches at the request of the denomination. This model constitution was entitled “Die Boek van Beheer en Tug” and was intended for use in local churches that did not have a constitution. Copies of this booklet were available at 1/- (10c) each. Several of the Upington Church Council members bought copies for themselves (Upington Church Council minutes, 17.01.1931).

Whilst this model constitution served as a very useful guide to Afrikaans-speaking churches, it did not, in every respect, meet the peculiar needs of all local churches. At the April 1938 combined Church Council meeting it was decided to draw up a constitution which could be used by the churches of the Northwest Cape. A committee was appointed to draft the constitution; they were the Rev. Damon, the brethren D. Murphy of the Upington church, W. Gouws of Keimoes and J. van Wyk of Kenhardt churches respectively (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 18.04.1938). This constitution as adopted by the churches and it was not in conflict with “Die Boek van Beheer en Tug” but rather supplementary to it.

As was pointed out earlier in this study, the churches of the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts followed the Presbyterian system of church government by having elected elders and deacons. This was the system taken over from the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. The question did arise about the duties and responsibilities of deacons and elders. When this matter came up for

discussion at the 1939 combined Church Council meeting, the chairman pointed out that whilst an elder is in charge of a ward there should be liaison between him and the ward deacons. Where a deacon was not able to attend to his duties he must keep the elder informed (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 07.04.1939).

At the same meeting a decision was taken to start a joint building fund for the group of churches. Both minister and deacons would be authorised to collect money for this purpose. A savings account was opened at a commercial bank at Upington for this purpose. The meeting made it clear that monies thus collected would be used exclusively for building purposes. The fund was to run initially for three years.

Matters of policy were also dealt with by these combined meetings. For instance at the April 1938 combined church meeting it was decided that unmarried men should not serve on the Church Council. It was also decided that close relatives, e.g. father and son or brothers should not serve in the same ward.

There is evidence that tension sometimes surfaced among the churches especially since the perception existed that Keimoes and Kenhardt churches were subordinate to the Upington church. In 1941 the relationship between the three churches was discussed at a combined Church Council meeting. Both Kenhardt and Keimoes members present came out strongly against any suggestion or insinuation that they were subordinate to Upington. At the meeting the fact was stressed that all churches of the group were equal partners and that their co-operation through the combined Church Council meeting did not in any way compromise their autonomy (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 11.04.1941).

Apparently the matter did not rest there, for at the October 1941 Church Council meeting of the Kenhardt church it was decided to ask the Rev. Damon to inform the denomination that it was not a branch of the Upington church (Kenhardt Church Council meeting minutes, 01.10.1941). At the April 1942 combined Church Council meeting the Kenhardt delegates complained that they received fewer visits from the minister than Upington and Keimoes churches. It would appear that there were people who thought that separation would be the best solution. The

response of the Rev. Damon supports this contention. He pointed out that while the three churches were linked, they enjoyed complete autonomy. Should the Keimoes church, for example, wish to sever ties with Upington the following procedure should be followed: a) the church must submit a written application to that effect to the District Association; b) it must draw up its own constitution; and c) decide on a name so that the amendments to the existing constitution could be made. In the light of this explanation the meeting decided to maintain the *status quo* (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 06.04.1942).

## **6. Church extension: Prieska**

The work at Prieska came about as a result of a combination of factors. Several Congregational families, mainly with links to Upington and Kenhardt churches, settled at Prieska and they were keen to retain their connection with their home churches. It so happened that a qualified Evangelist, J. Adams, of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, was staying at Upington; he was out of charge at the time. He was born at Prieska and therefore quite familiar with the area. He transferred his membership to the Congregational Church. In the January 1935 minutes of the Upington Church Council there is a reference to a report by the Evangelist Adams in which he stressed the need for ministry for Congregationalists living along the Orange River (Upington Church Council minutes, 05.01.1935).

This plea did not fall on deaf ears for the next development was the establishment of work at Prieska in August 1935. The work was constituted as a branch of the Upington church with 27 foundation members and Evangelist Adams was appointed to work in the area with Prieska as his base. Because of his training and background he was accepted by the WDA as Union Evangelist (cf. Combined Church Council minutes, 18.04.1935).

Among the people who joined this branch was a group linked to the Griqua community. Their local leader was a certain Johannes Paulus affectionately known as “father Paulus”. He was later elected an elder in the branch.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Part of the information concerning the work at Prieska the writer obtained in the late 1940s when doing supply work at that town.

The development of the Boegoeberg irrigation scheme by the Government in the 1930s opened up new challenges for the churches to minister to the people who were employed on the settlements along the River. Grootdrink, some 65 kilometers from Upington, was one of the settlements. Here one of the outstations was established and linked to the Kenhardt church and later it was transferred to Upington church. In 1935 Evangelist Adams drew the attention of the Upington Church Council to the need for a school there (Upington Church Council minutes, 28.09.1935).

A united school was started there in conjunction with the Methodist Church. The management of the school was in rotation between the two churches.

The work at Prieska grew steadily while Evangelist Adams laboured there. His stipend was jointly paid by the three churches. He kept the churches fully informed about the work with his reports to the combined church Council meetings. In September 1935 the combined Church Council meeting was informed about a plot that was available at Prieska at a price of £10 (R20). The actual price was £18 (R36) but one of the local people offered to donate £8 (R16) towards the purchase price of the plot on condition that he remained anonymous. This matter was then referred to the Finance Committee. Needless to say, the meeting agreed to accept the offer and decided to proceed with the deal. It also placed on record the appreciation of the church to the generous donor for this welcome gesture (Upington members' meeting minutes, 28.09.1935). Eventually three plots were purchased at Prieska where a multipurpose hall and later a manse were erected (Damon, 1952, p 121).

In 1938 there is a reference in the minutes of the combined Church Council meeting to a request to the WDA to grant the Prieska branch full church status. The upgrading of the work would enable them to call a minister. However, the WDA responded by pointing out that Prieska was at the time too small to have a full-time minister. It was therefore suggested that consideration be given to link Prieska to the Kenhardt church, presumably because these two churches were geographically comparatively near to each other. If this suggestion was acted on it would have had the implication that a minister would be stationed at Kenhardt and that he would also be

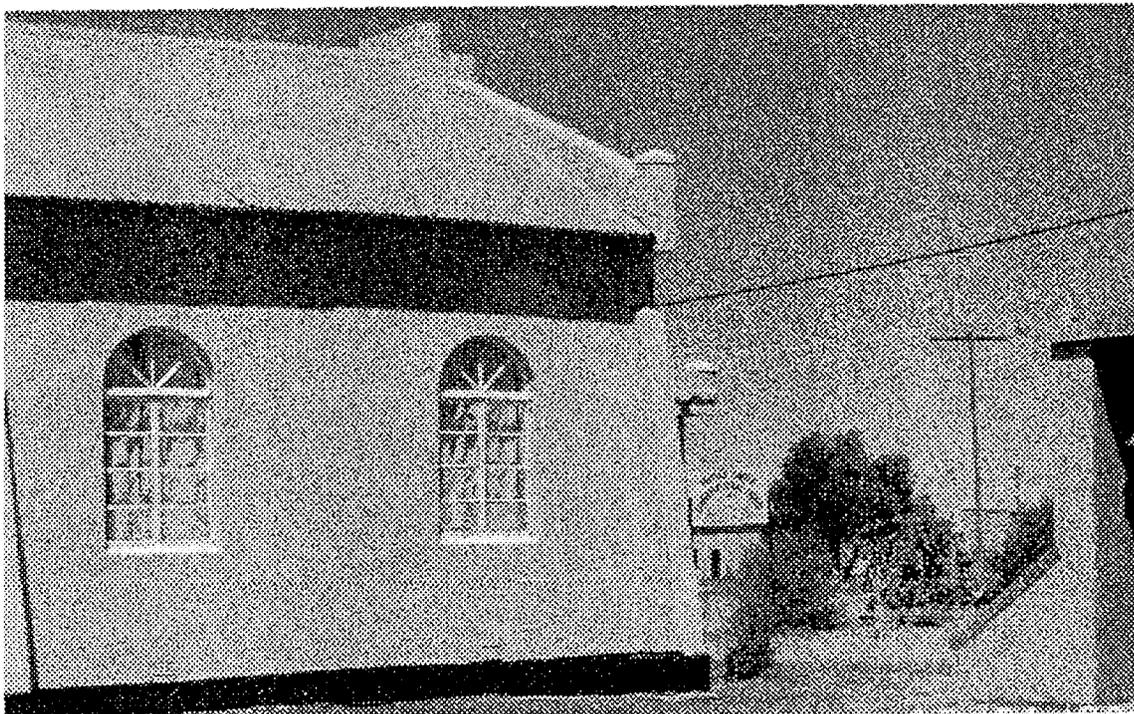
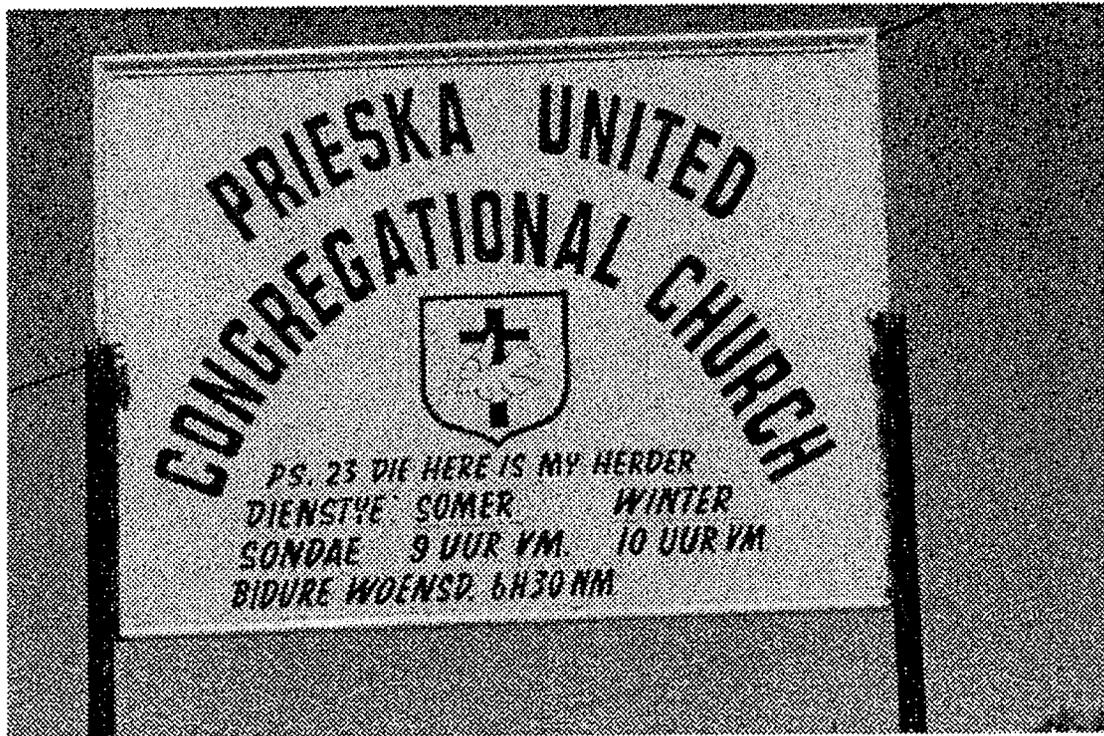
responsible for Prieska. After this suggestion was carefully considered by the combined Church Council meeting it was decided not to proceed with it since the parties concerned, i.e. the three churches as well as the Prieska branch, did not favour the separation of Kenhardt from the group. It was then decided to drop the matter until such time when the situation had changed (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 18.09.1938).

In October 1939 the Evangelist Adams requested the Upington church to assist with the erection of a building at Westerberg – an outstation of Prieska and situated along the Orange River where asbestos was mined. The idea was that a building could be used as a school and also as a place of worship. The combined Church Council agreed to assist with the erection of a building there. A school under the management of the Congregational church was then opened there and years later the mining company replaced the building with a spacious school building with modern amenities.

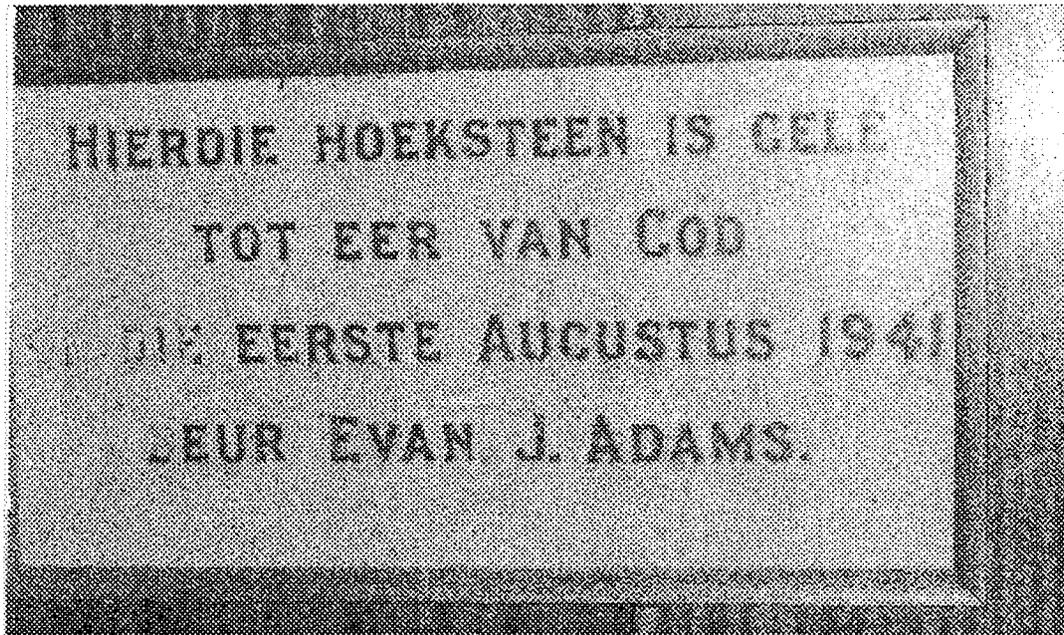
The report about the work at Prieska given by the Evangelist to the 1939 combined Church Council meeting reflected encouraging growth. The communicant membership then stood at 180 and there were 171 catechumen in the membership preparation class. On the personal level the meeting noted that the Evangelist was struggling to pay the bond on his property at Prieska, the installments of which amounted to £40 (R80). The meeting treated the situation sympathetically and it was decided that the three churches should contribute 10/- (R1) per month in order to assist the Evangelist with his bond repayments (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 07.04.1939).

An attempt was made to start a Congregational mission school at Prieska. At the December 1939 church Council meeting of the Upington church, Evangelist Adams reported that from a survey he conducted in the town there were 100 children of school-going age in the congregation who were not attending school (Upington Church Council meeting minutes, 30.12.1939). A private school was started there by the Church Council but the approval of the Education Department could not be obtained for the sanctioning of another mission school in the town. There was then already a Mission School under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. The matter was then tacitly dropped although the hall of the Congregational church was later rented to

accommodate the surplus children who could not be housed in the existing school.



*Present Church Building, Prieska*



*Foundation Stone, Prieska church*

## 7. Church settlements

The establishment of settlements by the Congregational Church to the west of Upington along the Orange River near Keimoes ushered in another chapter in the colourful ministry of the Rev. Saul Damon, although he did not initially see his role as originator and administrator of settlements. However, the fact that settlements were developed in the area must be seen as the church's response to a need that had arisen in the area. Many people who owned farms lost them because of economic circumstances aggravated by the depression of the 1930s as well as natural disasters such as droughts and floods. The Rev. Damon's role in this situation stemmed from his concern for the people who had to endure so much suffering and hardship. It is to his credit that he managed to persuade the church to buy farms which could be converted into settlements.

The first farm bought by the church in 1934 and which was converted into a church settlement was Bloemsmond. This farm was situated approximately 28 kilometers from Keimoes. Earlier on in this study reference was made to the fact that the Gordonia district was set aside for occupation by the "Baster" community during the reign of Queen Victoria in the late 19<sup>th</sup>

century. The Beukes family was one of the families who obtained a farm as far back as 1898.<sup>3</sup> The farm was divided among the four Beukes brothers, viz. Coenraad, Hendrik and Gideon were compelled to sell their portions of the farm to white buyers. Pieter, who was also an elder in the Keimoes church, struggled in vain for three months to obtain financial assistance from outside sources. Then, in desperation, he turned to the Rev. Damon for help and he in turn managed to persuade the church to buy that portion of the farm belonging to Pieter for the sum of £1,500 (R3,000). For this purpose the church obtained a loan from Dr. Charles Anderson who was a prominent layman in the denomination. As mentioned before he had served at one time as chairman of the denomination and included a visit to the Northwestern Cape during his term of office. This was an important development in the work of the church for Bloemsmond was the first farm to be converted into a church settlement (cf. Damon, 1990, p 14). Bro. Pieter Beukes was given usufruct on the erf allocated to him.

The effect of the Bloemsmond deal had important repercussions on the neighbouring farms Curriescamp and Soverby. The following year (1939) the Rev. Damon was approached by some men living at Curriescamp with the request that he must assist them to obtain some land where they could farm and make a living. In his memoirs he gave a vivid description of what transpired at the interview with the people (Damon, 1990, p 14). He first reproached them for not appreciating what they inherited from their forebears. They pointed out, however, that their impoverished situation was not entirely due to their negligence. Natural disasters like floods destroyed whatever crops they still had. This must have caused him to feel sorry for the people. He then suggested that a fund be started with contributions they could make which could be used to assist them to obtain land for farming purposes again. At that stage the people had very little to contribute but they brought the meager contributions they could spare. With the money he received from them he opened a savings account in his name at a commercial bank at Upington. Attempts by the Rev. Damon to solicit help from the Upington Church Council and the members failed because the people were, on the whole, indifferent to the plight of those in need on the farms.

---

<sup>3</sup> This information was obtained from a member of the Beukes family, Piet Nel, in an interview held on 14.11.2005.

The next development came when a certain Mr. Minnaar, a retired attorney, invited the Rev. Damon to meet him at the home of the Mayor of Upington, a certain Mr. Van Coppenhagen. He was impressed by the work the Rev. Damon did in uplifting his people especially after the Bloemsmond sale. Minnaar owned the farm Curriescamp and he intimated that he was willing to offer the farm to the church for sale. The farm was approximately 200 morgen in extent and the price quoted for the whole farm was £4,000 (R8,000). In the ensuing negotiations the owner agreed to come down with his price to £3,700 (R7,400). The Rev. Damon had £200 (R400) in the savings account which the owner agreed to accept as a deposit on condition that the church make another payment of £100 (R200) by the end of that year. After the conclusion of this transaction Curriescamp was developed into a settlement along similar lines as Bloemsmond.

After the Curriescamp transaction a group of people from the Soverby (“Zoovoorbij”) approached the Rev. Damon with a request for help. They told him that a certain Mr. Hendrik Steyn who leased the farm had informed them that he had cancelled his lease. They were then given notice to leave the farm within a month. Of the people affected by this notice some were born at Soverby while others had spent up to 18 years on the farm. The request to the Rev. Damon was that he must endeavour to persuade the church to lease the farm at a rental of £250 (R500) per annum. The farm was approximately 7000 morgen in extent and there was also a fountain. The Upington church agreed to rent the farm for an initial period of two years. In 1937 the purchase of the farm was discussed at a members’ meeting of the Upington church. The farm was then up for sale for the price of £4,500 (R9,000). In order to proceed with the transaction the church had to make an advance payment of £500 (R1,000). Soverby had the potential to accommodate 100 families and could generate an income of £1,000 (R2,000) per annum. With these facts before the meeting it was decided to bond the church and manse in order to obtain a loan of £500 (R1,000) so that the sale could be finalised (Upington members’ meeting minutes, 03.06.1937). Soverby was then also converted into a church settlement.

In 1939 the farm Geelkop, adjacent to Curriescamp, was divided into small holdings and sold to interested white buyers by the Farmers’ Board of Aid (“Boere Bystandsraad”). There was then still a small portion of the farm of 70 morgen in extent which bordered on Curriescamp with no prospective buyer. This was offered for sale to the church for the sum of £2,500 (R5,000). The

church agreed to buy this portion of the farm for the price quoted plus £250 (R500) surveyor's costs. The Land Bank agreed to lend the money to the church repayable over a period of 40 years (Upington members' meeting minutes, 01.04.1939).

In 1936 the Rev. Damon was elected by the Assembly of the C.U.S.A. to serve on its Finance Committee. This enabled him to become acquainted with the financial situation and policy of the denomination. He then managed to raise a loan on behalf of the church for £8,000 (R16,000). He could then redeem the loan on the farms Curriescamp and Soverby and the denomination became the bond holder. Bloemsmond was paid separately. Details of the loan with the denomination were only finalised in 1945 to which reference will be made later.

As far as the management of the settlements was concerned it was placed under the supervision of an elected Head Committee of six members of which the minister was ex officio member and chairman. They were to serve for a term of three years at a time. Members of this committee received no remuneration but an honorarium of £5 (R10) was paid annually to each of them. Any member of the Head Committee who was placed under church censor would forfeit his membership and would qualify for re-election only after he had been reinstated. At the 1940 combined Church Council meeting the Rev. Damon made a significant point when he pointed out that the settlements were originally developed for the benefit of the churches and not for personal gain (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 22.03.1940).

There were two categories of settles, viz. erfholders, i.e. people who rented erfs under irrigation, and then the ordinary tenants. These were the people who rented building plots on which they could erect houses to stay. They normally worked on neighbouring farms or nearby towns. One of the responsibilities of the Head Committee was to draw up a set of rules which contained the agreement they had with the church (see Appendix).

In order to qualify as a settler the applicant had to be a member of the Congregational or Independent church and application was to be made to the Head Committee who in its discretion could accept or reject the application. The erfs were initially 2 to 2½ morgen in extent. With the passage of time, however, the sizes of the erfs were increased to 3 morgen and still later to 5

morgen. If an applicant was not satisfied with the erf allocated to him he could raise his objections within 5 days.

The erfholders were held responsible for the payment of the sum of £120 (R240) plus 6% interest as well as the payment of a levy of £1 (R2) to cover administration and improvement expenses. The capital amount of £120 (R240) was to be redeemed in installments of not less than £10 (R20) per annum barring in the case of Bloemsmond where the installment was fixed at £12 (R24) per annum. Erfholders were given the right to graze their livestock on the settlements. The number of livestock they were allowed to graze was 25 small stocks and 10 large stocks per settler. In the case of donkeys the Head Committee fixed the number to be kept by the settlers.

Where settlers owned more donkeys or livestock than was laid down by the Head Committee they were to obtain permission to keep extra stock at an additional fee of 2/- (20c) per head in the case of donkey, 6d (5c) per head in the case of cattle and 5/- (50c) per hundred in the case of small stock. This was only applicable when the surplus stock belonged to the erfholder; no erfholder would be allowed to graze stock on the settlements not owned by him. This clause which gave erfholders grazing rights became quite a contentious issue at a later stage as will become clear in this study.

When an erfholder fell in arrears with his rental the Head Committee would have first claim in his crops. The crops thus claimed would only be released once the erfholder had settled his debt. The Head Committee also had the responsibility of ensuring that each erfholder submitted a report of his yield of his erf every year. Of the erfholders it was expected that they keep their erfs in good order and to cultivate the crops advised by the Head Committee. Each erfholder was to be allocated a building site by the Head Committee where he was to erect a brick house. Furthermore, a settler was allowed to keep poultry and other domestic animals on the site. Work on the settlements, such as the maintenance of roads, cleaning of water-furrows and dams, the erection of school classrooms, etc. was to be done by the erfholders on a voluntary basis. For the effective execution of the work referred to any settler who failed to respond to an appeal by the Head Committee to perform public duty or if he absented himself without a valid reason he would be liable to pay a penalty of 2/- (20c) for each day that he stayed away. As an incentive to

the groups for dedicated service the Head Committee could award a cash prize for the team who displayed the best behaviour and commitment.

It was also the duty of the Head Committee to take steps to ensure that erfholders maintain an orderly and civilised way of life on the settlements. An erfholder who fell afoul of the law of the land or was guilty of misconduct had to appear before the Head Committee. Depending on the seriousness of the charge the Head Committee could, if deemed necessary, impose some form of discipline on the erfholder concerned and in extreme cases an erfholder could be expelled from the settlement. When an erfholder was expelled from the settlements he would lose all rights and privileges and would forfeit any claims for compensation from the Head Committee or the church. He might not remove any improvements he had made on his erf.

Provision was also made for the appointment of two local committee members for each settlement. They were elected by ballot from a list of six names; 36 of whom were to be nominated by the settlers and three by the Head Committee members from a list of six. The responsibilities of the local committee included the supervision of the settlements and they had to ensure that the rules laid down by the Head Committee were carried out. They were to act as the local representatives of the Head Committee and no erfholder was to ignore or oppose the decision or action of the local committee. However, an erfholder who had reason to feel that he was unjustly treated by the local committee could appeal to the Head Committee for redress. The local committee members did not receive remuneration for the work they did on behalf of the Head Committee but they were exempted from paying rent for the duration of their term of office. They were, however, not exempted from paying interest at the rate of 6% including the administration fees as well as the levies imposed for surplus livestock and improvements on the settlements.

The Head Committee could expel or suspend any local committee guilty of misconduct or any serious offence in which case another erfholder could be appointed in his place for the duration of the unexpired period. It was within the competence of the Head Committee to make any additional rules should it deem it necessary. On completion of the payment of the capital amount together with the interest an erfholder would no longer be liable to pay rent except in the event of

unforeseen circumstances such as war, crop failure or floods; in such an event erfholders would be required to continue paying rent until the bond on the settlements had been paid in full. When the capital amount had been fully paid the settlers could no longer pay rent but would still be liable to pay the levy fixed by the Head Committee to cover administrative and improvement expenses. On the completion of the payment of occupation, erfholders would, however, still be subject to the rules of the Head Committee for the settlements and they would still be expected to maintain a good standard of behaviour. An erfholder would not be allowed to alienate his erf or bequeath it to someone else without the approval of the Head Committee. He could, however, transfer it to his wife or any of his children in writing but it had to take effect only at his death. It was clearly understood that the erfs would remain the property of the church and no erfholder would receive title to it. Erfholders who changed their church affiliation would forfeit all privileges on the farm and would have to leave the settlements immediately.

These rules remained in force as long as the settlements were under the control of the church. One problem the Head Committee had to grapple with was to enforce these rules.

#### **8. The term of office of the Rev. Bertram Nicholas Windvogel**

As pointed out earlier on the group of churches realised that with the growth and expansion of the work in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts, it became increasingly difficult for a single minister to cope. As early as 1937 the idea was mooted at the combined Church Council meeting to call a second minister in order to alleviate the pressure of the work on the Rev. Damon. The meeting felt that the Evangelist J. Adams should remain at Prieska and that consideration be given to call an ordained minister to assist the Rev. Damon (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 02.08.1937). The matter was taken a step further when the churches invited a final year student, a Mr. B.N. Windvogel, to pay a visit to the churches in the area. He visited the Upington church early in March 1938 where he received a warm welcome on behalf of the churches of the Northwestern Cape (Upington members' meeting minutes, 02.04.1938). At the December 1938 meeting of the Upington church the matter of a call to an assistant minister was broached and it was decided to refer it to the combined Church Council meeting which was due to take place at Keimoes in April 1939 (Upington Church Council meeting minutes, 31.12.1938). At that

meeting, the Rev. Damon intimated that he had consulted the Revs. Alexander Stewart and C. Abrahams on the subject of a joint ministry. Apparently the advice he received was positive. This resulted in the meeting deciding to extend a call to Mr. B.N. Windvogel as assistant minister. The stipend offered to him was to be £150 (R300) per annum plus a free manse and he was to be stationed at Keimoes.

By way of introduction, it needs to be observed that Bertram Windvogel was born at Port Elizabeth on 1 January 1909. After completing his primary school education at the Korsten Union Congregational Primary School he trained as a mason. After working for some years in this capacity he felt called to the ministry and proceeded to Lovedale Institution where he matriculated and then proceeded to Fort Hare to take the diploma in theology. After serving in the Kat River for three years he served the Union Congregational Church in Port Elizabeth under the Rev. G.P. Geldenhuys for nine months.<sup>4</sup>

As mentioned before, the decision to extend a call to Mr. Windvogel was taken and the combined Church Council meeting appointed a committee to draft a letter of call. They were to be the brethren F. van Wyk, R. Murphy and F. van Rooi. The three churches were to contribute £50 (R100) each towards his stipend (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 07.04.1939). In the event of the termination of the minister's services, three months notice had to be given.

The call was forwarded to Mr. Windvogel and at the September 1939 members' meeting of the Upington church the Rev. Damon informed them that the call was accepted and that the induction of Mr. Windvogel was to take place at Upington on the last Sunday of December, i.e. 30 December 1939. He could then start his ministry on 1 January 1940. The meeting then discussed the arrangements for his reception. It was suggested that the Keimoes church arrange a social for the new minister for Wednesday, 3 January 1940. Mr. Windvogel got married just before he moved to Keimoes on 26 December 1939 to a Miss Agnes Nickall of Fort Beaufort. It was decided by the meeting that the removal expenses of Mr. Windvogel and his wife to be shared by the three churches on a pro rata basis. However, the renovation of the manse at

---

<sup>4</sup> Information obtained from Obituary, delivered at the funeral service of the late Rev. Windvogel in 1968.

Keimoes was to be borne by that church alone.

Since Windvogel was not ordained as yet his ordination was to take place either at his home church in Port Elizabeth or in the Northwestern Cape. At the combined Church Council meeting the Rev. Damon made a strong plea to the churches not to allow divisions to develop within their ranks (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 04.10.1939). Further details of the reception of the new minister were discussed at the December 1939 church Council meeting of the Keimoes church. The meeting was informed that the actual date of arrival of the new minister and his wife would be on Wednesday 3 January 1940 in the afternoon at 16h00. He would then be met by the Church Council and members and the key of the manse would be formally handed over to him. A social in his honour would be arranged where a door collection would be taken (Keimoes members' meeting minutes, 09.12.1939).

The ordination of the Rev. Windvogel took place at his home church in Port Elizabeth by his own choice. For a young man who had just turned 30 and quite new to the situation in the Northwestern Cape it must have been a challenge to move into the shadows of the Rev. Damon. The latter was then a man in his early fifties and one who had already made his mark in the area. Though stationed at Keimoes the Rev. Windvogel shared the responsibility of running the three churches with his senior colleague. At that time the strain of the work was telling on the Rev. Damon hence the Upington Church Council agreed to grant him three months' sick leave with full pay in December 1939 (Upington Church Council meeting minutes, 30.12.1939).

The adaptation to the new situation where the churches were served by two ministers was not easy for the members in particular. At the April 1940 Church Council meeting at Upington, chaired by the Rev. Windvogel, he spoke out strongly against a tendency among members to talk out of the house. He reminded them that the Church Council was a confidential committee of the church and must be treated as such (Upington Church Council meeting minutes, 06.04.1940).

It would appear that there were times when the relationship between the two ministers was strained. For instance, at the May 1940 meeting of the Keimoes Church Council chaired by the Rev. Windvogel, he took the opportunity to appeal to members not to discuss anything which

concerned the Rev. Damon if he was not physically present (Keimoes members' meeting minutes, 17.05.1940).

The subject of the relationship between the two ministers was referred to at a special Church Council meeting in December 1940. The problem seemed to have arisen as a result of a difference in the style of the management of the church schools followed by the two ministers. There was also a reference of misunderstanding between the ministers although the nature of it was not spelt out in the minutes. The meeting felt, however, that it was imperative that the two ministers should sort out their differences and reconcile (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 16.12.1940).

At the November meeting that year it was decided to purchase a plot which belonged to Dr. E.H. Phillips. The meeting agreed to transfer £60 (R120) from the building fund to the current account in order to proceed with the deal (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 09.11.1940). At the December meeting the need to extend the church was referred to. The Women's Association was asked to make a contribution of £100 (R200) towards the planned extension. However, years had to pass before this intention was put into practice.

Apart from preaching appointments at Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt the Rev. Windvogel also chaired meetings at these churches in rotation with the Rev. Damon. There is also a reference in the 1941 minutes of the Keimoes church Council of a house visitation programme for the Rev. Windvogel which was to include the area from Kalkpunt to the Upington location (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 08.02.1941). At the same meeting the Rev. Damon reported that the churches could buy two motor cars for use by the ministers at the princely sum of £30 (R60). This could be financed by the three churches to the tune of £10 (R20) each.

The growth in the Keimoes church in particular was quite encouraging which could be ascribed to the presence of a minister in residence there. In the report to the Annual General Meeting of the church for the year April 1940 to March 1941 the membership increased by 111; 139 babies were baptised during that period as well as 31 adults, while 31 people were called to Higher Service and five members joined the church on transfer from sister churches. In October when

the Annual Assembly of the Congregational Union of South Africa met in Johannesburg the two ministers attended as ministerial delegates. Special mention was made at the meeting of the fact that the Rev. Windvogel was selected as one of the official preachers at Assembly (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 04.10.1941). At the January 1942 members' meeting of the Keimoes church the Rev. Windvogel gave a brief report of the Assembly meetings. He highlighted one of the points under discussion, viz. the training of coloured candidates for the ministry at Dower Memorial Training School, Uitenhage. In the end the denomination entered into an arrangement with the Presbyterian Church to train both African and coloured candidates at Fort Hare. Another subject of interest under discussion at Assembly was the Church's role in the reconstruction work in the post-war. The Second World War only ended three years later (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 10.01.1942). The report was received by the meeting with interest.

In January 1942 the Keimoes church decided to purchase five plots in the town from a Mr. J.A. van den Heever. The Women's Association was asked to contribute £100 (R200) towards the purchase price. The balance was to be taken from the church's building fund (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 10.01.1942). Recognition was given to the work done by the Rev. Windvogel in April 1942 when the combined Church Council decided to increase his stipend by £25 (R50) per annum (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 06.04.1942). The Kenhardt church agreed at its May 1942 meeting to this increase and expressed willingness to contribute £10 (R20) towards this amount on the understanding that the Keimoes church would make up the balance of £15 (R30) (Kenhardt members' meeting minutes, 16.05.1942).

At a special Church Council meeting of the Keimoes church held in August 1942 a letter from the General Secretary of the denomination was tabled. In it the attention of all local churches was drawn to the fact that in terms of Government Gazette No. 3058 of May 1942 evangelists and ministers had to be paid Cost of Living Allowances as from 1 May 1942. Since this was compulsory and not optional the meeting unanimously decided to comply with their injunction (Keimoes special Church Council meeting minutes, 08.08.1942).

In October 1942 the Rev. Windvogel tendered his resignation in writing since he had accepted a

call to the historic Congregational Church, Bethelsdorp just outside Port Elizabeth. His three months' notice would be for the period 1 November 1942 to 31 January 1943. In his letter of resignation he made mention of the fact that his departure would place a heavy burden on the Rev. Damon as he would have to work single-handed again.

In his response the meeting expressed appreciation to the Rev. Windvogel for the work he had done during his stay there. The Rev. Windvogel further suggested to the Church Council that consideration could be given to invite a probationer to assist the Rev. Damon. He mentioned the name of a Mr. H.W. Renecke as a possibility. He was at the time serving his probation at the Worcester Congregational Church (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 03.10.1942). When the resignation of the Rev. Windvogel was reported to the members' meeting the general feeling was that the church should not stand in his way to make the change. However, the members were appreciative of the work he had done during his comparatively brief stay with them (Keimoes members' meeting minutes, 03.10.1942). At the November 1942 meeting of the Keimoes Church Council it was decided to let the manse after the departure of the minister at a rental of £1 (R2) per month until a minister was settled in the pastorate again (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 03.10.1942).

## **9. The development of outstations**

The development of outstations by the churches must be seen as a natural extension of the churches' ministry to their members who moved into areas some distance away from the mother churches mainly for economic reasons but who wanted to retain their links with the home churches. These outstations were also preaching stations where people met for worship and fellowship on a regular basis. Whilst the local churches developed in the course of time quite a number of outstations, attention will be confined here to the more distant ones since some of them had growth potential. Some of the families mainly linked in the Keimoes church moved deep into present day Namibia as far as Kalkfeld well to the north of Windhoek. For historic and sentimental reasons they preferred to retain their links with the Keimoes church. The extension of the Congregational witness into the territory was already recognised during the ministry of the Rev. Horne as was mentioned before. He saw the prospects of developing work into the then

South West Africa territory.

The Rev. Damon paid a visit to the Congregationalists in Rehoboth and Kalkfeld areas and at the June 1940 meeting of the Keimoes church Council he gave a report particularly of his visit to Kalkfeld. The church received the report with interest and agreed to accept responsibility for ministry to the Kalkfeld group as an outstation even though it was some 1,280 kilometers from Keimoes. In his report the Rev. Damon mentioned that there were at the time 43 members of the Keimoes church in residence and the possibility existed that the church could acquire a sizeable piece of ground for the sum of £1,200 (R2,400). This would open up the possibility of commencing a mission school there (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 08.06.1940).

At the March 1941 Church Council meeting of the Keimoes church they were informed by the Kalkfeld outstation that they had bought a piece of ground 25 hectares in extent for the sum of £250 (R500) interest free. The meeting decided to condone the action of the outstation after taking the circumstances into consideration (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 08.03.1941). This matter was also reported to the combined Church Council meeting the following month. The combined Church Council meeting further agreed to inform the outstation that it was willing to render assistance but would require more details (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 11.04.1941). At the November 1942 Church Council meeting of the Keimoes church it was reported that the Kalkfeld outstation requested permission to erect a building on the site that was purchased. The building would serve as a place of worship. The meeting supported the request in principle but requested more details about the proposed building (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 27.11.1942). Whilst there was no immediate reference to the response of the Kalkfeld outstation the required information was furnished at a later stage to which reference will be made in a subsequent chapter. There is also a reference in the minutes of the Church Council of church "dues", i.e. members' subscription money of the Kalkfeld outstation, which were forwarded to the secretary of the Keimoes church. In September 1941, for instance, a remittance of £19 (R38) was received from Kalkfeld which was their members' subscription and it was duly acknowledged (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 13.09.1941).

Another outstation that was developed under the auspices of the Keimoes church was the work in the Kalahari area. Here again a fair number of Keimoes members moved to and settled at Mier, Loubos and Vilandersbron and they retained links with the home church. The Rev. Damon paid visits to these people and ministered to them. At the May 1942 Church Council meeting of the Keimoes church it was decided to recognise Loubos as an outstation since there was a fair concentration of Keimoes members. The Church Council also decided that a plan be worked out for the introduction of divine services on a regular basis (Keimoes Church Council meeting minutes, 11.07.1942). This marked the beginning of work in the Kalahari by the Keimoes church. In the 1960s – which falls outside the scope of this study – places of worship were erected at Loubos and Little Mier.

In the meantime the Kenhardt church also extended its area of operation by providing a ministry to its members who moved to the Orange River settlements as far as the Boegoeberg Dam area. At the November 1941 Church Council meeting of Kenhardt church it was decided to erect a building at Swartkop (Verneukpan) about 48 kilometers from Brandvlei where a number of the members of the church had settled. It was also agreed to put up a building on the farm Koegrabie subject to the church obtaining a loan for the purpose from the local shopkeeper, a Mr. M.H. Rogow. The meeting decided that the Rev. Windvogel should discuss the loan with Mr. Rogow when next he visited the outstation Wegdraai along the Orange River (Kenhardt Church Council meeting minutes, 14.11.1941). Both Swartkop and Koegrabie schools were started in 1949 and they were under the control of the Kenhardt church (Kenhardt Congregational Kerk, 1902-1979, p 12).

Groblershoop and Brandboom were also developed as outstations of the Kenhardt church. Both were situated along the Orange River in the vicinity of the Boegoeberg Dam. At the May 1942 members' meeting of the Kenhardt church it was decided to erect a church house at Groblershoop (Kenhardt church members' meeting minutes, 16.05.1942). Earlier on in 1938 the Kenhardt church had to assume sole responsibility for the building at Wegdraai since the Methodist church did not see its way clear to contribute financially towards the maintenance of the property (Combined Church Council meeting minutes, 02.07.1938).

With the churches developing outstations and in particular in the case of Upington and Kenhardt who both had work in the Orange River scheme, some overlapping was bound to take place. In 1937 the Kenhardt church Council made a request to the Upington church that the Orange River be accepted as the boundary between them. The implications of this request would have been that Kenhardt would be responsible for most of the outstations along the River. However, the Upington Church Council rejected this suggestion (Upington church meeting minutes, 02.10.1937).

## **10. African work**

The extension of a ministry to the African section of the community is part of the outreach of the Upington church. Unfortunately there is very little written source material available about the origin of the work. As far back as 1918 there is a reference in the minutes of the Executive Committee of the Congregational Union of South Africa to the presence of a fair number of Africans worshipping at the Upington church. The number was estimated at between 2 and 3 hundred people (The Congregationalist, September 1918, p 14). The question that does arise is, why most of these people at some point left the church and constituted themselves as an independent church in the old location? Language could not have been the important consideration since they were all familiar with Afrikaans which is the language most commonly used by most people in the area. Moreover, they were to a large extent Afrikaans speaking. Furthermore, they were not a homogenous group. Among them were Xhosa speaking people but others were of Tswana descent and there were also people of Damara origin apart from a number of Coloureds who joined them.

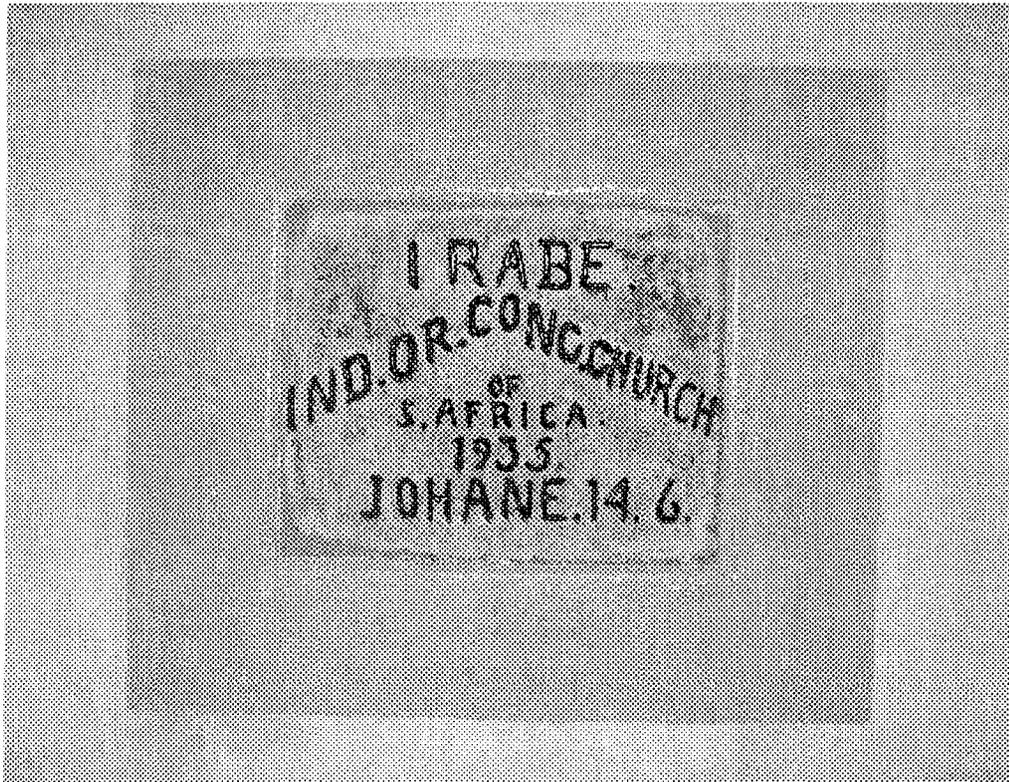
Oral tradition has it that the African section of the members of the Upington church felt unhappy with the attitude of some of the coloured members concerning the use of the chalice at communion serves. Since this is difficult to verify or refute in the absence of a lack of documentary evidence it must be assumed that there was reason enough for a number of people to leave the church. The contention is that there were conservative people in the church who could not move with the times. It must have been difficult for them to accept the fact that the Gordonia area had ceased to be a homeland for the Bastards exclusively as was the case when

Queen Victoria gave royal assent to it in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as pointed out earlier in this study. What gives substance to this contention is a reference in the Upington Church Council minutes of September 1934 when one of the members requested that consideration be given to the erection of a place of worship in the location for non-Bastard members.<sup>5</sup> However, the attitude enunciated by this person must have been limited to a very small section of the people as it did not evoke sufficient support to discuss it further and it was tacitly dropped. As far as can be ascertained, there is no evidence that the church officially barred anybody on the basis of language or ethnicity from membership. Throughout its history it provided a spiritual home to all who wished to join (cf. Upington Church Council meeting minutes, 27.09.1934).

The Upington African Congregational Church – now known as the Paballelo Congregational Church since the previous government moved Africans from the old location to this township and the church had to move as well – dates back to 1928. That year a number of people of African descent together with some Coloureds left the Upington church and constituted themselves as an independent church in the old location. As far as can be ascertained, this group made contact with a certain Rev. M. Nyangi of East London and he served them during the period 1928 to 1932. What his denominational affiliation was could not be established. It appeared, however, that contact with him was made through one of the deacons who was married into this minister's family. The arrangement the group had with him was that he would serve them periodically on an ad hoc basis and on payment of his expenses in advance which amounted at the time to £10 (R20) per visit. This type of ministry was comparable to a consulentship but it never was an ideal situation.

---

<sup>5</sup> The terms used by the elder and recorded in the minutes are still racist and derogatory and will, for that reason, not be repeated here.



*Paballelo Church Foundation Stone*

The Rev. Damon then came across this group and by 1935 he managed to persuade them to return to the Congregational fold as a separate African church. With his help they were received as a constituent church of the Congregational Union of South Africa. He was then appointed by the Western District Association as their consulent and he served them in that capacity for approximately 16 years, i.e. from 1933 – before they were formally accepted as a constituent church by the denomination – to early 1949 when he left Upington. During his term of office he managed to get the church to appoint one of their elders, Bro. P.M. Mreshani, as local Evangelist. He served under the Rev. Damon in that capacity up to 1949. It was also during the Rev. Damon's term of office that the church managed to lease a site for a church in the location and in 1936 a place of worship was erected and formally dedicated on 11 October that year. On that occasion the Upington church and the African church relationship had been reasonably good. Not only did the Rev. Damon serve them as consulent but also his successors followed in his footsteps.



*Present Church Building, Paballelo*



*Original Manse, Paballelo church in the old location, Upington*

## 11. Conclusion

The period covered in this chapter proved to be quite an eventful one for the Congregational churches in the Northwestern Cape. History was made when the Rev. Damon was first appointed consulent and afterwards accepted the call to become the resident minister there. What was significant with this appointment was that he was the first minister of colour to serve in the area. All his predecessors – even the consulents – were white. This in itself necessitated adaptation by the people since they were ministered to right from the days of the Rev. Schröder by white clergy.

There is, however, no evidence that the Rev. Damon encountered opposition on that score but his style of ministry was not always understood by everybody which is quite natural. But he did manage to endear himself to the people.

The development of outstations – in some instances – at considerable distances away from the mother church is a fairly common feature in coloured work in the rural areas. As was pointed out here people moved away from their home churches mainly for economic reasons but wanted to retain their links with the parent churches. The work in the Kalahari and Namibia are typical examples of this development. It was to the Rev. Damon's credit that he persuaded the Church Council to establish a Congregational presence in outlying areas of the Northwest. His involvement with the extension work at Prieska does suggest that he had a measure of foresight. The development of the church settlements came about during his ministry. Initially he had to fight an uphill battle to sell the idea to the church. On the one hand there was the plight of the people who lost the possessions they had. On the other, the church was financially not in a position to render the much-needed assistance. Furthermore, the Rev. Damon encountered crude indifference from among some of the members of the church. They showed reluctance to lend a hand to ease the lot of the people who were in dire need. Despite all these odds the settlements did take shape. Admittedly, as will be seen later on, mistakes were made but on balance it can be said this development was worthwhile.

With the expansion of the work, it became increasingly clear that it was way beyond the ability of one minister to do justice to it. The experiment with the settlement of an assistant minister it did not prove as successful as was originally envisaged. As will be seen later on the ultimate solution was in decentralisation.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ROAD TO DECENTRALISATION, 1943 – 1946

#### 1. Introduction

As mentioned before, when the Rev. Windvogel left for Bethelsdorp in 1942 the burden of the work fell once again on the shoulders of the Rev. Damon. He was then in his early fifties but it became increasingly evident that he could not carry the responsibility of the three churches with the addition of Prieska and the Upington African church single-handed. What aggravated the situation was the extension of the work into the Kalahari and Rehoboth and Kalkfeld in present-day Namibia to which reference was already made before.

The options open to the churches were, either to call a second minister as assistant to the Rev. Damon while retaining the work as a unity, or decentralization. As will be seen in this chapter it was the latter course that the churches chose to follow. However, decentralization posed various challenges to the churches. It meant, inter alia that they would have to stand on their own feet and develop the work in their respective areas of responsibility without the assistance of member churches in the group. Furthermore, they had to develop their own identities, draw up their own constitutions and generally bear the responsibility for their own ministers.

In preparing for separation there were a number of matters to be sorted out among themselves, such as the future of the settlements which included the question of the ownership and management of these settlements. The situation was that while the farms were vested in the Upington church, the majority of the settlers were members of Keimoes church. There was also the question of the boundaries of the churches since overlapping could pose problems. These are some of the issues which the churches had to discuss in order to arrive at a workable arrangement among them.

## **2. Resignation of the Rev. Damon**

Not long after the Rev. Windvogel's departure, the Rev. Damon tendered his resignation as minister of Keimoes and Kenhardt churches. At the July 1943 meeting of the Keimoes Church Council the resignation of the Rev. Damon was tabled. The meeting decided to refer this letter to a special members' meeting which was to be held in August that year (Keimoes church members' meeting, 10.07.1943). The reason was obviously that the Rev. Damon realised that it would be difficult for him to manage alone. The Kenhardt Church Council responded to his resignation by appealing to him to withdraw the resignation, and further agreed to request the group of churches to consider calling a second minister in order to ease the burden of the work on the Rev. Damon (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 14.08.1943).

This request was apparently shared by all three churches in the group for at the October 1943 church Council meeting of the Keimoes church which was chaired by one of the senior elders, bro. W. Gouws, and the response of the Rev. Damon was read. In his letter he informed the meeting that he had decided to withdraw his resignation and he further thanked the Church Council for the confidence shown in him (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 09.10.1943). It would appear that he withdrew his resignation from the Kenhardt church as well. However, he requested three months' leave, i.e. for the period April to June, 1944. The Keimoes Church Council readily agreed to grant him leave for that period (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 11.12.1943).

## **3. Domestic matters**

On the domestic front the member churches of the group carried on as best they could with the band of deacons and elders; these played an important part in routine matters such as house visitation and the conducting of services both in town and on the outstations. There is evidence that the church at times rendered assistance to members in cases of need. A case in point was when one of the members of the Keimoes church, Dinah Slabbert, was assisted by the church with an amount of £1.10s (R3) to enable her to buy food and to pay the district surgeon's

consulting fees when he treated her at her home at Loxtonvale just outside Keimoes. Such cases are referred to in minutes although these did not appear to be frequent, which does suggest that assistance by the Church Council was rendered only in cases of dire need and when brought to its attention (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 08.05.1943).

During the General Election of 1943 the Keimoes Church Council was approached by the local branch of the United Party for the use of its premises for the holding of a political meeting. This request was discussed at the September 1943 meeting of the Church Council. It was, however, decided not to accede to this request since it was, in its opinion, not feasible to make its premises available for party political meetings (Keimoes Church Council minutes, 11.09.1943).

As pointed out in a previous chapter, tension among the group of churches did surface from time to time. But the group managed each time to resolve such difficulties. In 1943 there was again a reference in the Church Council minutes of the Keimoes church of some difference between Upington and Kenhardt churches. At the September 1943 meeting of the Keimoes Church Council a letter from Upington Church Council was discussed. It related to some difference between Upington and Kenhardt Church Councils. It was apparently of a serious nature since the Upington Church Council indicated that they would not in future attend meetings of the combined Church Councils if Kenhardt representatives were present. What caused this situation was not mentioned in the minutes but the Keimoes Church Council concurred with its Upington counterpart. The matter was, however, resolved when in October 1943 at a meeting of the Keimoes Church Council a deputation from the Kenhardt Church Council was in attendance. It consisted of the brethren C. Theron, N. Titus and N. Titus (Junior). It appeared that this deputation was mandated by their Church Council to offer an apology for mistakes made and to ask the Upington Church Council to co-operate with them as in the past. Unfortunately there were no representatives from the Upington church at that meeting since they were busy at that time with preparations for the visit by the Rev. A. Stewart (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 20.10.1943). Reconciliation was apparently effected at some point since there was no further reference in subsequent minutes to this particular matter and thereafter combined Church Council meetings were attended by all three churches.

At the Upington Church Council a discussion was held at its May 1946 meeting on ways and means of improving divine services. One of the areas of concern was the question of the involvement of young people in the life and work of the church. In the ensuing discussion it was decided to ask the treasurer, bro. A.J. Ferreira, the principal of the high school, to draw up guidelines for the establishment of a Youth Fellowship. It was hoped that in this way young people could also be catered for. It was also decided to introduce a programme of Bible study for the Church Council members. Mondays were set aside for such meetings. This would give deacons and elders the opportunity to equip themselves for the work they were doing in the church (Upington Church Council meeting, 25.05.1946).

On the negative side the Upington church lost two families who had had a very long association with the church, viz. the Van Wyk and Murphy families. Whilst the phenomenon of people severing ties with a church and taking up membership with another church is not unusual, in this particular instance, the Van Wyk family was among the people linked to the church since its inception. The wife of bro. Van Wyk numbered among the very first group of locally trained teachers, and that goes back to the early part of the century. Bro. Dick Murphy, as mentioned earlier on, was at one time even considered as a possible candidate for a District Evangelist.

In the case of bro. Frans van Wyk, who was an elder in the church at the time a complaint was made that he allowed his wife and children to worship with a sectarian group known as the "Two-by-Two's" while they still retained their membership with the Congregational Church. This complaint was discussed at the September 1945 meeting of the Church Council. The meeting took strong exception to this and it was categorically stated that when a member of the Church Council allows his family to worship with another Christian group whose doctrine is at variance with that of the Congregational Church, such a person could not retain his membership in the church (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.09.1945). However, bro. Van Wyk remained for the time being a member of the Church Council.

The complaint made against bro. Dick Murphy was that he stayed away from Church Council meetings and communion services. Murphy was then summoned to appear before the Church Council in order to resolve the problem if he had any. He declined, however, to attend the

September 1945 Church Council meeting where it was hoped to clear up the matter. Subsequently bro. Van Wyk informed the meeting that he made contact with Murphy who told him that he had a difference with the Rev. Damon. To this the Rev. Damon responded by saying that he had nothing personal against Murphy. It was then decided to invite Murphy again to attend the Church Council meeting where the matter could be resolved but he failed to appear (Upington Church Council meeting, 27.09.1945).

The result was that at the November 1946 Church Council meeting it was decided to recommend to the members' meeting that bro. Murphy's membership be terminated (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.11.1946).

As far as bro. Van Wyk was concerned, he was also summoned to appear before the Church Council. At the July 1946 meeting of the Church Council it was reported that he stated in a letter to the Church Council that he would attend once he was in a better frame of mind. The meeting felt, however, that he was summoned thrice to appear and each time he had failed to attend; therefore it was decided to terminate his membership of the Church Council, and that he be placed under censure for an indefinite period.

The significance of this whole episode was that the church took a stand when and where members defaulted irrespective of the standing of the people in the church. The matter was laid to rest after the members concerned terminated their relationship with the church and took up membership with other churches in the town (cf. Upington Church Council meeting, 28.11.1946).

#### **4. Events leading up to decentralisation**

It is fair to say that the Rev. Damon took steps to prepare both Kenhardt and Keimoes churches to stand on their own feet. One of the things he did was to invite ministers and students for the ministry who were nearing the completion of their studies to visit Keimoes, Kenhardt and even Upington churches. This would enable them to make personal acquaintance with the extent of the work and at the same time the people could make contact with these ministers. In this way

the churches would be better able to make an informed choice when a call was to be considered.

At the time there was a young probationer serving the Worcester Congregational church, viz. a Mr. H.W. Renecke who was nearing the completion of his term of probation. At the suggestion of the Rev. Damon the Keimoes Church Council decided at its October 1943 quarterly meeting to invite this probationer to be their guest preacher at the April 1944 communion service (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 20.10.1943). At the February 1944 meeting of the Keimoes Church Council it was decided to ask Mr. Renecke to include a visit to the Kenhardt church as well (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 19.02.1944). For some reason not mentioned in the minutes the visit was brought forward to March 1944. It was during that visit that the Church Council recommended that Mr. Renecke be invited to serve the church as a probationer minister. This was endorsed by the members' meeting of the Keimoes church but Mr. Renecke declined this invitation. The Church Council thereupon decided to defer the question of a call to a minister to the April 1944 quarterly meeting (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 11.03.1944).

As far as Keimoes was concerned no firm decision was taken about a call of a minister until their August 1944 meeting when the Church Council was informed that there was another student for the ministry who was nearing the completion of this training, viz. a Mr. I.J. Theron from Port Elizabeth. The meeting then decided to invite him to do field work for them during the summer vacation. It was also agreed to remunerate him at a rate of £4 (R8) per month plus free board and lodging (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 11.11.1944). It needs to be observed that whilst the decision to invite Mr. Theron was taken in August, final preparations were only made in November since he had agreed to start his work in the church then.

The Women's Association undertook to make the necessary preparations for his accommodation. At the December 1944 meeting of the Keimoes Church Council an amount of £8 (R16) was voted to enable the Women's Association to purchase necessities for the room in the manse which was to be used by the student. The meeting also decided to call for tenders to effect renovations at the manse and in particular the room set aside for use by Mr. Theron.

As far as the Kenhardt church was concerned the Church Council took a decision to invite

another student for the ministry, a Mr. J.W. Stilwaney to do supply work for them during the vacation. He was studying at Fort Hare and was due to complete his course of training by the end of 1946. At the January 1945 meeting of the Keimoes Church Council the two ministerial students – Messrs Theron and Stilwaney – were present. They were cordially welcomed by the chairman, Rev. Damon, on behalf of the Church Council (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 13.01.1945).

By then both of them had done some field work in the churches and Mr. Theron reported on the number of visits to members he conducted and that he had found this aspect of the work both interesting and rewarding. Since this was to be the last Church Council meeting they could attend before leaving to resume their studies they were cordially thanked by the meeting. Members expressed the hope that they would consider spending another vacation at these churches.

Mr. Stilwaney returned to Fort Hare to resume his studies but Mr. Theron was apparently unsuccessful in his examination. The Ministerial Committee agreed to allow him to proceed with his studies privately. At the April 1945 combined Church Council meeting held at Keimoes it was decided to invite the student, Mr. Theron, to do field work in the area while preparing for his final examination which was later in August that year. The remuneration offered to him was to be £10 (R20) per month plus free lodging at Upington. However, he would be expected to pay for his meals. The idea was that he would be expected to serve in that capacity for a year. He would spend a month at each of the three churches and his duties would include house visitation as well (Combined Church Council meeting, 01.04.1945).

During his stay there he gained some experience in conducting church meetings. For instance at the June 1945 Church Council meeting of the Keimoes church he chaired the meeting in the absence of the Rev. Damon. At that meeting the arrangements relative to the use of his car on bona fide church duties were discussed. He made mention of the fact that the Upington and Kenhardt churches agreed to pay him a car allowance of £6 (R12) per month to cover fuel and maintenance costs. The Kenhardt church further decided to pay him an additional allowance to cover the wear and tear on his car. The Keimoes Church Council then agreed to follow Kenhardt's example by paying him £3 (R6) to cover the wear and tear on his car for the month

that he would spend at Keimoes (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 09.06.1945).

The position of the ministerial student, I.J. Theron, was discussed at a special combined Church Council meeting in December 1945. He recused himself since he was under discussion but before he left the meeting he request that consideration be given to changing the existing arrangement whereby he had to spend a month at a time at each of the churches. His contention was that a month was too short a period to enable him to do justice to the work. He suggested that the period be extended to three months per church instead.

The response to this request is not clear, possibly in the light of other developments the chairman shared with the members. The Rev. Damon reported that his application to the Ministerial Committee to have Mr. Theron licensed to administer the sacraments during the period of his stay in the area was turned down. After further discussion on the subject it was decided that the chairman should renew his application for the licensing of Mr. Theron. If the request was acceded to by the Ministerial Committee the meeting felt that he should be placed at Prieska (Special combined Church Council meeting, 15.12.1945).

Mr. Theron responded to the request of the meeting in a letter tabled at the January 1946 Church Council meeting of Upington. In it he declined the offer to serve the Prieska branch since he contended that the work there covered a geographical area similar in extent to that of the Keimoes church. He also asked to be relieved from duties by the end of January 1946 since he needed more time to prepare himself for his final examination which was due to take place in August that year. The meeting agreed to accede to Mr. Theron's request and it was decided to convey to him their thanks for the services he had rendered during his period of stay in the area. The members' meeting endorsed the recommendation of the Church Council. This terminated Mr. Theron's association with the group of churches (cf. Upington members' meeting, 03.01.1946).

However, at the February 1946 Church Council meeting of Upington the chairman reported that it had come to his attention that Mr. Theron had held a meeting, without his knowledge, with the Keimoes Church Council. The alleged purpose of this meeting was to advise the Church Council

that once the Rev. Damon's services had been dispensed with the church would be free to call a minister of its choice. To this the chairman took umbrage. (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.02.1946).

There is, however, no trace in the Keimoes church Council minutes of such a meeting. The deduction therefore is that if such an informal discussion took place it was entirely unofficial. It is very likely that Church Council members came to Mr. Theron for advice since they were not familiar with the implications of decentralisation. The matter must have been shelved since there is no further reference to it afterwards.

However, the group of churches still had to address the problem of an adequate ministerial oversight. With one ordained minister serving the whole area the position was far from satisfactory. In November 1945 the Upington Church Council held a special meeting where the future of the work came up for discussion. The option of a call to a second minister while the group of churches retained its character was considered. But the Rev. Damon was, however, of the opinion that the Keimoes church would be in a position to separate from the group since it would be able to support a minister. He did put this suggestion to the Keimoes church but the matter would have to be dealt with by the combined Church Council meeting. Should this suggestion find favour with the Keimoes church and meet with the approval of the combined Church Council, the idea of a call to a second minister would fall away. The meeting then decided to refer this matter to the combined Church Council for consideration (Upington Church Council meeting, 24.11.1945).

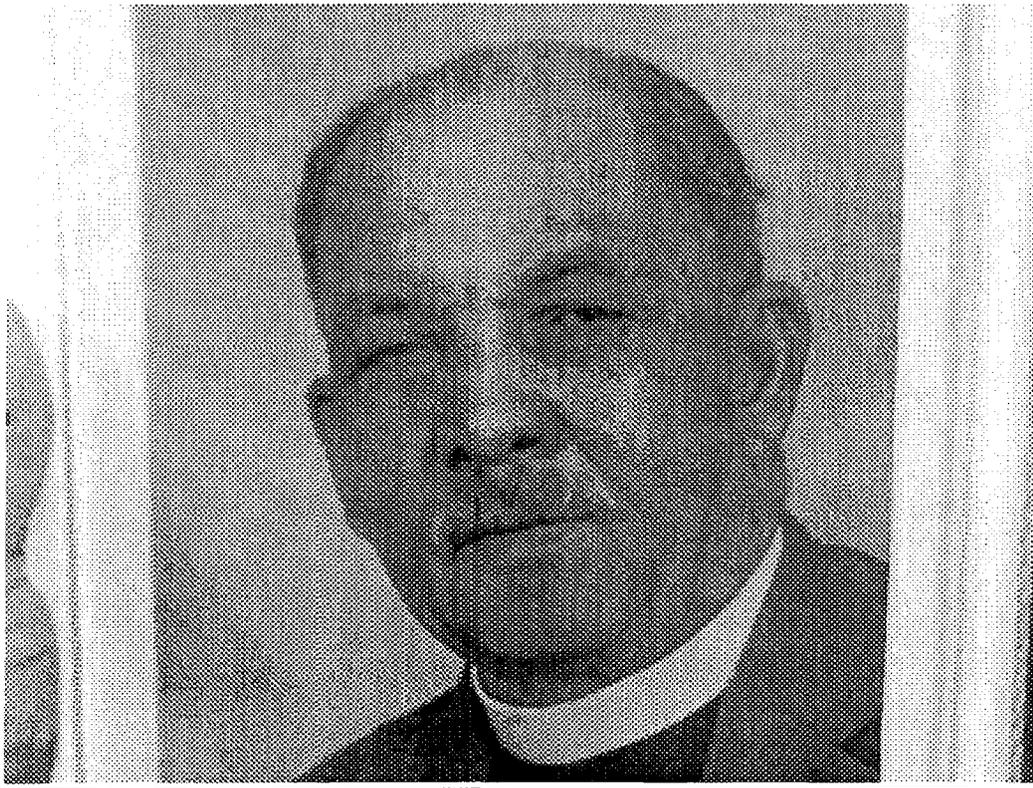
At the December 1945 special combined Church Council meeting, the request of the Keimoes church to separate from the group, so as to enable them to call a minister, was considered. The Rev. Damon explained to the meeting that for health reasons he was no longer able to shoulder the responsibility of serving the group of churches single-handed. He further pointed out that experience had taught that an assistant minister would not be the answer.

Decentralisation would be the other alternative option. However, this would not necessarily mean that the boundaries of the church should be fixed immediately. The work could go on as

before as well as the management of the settlements. The main implication of decentralisation would be that each church would be free to call a minister of its choice and that it could manage its own financial affairs. After this explanation was outlined by the chairman, the meeting decided unanimously to accede to the Keimoes church's request to separate from the group (Special combined Church Council meeting, 15.12.1945).

The withdrawal of the Keimoes church from the group did raise the question of the Rev. Damon's own position. At the January 1946 meeting of the Upington church Council which was chaired by the treasurer, bro. A.J. Ferreira, a letter from the Rev. Damon on his position after decentralisation was tabled. After the matter was fully discussed the meeting decided unanimously that the Rev. Damon should remain the resident minister of the Upington church after the secession of the Keimoes and Kenhardt churches from the group (Upington Church Council meeting, 31.01.1946).

At the combined Church Council meeting held in April 1946 chaired by the Rev. Damon, the decentralisation issue was discussed in-depth. The chairman pointed out that he had made several attempts at getting a minister for Keimoes church. One of the people he approached was a ministerial student who was nearing the end of his studies at Fort Hare, viz. a Mr. W.J. Bergins. However, he declined the invitation to consider a call to Keimoes church. As far as the Kenhardt church was concerned he made an approach to another student for the ministry, a certain Mr. J.W. Stilwaney, who was due to complete his training at Fort Hare in 1946. There was a possibility that he would be prepared to consider a call to the Kenhardt church. There was also an ordained minister of the Methodist Church who was stationed at the time at Wortel in the Rehoboth area who would be likely to consider a call to the Keimoes church. He was Rev. L.C. King.



*Rev. L. C. King*

The Rev. Damon went on to explain that there were not many Coloured ministers in the denomination at the time from whom to choose. He mentioned the names of the Revs. B.N. Windvogel, J.W. van Stavel, H.C. Samuels, C.W. Hendrickse and J.C. Abrahams. Then there were a few probationers, viz. Messrs. P.S. Attwell, J.W. Stilwaney and W.J. Bergins.

As far as the Rev. Damon's own position was concerned he pointed out that the calls to ministers by Keimoes and Kenhardt churches would differ in one important respect to the call he had received in the 1930s. He was then called to minister to the group of churches whereas the Kenhardt and Keimoes churches would extend calls to minister to them individually. He again expressed himself against the idea of calling an assistant minister since past experience had taught that such an arrangement did not work.

After the matter was carefully considered it was decided to defer further discussions on the subject until the Moderator of the Western District Association could be present (Combined

Church Council meeting, 22.04.1946).

The question of decentralisation and a call to a minister was further discussed by the Keimoes Church Council at its April 1946 meeting. The meeting was informed by the Rev. Damon that Kenhardt church had decided to invite the Moderator of the Western District Association, the Rev. B.H.M. Brown, to chair a special meeting where a call to a minister would be discussed. The Keimoes Church Council then decided to ask the Moderator to include a visit to them as well for the same purpose.

At the Church Council meeting the Rev. Damon reiterated what he had already said at the combined Church Council meeting, namely, that he worked under tremendous pressure in the three churches; it was therefore imperative that they should seriously give consideration to separate and call ministers. It needs to be observed that the application of the Keimoes church for separation was already dealt with by the special combined Church Council meeting in December 1945. Rev. Damon's remark here must therefore be seen as his keenness to expedite the process of decentralisation. He went on to say that if the church could not obtain the services of a Coloured minister they should consider extending a call to a white minister.

One of the suggestions made in the discussion was that the Rev. Damon be asked to serve the church after separation as consulent. He responded, however, that the work had grown to such an extent that it could not be served adequately by a consulent. The meeting then asked the Rev. Damon to remain in office until after the Moderator had visited the church and the future of the pastorate had been settled (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 12.04.1946). The meeting referred to here was the ordinary monthly Church Council meeting; but at the quarterly meeting there still seemed to have been some uncertainty among some members about the steps to be followed when decentralisation was to take place. This was evident from the opinion expressed by two elders of the Keimoes church, viz. the brethren M. Diergaardt and J. Goeiman. They were of the opinion that a call to another minister could only be entertained once the Rev. Damon had tendered his resignation and surrendered the church's title deeds and other documents in his possession. The Rev. Damon then explained the implications of this idea should the meeting agree to it. It would mean that he would have to relinquish duties by the end of that month; the

District Association would have to be informed accordingly. The Moderator would then have to chair a special meeting of the members in July to deal with the question of a call to a minister. The meeting then felt that in the light of the explanation given by the chairman the matter should be dealt with later (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 13.04.1946).

At the July 1946 Church Council meeting of Upington the Rev. Damon reported that the Keimoes church would take formal leave of him during the second week of October that year. Incidentally, it would coincide with the anniversary celebrations of the Women's Association. A farewell function was arranged in his honour for the second Saturday of October to which members of Upington and Kenhardt churches were invited (Upington Church Council meeting, 25.07.1946).

In May 1946 a special meeting of the Keimoes church Council was held followed by a members' meeting. At both meetings the Rev. B.H.M. Brown, Moderator of the Western District Association, was present. The Rev. Damon introduced him to the meeting and extended a cordial welcome to him on behalf of the church. He replied suitably and conveyed the greetings of the Executive Committee of the denomination to them. The purpose of the meeting was to consider a call to be extended to a minister. The Rev. Damon intimated that he would not be available for a call. The names of other candidates were then tabled, viz. the final year ministerial student, W.J. Bergins, the Rev. B.N. Windvogel and the student I.J. Theron. In respect of Mr. Bergins the meeting noted that he had indicated earlier on that he would not consider a call to the Keimoes church. As far as the Rev. Windvogel was concerned the Rev. Damon expressed doubts as to whether he was likely to consider a call to Keimoes. The student, I.J. Theron who did supply work in the area was considered. But the meeting noted that he still had to write his final examination in August that year and in the opinion of the Moderator it would be advisable to appoint him to a smaller church in order to enable him to concentrate on his studies.

The name of the Rev. L.C. King of the Methodist Church was then considered. By way of introduction it needs to be observed that the Rev. King's name was first mentioned at the September 1945 meeting of the Keimoes Church Council. As mentioned earlier on he was an ordained minister of the Methodist Church and was stationed at Wortel in the Rehoboth area. He

was also related to the Rev. Damon. At that meeting the Church Council decided to invite the Rev. King to pay them a visit in October 1945 (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 01.09.1945). This visit took place during the second week of October that year. He and his wife were cordially welcomed on behalf of the church on that occasion by the Rev. Damon (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 13.10.1945).

At the November 1945 meeting of the Keimoes Council the Rev. Damon reported that the Rev. King had applied to the Methodist Church to have his name transferred to the ministerial roll of the Congregational Union of South Africa. To this the denomination agreed to subject to his completing successfully a course in Congregational polity and accepting the Constitution of the Congregational Union of South Africa. There would have been added further the normal condition that he received and accepted a call to a Congregational Church.

When his name was mentioned at the special Church Council meeting of Keimoes the people had already had the opportunity of meeting him. Quite understandably it was decided to extend a call to him. His stipend was to be £250 (R500) per annum. Furthermore, the church agreed to provide him with a car for use in the execution of his pastoral duties. A cost of living allowance as laid down by the State was also to be paid to him as well as the normal contribution to the Superannuation Fund (Ministers' pension fund) on condition that it did not exceed £12 (R24) per annum. If the call was accepted he would be expected to commence duties on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1946. The meeting agreed to follow the normal procedure by conveying this decision to the Western District Association and to seek its approval of the call (Keimoes special Church Council meeting, 25.05.1946).

At the August 1946 Church Council of Keimoes the Rev. Damon reported that the Rev. King had accepted the call and that he was prepared to commence duties on 1 November, 1946. There was, however, a further communication to the effect that the Methodist Church was not prepared to release the Rev. King before December 31<sup>st</sup> that year. The meeting noted the contents of this communication and expressed satisfaction at the news of the Rev. King's acceptance of the call (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 13.08.1946). The meeting felt that since the church was not at that stage in a position to build a new manse, improvements should be effected to the existing

manse such as the erection of a veranda, a boundary wall and a stoep. The Rev. Damon then took the opportunity to appeal to the Council to increase the income of the church since they would have to support their minister without outside assistance.

As far as Kenhardt church was concerned, a special members' meeting was held in May 1946 which was chaired by the Moderator, Rev. B.H.M. Brown. The purpose of that meeting was also to consider a call to a minister. The chairman mentioned that it would not be advisable for the meeting to consider a call to the Rev. Damon at that stage. The names before the meeting were Messrs. J.W. Stilwaney, W.L. Nell and the Rev. L.C. King. The meeting decided to extend a call to Mr. Stilwaney. He was then in his final year at Fort Hare and if he accepted the call he would serve his probation at Kenhardt (cf. Damon, 1990, p 19). This call was accepted and he served the church for 17 months after which he accepted a call to Somerset East Congregational church.

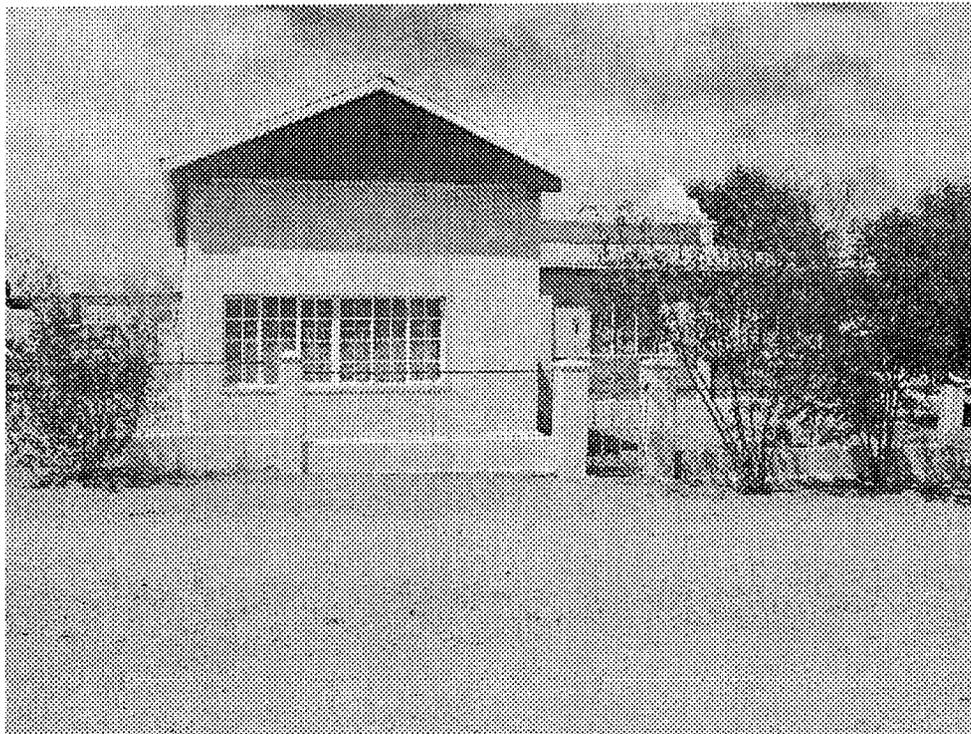
The separation of Keimoes and Kenhardt churches from the group had some important implications for the Upington church. One was that a new constitution had to be drawn up for the Upington church. At the October 1946 members' meeting of Upington church the Rev. Damon indicated that the new constitution would be ready by January 1947 (Upington members' meeting, 05.10.1946).

At the Upington Church Council meeting of October 1946 the Rev. Damon reported that he would conclude his ministry with the Kenhardt and Keimoes churches in November, i.e. a month after the time originally mentioned. After the termination of his ministry of these two churches he would like to have a short rest. The meeting noted this (Upington Church Council meeting, 05.10.1946).

At the November 1946 Church Council of Upington it was reported that the Kenhardt Church Council had extended an invitation to the induction service of their probationer minister, Mr. J.W. Stilwaney, which was due to take place on 10 January 1947. The meeting felt, however, that regrettably it could not accede to it since it coincided with the induction service of the Rev. King at Keimoes which was scheduled to take place on 11 January, 1947. The latter invitation was received and accepted prior to the Kenhardt one. It was also agreed to convene a special meeting

with the Keimoes Church Council for 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1946 where matters relative to the implications of decentralisation as these affected the two churches would be discussed (Upington Church Council meeting, 29.11.1946). This special combined meeting of Upington and Keimoes Church Councils took place at Keimoes on the date agreed upon under the chairmanship of the Rev. Damon. The following matters were then discussed:

- a) **Reception of the Rev. King.** The first matter dealt with by the meeting was the reception of the Rev. King and his family. The meeting noted that the Rev. King was due to arrive at Upington by train on 28 December, 1946. It was agreed that the Upington Church Council should take responsibility to meet the Rev. King and his family at the station from whence they would be escorted to Dyasonsklip where the Keimoes Church Council would meet their new minister and his family and take them to Keimoes.
  
- b) **Kenhardt manse.** The next item under discussion was the manse of Kenhardt. The erection of a manse was first referred to at a special combined Church Council meeting of the group held at Upington in 1945. The estimated cost of the erection of the manse was somewhere between £900 (R1 800) and £1 200 (R2 400). In terms of a previous decision of the combined Church Council the Upington and Keimoes churches agreed to contribute one third each to the cost of the manse. At that December 1945 meeting Kenhardt applied for financial assistance from the joint building fund of the three churches in order to erect a manse. A business man, Mr. Rogow, from the farm Koegrabie in the Kenhardt district was prepared to grant the church a loan of £800 (R1 600) at an interest rate of 5½% per annum. However, in the meantime the church went ahead with the erection of a manse by using their own resources. The result was that the balance needed to complete the manse only amounted to £500 (R1 000). The meeting then agreed to grant the loan as request at an interest rate of 4% per annum. (Special Combined Church Council meeting, 05.12.1945.) The meeting further agreed to deputise the brethren M.C. Visagie of the Upington church and W. Gouws of Keimoes church to represent the group at the dedication of the manse.



*Original Kenhardt Manse*

- c) **Prieska.** The third matter the meeting looked at was the situation at the Prieska branch. In April 1946 the combined Church Council meeting had to deal with a letter from the secretary of the Prieska branch. In it the secretary requested, on behalf of the branch, that the services of the evangelist J. Adams be terminated and that three months' notice be served on him. In the ensuing discussion it appeared that the meeting where this decision was taken was convened without the knowledge of the Evangelist, neither was the group of churches informed about it. The meeting therefore felt that the decision to terminate the services of the Evangelist was *ultra vires*. However, the Rev. Damon pointed out that Evangelist Adams was getting on in years and that he did explain the situation to the Ministerial Committee of the denomination.

He then mentioned the name of a certain Mr. W.T. Kruger who was taking the course for evangelists at Lovedale. But it turned out afterwards that this candidate was only due to complete his training in 1947. The meeting then decided that Evangelist Adams should remain at Prieska for the time being; furthermore, the chairman was mandated to ask the

Ministerial Committee to recommend a suitable candidate for the work at Prieska. Adams could remain at Prieska until a successor could be found and thereafter he could be used for the same type of ministry within the group of churches (Combined Church Council meeting, 22.04.1946).

At the July 1946 meeting of the Upington Church Council the Rev. Damon reported that he had made contact with a certain Mr. D. Fredericks, a Union Evangelist, from Port Elizabeth. He expressed willingness to consider an invitation to the work at Prieska. The practical problem at that time was accommodation but Evangelist Adams managed to obtain a rented house for £1.10s (R3) a month.

The meeting then agreed to invite Fredericks to serve Prieska as an evangelist. In the event of him accepting the invitation the Upington church agreed to take responsibility for his removal expenses as well as for the payment of the house rent. It was expected that he could commence duties at Prieska on 1 August, 1946 (Upington Church Council meeting, 25.07.1946).

The stay of Fredericks at Prieska was, however, of short duration. At the November 1946 meeting of the Upington Church Council the Evangelist Fredericks was present. The Rev. Damon reported at that meeting that Fredericks wrote directly to the Secretary of the denomination in which he alleged that he had made a mistake to accept the invitation to serve the Prieska branch. His contention was that Prieska was financially unable to meet his stipend. However, the financial statement received from Prieska reflected a monthly income of £24 (R48) and £26 (R52) respectively during the two months of his stay there.

Fredericks admitted that he did not follow the correct procedure when he bypassed the chairman and communicated directly with the Secretary of the denomination. But he reiterated that the financial position of the Prieska branch was not satisfactory. He felt that since he was married with family responsibilities he could not serve a church which had no financial resources to fall back on. In his response the chairman pointed out that he had travelled with Fredericks to the annual Assembly meetings held at Port Elizabeth and that at

no time did the Evangelist make any reference to financial problems that he experienced at Prieska.

The letter of Fredericks was referred to the Reference Committee.<sup>1</sup> The Rev. Damon then had to appear before this Committee in connection with Fredericks' complaint. He was able to point out that Prieska was an extension charge of the Upington church. Upington church undertook to guarantee the stipend of the Evangelist. In its investigation the Reference Committee found that Fredericks did receive his stipend on 2 September, two days after the end of the month. Fredericks admitted that the explanation given by the chairman was correct but he was adamant that he was not satisfied with the financial position of Prieska branch. Therefore, he had decided to tender his resignation.

The elder, Johannes Paulus, who accompanied Fredericks to the meeting, stated that the Prieska branch would have been in a position to meet the stipend of the Evangelist without outside help if they did not have a teacher on their pay roll. This was in reference to the private school that the branch was operating at the time. He then asked whether the Upington church could assist Prieska to meet the October stipend of the Evangelist. The meeting then agreed to assist the Prieska branch to the amount of £8 (R16) on the understanding that the balance of £5 (R10) be met by the branch. It was also decided that it should be paid over to Fredericks not later than 10 November that year. At the November 1946 meeting of the Upington Church Council the letter of resignation of the Evangelist Fredericks was tabled as well as a letter from the Secretary of the Prieska branch. In it he made mention of the resignation of the Evangelist which was due to take effect on 30 November, 1946. It also contained a request that the Rev. Damon pay them quarterly visits. The meeting accepted the resignation of Fredericks but did not accede to the request that the Rev. Damon pay them quarterly visits. It was decided instead that the Rev. Damon pay visits to Prieska as often as his programme permitted and that the work be carried in the

---

<sup>1</sup> This Reference Committee was one of the Standing Committees appointed by the Assembly. In terms of the Constitution this committee was to meet immediately prior to the annual assembly and shall "consider and report to the Assembly on matters which are referred to it by the Executive of the Assembly on the recommendation of the Executive." (C.U.S.A. Constitution, 1965, p. 16.)

meantime by the Evangelist Adams to the best of his ability (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.11.1946).

At the combined Church Council meeting of Upington and Keimoes to which reference was already made, the chairman reported that Evangelist Fredericks had resigned. The meeting then agreed that the Evangelist Adams be transferred to Upington since it was no longer possible for him to carry on the work at Prieska on account of his advanced age. Furthermore, his influence over the people there had declined which would make his ministry ineffective. It was therefore decided that Prieska be placed under the direct control of the Upington church.

- d) **The Kalahari outstation.** As far as the work in the Kalahari was concerned the meeting noted that there were approximately 100 communicant members of the Congregational church living in the Mier area, half of whom belonged to the Keimoes church, and the other half to the Upington church. After a lengthy discussion the meeting decided that this outstation be placed under the care of Keimoes church after decentralisation.
- e) **Exchange of plot.** The meeting noted that an arrangement was made by the two churches whereby a plot adjoining the Keimoes church site and which was vested in the Upington church be transferred to Keimoes church. In exchange the Keimoes church would then waive its share of the plot at Upington which was earmarked for the erection of the proposed high school.
- f) **Settlements.** The future of the settlements after decentralisation was an important matter since, as was pointed out earlier on, the farms were vested in the Upington church but the majority of the settlers belonged to the Keimoes church. The matter at issue here was the agreement reached at the combined meeting between the two churches. Other issues pertaining to the settlements not directly related to this will be dealt with later on in this chapter.

The chairman reminded the meeting that the farms were originally bought and converted

into church settlements for members of Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt churches. Since the repayment of the bond on the farms had not been completed, he suggested that the management of the settlements remain in Upington church's hands. The assurance was, however, given that members of Keimoes and Kenhardt churches living on the farms need not fear that they would be moved after decentralisation.

The meeting then unanimously agreed that the management of the settlements should remain in the Upington church's hands on the clear understanding that no settler should be moved purely on the grounds of his/her membership of Keimoes or Kenhardt churches (Special combined Church Council meeting, 16.12.1946).

## **5. Outstations**

Mention was already made in the previous chapter of the development of outstations by the three churches. The work in the Kalahari, like in other cases, developed because Congregationalists moved into the area but wished to retain their links with their home churches. The Keimoes church's entry into the Kalahari must be seen as the result of members who moved into the area and appealed to the mother church to minister to them. There is no indication that the Congregational Church entered the scene in competition with other churches that were already operating in the area.

At the July 1943 meeting of the Keimoes church's Finance Committee, the Rev. Damon reported that Rietfontein was to be taken over by the Government. In view of this development he suggested that the church should consider applying for a church site there so that a place of worship could be erected for Congregationalists who settled in the area. This the meeting agreed to (Keimoes church Finance Committee meeting, 12.07.1943).

At the October 1943 Church Council meeting of Keimoes the Rev. Damon reported that he had met a deputation of four men from Rietfontein on 16 October. They produced documentary evidence which showed that Rietfontein was originally granted to the Rhenish Missionary

Society by the Government for mission work on condition that if that Society could no longer maintain it as a mission station, it was to revert to the State. That happened in fact when the Rhenish Missionary Society withdrew from its mission work in this country. In that interview with the Rev. Damon the deputation further informed him that one of the representatives from Rietfontein, a certain Mr. Philander, wanted to know whether the property relinquished by the Rhenish Missionary Society could be passed over to the Congregational Church. The reply he received was that the matter was in the hands of the Government and that as soon as a response was received the people of the area would be informed (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 20.10.1943).

The background to the situation pertaining to Rietfontein was that when the Rhenish Missionary Society withdrew from its South African mission field, it entered into an agreement with the General Mission Committee of the Mother Church of the Dutch Reformed Church whereby the Rhenish mission work would be incorporated into its own mission work. Unfortunately, a sizeable number of the members of the Rhenish congregation at Rietfontein and Bokseputs refused to join the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. This led to a schism and the dissatisfied group found a spiritual home with the Lutheran Church. Those who were in favour of incorporation numbered initially 50 families at Rietfontein and approximately 20 families at Bokseputs (De Villiers, 1950, p 50). The group who joined the Dutch Reformed Mission Church was placed under the care of the Uppington Dutch Reformed Mission congregation.

In December 1943 the Rev. Damon reported to the Keimoes Church Council that he had received a telegram from the Congregational church members living at Rietfontein and the environs in which they asked him to pay them a visit and to serve the sacraments to them. At the same meeting he reported that he could not make any headway in the Rietfontein situation. This was in all probability in reference to a visit he had paid to the area when he could not gain access to the church building at Rietfontein in order to conduct a service there; the doors were locked then. In retrospect it must be conceded that it would have been difficult to work in the area given the circumstances that pertained at the time. There was still then a lot of dissension between the two groups referred to. Furthermore, as it turned out, the Congregationalists were mainly concentrated at Mier, Loubos and Vilandersbron. At Rietfontein both Lutherans and Dutch

Reformed Mission churches developed their work and the old feud subsided with the passage of time (cf. Keimoes Church Council meeting, 11.12.1943).

## 6. Settlements: Bloemsmond, Witputs and related matters

Three matters relative to the settlements need to be mentioned here apart from the administrative aspect which was already dealt with earlier on.

- a) **Bloemsmond.** Firstly, the Upington Church Council was informed by the chairman at the February 1946 meeting that Dr .C.J. Anderson had indicated that he was ready to have transfer of the farm Bloemsmond passed in favour of the church. The only condition was that the amount of £655 4s 8d (R 1 310.48) be paid to him within a reasonable time. He was prepared to waive the interest on the loan for 1946. The meeting expressed itself in favour of the way the chairman handled the Bloemsmond matter and agreed to refer the request of Dr. Anderson to the church's Finance Committee (Upington Church Council meeting, 08.02.1946).

From the Finance Committee the matter was referred to the members' meeting where it was decided to accept the condition made by Dr. Anderson for the repayment of the loan he made to the church. As mentioned in a previous chapter, the money he lent to the church was to buy that portion of the farm Bloemsmond which belonged to bro. Pieter Beukes. The loan amounted to the figure mentioned above, viz. £655 4s 8d (R1 310.48). The meeting also decided that the property be vested in the Upington church (Upington members' meeting, 06.04.1946).



*Bloemsmond School*

Apparently, the church failed to observe common courtesy by thanking Dr. Anderson after the whole matter was finalised. This was brought to the attention of the Upington Church Council at its November 1946 meeting by the chairman. He mentioned that he met Dr. Anderson during the Assembly meetings in October that year and in a private conversation he expressed his disappointment with the church who did not say a word of thanks in regard to the Bloemsmond matter after everything had been finalised. Rev. Damon assured him that this omission was not intentional but that the church would still communicate with him. The meeting then agreed that the Rev. Damon be requested to send a letter of thanks on behalf of the church to Dr. Anderson.

- b) **Head Committee.** The second matter referred to a decision to enlarge the size of the Head Committee. At this April 1946 combined church meeting it was decided to enlarge the Head Committee by the addition of a sixth member. It was further decided that members of the

Head Committee should be elected annually and that two members should retire annually but that they could be eligible for re-election.

At this point one of the members of the Keimoes Church Council, bro. N. Louw, expressed the hope that members of Keimoes church would also be included on the Head Committee. The chairman in his response pointed out that while there could be no objection in principle to the inclusion of members of the Keimoes church onto the Head Committee, it would have financial implications. Attendance at meetings of the Head Committee would involve periodic traveling to the settlements; moreover, the meetings were held at irregular intervals (Combined Church Council meeting, 22.04.1946).

- c) **Proposed sale of Witputs.** Another matter the meeting had to consider was the proposed sale of that part of the grazing lands of the farms Soverby and Curriescamp commonly known as Witputs. This became a very thorny issue and brought the church to the brink of a court case as will be seen later. The matter was first discussed at the April 1946 Church Council meeting of Upington. The grazing fields in question measured between 7 000 and 8 000 morgen. The suggestion here was to sell this piece of ground at the best possible price. The motivation was that if it were sold at a reasonably good price it would enable the church to repay the bond owing to the Congregational Union of South Africa. At the time the amount owing to the denomination stood at £8 700 (R17 400). Furthermore, it would enable the church to redeem the overdraft it had with the Bank. After the matter was fully discussed by the Church Council it was agreed to recommend to the members' meeting that Witputs be sold (Upington Church Council meeting, 06.04.1946).

The problem here was that whilst the recommendation of the Church Council was decided at the Upington members' meeting, a large number of the settlers, as pointed out before, belonged to the Keimoes church and their approval was also important. Moreover, as will be seen later, it was argued by some that the sale of the grazing land would impinge on the settlers' right to the grazing area. The recommendation of the Church Council on these issues was discussed fully at the quarterly members' meeting in April 1946. When it was put to the vote there were initially 57 votes cast in favour and 9 against. After several recounts

74 votes were recorded in favour of the recommendation and 7 voted against it.

The meeting then decided that the trustees be authorised to sign the necessary documents relative to this matter when the sale was concluded. However, one of the settlers of Curriescamp, bro. Jan Daries, requested that his negative vote be recorded (Upington members' meeting, 06.04.1946). As mentioned before, the matter did not rest there since the dissatisfied settlers were prepared to contest the validity of the decision in court.

## **7. The first Secondary School for people of colour in the North-western Cape**

Mention was made earlier of the role of the Rev. Damon in the provision of primary schools under the auspices of the church in outlying parts of the district in order to ensure that children could at least get a basic education. The need for a secondary school existed since there were no facilities in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts for children of colour who wanted to further their education beyond the primary school level. Parents who wanted their children to receive secondary school education were compelled to send them at considerable expense to bigger centres like Kimberley or Cape Town. It must, however, be conceded though that there were not many secondary schools for people of colour in the Cape Province during the 1930s. The first high school, viz. Trafalgar High School, was only opened in Cape Town in 1925.

In his unpublished autobiography to which reference was made in this study, the Rev. Damon made mention of the uphill struggle he had to wage to persuade the Cape Education Department to sanction the establishment of a secondary school at Upington. He made vain attempts at soliciting the co-operation of local churches to support him in his efforts to get the approval of the educational authorities to sanction the establishment of a secondary school for the coloured community. For approximately a decade he fought a lone battle (Damon, 1992, p 12).

Various reasons were advanced by the Education Department for its seeming reluctance to accede to the request for a secondary school. One was that the number of learners who passed Standard Six (Grade 8) was not sufficient to warrant the sanctioning of a secondary school. In

order to counter this argument the Rev. Damon encouraged local primary school principals to send their Grade 8 learners to the Upington United Primary School in order to complete their primary school training there. In his appeal he went way beyond the immediate vicinity of Upington and included primary schools of Keimoes, Kakamas and even as far afield as present day Namibia. In this way he was hoping to strengthen his case for the establishment of a secondary school in the area (cf. Carlton van Heerden Hoërskool Jaarblad, undated).

In 1939 the Second World War erupted and one of the results of this conflict was that South Africa was also drawn into it. The Government of the day split on the question of whether the country should participate in the War or remain neutral. Gen. J.B.M. Hertzog, the then prime minister of the Union of South Africa moved a motion in the House of Assembly on 4 September, 1939 that the country should remain neutral. To this an amendment was proposed by Gen. J.C. Smuts that the country sever relations with Germany; this amendment was accepted by a majority vote of 80 to 67. That marked the end of the Fusion Government. Gen. Hertzog resigned as prime minister and the Governor-General then asked Gen. Smuts to form a new government. One of the first things the Government did was to join the War on the side of Great Britain and France against Germany (cf. Davenport, 1987, p 328).

The country's entry into the War had a negative effect on the efforts of the Rev. Damon and those who supported him in his bid to persuade the Cape Provincial Education Department to sanction a secondary school for the area. One of the problems directly linked to the War was the shortage experience in building material by that industry. In the light of this development it almost seemed as if the expectation to have a secondary school approved for the area would have to be left in abeyance.

However, strangely enough, developments in the political arena at the time influenced the situation. The political parties began to realise that the Coloured voters could be an important factor in the 1943 general election. In his autobiography, the Rev. Damon referred to a meeting, a deputation of which he was a member, had with the Prime Minister, Gen. Smuts, at Kimberley. No details are given about this deputation or of the date when the meeting took place. The deduction is that this meeting took place on the eve of the general election. The prime minister

gave the deputation a sympathetic hearing and some undertaking that the Government would lend a helping hand to the Coloured community (Damon, 1991, p 13). There can be no doubt that one of the matters raised by this deputation was the question of the much-needed secondary school in the North-western Cape.

It was, however, not only the United Party, but also the National Party of Gen. J.B.M. Hertzog, who realised the importance of the Coloured vote in the Northern Cape. He also promised at one of his election meetings that his Party would give the Coloured community a better deal should they get their support and win the election. In the meantime the leadership of the United Party in the Gordonia district asked the Rev. Damon to lend him support to the formation of branches of that Party among the Coloured community in the area. These developments gave the Rev. Damon the opportunity to press for the establishment of a secondary school. The United Party leadership then gave the undertaking that if the Rev. Damon would lend his support to the formation of branches of that Party among the Coloured community, they would assist him to get a secondary school approved by the Education Department. That he agreed to (Damon, 1990, pp 14 and 15).

At the August 1942 Church Council meeting of Keimoes it was reported that the Upington church had decided to apply for a loan of £4 500 (R9 000) from the Johannesburg Building Society. The idea was that this loan, if approved, could be utilized to erect a hostel for high school learners who were not residents of Upington. However, the hostel did not materialise no matter how laudable the intentions were. It is very likely that financial constraints, particularly in the economic climate of the time, were the main reasons why the hostel plans for secondary school learners had to be dropped. Children from other towns who enrolled at the secondary school were then boarded privately.

The churches and the community responded favourably once it became clear that a secondary school would become a working reality. For instance at the November 1942 Church Council meeting of Keimoes, it was decided to buy a wood and iron structure, the idea being that the material could be used in the erection of two classrooms at Upington (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 07.11.1942).

During the negotiating process two prominent members of the local United Party branch at Upington, viz. Messes. A. Carlton and C. van Heerden, took a personal interest in the process for the granting of approval for a secondary school at Upington. Both these gentlemen were building contractors and they donated some of the material which was used in the erection of the classrooms (Carlton van Heerden Jaarblad).

The opening of the secondary school took place on 25 January, 1943. This was an historic occasion for the community who had waited so long for a secondary school. Rev. Damon sent a full report of the event for publication in the official magazine of the denomination. It appears in the April 1943 issue of "The Congregationalist". The original name of the school was the "Secondary School of Gordonia" but in 1945 it received high school status and it was renamed the "Carlton van Heerden High School" in recognition of the role played by Messrs Carlton and Van Heerden in obtaining the approval of the Cape Education Department for the establishment of the school (cf. Carlton van Heerden Jaarblad).

There are minor differences in the accounts of the Rev. Damon and the annual magazine of the Carlton van Heerden High School. These differences concern mainly details but in the main they supplement each other. The school started with an enrolment of 99 learners; 74 of whom were in Standard 7 (Grade 9) and 25 in Standard 8 (Grade 10). The Standard 8 class consisted of learners who did Standard 7 on their own by private study (The Congregationalist, April 1943, p 12).

The first principal of the school was a Mr. A.J. Ferreira who was previously principal of the Riversdale Secondary School in the Southern Cape. He held a B.A. degree for the University of South Africa which he obtained at Fort Hare and an M.A. degree of the University of Columbia in the United States of America. Initially, the school had a staff complement of three teachers but the Education Department sanctioned the creation of an additional post as from 1 April 1943. The learners came from all over the Gordonia district. The primary school principals of schools in Namaqualand and even as far afield as present-day Namibia indicated willingness to send their children to Upington for secondary school training.

The building which housed the school consisted initially of three classrooms erected on a site which belonged to the Upington Congregational church. These classrooms were completed within five weeks. Although the Congregational church provided the accommodation, the school was, right from its inception, under the control of the School Board. On the school committee the established churches in the community were represented, viz. the Anglican, Congregational, Dutch Reformed Mission, Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches. The Cape Education Department supplied second-hand furniture to the school through the School Board. One of the conditions laid down by the Department for the sanctioning of the school was that the Coloured community must pay the rent on the building. This the people agreed to.

There are a few observations to be made about this high school. The prime mover of this project, the Rev. Saul Damon, displayed determination in pursuing this objective despite heavy odds. At the same time he was modest not to insist that his name be included when a decision was taken to change the name of the school.

It must also be recognized that although Upington church took responsibility for the provision of the site and the erection of the building, the Keimoes church also gave its support. In 1943 the Keimoes church's Finance Committee took a decision to contribute half of the cost of the erection of the building for which Upington church raised a loan of £710 (R1 420). The rationale here was that a high school for the area was very much needed (Keimoes church Finance committee meeting, 12.07.1943).

Once the high school was in operation, various ambitious ideas were mooted which reflected the enthusiasm that existed in the community. In July 1945, for instance, the Upington Church Council decided to recommend to the members' meeting that a pack store near the Upington church be bought from a certain Mr. Visser for £650 (R1300). The idea was to convert the building into a trade school where high school learners with the necessary aptitudes could acquire manual skills such as cabinet-making, bricklaying, etc.

At the September 1946 meeting of the Upington Church Council a deputation from the Carlton van Heerden High School Committee interviewed the Council. The deputation consisted of

Messrs. W. Steenkamp and G. Dames. The purpose of this interview with the Council was a request that the church consider making its garden available for learners who wished to include Agriculture as a subject in their curriculum. They were informed that the Committee had decided to approach the Education Department with a view to sanction the introduction of Agriculture as a subject at the High School. After some discussion the meeting agreed to let the garden to the school at a rental of £360 (R720) per annum.

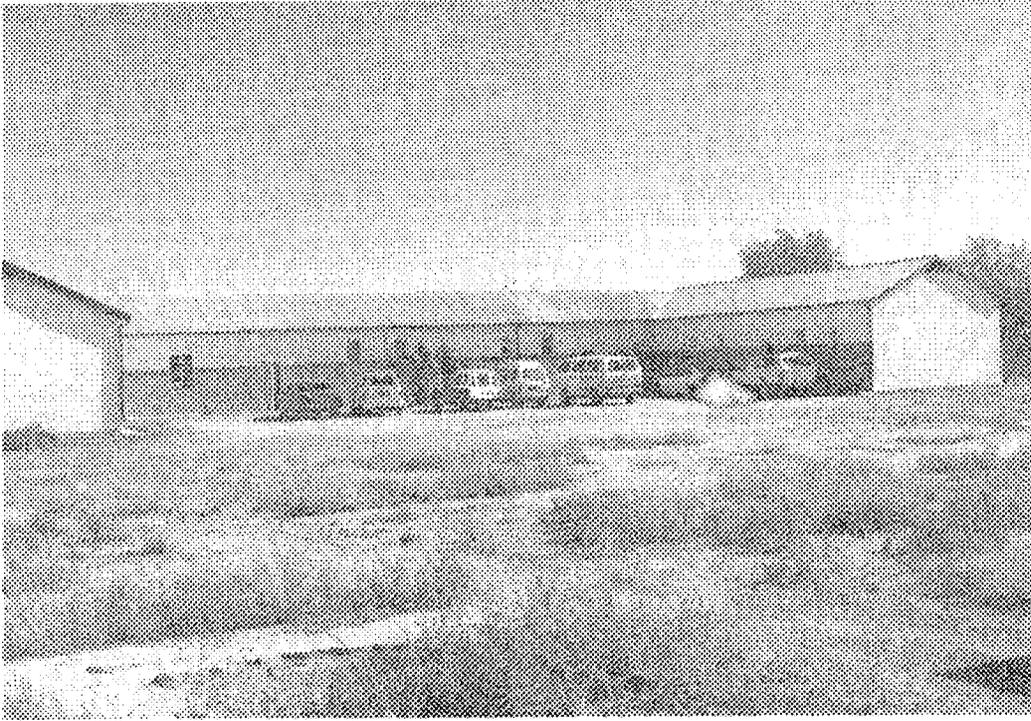
Unfortunately, neither the trade school nor the introduction of Agriculture as a subject materialised. The reason obviously was that constraints such as a lack of classroom accommodation and the lack of suitably qualified teachers hampered such developments (cf. Uppington Church Council meeting, 07.07.1945).

It was only in the early 1950s that Woodwork as a subject was introduced at the High School after the Uppington Congregational church was able to add an additional classroom to the existing building for the purpose.<sup>2</sup>

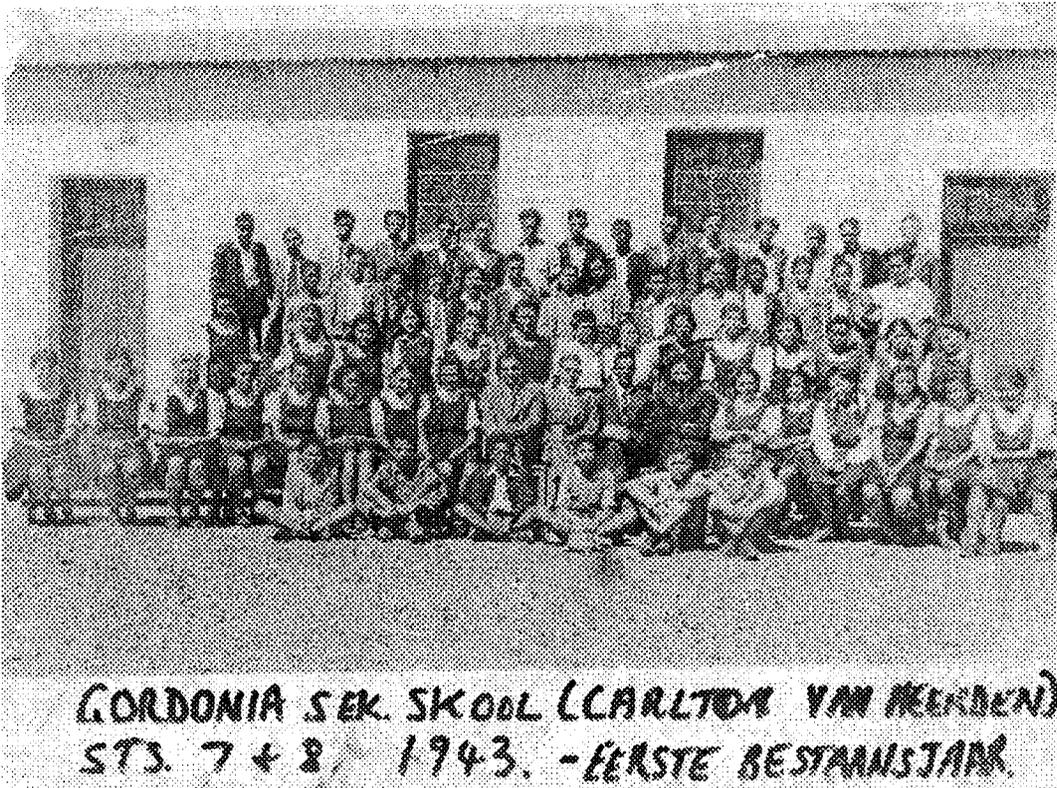
What was, however, strange about these developments was that while the opening of the secondary school at Uppington was for the people of colour an epoch-making event, there was no reference to it in the local press. *The Gordonia News* was completely silent about it; not even an oblique reference appeared in its columns. In retrospect one can only come to the conclusion that while the event itself meant much for the community the school was to serve, it was not considered to have sufficient news value to be included in any of the issues of the local newspaper in 1943. Notwithstanding, it ushered in an important development in the life of the community.

---

<sup>2</sup> This development took place while the writer served as the chairman of Carlton van Heerden High School Committee during 1952-1955.



*Original Carlton van Heerden High School Building*



*Carlton van Heerden Staff and Learners, 1943*

## 8. Denominational matters

- a) **Church Union discussions.** On the ecumenical side the discussions of a possible merger between the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian denominations during the 1930s were significant in that the local churches had to express themselves on such a union. It is not clear who initiated these discussions, but it engendered at first a fair amount of enthusiasm among the denominations concerned. Unfortunately, it was eventually discontinued as will be seen later.

In the official magazine of the Congregational Union of South Africa (C.U.S.A.) – “The Congregationalist” – a fair amount of space was devoted to the discussion during the latter part of the 1930s to this subject. This was in itself a reflection of the enthusiasm which existed also in Congregational circles about this idea of organic union. In the January 1939 issue of “The Congregationalist”, the editor, the Rev. W.E. Morgan, wrote an article entitled, “Frank thoughts on union”. In it he made mention of the fact that the different denominations came about as a result of schism. He contended, however, that schism in itself is not always sinful since those who were responsible for the formation of the different denominations were also divinely guided in what they did. He further argued that whilst there was historically a time when Churches preferred to be separate it did not apply any longer. Another significant point that he made was that union did not necessarily imply uniformity in so far as the forms of church government and worship were concerned; all could work together for the same end in harmony and brotherly love (The Congregationalist, January 1919, p 1).

It would appear that the three denominations also created church union committees. Then in order to facilitate the process of Church Union, a Joint Committee was appointed on which the three participating denominations were represented. This Joint Committee drew up a statement entitled the “Preliminary Basis of Union”. The idea was to accommodate in it the positions of the three denominations in matters of doctrine and church polity. One of the problems that surfaced was the question of the acceptance of a Creed that would meet with

the approval of all concerned. The Presbyterian Church was still bound by the Westminster Confession of Faith, while Congregationalists still adhered to the simple confession made by the Pilgrims in 1629 at the Tabernacle Church in Salem, Massachusetts, viz.

“We covenant with the Lord and with one another, to bind ourselves in the presence of God to walk together in all his ways, according as he is pleased to reveal himself unto us in his blessed word of truth.” (Wing, 1987, p 52).

However, the initial enthusiasm for union did not last. In the July 1939 issue of “The Congregationalist” the editor made the following observation, “It may be taken for granted that the great majority of us are in favour of union with our brethren in the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches if satisfactory terms can be agreed upon. The ‘if’ is a big one.” (The Congregationalist, July 1939, p 1). Further evidence that Church union was losing its erstwhile force of impact was when the Western District Association appointed the Revs. D.R. Clinton and J.R. van Stavel to visit local churches in order to explain the contents of the document, “The basis of Union”, and also to endeavour to generate fresh interest in Church union (The Congregationalist, August 1939, pp 1 and 2).

By the end of that year it became clear that there were insurmountable difficulties in the way of organic union. The President of the Union then put forward some proposals for co-operation among the participating denominations. The Assembly of the C.U.S.A. received these proposals and agreed that they should be considered by the relevant committee on Church Union. In these proposals it was recognized that Church Union for the present appeared to be impracticable. As a step forward it was suggested that discussions should continue through conferences and consultations between duly appointed committees of the respective Churches. The purpose would be to promote frank discussions of problems which affected the inter-relationships of the Churches. Furthermore, misunderstandings, where such existed, could be removed. Closer and more effective co-operation could be fostered and in general the work and witness of the Christian Church could be advanced in this country (The Congregationalist, November 1939, p 1).

Although the intended union was growing faint, the hope remained that it would materialise some time in the future. This was expressed in the Editorial comment of the magazine issue of November 1939. It stated that “the hope for ultimate organic union was still cherished although it was recognised that it would take time” (The Congregationalist, November 1939, p 2).

From the chequered passage the discussions on Church union travelled, it appeared that there were difficulties in a few areas which put a damper on it. One was the fact that both the Methodists and the Presbyterians favoured federation whereas the Congregationalists preferred union. By 1941 a proposal was put forward by the Joint Committee on Church Union that the participating denominations should consider the formation of a federal Council on which the three denominations should have equal representation. The Methodist Church reported on work among the white section of the community and on mission work among Africans. The Rev. Damon was not convinced that the motive for Church union at the time was the correct one.<sup>3</sup>

He contended that these Church union discussions were fear-driven. However, in the absence of documentary evidence either to confirm or refute this perception, it is not possible to express an informed opinion on it. What is clear is that there were difficulties and that both White and Coloured members had doubts about the feasibility of union at that time. At best it can be said that the time for Church union was not ripe. The lukewarm response to Church union in the North-western Cape stemmed also from the fact that there was no Presbyterian presence in the area; a case of ‘unknown, unloved’. The same situation applied to the other two constituencies of the C.U.S.A. as well. The majority of the traditionally Coloured churches in the denomination voted against the proposed union. In 1943 the Rev. Damon reported to the Kenhardt Church Council that from a survey conducted throughout the denomination the following results were obtained: of the 51 Coloured churches, 12 expressed themselves in favour of union while 22 voted against it and 17 abstained (Kenhardt Church

---

<sup>3</sup> In a conversation the writer had with the Rev. Damon in 1967 on the eve of the merger between the C.U.S.A., the L.M.S. and the American Board Mission he mentioned that he was of the opinion that the real motive for Church union in the 1930s was fear-driven, i.e. a

Council meeting, 15.05.1943). This was a good indication of the attitude of people towards union.

Whilst it is true that the non-white, and in particular the Coloured constituency, was not enthusiastic about union it must be borne in mind that there were also problems the white section of the denomination had with the proposed basis for church union. This is evident from the reaction the Western District Association had when the "Preliminary Basis of Union" to which reference was already made, was referred to all District Associations for their comments. The W.D.A. appointed a committee which consisted of Mr. G.H. Dunn, and the Revs. R.J. Cooke, D.K. Clinton and W.E. Morgan to consider the document.<sup>4</sup> This committee suggested a number of amendments to the document which were endorsed by the W.D.A. and then forwarded to the Assembly of the C.U.S.A.

In the section which dealt with the "Statement of Faith" the committee suggested that the Congregational heritage of liberty and freedom should be incorporated there. It also felt that while no adequate statement of the essentials of the Christian faith was possible, the things commonly believed by Congregationalists should be stated. The doctrine of the Trinity is to be upheld but it was important to state that "God continues to work in hearts and minds of men by His Holy Spirit, renewing them and guiding into all truth..." (The Congregationalist, June 1939, p 1).

As far as the polity of the Church was concerned it was recommended that provision be made for a larger lay representation in both Presbytery and Conference. Furthermore, it was suggested that the proposed Conference be renamed Regional Council. Under the heading, "The Pastoral Charge", the committee suggested that that section dealing with the composition of the Presbytery should include provision for both ordained and a representative number of lay people to serve on it. A further addition was recommended to the effect that where in Coloured and African Presbyteries there were fewer than three white

---

merger would redress the racial imbalance which existed at the time in the C.U.S.A.

<sup>4</sup> The information here is taken from the report of the W.D.A. Committee which appeared in the June 1939 issue of The Congregationalist under the heading, "Suggested Amendments to

ministers, provision should be made for the presence of at least two white Assessors who would also have power to vote.

In regard to the training of ministers the committee suggested that a Ministerial Committee be appointed. This committee would be responsible for the approval of candidates for the ministry and to control the official list of students. The procedure to be followed for the acceptance of candidates for the ministry would be that they should be recommended by their Pastoral Charge and be approved by the Presbytery after which the names were to be forwarded to the Ministerial Committee. This committee would then be responsible for prescribing the course of training and if necessary arrange for examinations. It must also be empowered to sanction and arrange for the ordination of successful candidates and to make recommendations in connection with Grants-in-Aid for the training of students.

When these recommendations were considered by the C.U.S.A. Assembly it approved only a few minor alterations but it did not meet the objections raised by the W.D.A. (*The Congregationalist*, June 1939, p 3). The Editor of "*The Congregationalist*" made some pointed comments on the Assembly's recommendations. He contended that while it was suggested that the Presbyteries consisting of the three racial groups should, wherever possible, meet at the same time and in the same place, it was difficult to see the value of this unless they met together.

He was also critical in his comments on the "Relation of a minister to the doctrines of the church". For instance, one of the suggested questions to be put to an ordinand was: "Do you believe yourself to be a child of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?" His comment was that "it passes comprehension why any man should be expected to offer himself for the Christian ministry at all if he did not believe himself – in common with all his fellow-men – to be a child of God". He went on to say that "if the question means that it is only through faith in Christ that we become God's children, then the answer many of us would give is an unhesitating No!" (*Ibid*, p 3).

It would appear that church union discussions were held elsewhere overseas by Churches of the same Free Church tradition. In the November 1939 issue of "The Congregationalist" there was a reference of a similar attempt in Australia and New Zealand to unite the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches. But the difficulties there proved in the end to be insuperable; the result was that church union discussions were discontinued. The three denominations then decided to adopt a plan of closer co-operation among them. The suggestion was then put forward by the Editor of the magazine that three denominations in this country should consider adopting a similar plan of action (The Congregationalist, November 1939, p 1).

It needs to be observed that the search for union particularly with the Presbyterian Church has never been abandoned completely. For years afterwards the C.U.S.A. had a statutory committee on Church Union with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa.

During the last thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century serious discussions on Church Union with the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian denominations were again entered into but it falls outside the scope of this study (cf. C.U.S.A. Year Book, 1958, p 6).

**b) Visit of the chairman of the C.U.S.A.**

It was not unusual for the churches of the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts to receive visits from the chairmen of the denomination during their terms of office. What made the visit of the Rev. C.W. Hendrickse significant was that he was the first person of colour in the history of the C.U.S.A. to be elected to the highest office in the denomination. The Rev. Hendrickse, who was then minister of the Dale Street Congregational church at Uitenhage, was elected chairman of the C.U.S.A. during the 1945 Assembly meetings held at East London.

Since part of the duties of a Chairman was "to visit Churches during his term of office" the Rev. Hendrickse visited as many local churches as was possible for him (cf. C.U.S.A. Year Book, 1959, p 19). During the first Council meeting of the Keimoes church after the October Assembly in 1945, the Rev. Damon reported that the Rev. Hendrickse had indicated that he would like to include the churches of the North-western Cape in his itinerary (Keimoes

Church Council meeting, 10.11.1945).

In May 1946 the Rev. Damon reported to the Keimoes Church Council meeting that the Rev. Hendrickse had informed him that he would like to visit the Uppington, Keimoes and Kenhardt churches from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1946 (Keimoes special Church Council meeting, 25.05.1946). This visit took place during the time indicated and the Rev. Hendrickse could then report at the Executive Committee of the denomination of the good reception he received at all the churches he visited in the area. As was customary, he chaired the Assembly meetings at the conclusion of his term of office in October, 1946 at Port Elizabeth. In his Chairman's address on that occasion he thanked the Assembly on behalf of the Coloured people for electing him to that high office. And then prophetically he added, "By this act you also gave the true Christian lead to South Africa... The old order of things must pass away love must take the place of hate, brotherhood the place of racialism." (Briggs & Wing, 1970, p 235).

c) **European work**<sup>5</sup>

Mention was already made of the historical reason why the European component of the denomination was small in comparison to the other groups. During the 1940s there was concern in the denomination at the slow rate of progress in that section of the work. In March 1945 issue of the denomination's magazine – "The Congregationalist" – there was a reference to a discussion on the situation in European churches at one of the Sectional meetings of the Assembly. It appears that the 1944 Assembly appointed a special commission whose terms of reference were to review the position of European Congregational churches. This Commission looked at various suggestions made to extend the Congregational work and witness among the European section of the community (The Congregationalist, March 1945, p 19). The Commission then identified problems which hampered the work; these included the shortage of manpower, the shortage of trained Lay Preachers who could provide an auxiliary service and insufficient propaganda. The latter was

---

<sup>5</sup> In official publications of the C.U.S.A. the White constituency was referred to as 'European'. For that reason only the term will be used to denote churches with predominantly White members.

probably a reference to the fact that the denomination did not advertise its work sufficiently (The Congregationalist, June 1945, p 29).

In the report of the Commission to the Assembly various suggestions were made to improve the situation. These included the need to improve the manpower shortage both in the fields of the ministerial and the laity. It was felt that the strength of the existing local churches should be reviewed. Furthermore, practical possibilities for church extension should be explored and a Five Year Plan should be formulated for achieving the goals set by the denomination. This Plan would also include the raising of funds to undertake the work (Ibid, p 4).

The Commission's report on ways and means of addressing the problems European churches grappled with was included in the December 1945 issue of the magazine. As far as the vacant pastorates were concerned, it was suggested that in view of the shortage of ministers in this country consideration should be given to recruit ministers from overseas and where necessary, the denomination could provide assistance to churches who wished to call ministers from the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

As far as Lay Preachers were concerned, it was suggested that the Assembly could accept the principle of the introduction of a Lay Preachers' Association for each District Association and the establishment of a Lay Preachers' Examination by the denomination. As far as the training of ministers locally was concerned it was noted that a theological faculty was due to be started at the Rhodes University, Grahamstown. It started in 1947 as a Department of Divinity where Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational students for the ministry could receive their training. The first head of the Department was Dr. Horton Davis, a Congregational minister (Briggs & Wing, 1970, p 297).

The Commission suggested that the C.U.S.A. make bursaries available in order to assist needy students for the ministry. In order to meet the need of local churches it was then suggested that closer co-operation between Congregational churches in an area should be explored. Furthermore, in view of the rapid development of urban areas it was felt that it was imperative to adopt a definite policy of church extension particularly in new town extensions

(The Congregationalist, December 1945, p 11).

At the 1945 Assembly meetings the Rev. T. Downham was elected Chief Commissioner; his responsibilities included visits to local churches throughout the country and to encourage them to support the building up of the work among the European section of the denomination. A European Extension Fund was launched and it was also the task of the Rev. Downham to encourage churches on his visits to contribute liberally towards this fund. The idea was to raise an amount of £20 000 (R40 000) within three years for extension work among the European section of the denomination.

The churches of the North-western Cape were also included in his itinerary. At the November 1945 Church Council meeting of Uppington a letter was tabled from the Rev. Downham which contained an appeal to the churches to support the C.U.S.A.'s plan to build up the work among Europeans. He also indicated that he would be prepared to pay a visit to the churches in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts. He pointed out that if such a visit could be arranged he would travel at the denomination's expense. The meeting then agreed to invite the Rev. Downham to visit the churches in the area (Uppington Church Council meeting, 27.11.1945).

This visit took place the following year. As far as can be ascertained he was well received and took slides of the work which he in turn showed to churches in other districts that he visited. Donations were also made by the churches towards the European Church Extension Fund. Unfortunately the target of £20 000 (R40 000) could not be reached within the period set aside for the purpose. Nevertheless, there was some improvement discernible; membership of European local churches during the latter part of the 1940s although it was not spectacular.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> In a paper delivered at Johannesburg in May 1958 at a conference of Congregationalists entitled, "The Contribution of Congregationalism" the writer – who was unfortunately not named – quoted statistics for the period 1929-1957-58 which showed that there were in 1929, 2782 European Congregational communicant members and these increased by 1957-58 to 4795.

#### d) C.U.S.A. Council

The 1945 Assembly will go down in the history of the denomination as a very important one. Mention was already made of the election of the first chairman of colour and the launching of the European Church Extension Fund. To this can be added the decision to establish a Council as one of the standing committees of the Assembly. This Council was to be a deliberative body and the function was inter alia to formulate new policy and to plan new work. It was referred to as the cabinet of the denomination. Part of its function was also to review current policy and to consider matters referred to it by the Assembly or the Executive Committee of the C.U.S.A. (C.U.S.A. Constitution, Year Book, 1958, p 21).

The composition of this Council was to be representative of the District Associations. The Midlands and the Northern District Associations were to have three representatives each so as to ensure that all three racial groups were included. The South Western District Association which was the smallest was to have one representative on Council while the Western and the Natal District Associations were to have two representatives each. Over and above these the Executive Committee was to nominate six members, three of whom were to be lay men or women.

The first meeting of the Council met in April 1946. These meetings were normally held during the season of autumn and in the town where the Executive of the denomination was located. The Rev. Damon was one of the ministers nominated to serve on this Council and it was indicative of the recognition he received from the denomination for the work he was doing in the North-western Cape.

### 9. The roaring forties

The 1940s ushered in an era of political activity unprecedented in the history of the country especially within the ranks of the non-white section of the population. Much has been written about the period and it has been fairly well covered in quite a number of scientific studies.<sup>7</sup> The

---

<sup>7</sup> To mention but a few there are the works of R.E. van der Ross: *The Rise and Decline of Apartheid*; Maurice Hommel: *Capricorn Blues*; Gavin Lewis: *Between the Wire and the Wall*;

intention here is therefore not to repeat what has already been done on the subject but rather to see to what extent events exercised an influence on the church in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts. It is to be observed that two prominent members of the Uppington Congregational church – the Rev. Damon and Mr. A.J. Ferreira – the principal of the Carlton van Heerden High School and treasurer of the church – accepted nomination on the Coloured Advisory Council.

Without going into any detailed discussion of the period it is important just to bear in mind that the two organisations in the Coloured community, viz. the African Peoples' Organisation (A.P.O.) and the Teachers' League of South Africa (T.L.S.A.) were adversely affected by the trend of events in the 1940s. The A.P.O. was founded in 1902 and it was a predominantly Coloured organisation although it was not racially exclusive. The principal goal was to work for the extension of the Cape franchise to the Coloured people in the Northern provinces. It also pledged itself to promote unity between the Coloured people of South Africa and the attainment of a better and higher standard of education for the children; the defence of the social and political rights of the people and the general advancement of the Coloured people of South Africa (Hommel, 1981, pp 27-28).

By 1905 the leadership of the A.P.O. passed to Dr. Abdulla Abdurahman, a medical practitioner trained in Scotland and a member of the Malay community of Cape Town. He was president of the A.P.O. until his death in 1940. The A.P.O. grew into a strong organisation which, at its peak, could boast with a membership of 20 000 with branches throughout South Africa (Lewis, 1987, p 2). However, by the mid-thirties Dr. Abdurahman's influence started waning especially among the younger generation of the Coloured community. They became critical of his conventional methods of expressing the people's disapproval with the Government's policies that affected them negatively. His methods of deputation, the ballot box and dialogue did not appeal to the young people since these did not bring about the desired changes (cf. Hommel, 1987, p 34).

In 1934 the Government appointed the Cape Coloured Commission – known as the Wilcocks commission – to investigate the situation of the Coloured people and to make recommendations

---

and also general histories such as E.A. Walker's *History of Southern Africa* and T.R.H. Davenport: *South Africa, a Modern History*.

on ways and means of improving their lot. Dr. Abdurahman also served on this Commission. The report of the Commission was published in 1938 and it gave a grim picture of the situation in which the Coloured community found itself. Its findings were, inter alia, that in spite of the fact that there were Coloureds mainly in the cities who had achieved economically a fairly high standard of living; the majority was low-grade urban or rural labourers or indifferent domestic servants (Walker, 1972, p 650).

The Commission made several recommendations which included that the sale of liquor to Coloured persons be curtailed and that they be placed throughout the country on the ordinary voters' roll on the basis of the qualified franchise requirement which was in force in the Cape Province. It also recommended that special sections be created in the different Departments of State to guard and further the interests of the Coloured people, and that suitable persons from their ranks be appointed as officials in these sections as a means of guaranteeing that Departments of State remain in close touch with the opinion and needs of the people. Unfortunately the Government ignored the Commission's recommendations. This, in turn, underlined for many Coloured people the failure of moderate political organisations, particularly the A.P.O., to halt the general decline of opportunities for Coloureds to improve themselves (Lewis, 1987, p 151).

The other organisation to which reference was made was the T.L.S.A. It was established in 1913 and initially its aims were to improve education in South Africa particularly for the Coloured community; the promotion of union and intercourse among teachers and the improvement of their status (Lewis, 1987, pp 75-76). However, by the 1930s the teacher corps in this organisation underwent a process of radicalization. The younger members of the T.L.S.A. became more outspoken in their criticism of the conditions of service and the educational system in the country.

Matters came to a head when the Minister of the Interior, Mr. H.G. Lawrence, announced in 1943 his intention to create a special section within his Department to deal exclusively with matters affecting the Coloured people. The idea was apparently that this body would mediate between the Coloured people, whom it was supposed to represent, and the all-white Parliament.

Initially it was composed of twenty-five nominated members and they were appointed to serve for a trial period of two years. The majority came from the Cape Province, but there were also two representatives each from the Transvaal and the Free State. This permanent Commission on Coloured Affairs became commonly known as the Coloured Advisory Council (C.A.C.). The Government's stated aims with this Council were to assist it to enforce the recommendations of the Cape Coloured Commission of Inquiry of 1939; to advise the Government and to be available for consultation on matters of administration. It was also to assist the Government with respect to the peculiar problems of the Coloured people.

Among the first eight people who accepted nomination on the C.A.C. were prominent members of the T.L.S.A. Dr. F.H. Gow was appointed chairman and he was a prominent member and minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.). Barring Messrs. S. Dollie and M. de Vries, the others – viz. Messrs G. Golding, P.M. Heneke, F. Hendricks, D. van der Ross and S.G. Maurice – were all teachers. Later on the Rev. S. Damon and Mr. A.J. Ferreira also accepted nomination on this Council.

The establishment of the C.A.C. disturbed many people especially within the ranks of the T.L.S.A. and the A.P.O. Opponents of the C.A.C. saw in it the precursor of a Coloured Affairs Department which would be responsible for all aspects of the lives of the people similar to the Department of Native Affairs the Government created for the African section of the population in the mid-1930s. The Government tried to allay the fears of the people by giving an assurance that it did not have any intention to create a separate department or to attack the political rights of the Coloured people, or to press ahead with residential separation. But these assurances did not convince people that the Government was sincere since the Africans of the Cape were removed from the common voters' roll. It is true that the United Party Government did not remove the Coloured voters of the Cape from the common voters' roll, and neither was it responsible for the creation of the Coloured Affairs Department; these things were done by its successor in office, the Nationalist Party. Nevertheless the people saw in it the thin edge of the wedge on the road to the establishment of a separate Department of State for the Coloured community (cf. Van der Ross, 1986, p 177).

A direct result of the creation of the C.A.C. was that the people who rejected it formed the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (Anti-C.A.D.) organisation. This organisation was federal in structure and to it were affiliated other organisations who shared its opposition to the C.A.C. They adopted a policy of non-collaboration with the C.A.C. and they boycotted all organisations and individuals which showed any sympathy with the Government's attempts at providing such a structure to serve the Coloured community. Supporters and sympathizers with the C.A.C. were branded as quislings and the Anti-C.A.D. drew much support from all who distrusted the Government's re-assurances about the C.A.C. (Lewis, 1987, p 212).

The T.L.S.A. in particular suffered as a result of the establishment of the C.A.C. since there were within its ranks both supporters as well as opponents to this Council. As in the case of the A.P.O., some of its leading members accepted nomination on the C.A.C. The Anti-C.A.D. supporters felt that the sympathizers of the C.A.C. should be expelled from the T.L.S.A. On the other hand there were those who were either in favour of the C.A.C. or were at least prepared to give it a chance. At the July 1943 conference of the T.L.S.A. held at Kimberley matters came to a head. The delegates at the conference who opposed the C.A.C. outnumbered those who were in favour of it by far. The meetings were characterized by vociferous displays of opposition to the C.A.C. and the Government's colour policy. However, contrary to expectations, the pro-C.A.C. group scored a victory over the Anti-C.A.D. supporters when the executive was elected. This was mainly due to the system of proxy votes which was in vogue at the time.

But in spite of this result the newly elected Executive realised that the division within the ranks of the organisation on this issue was so sharp that it would be impossible for them to affect rapprochement between the two groups. The result was that the moderate section left the T.L.S.A. and formed the Teachers' Educational and Professional Association (T.E.P.A.) at the Battswood Training College Hall later in 1943 (Van der Ross, 1986, p 180). Mr. A.J. Ferreira, the principal of Carlton van Heerden High School was elected on the Executive of this newly formed T.E.P.A.

The A.P.O. was, as mentioned before, also adversely affected by the discord the establishment of the C.A.C. caused within the ranks of the Coloured community. Dr. F.H. Gow who succeeded

Dr. Abdurahman as president of the A.P.O. accepted the chairmanship of the C.A.C. This led to a split within the A.P.O. since some of the members favoured the C.A.C. or were at least prepared to give it a chance, while others were violently opposed to it (Hommel, 1981, p 78). This division wrecked the A.P.O. from which it never recovered.

The 1940s saw a re-alignment of forces on the political field. The T.L.S.A. aligned itself with the Anti-C.A.D. organization and both these organizations joined the Non-European Unity Movement (N.E.U.M.). The N.E.U.M. was formed in 1943 and to it was also affiliated the All African Convention (A.A.C.). Whilst the idea was to unite all non-white people under one federal organization, that ideal was not achieved. On the one hand the N.E.U.M. and its affiliated organizations rejected any compromise on segregation and advocated non-collaboration with the Government. But on the other hand the more moderate section of the community stressed that the attainment of the most urgently needed socio-economic reforms should receive priority (Lewis, 1987. p 208).

The formation of the T.E.P.A. also led to a division within the ranks of the teacher corps in the Northern Cape. Some remained loyal to the T.L.S.A. whilst others joined the T.E.P.A. Both organisations had branches in the area. In the urban areas this situation caused tension among teachers who belonged to these two opposing organisations. However, in the Northern Cape it did not produce the same amount of tension; teachers were more inclined to confine themselves to their work at school than to focus on differences in the political arena. As stated before, both the Rev. Damon and Mr. A.J. Ferreira were members of the C.A.C. but they steered clear from party politics in both church and school. Unlike the situation in the bigger urban centers like Cape Town, Port Elizabeth or Kimberley where the split in the T.L.S.A. caused estrangement among teachers, it did not have the same effect in the rural areas of the Northern Cape. On the Church Councils of the Congregational church there were both supporters and opponents of the C.A.C. but these differences never found their way into the church.

## 10. Conclusion

The period under review in this chapter was marked by important developments. It became clear that ministering to a widely scattered circuit was an impossible task for a single minister no matter how dedicated and committed he might be in his work. The Rev. Damon was thus compelled to encourage the churches to decentralise especially since his health was affected by the strain of the work. Decentralisation was the option the people chose, but it brought also new challenges for the churches. An important one was to adjust to their new status; it meant that they had to operate independently of each other and yet co-operate with each other as equal partners. Another result of decentralisation was the future management of the church settlements. It involved mainly the Upington and Keimoes churches since their members were settlers on these farms. The Keimoes church readily agreed to allow the Upington church to take responsibility for the management of the settlements. The reason is probably because if the Keimoes church was to take responsibility of any one of these settlements – for instance, Soverby which was nearest to Keimoes – it would have been involved in a sizeable bond since the debt on the settlements was not paid for at the time. It would have been hard on them to start independence with a millstone of debt round their necks. It was during this period that the Upington church managed to repay the loan on Bloemsmond which it had borrowed from Dr. Charles Anderson. The debts on the other settlements took longer to settle as will be seen later. The proposed sale of Witputs started a serious problem which nearly landed in the Supreme Court. Though the matter was resolved, it focused attention on a serious flaw in the agreement the settlers had with the church.

The Prieska branch made headway, but during the period dealt with here it still had a long way to travel before full status would even be considered. The extension work in the Kalahari must be seen as the normal tendency of mother churches extending their area of operation to their members who moved away from their homes and settled elsewhere mainly for economic reasons. When the Rhenish Missionary Society handed its work at Rietfontein and Bokseputs over to the Dutch Reformed Mission Church it caused tension among those who did not favour this transfer. But it did not have any direct effect on the Congregational church's ministry to its members. The

only negative aspect of it was that it took the Congregational Church some years before a site was allocated to it at Mier.

A great day for the Rev. Damon and in fact for the whole Coloured community of the Northern Cape was the opening of the first secondary school at Upington in 1943. This brought to a successful conclusion a decade of chequered negotiations with the Education Department in which the Rev. Damon played a major role. Although the school did not bear his name, recognition was given years later to both him and Mr. A.J. Ferreira when two secondary schools were named after them. In this way these two pioneers were suitably honoured albeit that in Mr. Ferreira's case the secondary school at Upington named after him was opened years after his death.

Although the churches of the Northern Cape had associate status developments within the denomination also affected them. For instance, they had to express themselves on the issue of church union which was seriously considered in the late 1930s and early 1940s. However, the envisaged union between the C.U.S.A. and the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches did not materialise, but the hope has never been abandoned. It proved again that the road to organic union is, in any case, a long and tedious one.

Developments in the political field in the 1940s did also have some effect on the community of the Northern Cape particularly the teaching fraternity. It needs, however, to be observed that although the T.L.S.A. split in 1943 and it led to the establishment of a branch of the T.E.P.A. in Upington and its environs it did not deteriorate into the spirit of animosity that was evident in the bigger centres. The contention is that the Rev. Damon's participation in the C.A.C. stemmed from a genuine belief that this Council could be used to render much needed assistance to the people in the area. History has proved, however, that this contention was wrong.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

#### 1. Introduction

After the process of decentralisation, referred to in the previous chapter, was finalised by the end of 1946, three churches – Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt – embarked upon the road of independence. In a sense this was not entirely new to them. They operated very much the same as before since both Keimoes and Kenhardt churches enjoyed a fair measure of autonomy. The Kenhardt church, as pointed out earlier on, was treated as separate right from the advent of Congregationalism in the area. That was largely due to its physical isolation from Upington and Keimoes churches. Nevertheless these churches were served for some 44 years by the same ministers and the introduction of combined Church Council meetings inter alia, fostered close ties among the group.

After independence each of the churches, barring Upington, called their own resident ministers. However, areas of co-operation which were in practice among the churches prior to independence, remained. There was, for instance, the annual church choir competitions which were organised jointly by the three churches; the venues where these events were to take place rotated and these remained popular occasions in the life of the churches. Furthermore, other important events like the celebration of anniversaries or the dedication of a manse were shared with the churches of the group. These all helped to keep the sense of unity alive. Some of the customs established during the time of the group were perpetuated by the three churches long after independence. One of these was the system of registration<sup>1</sup>. In terms of this, members were expected to be interviewed by the minister before the quarterly communion service. Time was

---

<sup>1</sup> The Afrikaans term commonly used by the churches was “Aanmelde”, which referred to the interviewing of members by the minister.

usually set aside for this purpose and records of the number of people who came for these interviews were kept.

The reason for this was a very practical one. Since the minister was not able to visit all the members in their homes before the communion services, given the size of the congregations and the scattered nature of the work, this afforded him an opportunity to make personal contact with people. It is not clear when this custom was introduced or how widely it was observed by churches outside the North-Western Cape but it would appear that it was not confined to the churches of the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts.

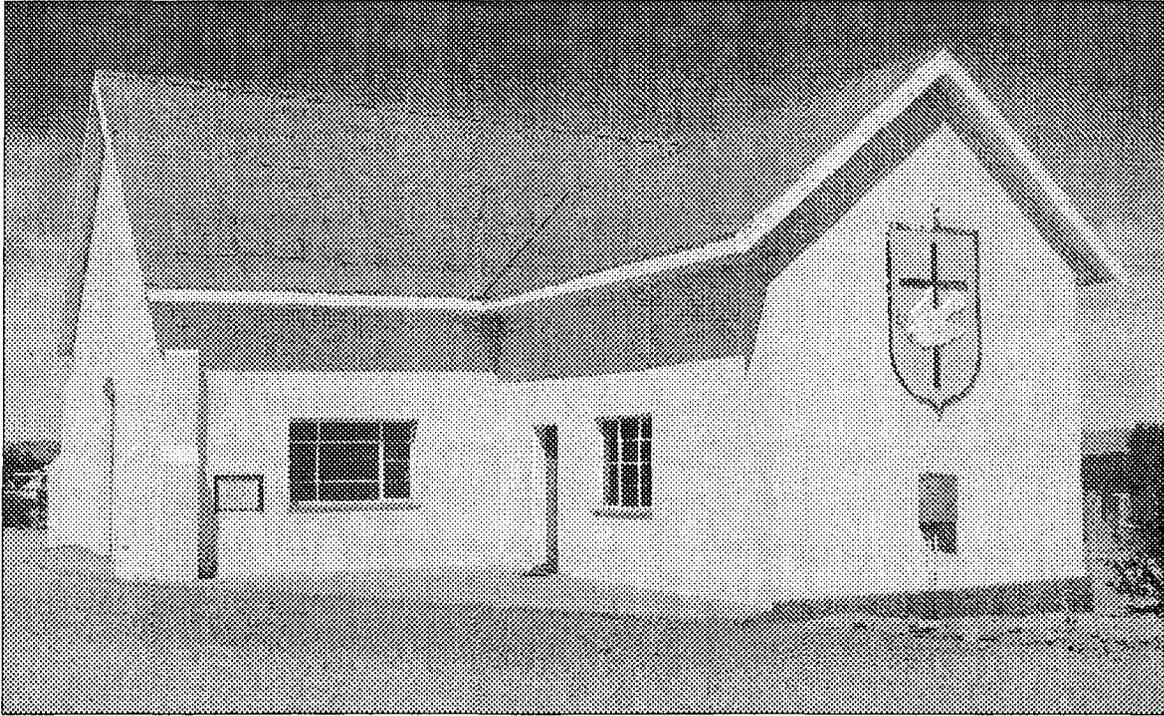
A general observation to be made at this stage is that in all three churches before and after independence, much time was taken in the Church Council meetings on interviewing members. Matters relating to moral misdemeanours, broken relationships within the home, or in cases where members were very much in arrears with their financial obligations to the church, were brought to the attention of the Church Council. This was particularly so in cases where the ward elder and the deacon could not handle the case; in that event the people concerned were summoned to appear before the Church Council. After such cases were carefully investigated, appropriate action was then taken. Depending on the seriousness of the case the action could take the form of a reprimand or counselling and in more serious cases such as adultery, immorality or habitual drunkenness, defaulting members were censured. Censorship could take the form of exclusion from the Lord's Table for a period, or in very extreme cases excommunication was imposed.

While Church discipline at the time appeared to be harsh and a cursory look at the situation tends to create the impression that in many instances it was punitive rather than remedial, it must be seen against the background of the time. Discipline was provided for in the constitution of the local church and censorship was applied in terms of the relevant provisions. But in the final analysis it must be conceded that the intention of disciplinary action was to correct rather than to punish.

Suffice it to say that there were also instances, as mentioned in a previous chapter, where the Church Councils extended a helping hand to members in need where and when their attention was drawn to it. On balance it needs to be observed that the church acted as custodian of moral values at a time when this was still central in the life of the community. It must also be borne in mind that during the time under review there were no trained counsellors to whom people could be referred to, hence the Church Council had to deal with it to the best of its ability.

## **2. Kenhardt Church**

During the first five years of independence the Kenhardt church passed through approximately three phases. The first phase which covered the period 1947 – 1948 was the time when the probationer, J.W. Stilwaney, served the church. Since he was not ordained when he started at Kenhardt he worked under the supervision of the Rev. Damon. When he accepted the invitation of the Somerset East Congregational church to continue his probation there, it ushered in the second phase – the period of vacancy which lasted until late in 1950 when the Rev. Damon returned to the active ministry and accepted the call to Kenhardt church. Then followed the third phase which was a period of a settled ministry and ended when the Rev. Damon finally retired well after the mandatory retiring date.



*Kenhardt church*



*Kenhardt Church Hall completed for golden jubilee celebrations in 1952*

## 2.1 The period of the Probationer J.W. Stilwaney

Mentioned was made earlier on that Mr. Stilwaney did his field work at Kenhardt during his vacation while he was still doing his ministerial training at Fort Hare. When he accepted the call to Kenhardt church it was hoped, in denominational circles, that his stay there would be for a long time. However, it did not work out that way. A report of his installation at Kenhardt appeared in the Afrikaans magazine of the denomination, "Die Kerkberig". In the April, 1947 issue it was reported that the service of installation took place on 9 January, 1947 and that the ministers who took part in the ceremony were the then Moderator of the Western District Association, to Rev. B.H.M. Brown, as well as the Revs. S. Damon and L.C. King. At that service the church was filled to capacity by members and visitors. The church also bought a car for the use of their probationer minister which was named "Geloof" (Faith). It all points to the fact that at the time when Mr. Stilwaney started his ministry at Kenhardt, the church had shown good growth potential. The Sunday School in town had an enrolment of 363 children with a staff complement of 7 teachers ("Die Kerkberig", April 1947).

Since the work at Kenhardt was not entirely new to him he followed the pattern set by the Rev. Damon. Initially the people were very enthusiastic and that was evident from a report on the progress of the work which appeared in the July, 1947 issue of the magazine. Two years prior to Mr. Stilwaney's arrival at Kenhardt a Youth Fellowship was started there. On the last Sunday of March, 1947 he inducted the elected office-bearers of that organisation. That was apparently quite a special occasion; the church was packed to capacity and among the visitors there were even a number of white people of the town. One of them was the principal of the local high school. Three choirs rendered items at the service. Another important event was the talent bazaar which took place on 31 March, 1947 and it was also well supported. It all pointed to the fact Mr. Stilwaney had made a very promising start in his ministry there. Part of the enthusiasm of the people stemmed from the fact that he was the first resident pastor they had had since their inception. He also gave attention to the outstations, which is to be understood, since this arm of

the church's ministry was very important. There is a reference in the report of the establishment of a new outstation some 65 miles (104 kilometres) from Kenhardt. The name of the outstation was not mentioned but in all probability it referred to Swartkop (Verneukpan) ("Kerkberg", July 1947, p 8).

However, in spite of this encouraging beginning he did not complete his two year period of probation there as was originally hoped. When he accepted an invitation of the Somerset East church to continue his probation there he left less than 19 months after he had commenced his ministry at Kenhardt. Because of the brevity of the stay it was not really possible for him to introduce any major change. After he left, the Church Council had to deal with the problem of the manse which was to remain vacant until a new minister could be called. However, at the August, 1948 Church Council meeting a request from a certain Mr. F. P. Summers to lease the manse up to the end of that year was considered. Summers was a teacher at the local primary school and he was also a member of the Church Council of the local Dutch Reformed Mission congregation, but he was married to a member of the Congregational Church.

The meeting readily agreed to his request on condition that the study be excluded: the reason being that it was used as a church office. The rent was fixed at £4 (R8) per month (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 14.08.1948). Apparently the tenant could not vacate the manse when the lease expired. Consequently, he asked the Church Council to extend the lease for a further period. The Church Council agreed to recommend at the members meeting that the lease be extended.

That members meeting was chaired by a ministerial student, H.W.D. van der Linde, who was deputised by the Moderator to chair the meeting. He was, at the time doing field work there during the university vacation. The recommendation of the Church Council to accede to the request of Mr. Summers was endorsed by the members' meeting. The rent was, however, increased to £6-10s (R13) per month (Kenhardt special members' meeting, 19.11.1949)

## 2.2 The period of vacancy, 1948 – 1950

During the vacancy the Moderator, Rev. W.N.H. Tarrant<sup>2</sup>, minister of the Rondebosch church in Cape Town, automatically became the consulent of the Kenhardt church in terms of the constitution of the denomination (C.U.S.A. Year Book, 1966, p 20). However, it was difficult for him to give attention to the Kenhardt church partly because of distance and also because of his pastoral and administrative and Moderatorial duties. It left him with no alternative but to use the Rev. King as his deputy as Kenhardt.

The situation at that time resembled very much that of the time when the Rev. Damon had the sole responsibility for the churches in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts. After the departure of the resident minister he had to care for the Upington church of which he was consulent, as well as the African church at Upington and the Keimoes church of which he was the resident minister. Over and above that he represented the Moderator as deputy at the Prieska branch as well. This was an unenviable situation but fortunately it did not last very long. For the Moderator it was difficult to appoint any other Congregational minister to give oversight to the Kenhardt church because of the paucity of Congregational ministers in the area.

One of the important aspects of the work was ministry to the outstations. This was not easy for the Church Council when there was no resident minister. After the departure of the probationer, J.W. Stilwaney, the Church Council decided to ask the Rev. King to serve the outstation at Regkyk just outside Kakamas. The reason was that this particular outstation was situated fairly near to the town of Keimoes. That same meeting also decided to ask the Upington Church Council to allow its minister to serve the outstations of Kenhardt in the Buchuberg Scheme, viz. Wegdraai, Groblershoop en Brandboom (present day Buchuberg) (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 14.08.1948). Both these requests were acceded to by the Church Councils of Upington

---

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. W.N.H. Tarrant succeeded the Rev. B.H. M. Brown as Moderator.

and Keimoes church respectively. The policy the Rev. Damon had adopted during his term of office in respect of the provision of schools on the outstations where the need existed was continued after he left. For instance at the November 1949 meeting of the Kenhardt church members the recommendation of the Church Council to apply to the Education Department for the sanctioning of a school at Swartkop (Verneukpan) was discussed. This outstation was situated approximately 48 kilometres from the town of Brandvlei in the northern Cape. This application was successful for a school was opened there in 1950 under the management of the Kenhardt church. At the Church Council meeting – which preceded the members’ meeting – it was also reported that the building on the farm, “Omkyk” which is situated approximately 8 kilometres from Kakamas, and was used for school purposes and divine services, was not in a good state of repair. The owner of the farm, Regkyk, was asked for permission to use a building on his property (farm) for school and religious purposes. The negotiations between the Church Council and Mr. Loxton are not reflected in the minutes but an agreement was apparently entered into by the two parties for the school moved to Regkyk (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 07.11.1949).

On the domestic side it would appear that the work progressed reasonably well under the circumstances. An incident which occurred in August, 1948 underlined the basic Congregational principle that the final authority in local and domestic matters rests with the members’ meeting. The Church Council acquired a wind charger for use at the manse at a price of £33 (R66). At that time the town had no electricity and when the action of the Church Council was reported at the members’ meeting it was decided to reprimand the Council. The reason why the meeting took exception to the action of the Church Council was because it was done without their sanction.

However, since the need for a wind-charger, given the circumstances, was recognised, it was decided to condone the action on the clear understanding that the article was the property of the church and should under no circumstances be sold without the prior approval of the members’ meeting. At the same meeting a letter from the local Hospital Board was also tabled. It contained an appeal for a donation towards the remuneration of a Coloured nurse who was appointed to the

staff of the Hospital. This appeal was sympathetically received and it was agreed to make a donation of £2.10s (R5) to the Board for that purpose (Kenhardt church members' meeting, 14.08.1948).

The Church Council also showed sensitivity to the situation of the people on its pay-roll. A case in point was when at the January, 1950 members' meeting a recommendation by the Church Council relative to the remuneration of the verger, was approved. The meeting agreed to increase the remuneration of the verger by 5/- (R0.50) per month. It was further agreed to increase the honoraria of the church secretary and treasurer to £6 (R12) per quarter each (Kenhardt special members' meeting, 07.11.1949). At the February, 1950 members' meeting it was agreed in principle to erect a garage at the manse (Kenhardt members' meeting, 18.02.1950).

The co-operation among the churches of the former group remained good even after independence. This is illustrated when a request was made in May, 1950 by the Keimoes church choir for the use of the church building in order to hold a concert on June, 1950. The concert was to be a fundraising effort. This request was acceded to and it was subsequently ratified by the members' meeting.

At that meeting a procedural decision was taken with regard to Church Council members. It was agreed to fix the term of office of Church Council members at three years. They would, however, be eligible for re-election (Kenhardt special members' meeting, 20.05.1950)

### **2.3 United Primary School**

An important matter that the Church Council had to deal with during this period of vacancy was the management of the United Primary School. At the August, 1948 Church Council meeting, a request by the local Dutch Reformed Mission Church Council relative to the school was tabled. The purpose of this request was to solicit the support of the Congregational Church Council for a joint fundraising effort. The situation was that the school was a united school in which the two

local churches participated. The request was conveyed by the treasurer, bro. David Titus, who was a staff member at the school. The idea was to work for funds in order to redeem a loan of £10 000 (R20 000) raised by the D.R. Mission Church Council. The purpose of the loan was to erect a school building on a site which belonged to that church. This would then enable the school to move out of the churches and in that way teaching could be done under more favourable conditions from an educational point of view.

The status of the school would still remain united but the title of the new building would be vested in the D.R. Mission Church (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 14.08.1948). While there is no indication in the minutes what the reaction of the Church Council was to that appeal, it would appear at any rate that it was noted. The question of the management of the school was further discussed at a special meeting of parents in January, 1949 under the chairmanship of the Rev. Damon<sup>3</sup>.

In his opening remarks he briefly outlined the history of the United School. The school had become a united school in 1920. Initially classes were conducted in the Congregational church building until somewhere between 1933 and 1937. The D.R. Mission Church Council then made their church building available for classes in order to relieve the pressure on the Congregational church. The management of the school was in the hands of lay people; at times the Secretary of the local School Board served as manager. As a way forward the meeting then decided that a deputation consisting of the chairman and secretary meet with the minister of the D.R. Mission Church, the Rev. F.J. Viljoen, in order to discuss matters relative to the management of the school (Special Parents meeting, 02.01.1949). However the issue of the management of the school was overtaken by subsequent developments.

In the meantime the D.R. Mission Church Council went ahead with the erection of a school

---

<sup>3</sup> The meeting referred to was chaired by the Rev. Damon because he was then consulent of the Kenhardt church. It took place after the departure of Mr. Stilwaney and before Rev. Damon moved to Cape Town.

building on a site owned by them. After the completion of the building, an invitation was extended to the Congregational Church Council and members to attend the opening and dedication of the new school building. This invitation was accepted (Kenhardt church members' meeting, 17.06.1949). The status of the school was discussed at a special Church Council meeting in April, 1951. At that meeting a letter from the Department of Education relative to this matter was tabled. It appeared from its contents that the Department preferred that the management of the United School should be placed under the control of a committee elected by the parents. This the meeting noted. (Kenhardt Special Church Council meeting, 13.04.1951). Thereafter a committee was elected by the parents and in the end it solved the question of the management of the school.

#### **2.4 The call of a minister**

Whilst the work of the church could go on with the help of Rev. King who had acted since the first quarter of 1949 as deputy to the Moderator, it became clear that it could not go on indefinitely. The obvious solution would be to call a minister. With this in view to call a minister a special meeting was convened. That meeting was preceded by a special Church Council meeting where it was decided to recommend to the members' meeting that the Rev. Damon be called to fill the vacant pastorate.

As mentioned before, the Rev. Damon had resigned from the Upington church and also from the ministry early in 1949 and had moved to Cape Town. The writer recalls that the then secretary of the church – the late bro. Jafta Van Wyk – informed him in 1950 that he, on behalf of the Church Council had made unofficially contact with the Rev. Damon before a call was extended to him. At the meeting of the Assembly of the denomination in October, 1950 it was decided to reinstate the Rev. Damon which in fact meant that he was again eligible to be called to a church. The members' meeting of the Kenhardt church endorsed the recommendation of the Church Council. The conditions of service offered to Rev. Damon included the following: the stipend would be £300 (R600) per annum, plus cost of living allowance as laid down by the Government.

The fringe benefits would include a free manse and the use of the church's car for the execution of his pastoral duties. Furthermore, the church would be responsible for paying his pension contributions at a rate of £1 (R2) per month. The church would also be responsible for the removal expenses of his furniture from Cape Town to Kenhardt. However, he would be expected to take responsibility for the payment of water bills for domestic purposes at the manse as well as for his own fire-wood (Kenhardt special members' meeting, 19.08.1950).

The call followed the normal route before it was forwarded to the Rev. Damon. The approval of the Western District Association was obtained, which was normal constitutional requirement. (C.U.S.A. Constitution, Section X111, par. 3a). He accepted the call and left Cape Town by train late in October, 1950. At Putzonderwater, which was the nearest railway station to Kenhardt, he alighted from the train where he was met by the members of the Church Council and he was taken by road to the town. At Driekoppen, not far from Kenhardt, a large gathering of enthusiastic members of the church gave him a warm welcome and from there he was taken to Kenhardt<sup>4</sup>. His induction was presided over by the Moderator of Western District Association, the Rev. W.N.H. Tarrant (of Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 19.11.1950).

## **2.5 The term of office of the Rev. S. Damon**

With the settlement of the Rev. Damon at Kenhardt in November, 1950 a new era was ushered in, marked by steady growth and stability. He was then a mature person of 60 years of age and although he had served the Kenhardt church previously as part of the group for some 15 years, the situation for him and for the church was different now. He was resident minister of Kenhardt and it gave him the opportunity to spend his time and attention mainly on this one church.

There were times later on when he acted as consulent for Keimoes church and he also played a

---

<sup>4</sup> Information obtained from a senior member of the Kenhardt church, sr. Cornelia Titus, widow

key role during the 1960's to organise the Congregational churches in the North-west Cape into a separate Regional Council. However, that development took place outside the period covered in this study. An important aspect of his style of ministry was his caring concern for the work on the outstations. In his contention he held a simple philosophy on this matter, viz. that the work in the wards and outstations cannot be built up if one confines oneself to the serving of the sacraments periodically. To stimulate growth one must be in constant contact with the people one serves. That explains why he placed a high premium on visitation of people in their homes<sup>5</sup>. For that reason he also gave much of his time and attention to the outstations. This is reflected in minutes of the Church Council as will be seen when the outstations are dealt with.

He was also confronted with important challenges. One was the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of Congregational work and witness in the North Cape which was to take place in 1952, i.e. fifty years after the Congregational Church had entered the scene in that part of the country. He was the prime mover in the planning of the celebrations which were done in conjunction with Keimoes and Upington churches. The Kenhardt church decided to erect a hall to commemorate the advent of the Congregational church in the area.

At the November, 1950 meeting of the Church Council, formal leave was taken of the Rev. L.C. King who had acted as deputy to the Moderator during the period of vacancy. He chaired the meeting for the last time in his capacity as acting consulent. The Rev. Damon was also present and the meeting was informed of the passing of the Rev. J.C. Abrahams of Harrington Street church in Cape Town. He died on 01 November 1950, and was a personal friend of the Rev. Damon. The meeting observed a moment of silence as a mark of respect and a prayer of condolence was offered by the Rev. Damon (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 19.11.1950).

---

of the late bro. David Titus the former treasurer of the church.

<sup>5</sup> The sentiment was expressed by the late Rev. Damon in conversation somewhere during the early 1960's with the late Rev. E.A. Swartz who was then minister of the Upington church. The writer was also present on that occasion.

At that meeting it was also reported that the Church Council had engaged one of the members – bro. F. Smith – to transport the furniture of the Rev. Damon as was agreed when the call was discussed.

## **2.6 Domestic matters**

On the domestic side there were matters which claimed his attention shortly after he had assumed office. One was the repair work on the fence at the manse which was long overdue. The other was to arrange for the installation of electricity at the manse since the Municipality had completed the power station for the town. The December, 1950 Church Council meeting which was the first to be chaired by the Rev. Damon since he took over, decided to nominate him as manager of the schools in the district under the control of the church. During the vacancy the secretary, bro. J. Van Wyk, had acted as manager of the schools (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 05.12.1950). At the Church Council meeting the following month it was reported that the Cape Education Department had approved the appointment of the Rev. Damon as manager of the schools.

## **2.7 Outstations**

Mention was made earlier in this study that the Rev. Damon strove for the provision of schools on outstations where the need existed. That explains why at most of the outstations primary schools were accommodated in buildings which were either put up by the church or rented by the church. The general pattern followed by the Church Council was to acquire a site and then to erect a building where divine services and other church activities could be conducted and if necessary, it could be used for the day school purposes as well. Over and above the building the Church Council also took responsibility for the provision of accommodation for the principal and if need be for the staff members as well. The Education Department normally gave a rent-grant if the building was erected in accordance with their basic requirements.

It is against this background that references pertaining to the schools should be seen. The school at Brandboom was a case in point. At the January, 1951 Church Council meeting it was reported that there was a need to provide accommodation to staff members of the school.

Furthermore, structural alterations to the building were delayed because of a shortage of cement. That had an adverse effect on divine services. The meeting then agreed to arrange with the Anglican Church who had a building there to use its premises as an interim measure. The arrangement was made possible since the two groups met on Sundays for divine services at different times. In that way the problem was solved (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 05.06.1951) This is also an indication that the church was held responsible for maintaining and if need be, for the enlargement of the buildings for which it received rent-grants from the Education Department. There is also a reference to improvements made to the house of the principal of the Brandboom school. These improvements were completed and the cost amounted to £49 (R98) (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 07.04.1952). At that meeting there was also a reference in the ward report of Wegdraai that a former member, bro. Charlie van der Westhuizen, who had severed ties with the church and had joined the Methodist Church, had tried to persuade members to follow him. The brother concerned had served for years on the Church Council of Kenhardt Congregational church as an elder in that ward. The meeting noted the concern expressed in the ward report in respect of bro. v.d. Westhuizen.

However, he did not succeed in weaning people away from the church and in the end the matter was tacitly dropped (cf. Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 05.04.1951). At Groblershoop, which was developing settlement in the Buchberg Irrigation Scheme, Kenhardt church had a school under its management. With the growth in membership on the outstation the building became too small for the work there. At the request of the local elders and deacons the Church Council agreed at its January, 1951 meeting to enlarge the building (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 06.01.1951).

At the annual general meeting of the Kenhardt church in November, 1951, which was the first

year of the Rev. Damon in office, a full report was given on the work in the church. The highlights included improvements at the manse. A sewerage system was installed as well as the installation of the electricity of the manse. Repair work to the fence which reference was already made earlier on, was completed at a cost of £326 (R652).

On the outstation Swartkop (Verneukpan) the need for a site where a multipurpose building could be erected was referred to. The decision taken in this matter at the April, 1951 church meeting was to approach the owner of the property with the request to lease a site there. Whilst negotiations between the Church Council and the owner of the property are not reflected in the minutes of the Church Council, an agreement was apparently reached for a school building was erected there. At the Annual General Meeting of the church, to which reference was already made, mention was made of a kitchen that was built at Swartkop for the Feeding Scheme of the school.

At Louisvale village, which is situated approximately 16 kilometres from Upington, overlapping between Upington and Kenhardt occurred since both these churches had wards there. At the November, 1951 members' meeting of Kenhardt church a suggestion made by the Upington Church Council relative to the situation at Louisvale village was discussed. The purport of the suggestion was that the ministers of the two churches take turns to visit the outstation for communion services. This proved in due course to be a viable proposition since both groups used the same school building for divine services. It also eliminated any friction which could have developed there (Kenhardt members' meeting, 17.11.1951).

At Putzonderwater the school was used by the church for Sunday services on a temporary basis until the Church Council could erect a building for its normal church activities on the outstation. The dimensions of the proposed building were to be 45' x 20' (15m x 6m). However, the erection of the hall at Kenhardt – to which reference will be made – took precedence because of the time factor. It was therefore agreed to postpone the erection of a place of worship at Putzonderwater (Kenhardt, Church Council meeting, 13.07.1951).



vicinity of £70 (R140) (Kenhardt special Council meeting, 30.10.1951).

This matter received much attention at Church Council meetings and at the November meeting that year it was decided to plan the celebrations in conjunction with the Upington and Keimoes churches. This aspect of the celebrations was then planned in collaboration with the other two churches.

It was further agreed that the Kenhardt church should erect a hall on its site which could be dedicated during the celebrations. A contributory factor to the whole idea of the celebration was the fact that the minister who had started the work in 1902 was then still alive, viz. Rev. Alexander Stewart. The idea of a hall on the church site aroused a lot of enthusiasm among the members and it occupied a fair amount of time on the Church Council's agenda. The meeting also took a decision that in view of the intended celebrations the church building should be renovated (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 15.11.1951).

Since money would be needed for the erection of the hall the Church Council, at its April, 1951 meeting, decided to approach a businessman, Mr. Morris Hayne Rogow, for a loan. After discussions were held with him it was reported that he was prepared to grant the church a loan of £2000 (R4000) at an interest rate of 5% payable every six months. This the meeting accepted, and although the formalities about the loan were only finalised some months later, the Church Council proceeded with the arrangements for the building. It was, for instance, agreed to set up a building committee to whom the task of planning the erection of the hall was entrusted. Furthermore, the committee would also have to arrange for the installation of a ceiling in the church (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 01.04.1951).

Later the same month, the Building Committee met where it was decided to call for tenders for the erection of the hall and the installation of electricity in the church (Kenhardt Church Building Committee meeting, 23.04.1951). These two matters received high priority on the agenda of the Church Council. In June, 1951 a special Church Council meeting convened where the two

projects, viz. the hall and the installation of electricity were discussed. The meeting was informed that the church site was big enough to erect the hall next to the church (Kenhardt special Church Council meeting, 08.06.1951).

At the regular Church Council meeting in June, 1951 tenders for the hall and the installation of electricity were considered. The meeting agreed to accept the tender of one of the members, Louis de Wee. His tender price was £115 (R230). It was then agreed to proceed with the erection of the hall once the loan had been approved (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 18.06.1951).

At a special church meeting the following month progress was reported with the erection of the hall. The meeting discussed matters relative to the material to be used. It was also reported that the Municipality had agreed to provide electricity to the church (Kenhardt special Church Council meeting, 16.11.1951).

At the October monthly meeting of the Church Council it was reported that neither Dr. A. Stewart, the son of the Rev. Stewart, and the donor of the Foundation stone, nor the Mayor of Kenhardt would be available to unveil the foundation stone of the hall (Kenhardt Church Council meeting, 05.10.1951). This was obviously a disappointment but the bigger setback the Church Council meeting encountered was with the builder, Louis de Wee.

At a special church meeting held in January, 1952 it was reported that the builder had asked for an additional £120 (R240). The response of the Church Council was that his request would be considered if he could submit his pay-sheet and also give an indication of how long it would take him to complete the work (Kenhardt special Church Council meeting, 15.01.1952). This apparently did not satisfy him for at a special Church Council meeting, nine days later, it was reported that the builder had stopped working on 12 January, 1952. Since no response could be elicited from him, a special members' meeting was convened for 28 January, 1952. At that meeting it was decided to give the builder an ultimatum. The purport of this ultimatum was that if he did not resume work within 10 days from the date the notice was served on him, it would be taken that he was not prepared to complete the work. In that event the church would have no

alternative but to complete the work at his expense (Kenhardt special members' meeting, 28.10.1952).

At a subsequent members' meeting the Rev. Damon reported that the builder had stopped working without notifying the Building Committee. All attempts to meet with the builder in order to smooth out problems which he might have had, were unsuccessful. The balance of his original tender amounted to £97.10 (R195). There is no indication that it was decided to take legal action against De Wee at that stage. This was probably due to the fact that the completion of the hall was a matter of urgency. Furthermore, a civil case would have delayed matters and the church would have been involved in a fair amount of expense. It was then decided that the church would take responsibility for the completion of the hall. One of the elders, bro. Jan Titus, who was also a builder, was appointed to supervise the work.

An appeal was also made to members to volunteer to assist with the work (Kenhardt special members' meeting, 11.02.1952). Members heeded the appeal and the hall was completed in good time. Quite fittingly the hall was named the "Stewart Jubilee Hall" in recognition of the pioneering work of the Rev. Stewart had done in the area. The Rev. Stewart was personally present when the hall was dedicated on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1952. With the dedication service the visiting clergy and invited guests together with the congregation waited at the main entrance. The Rev. Stewart ceremoniously unlocked the door while the congregation started singing the well-known hymn, "All people that on earth do dwell" and at the singing of the third verse, "O enter then His gates with praise", the ministers and the congregation proceeded into the hall. The Rev. Stewart was the keynote speaker. This was a highlight for Kenhardt in their Jubilee celebrations.

At a special members' meeting held towards the end of April, 1952 a full report was given on the cost of the hall. According to the statement presented to the meeting, the builder, Louis de Wee, had exceeded his tender price by £84,19s.9d (R169,97½). The meeting decided that the Church Council should take the necessary steps to recover the money from De Wee. It was further agreed to ask the different organisations of the church to raise funds of at least £4.3s.4d (R8,33c)

each in order to cover the outstanding debt on the hall. However, the Church Council was not successful in recovering the money owed by the builder. Since there was not sufficient enthusiasm to start litigation proceedings against him, the matter was eventually dropped (cf. Kenhardt special members' meeting 29.04.1952).

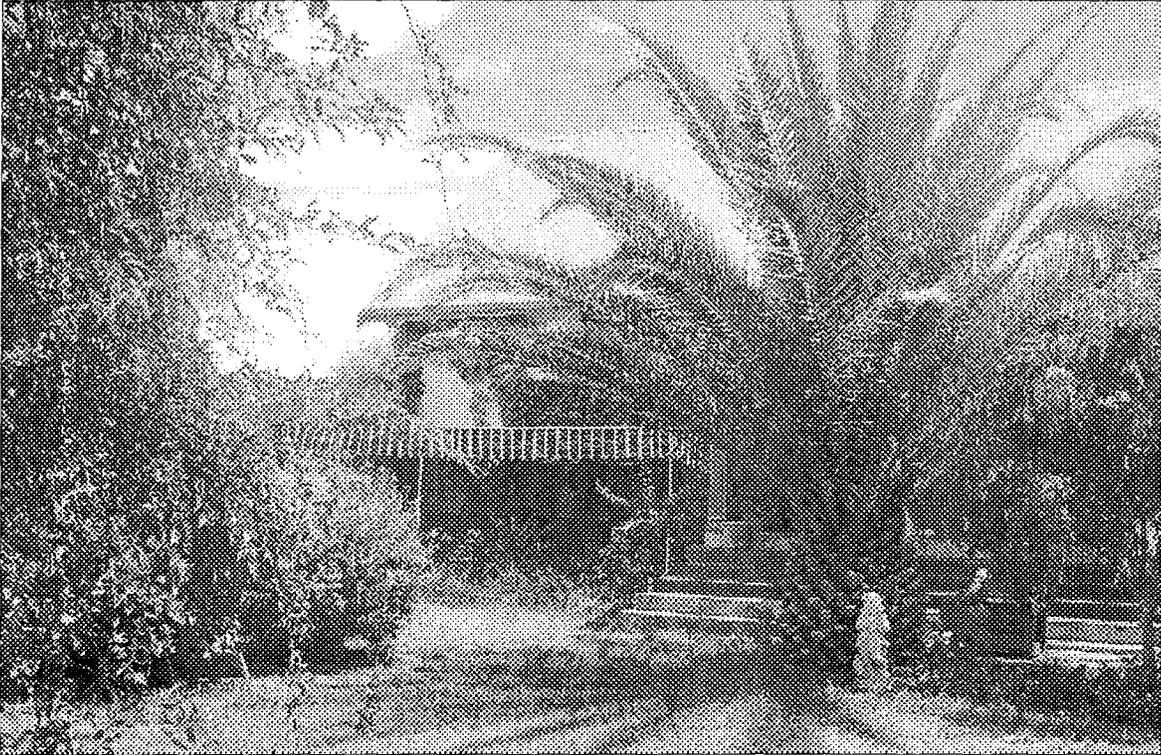
In retrospect it needs to be observed that the first year of Rev. Damon's term at Kenhardt had started very well. The Golden jubilee celebrations were planned jointly by the three churches. The extra expenses incurred with the erection of the hall as well as other commitments did place a strain on the church's finances. This is reflected in a special members' meeting held in March, 1952. It was decided then to apply to the Bank for an overdraft facility to a maximum of £150 (R300) and that the church offers its vacant plots as security (Kenhardt special members' meeting, 11.03.1952). However, the situation did not appear to improve sufficiently to enable the church to meet its financial obligations. It was then decided, at the August, 1962 members' meeting to sell one of the plots owned by the church in order to pay the interest on the loan (Kenhardt members' meeting, 14.08.1952). It must, however, be seen as a temporary setback; eventually the church recovered financially and the work moved forward on an even keel.

### **3. Keimoes Church**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

With the settlement of the Rev. L.C. King at Keimoes as their resident minister a new chapter in the life of the church began. As mentioned before, the Rev. B.N. Windvogel was based at Keimoes during his ministry there but he was responsible, together with the Rev. Damon, for the group of churches. The Rev. Lonnie Cecil King was born near Umtata in the Transkei on 05 August, 1905. He candidated for the ministry of the Methodist Church and trained at Fort Hare; thereafter he served that denomination during the years 1937 to 1946. Reference was already made of his entry into the Congregational ministry when he accepted the call to the Keimoes church late in 1946. Keimoes was therefore his first charge in the Congregational church. He

served other Congregational churches after he left Keimoes in 1952, viz. Uniondale, Upington, Grahamstown and Kruisfontein. When he started at Keimoes he was in his early forties and in all the churches he served he had a stable ministry. Coming from a Methodist background he was understandably cautious not to introduce drastic changes. He operated within the structures he found there and on the whole he managed to endear himself to the people.



*Original Keimoes Church building converted into a dwelling house after the church moved to the extension.*



### 3.2 Domestic matters

One of the first matters the church had to give attention to after he assumed office was to elect a secretary from among its own ranks. The situation was that while Keimoes was part of the group the Upington church secretary, bro. Thomas T. Titus, had also served them (i.e. Keimoes church) in that capacity. However, with separation it became necessary to elect a new secretary. At the April, 1947 members' meeting it was agreed to retain the services of T.T. Titus until a suitable person from among the congregation could be found (Keimoes members' meeting, 19.04.1947). There is a reference to some remuneration that was paid to the secretary at the July, 1947 Church Council meeting. The remuneration was fixed at £4 (R8) per quarter (Keimoes members' Church Council meeting, 12.07.1947). This is to be understood since the secretary in this case stayed at Upington and he had to attend Church Council and members' meetings in addition to administrative duties which might have been assigned to him. This situation lasted until the October, 1947 quarterly meeting when at that members' meeting it was decided to elect bro. Willem Diergaardt to succeed T.T. Titus since that was bro. Titus's last meeting as church secretary he took formal leave and thanked them for the co-operation he had enjoyed during his term of office. The chairman responded suitably on behalf of the church and wished him well for the future. However, Willem Diergaardt declined the nomination on account of the state of his health. The meeting thereupon elected bro. Jan Van Rooi as secretary. The other office-bearer elected at that meeting was bro. Adriaan Coetzee as treasurer. He served the church in that capacity for a number of years (cf. Keimoes church members' meeting, 11.10.1947).

Another matter that claimed the attention of the church was acquisition of a car in order to enable the minister to carry out his pastoral duties effectively. This was necessary since Keimoes was essentially a rural church and the congregation was fairly scattered. At the April, 1947 members' meeting it was agreed to buy a motor car for the use of the minister. A further decision was taken at that meeting, namely to find the necessary finance for this purpose. This is also indicative of the Rev. King's thriftiness. He always tried as far as possible to dissuade the church from

incurring debts. The meeting decided to appeal to all families in the church to make a donation of £1 (R2) towards a car fund up to the end of June (Keimoes church members' meeting, 12.04.1947). Apparently the response to this appeal was not quite as good as was expected, for at the October quarterly members' meeting the Rev. King reported that since the contributions towards the car fund were coming in rather slowly the Church Council had to 'borrow' from the regular income to be paid over into the fund. That had a very negative effect on the financial situation of the church. This was borne out by the fact that income for the quarter ending, 31st October 1947 amounted to £326-17s-7d (R653-76c) against an expenditure of £325-15s-5d (R651-41c), leaving a credit balance of £1-2s-2d (R2-22c) (Keimoes church members' meeting, 09.10.1947).

However, the decision to purchase a car had been taken a step further already in May, 1947. At that Church Council meeting the treasurer, bro. Adriaan Coetzee, reported that a car could be obtained from a certain Mr. L. Saaiman. It was a 1939 model Ford car and in his opinion it was in a reasonably good condition. The owner was prepared to supply a new battery for the car and to come down from his original price to the amount of £200 (R400) on condition that the car radio was not included in the sale. After the matter was fully discussed the meeting agreed to buy the car subject of course to the approval of the members' meeting (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 10.05.1947). The approval was given and the car was purchased but it would appear that the car fund was still kept open, the idea being that members would still have the opportunity to make contributions until the purchase price was fully covered. At the April, 1948 members' meeting the Rev. King reported that only £174 (R348) had been paid in by the members; the outstanding balance was £26 (R52). The meeting then decided that those families who did not contribute towards the car fund should be encouraged to do so (Keimoes members' meeting 10.04.1948).

After the car was bought in October, 1947 a decision was taken by the Church Council meeting that the car should only be used for bona fide church purposes (Keimoes Church Council meeting 09.10.1947). The reason for this was in all probability to discourage members from

expecting that the church's vehicle was there for their personal needs.

One of the things the church had to come to terms with was the importance of developing a sound stewardship. For instance at the April, 1947 members' meeting it was decided to appeal to the church choirs in town and on the outstations, as well as to the young people, to become actively involved in fundraising efforts so that the financial situation could be placed on a sound footing. The financial reports during the ministry of the Rev. King had shown that appeals like these did not go unheeded.

Another matter which illustrated the point that the church was developing an identity of its own, was the decision at that same meeting in respect of who should qualify to serve on the Church Council. This is covered in the constitution, but by way of amplification it was agreed that brothers and their fathers would be eligible to be elected to the Church Council. However, they may not be assigned to serve in the same ward (Keimoes church members' meeting, 12.04.1947).

At the September, 1949 Church Council meeting a decision was taken relative to the Womens' Association it was obviously intended as a guideline. It was decided to advise the Womens' Association that no loans should be advanced to individual members without the prior approval of the Church Council (Keimoes Council meeting, 10.09.1949).

### **3.3 Outreach**

While domestic issues for understandable reasons claimed much of the time and attention of the Church Council and the members' meetings, there were times when other matters outside the immediate purview of the church demanded its attention as well. Mention was already made of a joint building fund that was established when the three churches still operated as a group. At the December, 1947 Church Council meeting it was decided to request that this fund be dissolved and that each of the participating churches operate its own building fund (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 13.12.1947).

Prior to this decision the Kenhardt church Council wrote to the Keimoes church secretary in which the attention of the Council was drawn to the fact that it had committed itself to pay a pro rata share of the erection of a manse at Kenhardt. This matter was referred to the Finance Committee for consideration (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 12.07.1947). After the Finance Committee had dealt with it the matter was again brought to the Church Council. It appeared that both the Church Council and the Finance Committee recognised that the request of the Kenhardt Church Council was a valid one. The meeting then re-affirmed its original decision namely, that the Keimoes Church Council would stand by its undertaking to pay a pro rata share of the erection of the manse as was agreed earlier on (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 10.01.1948).

The Kenhardt church fell vacant while the Rev. Damon was still at Upington. He could then supervise the work at Kenhardt. However, in November, 1948 the Kenhardt Church Council asked the Keimoes Church Council to allow its minister to serve their outstations at Wegdraai and Brandboom. This was readily agreed to (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 13.11.1948). After the Rev. King had paid visits to these outstations the Kenhardt Church Council expressed their thanks by letter both to the minister as well as to the Church Council. They also included a remittance of £10-10 (R21). The meeting then decided to give £8 (R16) of it to the Rev. King and then to deposit the remaining £2-10s (R5) in the church's current account (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 11.12.1948).

At the February, 1949 Church Council meeting a letter from the Moderator, Rev. W.N.H. Tarrant, was tabled. In it he asked the permission of the Church Council to allow its minister to serve the sacraments at the Kenhardt church and its outstations. The reason for this request was already dealt with. The response of the meeting was that the matter be left to the Rev. King since he would best be able to judge whether he could accede to this request or not (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 12.02.1949).

The Rev. King apparently did agree to serve the Kenhardt church as requested for at the May,

1949 Church Council meeting a further request from the Kenhardt Church Council was received that the Keimoes Church Council allows their minister to give them three Sundays per quarter. The response of the Keimos Church Council was that they could allow their minister to give them two Sundays per quarter instead of the three as requested (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 07.04.1949). The remuneration agreed by the Council was to be £7-10s (R15) for two Sundays. It needs to be understood that the reason why the Keimoes Church Council could not see its way clear to accede to the request was that the workload of their minister at that time was rather heavy. A request from the Moderator in similar vein was soon forwarded to the Keimoes Church Council regarding the Upington church which had fallen vacant, as mentioned earlier on. In this case the Rev. King agreed to serve the Upington church as consulent. At the September, 1949 Church Council meeting a letter from Upington Church Council was tabled. In it they expressed their thanks to the Keimoes Church Council for allowing their minister to serve them as consulent. However, their request to allow the Rev. King to give them three Sundays per quarter was regrettably declined. Like in the case of Kenhardt, they were prepared to grant the Upington church the services of their minister for two Sundays per quarter (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 10.09.1949).

### **3.4 Outstations**

As mentioned earlier, in terms of the agreement reached at the decentralisation discussions, the Keimoes church was given the responsibility of caring for the outstations in the Kalahari and Tsumis Park in the Rehoboth area and Kalkfeld in present day, Namibia. The latter two in particular were quite far from Keimoes, but in addition to these the church settlements of Bloemsmond, Curriescamp en Soverby also fell within the jurisdiction of Keimoes church since most of the people living there were members of that church. Over and above these the nearby islands on the Orange River were also outstations of Keimoes. For understandable reasons the work on these outstations claimed an important part of the Church Council's agenda.

### 3.4.1 Kalkfeld and Tsumis Park

As mentioned before this was the most distant outstation of the church. At the November, 1947 Church Council meeting the Rev. King indicated that it was his intention to visit the Kalkfeld outstation. After his visit there a letter was tabled at the April, 1947 Church Council meeting in which reference was made to an outstanding amount of £50 (R100) still owing to the mother church. It was, however, their intention to settle the debt as soon as possible and thereafter to sink a borehole on the site. Whilst details about the loan to Kalkfeld by the mother church are not reflected in the minutes the deduction is that it referred to the purchase of the property to which reference had been made in an earlier chapter. There is also a reference to money owed to the mother church by the Tsumis Park outstation but here also no indication is given as to what it was in aid of (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 12.02.1952). However, on the whole the work proceeded well in both these two outlying outstations. This was mentioned by one of the Keimoes elders, bro. Marthinus Diergaardt, who accompanied the minister during a visit there (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 12.03.1949).

At the April, 1948 Church Council meeting, a request from the Rehoboth outstation (i.e. Tsumis Park in the Rehoboth area) was considered by the meeting. The request in this letter was that the outstation be permitted to administer the funds collected locally for the work there. The Church Council was sympathetic to the request and agreed to recommend to the members' meeting that it be acceded to on condition that it be done under the supervision of the Keimoes Church Council (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 10.04.1948). When this recommendation was put to the members' meeting, the same day, it was approved with the proviso that these two outstations – Kalkfeld and Rehoboth – pay over to the mother church that portion of their income that was due to it. This obviously referred to the normal members' subscription which was payable every month.

### **3.4.2 Kalahari outstations**

The Kalahari outstations also received the attention of the minister and he kept the Church Council informed about the state of affairs there. In January, 1949 the Rev. King reported to the Church Council about his visit to Mier. The work there was progressing well (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 08.01.1949). At the following monthly meeting of the Church Council the question was raised as to whether consideration could not be given to handing over the outstations of Mier and Swartkopsdam to the Upington church. The meeting felt, however, that this matter should best be dealt with a joint meeting between the Keimoes and Upington Church Councils. Since nothing further appeared in subsequent church minutes on this issue the deduction is that it did not receive sufficient support to pursue it further.

The farm "Voorsorg" situated near the border of the then South West Africa was at the time owned by the Rev. Damon. On the farm there were some families linked to the Keimoes church and there was also a one-teacher school. The eldest son of the Rev. Damon, Thomas, was teaching there. At the February, 1949 Church Council meeting the chairman reported that the Rev. Damon had informed him that he would have no objections if the Keimoes church would make use of his son on the outstation although he was still a member of the Upington church. Furthermore, he would be willing to issue transfer certificates to Upington church members who were staying on the farm and wished to link up with Keimoes church. The meeting noted this since it reflected a spirit of co-operation on the part of Rev. Damon (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 12.02.1949).

### **3.4.3 Vyebos-eiland outstation**

While the outstations referred to above were all situated in the Kalahari area there were others nearer home, one of which was Vyebos-eiland. Here the local Dutch Reformed Mission and Congregational Churches had wards. At the September, 1949 church Council meeting there was a deputation from the local Dutch Reformed Mission Congregation to interview the Council.

Their request on behalf of their Church Council was that the two churches apply jointly for a site to the Department of Land Affairs in order to erect a building which could serve as a day-school and for religious purposes over weekends. This request was referred to the members' meeting (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 10.09.1949). While the matter is not reflected in subsequent minutes the deduction that can be made is that it was approved by the members' meeting. Furthermore, a site was obtained from the Department of Land Affairs and a building was erected there which was used on a shared basis by the two churches. The school that was started there was united and the management rotated between the two churches. This was a splendid example of co-operation between the two churches.

### **3.5 Enlargement of the church building**

The Keimoes church building in Kruger Street could not accommodate all the worshippers during quarterly communion services. For that reason a decision was taken at the April, 1949 quarterly members' meeting to enlarge the building (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 09.04.1949). This was regarded as a matter of urgency for at the May, 1949 Church Council meeting, it was reported that the local authority had approved a plan submitted for this purpose (Keimoes Council meeting, 07.05.1949). At the August Church Council meeting further progress was reported. Mention was made of some material that had been acquired, viz. corrugated iron sheets, timber and cement and that it amounted to £556-7s-9d (R1113-77½). It was then agreed to appoint a Building Committee consisting of the brethren M. Panizza, W. Theron, Floors Diergaardt, A.J. Coetzee, G.N. Beukes, W. Kotze and the Rev. King.

The meeting also agreed that 22000 bricks be bought at £3 (R6) per thousand. It was further decided to employ bricklayers at a remuneration of between 15/- (R1.50) and £1 (R2) per day. The supervisor of the work was to be remunerated at a rate of £2.5s (R5) per day. The transport of the material to be used at the building was to be arranged by the Building Committee (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 13.08.1949).

At the following monthly meeting of the Church Council, it was reported that bro. M. Panizza who was appointed to supervise the work was unable to take on that responsibility. It was then agreed to approach bro. S. Thomas, a member of the Upington church, to take on the responsibility. His remuneration was to be 15/- (R1.50) per day. He agreed and the work progressed well (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 10.09.1949). By October that year the Church Council could already agree on a date for the dedication of the new wing that was added to the building. The meeting felt that February 1950 would be a suitable time for the dedication of the new wing. The members meeting which was held two days after the Church Council meeting decided that the date for the event should be second Saturday of February, 1950. It was also agreed that on that occasion a collection of 2/- (R0.20c) should be taken which would be handed in together with the money raised by the church choirs.

The financial position of the church appeared to be sound. The income for the quarter, 01 July to 30 September 1949, amounted to £271.3s10d (R542,40c) against an expenditure of £193.19s2d (R387-92c) leaving a credit balance of £77-4s8d (R154,47c). This had been the trend throughout the Rev. King's ministry at Keimoes. The church always showed a credit balance even though it was not always big. The meeting also gave recognition for the work done by the treasurer, bro. A.J. Coetzee; it was agreed to give him an honorarium of £4 (R8) (Keimoes members' meeting, 08.10.1949). Once the extension work of the church was completed there was a spirit of enthusiasm to work discernible among the members.

Evidence of this was seen in January 1950 when the Women's Association at that members' meeting handed in, to the church an amount of £60 (R120) which was earmarked for pews for the church. This was necessary because the building had been enlarged and there was a need for additional seating. Furthermore, the Keimoes church choir decided to pay for the installation of electricity in the church. The church Council also identified the need for a bell and recommended to the members' meeting that it be acquired (Keimoes Church Council meeting, 07.01,1950),

### 3.6 Golden jubilee celebrations

The celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of Congregational work in the North-western Cape, was one of the highlights of the Rev. King's ministry at Keimoes. The event was to be observed in 1952, i.e. fifty years after the work had been commenced in the area by the Congregational Church. Much planning went into it; the matter was raised as early as December, 1947 in the Church Council meeting. There was general agreement that suitable ways and means should be devised to mark the event. The Rev. King informed the meeting that in private discussions he had with the Rev. Damon the idea was mooted that among the ministers to be invited to the celebrations, the Rev. W.J. Bergins of Cradock should be included. The Rev. Damon also indicated that Upington church would be willing to make their car available where transport was involved on condition that the two other churches contribute towards the fuel expenses.

The planning of the celebrations was done jointly by Councils of the three churches' meetings about the details as worked out by them. There is unfortunately a paucity of information in the minutes of the Church Council meetings about the details as worked out by the churches concerned. However, as stated before, the Rev. Stewart was able to be present at each of the celebrations and he was the keynote speaker. The arrangement was that each of the churches would plan their celebrations at different times and in that way it was possible for the members to take part in all the events. Although the Rev. Stewart was not involved with the extension work at Prieska, he was able to include a visit to them during his itinerary.

This was the highlight of the Rev. King's ministry at Keimoes. After the conclusion of the jubilee celebrations he resigned from the Keimoes pastorate. He accepted a call to the Uniondale church and served that church during the years 1952 to the end of 1954. After his departure from Keimoes that church requested that the minister of Upington, Rev. H.W.D. van der Linde, to serve them as consulent. This was approved by both the Upington Church Council as well as the Western District Association. His term of consulentship covered the period 1952 to 1954 when the Rev. H.C. Samuels of Worcester accepted a call to the Keimoes church. Apart from the

routine pastoral duties it was during that period of vacancy that the new manse was built at Kruger Street, just opposite the church.

### 3.7 Conclusion

To summarise, the ministry of Rev. King covered a very important period in the development of the church. Bearing in mind that he had come from a Methodist background, as stated before, he adjusted remarkably well to the Congregational system of church policy. Under his leadership the Keimoes church developed an identity of its own. The church was, in composition and character essentially rural; its main strength lay in its outstations. It has been noted that some of these outstations were very far removed from the mother church. When the Rev. King commenced his ministry at Keimoes, the local authority was a still Village Management Board. Town status was granted only in the late 1940s but the character of the town remained very much the same for a long time. To the ordinary people Upington was regarded as the “town” where the main shopping could be done.

An outstanding trait of the Rev. King was as stated before, was his frugality. Initially the church experienced difficulty in meeting his stipend on time. What helped was the fact that his wife Mrs. Leah King, was a qualified teacher and she got a teaching post at the local primary school. This enabled him to arrange with the Church Council to pay his stipend in full when they broke even again<sup>6</sup>. This was, however, a temporary arrangement, and when the church’s financial position improved the matter was rectified. The quarterly financial statements of the church reflected a steady improvement and that, in turn, enabled them to adjust the minister’s stipend from time to time.

The Rev. King never wanted the church to incur debts. The writer recalled the point he once made in conversation that he would never be at ease if a church he serves operated on an

---

<sup>6</sup> Information obtained from his daughter, Eunice Absalon.

overdraft at the Bank. He would not be happy to accept a stipend paid with money that did not belong to the church<sup>7</sup>. An important contributory factor as to why the Keimoes church's financial position improved during that period was the fact that it was always numerically stronger than its two sisters' churches. Moreover, it did not have to contend with the debt on the Settlements since these were placed under the control of the Upington church. Furthermore, it must be conceded that the strict financial discipline of the Rev. King went a long way in placing the church on a stable and sound road.

The enlargement of the church building, referred to earlier on, was done on a cash basis. He first encouraged the people to gather the funds they needed and thereafter the work on the building was proceeded with. That was characteristic of his style.

## **4. Upington Church**

### **4.1 Introduction**

After decentralisation was an accomplished fact, the Rev. Damon was able to devote most of his time to the Upington church of which he was then the resident minister. It must have been quite a relief for him when the strain of the other two churches in the group was lifted from his shoulders, but it must have been an adaptation also to be responsible for one church only. However, in terms of the settlement reached at decentralisation discussion the Upington church was entrusted with the management of the Settlements and the repayment of the bond on the farms. Furthermore, the Rev. Damon still had the responsibility of supervising the work at Prieska where an evangelist, was stationed. The Upington African Congregational church was also under the care of the Rev. Damon.

The period under review can roughly be divided into five brief phases, viz. the first covers the

---

<sup>7</sup> The sentiments were expressed by the late Rev. King during a conversation somewhere in the

last years of the Rev. Damon's ministry at Upington, i.e. 1947 to 1949. The next phase was when the church fell vacant and was served by the Rev. King as consulent. It ended in 1950 when the Rev. S. Bimray accepted the call to Upington church. His term at Upington lasted a year, 1950 – 1951 – and then the Rev. King again had to act as consulent for the rest of that year. In 1952 the pastorate was filled when the Rev. H.W.D. van der Linde started his ministry there. That concludes the period covered in this study.

#### **4.2 The Beerwinkel episode**

Shortly after the Rev. Damon had started his ministry Upington as sole resident minister he had to deal with a problem which ended in a court case. One of the members, Adriaan Beerwinkel, apparently had his own interpretation of his rights in terms of the constitution. The background to this problem was that the member concerned had forfeited his privileges because he had absented himself from communion services since 1944. His attention was brought to this fact by letter in 1946 by the Church Council. In October that year the Council received a letter from the attorney, Mr. G.J. Kuhn, in which he pointed out that his client, A. Beerwinkel, took exception to the tenor of the communication of the Church Council. The Rev. Damon explained to the meeting that in cases where members had forfeited their membership privileges he would have no alternative but to prohibit them should they insist on taking part in the discussions at members' meetings. The meeting then agreed to ignore the letter of the attorney (Upington Church Council meeting, 05.10.1946). At the members' meeting held that same afternoon, the chairman in his opening remarks appealed to people who were not good standing members of the church to withdraw. Bro. Adriaan Beerwinkel was present at this meeting and he did not heed the appeal of the chairman. When he rose to speak on the subject of fire-wood transported from the Settlements to the town, the chairman ruled him out of order (Upington members' meeting, 05.10.1946).

---

early 1950s.

The matter did not rest there for at the November, 1946 Church Council meeting, another letter from Beerwinkel's attorney was tabled. In it he claimed £200 (R400) damages on behalf of his client because Beerwinkel felt offended since he was not permitted to speak at the members' meeting. After considering the letter the meeting decided to reply to the attorney and to point out to him that while Beerwinkel's name was not removed from the roll of members, he had neglected his duties and therefore had forfeited his privileges as a member. Thrice he had been invited to see the Church Council in order to sort out whatever problems he might have had, but that he had failed to attend any of those meetings. He was fully aware of the fact that matters discussed at the Church Council meetings were treated as confidential. Recommendations from the Church Council were normally referred to members' meetings for final decisions. The meeting agreed to forward a letter to this effect to the attorney (Upington Church Council meeting, 07.11.1946). The response of the attorney to this letter was tabled at the November, 1946 Church Council meeting. In it he offered to meet the Rev. Damon together with one or two of the Church Council members and Beerwinkel in his office. The purpose of the suggested meeting was to iron out the differences between the two parties. To this the meeting responded by stating that the attorney should be informed that the Church Council was not amenable to such a meeting in his office. It was their contention that since Beerwinkel was not prepared to meet with the Church Council when invited to do so, he would be at liberty to take the matter further if he so wished. Furthermore, the Church Council was not prepared to entertain any further communications in this matter since they regarded it as closed (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.11.1946).

At the January, 1947 Church Council meeting the chairman reported that Beerwinkel had instructed his attorney to start litigation proceedings against the church. He was suing the church for £200 (R400) damages which he allegedly suffered when the chairman refused to allow him to speak at the members' meeting. The chairman informed the meeting that he had handed the matter to the church's attorneys, Messrs Malan and Malan. They were of the opinion that the church would have a very good case if tested in a court of law. The meeting noted this (Upington Church Council meeting, 04.01.1947). The case was heard in the Upington Magistrate's court

afterwards. The three office-bearers of the church who were summoned to appear in court were, the Rev. S. Damon, in his capacity as chairman of the meeting, T.T. Titus, the secretary who had written the letter in which Beerwinkel was informed of his loss of status as member, and the ward deacon, L. Visagie, who had delivered the letter.

In the ensuing case the plaintiff's case was dismissed. The only expense the church had to meet was the nominal fee of £1.1s (R2-10c) for the summons<sup>8</sup>. That brought the whole unpleasant episode to an end. The significance of the case was that, given the circumstances, the authority of the Church Council was upheld. It would have set a dangerous precedent if any member could flout the authority of the chairman and the Church Council with impunity and it could undermine its discipline over its members. The matter was laid to rest when Beerwinkel severed ties with the church and joined another local church.

#### **4.3 Domestic matters**

One of the implications of decentralisation was that the Upington church had to draw up its own constitution in order to make provision for its own needs. It stands to reason that it had to be in line with the model constitution for Afrikaans-speaking local churches.

As mentioned earlier on this model constitution was drawn up by the Rev. G.P. Ferguson and was known as "Die Boek van Beheer en Tug". It was also important for the Upington church to have a constitution of its own since the previous one had covered all churches in the group. This draft constitution was completed in time for the January, 1947 members' meeting. It was approved by that meeting and was attached at the end of the minutes. In line with the decision taken at the members' meeting the name of the church was to be the "Coloured Independent, or Congregational Church of Gordonias at Upington".

---

<sup>8</sup> While church records on the outcome of the case were not kept, this information was obtained from the then church secretary, the late T.T. Titus.

In brief outline the following matters were covered in the Constitution. Article 4 stipulated that the management of the church was to be vested in elected deacons and elders for a three year term and one third of their number would retire autonomically each year but they would be eligible for re-election. Their duties and responsibilities were set out in Article 4 (a). In Article 4 (b) provision was made for disciplinary action. In Article 5 the procedure for the call of a minister was set out as well as his duties. In this article it was stated that a call could only be extended to an accredited minister of the Congregational Union of South Africa and whose name appeared on its official roll of ministers. A minister of another recognised denomination could be called subject to the approval of the Congregational Union of South Africa. Article 6 deals with property matters which included the Settlements as well the management thereof. In Article 7 and 8 the duties of the secretary and treasurer were set out. In Article 9 and 10 the election and duties of the Finance Committee were dealt with as well as that of Church Council members. At the January, 1947 members' meeting it was decided also to delete the term "Baster" which had appeared in the name of the former constitution (Upington members' meeting, 04.11.1947).

#### **4.4 Exchange of outstations**

Although decentralisations had formally taken place, there were still matters especially in respect of the outstations that had to be dealt with. In the Buchuberg Irrigation Scheme there was some overlapping between Upington and Kenhardt churches.

Grootdrink, for instance, was an outstation of Kenhardt, while Topline and Brandboom which are situated beyond Grootdrink and Putzonderwater and which was the railway station for the town of Kenhardt, fell under Upington church. At the April, 1947 meeting of the Upington Church Council it was decided to request the Kenhardt church to take over Topline, Brandboom and Putzonderwater in exchange for Grootdrink. This was a logical arrangement since the outstations offered to Kenhardt were in fact nearer to them than to Upington. This arrangement was acceptable to Kenhardt church (Upington Church Council meeting, 03.04.1947).

#### 4.5 Women's Association

The Women's Association which formed an integral part of the local church was very active judging from reports sent to the denomination's English and Afrikaans magazines. In the February, 1947 issue of "The Congregationalist" there appeared a reference to the training of one of the Upington church's members as a nurse. The member concerned was Catherine Thomas and she was sponsored by the Congregational Women's Federation to enrol at the New Somerset Hospital in Cape Town for her training. It needs to be observed that the Women's Federation which was the umbrella body in the denomination and concerned with women's work had a Forward Planning programme. The training of Catherine Thomas fell under the auspices of the Forward Planning Committee. The reason why a candidate from the North-western Cape was selected for training was because there existed a need for a maternity home at the church settlements. The Women's Federation was prepared to make a contribution of £500 (R1000) towards such a project. On the arrival of Catherine Thomas in Cape Town she was met by Mrs. M.M. Abrahams of the Harrington Street church, Cape Town. Mrs. Abrahams was the wife of the Rev. J.C. Abrahams and she held office at times as President of the Women's Federation in the Western District Association. The Forward Planning Committee also attended to the candidate's uniforms and other necessary items for her care and comfort. (The Congregationalist, Feb./March, 1947, p 14). Although the candidate completed her course of training, the intended maternity home did not materialise; the reason was that the Upington Church Council investigated the viability of such a project. It was discovered that the estimated cost of the erection of such a home would be somewhere between £1500 (R3000) and £2000 (R4000). Unfortunately, the church was not at the time in a position to finance such a project. This laudable idea had to be abandoned (cf. Upington Church Council meeting, 15.10.1950).

Apart from this setback the Women's Association remained actively involved in the work of their local church. On 20 September, 1947 they celebrated their anniversary in the form of a social evening. On that occasion choirs from the wards and even from the Kenhardt church

rendered items. Among the guests was the probationer minister of Kenhardt, Mr. J. Stilwaney. The Upington Women's Association reciprocated by attending the Kenhardt church Women's Association anniversary. It was also their intention to attend the anniversary celebration of Keimoes church Women's Association which was due to take place on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1947. All these confirmed the contention, referred to earlier on, that the co-operation among the churches of the former group remain alive long after decentralisation (cf. Die Kerkberig, Nov. 1947, 10). In church news reports published in the denominational magazines there are references to Prayer Sisters. This was in all probability an extension of the Women's Association. It would appear that they met periodically but their main thrust was the holding of prayer meetings in the homes of people where a need existed.

#### **4.6 Other important events**

The highlights in the Upington church was the anniversary services which were held during the first weekend of April. The April 1947 anniversary service was preceded by the annual bazaar. It started already the Friday evening and was continued onto the Saturday. This particular bazaar was well patronized and it realised the princely sum of £234-s-5d (R468,34c). That was considered to be quite an achievement. The Sunday morning service coincided with Easter. The church was filled to capacity since people from outstations made a special effort to attend the service. At that particular communion service 57 candidates were confirmed and 8 members were received on transfer from other sister churches. The Rev. Damon on that occasion preached quite fittingly on the theme "The Resurrection: Christianity's greatest victory" (Die Kerkberig, June 1947, p 9).

The other major service at the Upington church was the October quarterly communion. It followed very much the same pattern as the April service. At that particular service in 1947, the Rev. Damon made a strong appeal to young people to become involved in the work and witness of the church. There is a reference in the report on the work at Upington of the establishment of a

Youth Fellowship or Young People's Association as it was referred to them. It was started on 18 July, 1947 with a social evening arranged for the young people who were interested in joining. With the inception 42 young people joined the Fellowship. The names of the office bearers were also given, viz. Adam Patrick Visagie, the president, Martin Jansen, the secretary, Anetta Allies, the assistant secretary and Nicholas Mouton, the treasurer. The two committee members were Maria Adams and Tommy Allies, A. Van Rooi, M. Visagie and F. Visagie. The stated aim of this society was to assist with character building among the young people. This significance of this society started by the church was that it was a genuine attempt at providing some healthy outlet for the youth in a town where there were not very socially acceptable activities in which they could participate.

The other departments of the church seemed to have made encouraging progress. The church choir was under the able leadership of bro. A. Van Rooi, a teacher at the local primary school. The Sunday School choir was also making headway under the leadership of bro. A.P. Visagie, another teacher at the primary school. This choir took part in 1948 in the Children's Day celebrations (*The Congregationalist*, Feb. 1948, p 21).

All these reports about the Upington Church during the post-decentralisation period point to the fact that the Rev. Damon was able to do more concentrated work at Upington and the outstations since his responsibilities were largely confined to the one local church. It would further appear that despite problems like the Beerwinkel episode, dealt with earlier, the work remained intact. On the personal level, however, he suffered a serious loss when his wife passed away after a period of illness. She died in a hospital in Cape Town where she had been taken to for treatment. She was laid to rest at Upington on Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 1948. A large number of people from all walks of life attended the funeral service. The probationer minister of Kenhardt church, Mr. J.W. Stilwaney and Rev. L.C. King officiated at that service. After this loss the Rev. Damon still carried on with the work. There is a reference in the news report which appeared in the English magazine of the church that the preacher at the anniversary service in April, 1948 was the newly ordained minister of the Cradock church, the Rev. W.J. Bergins. The Rev. Damon attended his ordination at Cradock in January, 1948 (*The Congregationalist*, June 1948, p 69). There is also a

reference to the staging of the play “Naomi and Ruth” by the Youth Fellowship.

But the bereavement suffered by the Rev. Damon affected him adversely and in the August, 1949 issue of “The Congregationalist”, mention is made in the report of the Executive Committee of the denomination of his resignation from the Upington church and also from the ministry of the denomination ‘for personal reasons’<sup>9</sup>. The resignation of the Rev. Damons was treated sympathetically by the Executive Committee. Recognition was given to him for the work he had done in the north western Cape, over a period of 15 years. It was during his ministry that stretches of land along the Orange River were acquired by the Upington church. These were let out in plots to church members and co-operative methods of farming and marketing were introduced. He also worked untiringly to improve the educational standards of the people. There is also a reference to the growth that took place in the group of churches since he had started there in 1934. The report concluded with the statement that “he has been a greatly loved figure in all our Assemblies, recognised as possessing real qualities of statesmanship. He will be greatly missed among us and not least of all by the Upington folk” (The Congregationalist, Aug. 1949, p 72). When he left Upington he moved to Cape Town where he ran a shop in Hanover Street, in District Six.

The Rev. L. C. King who was the nearest Congregational minister once again had to act as consulent of the Upington church.

#### **4.7 The Rev. Samuel Bimray’s term of office**

One of the urgent matters which claimed the attention of both consulent and Church Council was the filing of the vacant pastorate. The man who was called to succeed the Rev. Saul Damons, was the Rev. Samuel Bimray. Like Rev. King he was an ordained minister of the Methodist

---

<sup>9</sup> The records in the local church archives of this particular period could not be traced. In the absence of the minute book of 1949 the only source of reference is the report of the denomina-

church. He joined the ranks of the Congregational ministers when he accepted a call to the East London Congregational churches in 1947. He served those churches until the beginning of 1950 when he accepted the call to the Upington church. His name first appeared in connection with Upington church in a news item in "The Congregationalist" in 1948. He had paid a visit to Upington sometime that year when he was a guest of the Rev. Damon. They apparently had met during the time when he had served in one of the circuits of the Methodist Church and the Rev. Damon had served the Tsumis Park and Kalkfeld outstations of the Keimoes church (cf. The Congregationalist, Feb. 1948, p 21).

When the vacancy occurred at Upington church his name was mentioned as a possible successor to the Rev. Damon. With this in view he was invited by the Upington Church Council to spend a weekend there sometime during the first half of 1949<sup>10</sup>.

This gave the Upington Church Council and members the opportunity to meet the minister and he could make personal contact with the work. At the special members' meeting held in October, 1949 under the chairmanship of the consultant, the Rev. King, there were 23 Church Council members present and 123 members. The Church Council's recommendation was that a call be extended to the Rev. S. Bimray. This the meeting agreed to.

The terms of his call included the following: the stipend was to be £33 (R66) per month plus Cost of Living Allowance of £4-15s (R9,50c) per month. Furthermore, the church agreed to pay his pension contributions at a rate of £1-10s (R3) per month, plus a free manse.

The church would also undertake to pay the transport of his furniture from East London to Upington. If the call was accepted he would be expected to commence duties on 01 January, 1950 (Upington special members' meeting, 01.01.1949). The call was forwarded to the Western District Association for its approval and thereafter to the Rev. Bimray. At the Church Council meeting held towards the end of October, 1949 it was reported that the Rev. Bimray had

---

tional Executive Committee.

<sup>10</sup> Information obtained from the late Rev. Bimray himself.

accepted the call (Upington Church Council meeting, 27.10.1949).

In view of this the November, 1949 Church Council meeting gave attention to a work programme for the minister. It was agreed that the minister should include in his rota visits to the outstations at a rate of one Sunday per quarter to each of the following, viz. Grootdrink, Lynsloot, Leerkrans, Louisvale Village, Prieska and Westerberg, as also the African Congregational church at Upington. The meeting also agreed that consideration be given to visits by the minister to the farms. Soutpots and Gemsbokholte. Thereafter consideration was given to arrangements for the reception of the new minister (Upington Church Council meeting, 24.11.1949). At the December meeting the Church Council finalised the arrangement for the reception of the minister and his wife and family. It was agreed to include, inter alia, in the list of invitations, the local Lutheran and African Congregational churches (Upington Church Council meeting, 29.12.1949).

The actual reception of the Rev. Bimray is not reflected in the minutes of the Church Council. However, the writer recalls that in conversation with the Rev. Bimray sometime after the event it would appear that he was warmly welcomed on his arrival at Upington by a large gathering of Church Council and church members.

The Kenhardt church choir also took part in the welcome social which was arranged by the Church Council. Not only the members of the Upington church but also the Executive Committee of the denomination had high hopes for a long and fruitful ministry. In the February, 1950 issue of the "The Congregationalist" the following appeared in the column "Executive Spotlight": "It is good to know that the Rev. C. (sic) Bimray, who since coming to us from the Methodist Church has proved his worth in East London, will this month take over the great sphere of work at Upington with its land settlement and co-operative farming and marketing scheme for church members, and its heavy educational responsibilities as it was imperative that a sound leader should be secured for this Church." (The Congregationalist, Feb., 1950, p 6.)

Whilst the expectation were high that the Rev. Bimray would be the right person to step into the

shoes of the Rev. Damon and carry on the work as before, he soon discovered, however, that he had to be contend with deeply rooted customs which could not be changed overnight. Where patience and mutual understanding seemed to have been lacking from both sides, it inevitably led to differences and clashes between the Church Council and members on the one hand and the minister on the other. At the January, 1950 Church Council meeting the Rev. Bimray was present. The meeting was, however, chaired by the consulent, the Rev. King. The chairman took the opportunity to extend a cordial word of welcome to the Rev. Bimray on behalf of the Church Council.

Among the correspondence the meeting had to deal with, there were two letters: one from the Rev. Damon in which he thanked the Church Council for the gift they had sent to him. This the meeting noted and requested the secretary to send a suitable acknowledgement to the Rev. Damon. The other letter came from one of the members, Henry Boonzaaier, who was principal of the Congregational Mission School at Leerkrans. In it he asked the Church Council to support his application to the Western District Association to be accepted as candidate for the ministry. The Church Council agreed to recommend to the members' meeting that his application be supported. The members meeting which took place the same afternoon agreed to forward Boonzaaier's application with their recommendation that he be considered, to the Western District Association. Unfortunately, as it turned out later, his application was not successful.

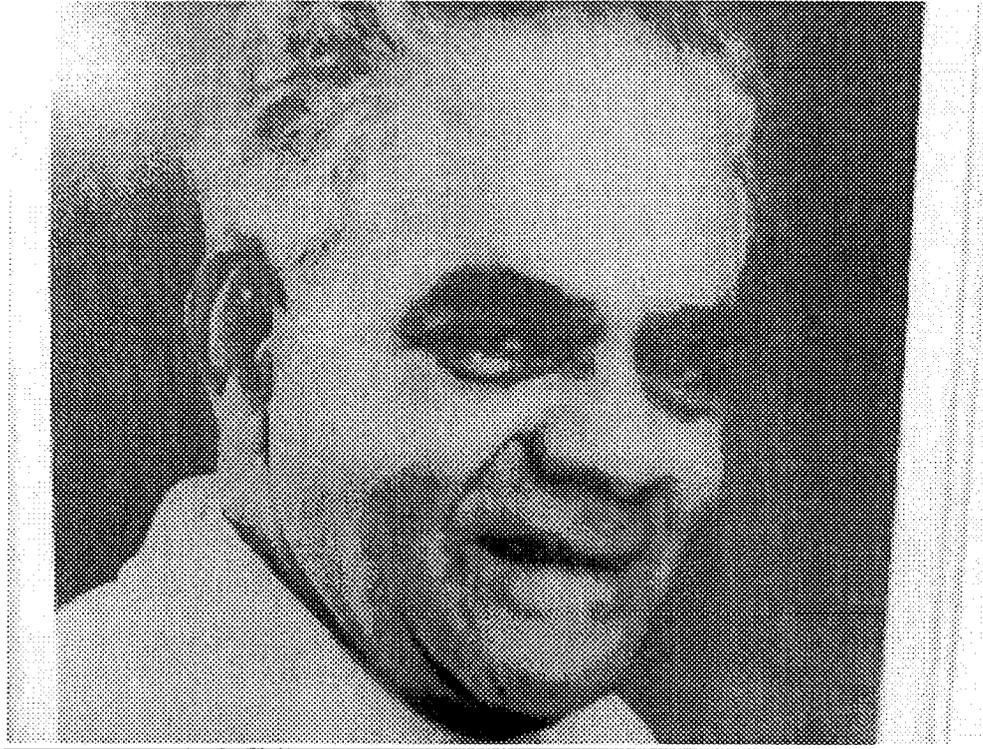
Since this was the last meeting of the Rev. King as consulent, the treasurer, bro. A.J. Ferreira, expressed thanks on behalf of the church and appreciation for the services rendered during the period of vacancy (Uppington members' meeting, 14.01.1950).

The first regular monthly meeting held in January, 1950 was chaired by the Rev. Bimray and it marked effectively the commencement of his term as resident minister. One of the first problems he and the Church Council had to deal with stemmed from some differences which had arisen between the Congregational and Dutch Reformed Churches' members at the Matjies River outstation on the Orange River irrigation scheme. The primary school on this outstation was under the management of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church. Both Churches had members

living there and the school building was used by both groups on Sundays for divine services on a shared bases. There was apparently a longstanding arrangement whereby the elder or deacon who took a preaching appointment would be entitled to take the plate collection and hand it over to the treasurer of the congregation where he belonged. The problem came when the ward elder of the Dutch Reformed Mission congregation refused to abide by this arrangement. It was further alleged that some of the D.R. Mission Church members on the outstation refused even to sing the hymns from the Congregational Church hymnal. A further allegation was made that a similar situation pertained at some of the outstations where the work of the two churches overlapped. Vaalkoppies and Kameelmond were cited as examples.

The meeting, after discussing these allegations, decided to send a letter to the D.R. Mission Church Council at Upington in order to obtain some clarity on the situation (Upington Church Council meeting, 20.01.1950). This matter again came up for discussion at the April, 1950 Church Council meeting, The chairman then reported that he had been informed by Congregational church members at Matjies River that the local leadership of the D.R. Mission church there had told them that their elder would no longer be allowed to take preaching turns in the school building. The meeting then decided that under those circumstances the Congregational church should withdraw and hold cottage services in the homes of the members instead (Upington Church Council meeting, 27.04.1950).

The Rev. D.H. De Villiers, the resident minister of the D.R. Mission congregation at Upington, responded by letter. In it he stated that his Church Council would have no objection to Congregational Church Council members taking preaching turns at these outstations on condition it was done in an orderly manner. The chairman then informed the meeting that his advice would be that Congregational members on these outstations should withhold their support when maintenance work was to be done. This unfortunate situation was indicative of a lack of co-operation on some of the outstations where the work of the two churches overlapped (cf. Upington Church Council meeting, 01.06.1950).



*Rev. Samuel Bimray*

#### **4.8 Prieska**

At the March, 1950 Church Council meeting a letter from the Prieska branch was tabled. In it they asked for a meeting with the new minister in order to discuss with him the possibility of obtaining the services of their own resident minister. The meeting felt that a deputation should be sent to Prieska in order to discuss the matter with the Church Council and members there (Upington Church Council meeting, 02.03.1950).

This stemmed from the fact that the branch felt a need of a resident minister or evangelist since they were without adequate pastoral care after the evangelist, J. Adams, retired and moved to Upington and the evangelist D. Fredericks had left them not long after he had taken office. At the July, 1950 meeting of the Upington Church Council there was another request from the Prieska

branch for assistance to obtain the services of an evangelist. The meeting noted that there were two candidates available for appointment, viz. Messrs. D. Fredericks and W.T. Kruger of Durban. The meeting then agreed to extend an invitation to Mr. Kruger to serve the Prieska branch (Upington Church Council meeting, 06.07.1950). The invitation was forwarded through the normal channels, i.e. the District Association and then to the person concerned and at the August, 1950 Church Council meeting it was reported that Mr. Kruger had accepted the invitation.

#### **4.9 Upington United Primary School**

Another matter the Rev. Bimray had to deal with early during his term of office was the question of the management of the Primary school at Upington. Since this was a united school, the local D.R. Mission congregation's resident minister acted as manager and later on the Rev. Damon served as manager. With his departure and the subsequent arrival of the Rev. Bimray the management of the school became a point of discussion. At the January, 1950 meeting of the Church Council the Rev. Bimray reported that he had been appointed by the Education Department as manager of the school. He further stated that in his letter of appointment there was no reference to any rules regarding the management of the school. The deduction is that the reference to rules alluded to, refers to an arrangement which existed among the three participating churches – i.e. the Dutch Reformed Mission, the Congregational and the Lutheran Churches – in terms of which they would have a share in the management of the school. The Rev. Bimray's contention was, since there was no mention in his letter of appointment to new rules, he could not abide by them. The meeting then agreed that the circuit inspector should be notified that the Congregational church was not ready to accept new rules for the management of the school (Upington Church Council meeting, 26.01.1950).

However, at the March, 1950 meeting of the Church Council it was decided to rescind the decision taken at the January meeting in respect of the new rules for the management of the

school. It was decided instead that a deputation consisting of the chairman, secretary and the elder, M.C. Visagie, meet with the circuit inspector. The matter could then be discussed with him and the deputation was mandated to sign an agreement on the issue should they be satisfied that it would be in the interest of all parties concerned (Upington Church Council meeting, 30.03.1950). At the April, 1950 members' meeting the chairman reported that an agreement among the participating churches had been reached. The chairman refused, however, to sign the agreement since he argued that the congregation had not given him a mandate to do it. The brethren M.C. Visagie and the secretary T.T. Titus had signed the agreement in good faith on behalf of the church pending the approval of the members' meeting.

The meeting then agreed, without any dissenting vote, to condone the action of the brethren. (Upington members' meeting, 08.05.1950). The basis of this agreement was that the management of the school was to be placed in the hands of a committee representative of the three participating churches. The offices of chairman, vice-chairman and secretary rotated among the three churches. In the end this has proved to be a very satisfactory arrangement.

#### **4.10 Soutputs school**

The farm, "Soutputs" in the Kalahari belonged to the Beukes family who were members of the Upington church. A school was started there and it was under the management of the Upington church. When the ownership changed hands, the new owner informed the Church Council that the school could continue there as long as the relationship between himself and the people remained sound. He made it clear that he was not in favour of people squatting on his farm. Should the school have to close down at some stage the church could pull down the building. He was, however, not prepared to give the church the undertaking that he would compensate them for the building. The Church Council noted this (Upington Church Council meeting, 20.03.1950).

At the February, 1950 Church Council meeting the school at Soutputs came up for discussion

again. At that meeting it was reported that the parents had appealed to the Church Council to assist them with the rent demanded by the owner of the farm for the school building on his property. The owner, Mr. P. Beukes, demanded a rental of £4-10s0d (R9) per quarter. The parents stated that they would endeavour to meet the rental for the first quarter, but they asked the Church Council to come to their assistance from then onwards. The chairman reported that he had forwarded the letter of the farm owner in which he stated the rental charged, to the Education Department. The response of the Department was that a rent grant could not be paid unless the farm owner submitted a specified statement reflecting the expenses incurred with the erection of the building, which must also be accompanied by corroborative accounts, cheques and receipts. Failing this, the farm owner should be advised that he should furnish the Department with a valuation certificate issued by a sworn appraiser. The meeting agreed to enter again into correspondence with the Department concerning this matter and to inform the farm owner about the church's attempts at obtaining a rent grant. The chairman also suggested that in the event of the closure of the school, the equipment such as desks, tables, cupboards and books should be brought to Upington (Upington Council meeting, 22.02.1951).

#### **4.11 The baptism issue**

At the April, 1950 Church Council meeting an issue which proved to be quite a thorny one came up for discussion. There was a very old custom observed by the church in respect of babies born out of wedlock. Such babies were baptised in the vestry and not in front of the pulpit. The chairman vehemently objected to this. Since this was a very contentious and emotional issue the meeting decided that it should be referred to the next monthly Church Council meeting (Upington Church Council meeting, 08.04.1950). At the members' meeting held that same afternoon this subject of the baptism of babies born out of wedlock surfaced. Here also it evoked sharp differences between the minister on the one hand and the members on the others. The meeting then decided to refer it back to the Church Council. This issue was then discussed at a special Church Council meeting held in May, 1950. The chairman again voiced his strong

objections to the practice of baptizing babies born out of wedlock in the vestry. The writer recalled that in a conversation with the Rev. Bimray on the subject he sarcastically referred to this practise as “back-door baptism”. He argued that there were no Biblical grounds for it. Moreover, in the baptismal formulary no provision was made for two separate liturgies. This evoked a sharp reaction from several members. One of the points of criticism levelled at the chairman was that he used the Methodist Church’s formulary when he conducted baptismal services instead of the one commonly used in the Congregational churches. Another view expressed by some of the members was that babies born out of wedlock should not be baptized at all. Eventually the meeting agreed to maintain the status quo for a year after which the matter could be reconsidered. The chairman, on his side, also agreed to discontinue using the Methodist Church’s formulary when conducting baptismal services and to use the Congregational one instead (Upington special Church Council meeting, 04.05.1950).

The decision taken at the meeting was more in the nature of a compromise arrangement than a lasting solution for it surfaced again at the July, 1950 members meeting. When the issue was broached there it led to a heated altercation between the chairman and some of the members. In the end the meeting decided that the status quo be maintained. This did not satisfy the chairman. He informed the meeting that he would first have to “consult his Lord” – as he put it – before he could take a decision on the matter (Upington members’ meeting, (08.07.1950).

#### **4.12 Bazaar and tithing issues**

The other matter that caused a fair amount of tension between the minister and the Church Council was the old custom of annual bazaars. When the baptism issue referred to above, was discussed at the May, 1950 Church Council meeting the chairman raised the possibility of introducing tithing as an alternative to be normal methods of fundraising. The chairman favoured tithing as a more effective method of fundraising than the normal system of members’ contributions and bazaars. This also led to a very heated discussion. One of the members drew

the chairman's attention to the fact that the members' subscriptions or church "dues" were fixed at 1/- (.10c) per member per month. To change it to a system of tithing would obviously have implications for the ordinary member in the pew. From the discussions it appeared that this particular issue was quite an emotive one. At one stage the chairman stated that it appeared to him that the Church Council seemed to expect him to submit his sermons first to them for scrutiny before he could deliver them. He stated categorically that he would not stop preaching tithing to the congregation.

The trend of the discussion and the spirit in which it was conducted suggested that there was dissension between the minister and the congregation. This was evident when he made an innocent request that the people should leave the church at the conclusion of divine services in two's in order to ensure that it would be orderly. The criticism levelled at this suggestion was that it smacked of the "Two-by-Twos"<sup>11</sup>. Some of the people who took part in the discussion wanted to know whether they were made to understand that because Christ, with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, rode on a donkey, an ass should be brought into the church. They also wanted to know whether it would be expected of the men who smoke to use a certain brand of tobacco. These were obviously sarcastic digs at the chairman because he was at that time an avid smoker.

Another matter which came up for discussion was the old custom of holding bazaars. The chairman explained that he was totally opposed to the church organising bazaars for fundraising purposes. He apologized to the meeting if his stand on this issue offended people. In reply to a question put to him about the difference between bazaars and plate collections at divine services, he stated that in the case of plate collections at divine services the people did not receive anything in return for it. But in the case of bazaars the people exchanged their money for something in return. As a compromise he suggested that the church continue with the holding of bazaars but that he be allowed to stay away from them. It was then pointed out that part of the

---

<sup>11</sup> The "Two-by-Two" was the name given to one of the sectarian groups which operated in the town.

minister's stipend came out of bazaar income. His contention was that the regular members' subscription monies as well as the plate collection should cover his stipend. It was then stated that those sources of income were not kept in separate accounts and that the minister's stipend was also paid out of all monies raised, including the bazaar income. To this the chairman made no further comment.

The concluding remark of one of the elders, bro. H. Jansen, was that it was unfortunate that the chairman had not stated his views on the issues discussed right at the beginning of his term of office. That would have obviated all arguments and misunderstandings (Upington special Church Council meeting, 04.05.1950).

At the August, 1950 Church Council meeting the two contentious matters – the baptism and bazaar issues – again led to heated discussions. The chairman stated that he was not yet in a position to give a direct answer about his attitude on those issues since he was still battling with them (Upington Church Council meeting, 31.08.1950).

#### **4.13 The financial situation**

The financial situation of the church was another matter of concern. Hence, in September, 1950 a special Church Council meeting was convened, the purpose of which was to discuss ways and means of improving the financial position of the church. Here it was decided to recommend to the members' meeting that the members' contributions, the wedding fees and the baptismal fees be increased. The concern was due to the fact that the church was operating on a bank overdraft which did not come down as was expected. As a matter of interest, the quarterly financial report for the period 01 July to 30 September, 1950 which was presented to the October members' meeting reflected an income of £611.10s1d (R1223,02c) against an expenditure of £611.3s10d (R1222,37 ½ c). The bank overdraft then stood at £3202-15s4d (R6405,53c).

Moreover, there was still a bond on the Settlements to be paid, plus interest. After in-depth discussions it was agreed to recommend to the members' meeting that the members' contribution

be increased to 2/- (.20c) per member per month. There was a further suggestion that a collection list be opened on which members would be encouraged to contribute on a voluntary basis. However, the meeting did not agree with this suggestion since the operation of such a list simultaneously with the increase in members' contributions would not be a feasible idea. It was then decided that the baptismal and confirmation fees to be increased to 5/- (.50c) each and wedding fees to £1 (R2) per wedding (Upington special Church Council meeting, 21.09.1950).

At the members' meeting of October, 1950 the recommendation of the Church Council relative to the increase of wedding, confirmation and baptismal fees were approved, but the increase in members' contribution fees were referred back to the Church Council. A rather thorny issue was raised at the October, 1950 Church Council meeting when the matter of the reimbursement of the minister for his travelling and incidental expenses which he had incurred during his attendance of the denomination's annual Assembly meetings in Cape Town came up for discussion. The Rev. Bimray submitted to the meeting an account of his incidental expenses in which he detailed the items. These were; bedding on the train which amounted to 16/- (R1,60c); meals £1-5s (R2,50c) and 5/- (50c) taxi fare to and from Upington station. The total amounted to £11-19s (R23,90c). This evoked a sharp reaction from several members. The main objection was that the chairman had not discussed this matter beforehand with the Church Council. Eventually the meeting agreed to reimburse the minister for the out-of-pocket expenses he had incurred, but a strong plea was made at the meeting for better co-operation between the chairman and the Church Council.

#### **4.14 Ministry to the outstations**

At the same meeting the church secretary, T.T. Titus, suggested that as far as the ministry to the outstation was concerned, consideration should be given to the grouping of the outstations along the Orange River Irrigation Scheme. He suggested that the following be grouped: Grootdrink en Lynsloot; Vaalkoppies and Leerkrans; Louisvale Road and Louisvale village. Each of these groups could be served over one week-end at a time during the month. His motivation was that

the grouping of these outstations would cut down on the expenses of the visits for the church. The chairman was, however, not in favour of such an arrangement. He contended that each of these outstations would have the same claim on the minister's time as the wards in the town. The meeting then decided that the matter be deferred for further discussions at a later meeting (Upington Church Council meeting, 24.10.1950).

#### **4.15 Invitation by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church**

At the October, 1950 Church Council meeting an invitation was received from the local Dutch Reformed Mission Church to attend their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. The chairman intimated that he would not be prepared to attend the celebrations since – as he put it – he would not feel comfortable in their presence. This sentiment was rather unfortunate since the two church communities were very much interwoven. However, this sentiment was not shared by the meeting and it was agreed to accept the invitation and to deputise one of the senior elders, bro. M.C. Visagie, to represent the church at these celebrations. Furthermore, the meeting agreed to prepare an address on behalf of the Church Council to be read by bro. Visagie at the celebrations.

#### **4.15 Other miscellaneous matters**

Already at the March, 1950 Church Council meeting it was reported that a piece of ground, one morgen in extent, was up for sale at the farm Swartkop, in the Gordonia district. The meeting then asked the chairman to obtain more information on the matter (Upington Church Council meeting, 02.03.1950). However, further enquiries revealed that the owner of the property had decided not to sell anymore. This the meeting noted. But at the July Church Council meeting the trustees were mandated to negotiate with a certain Mr. J.J. Louw about the purchase of a piece of ground of three morgen in extent on the farm Swartkop (Upington Church Council meeting, 27.07.1950). The trustees reported on at the Church Council meeting at the end of July. It would

appear that Mr. Louw was not prepared to sell the property to the church. He was prepared though to allow the school to continue on condition that the church agreed to pay for the extra beacons and fencing of the site. The meeting then agreed to negotiate a lease of the site, and that a written agreement be drawn up in which a clause was included in terms of which the church would be compensated for improvements on the site in the event of the owner's death (Upington Church Council meeting, 31.08.1950).

#### **4.16 Kenhardt's Church Council request**

At the July, 1950 meeting of the Church Council a letter from the Kenhardt church secretary, bro. J. Van Wyk, was tabled. It contained a request that the Rev. Bimray assist with the serving of communion at the Louisvale Village outstation where, as mentioned before, the work of the two churches – Upington and Kenhardt – overlapped. The meeting agreed that the minister be allowed to render assistance on the understanding that half of the income from the outstation taken during the visit be paid over to the Upington church.

#### **4.17 Resignation of the Rev. Bimray**

At the November, 1950 Church Council meeting, the Rev. Bimray informed the meeting that the Rev. King had asked him to pay a visit to the Kalkfeld outstation in his stead in February, 1950. The Rev. King was apparently not able to pay them a visit at that time. The meeting agreed to that.

At the meeting, the Rev. Bimray tendered his resignation as resident minister of the Upington church. He had accepted a call to the Hankey Congregational church in the Eastern Cape. He requested further that his resignation should take effect on 31 March, 1951. Furthermore, he asked that he be granted leave for the month of March. The meeting agreed to recommend to the members' meeting that his resignation be accepted and that his request for leave be granted

(Upington Church Council meeting, 30.11.1950). At the January, 1951 quarterly members' meeting the recommendations of the Church Council relative to the resignation of the minister and his request for leave were approved (Upington members' meeting, 13.01.1951).

At the last Church Council meeting for the year held in December, 1950 a letter was tabled from the ministerial student, H.W.D. v.d. Linde, who had been recommended by the church for training in April, 1946. In it he informed the Church Council that he had successfully completed his studies at Fort Hare and thanked them for their support and encouragement. This was noted with thanks (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.12.1950).

#### **4.18 School Committee**

While the minister was the manager of the schools under the control of the church, the need was felt that an advisory committee from the Church Council should be appointed in order to assist him. On the recommendation of the Church Council the members' meeting held in January, 1951 agreed to appoint the following brethren to serve as a school committee, viz. M.C. Visagie, H.J. Jansen and T.T. Titus (Upington members' meeting, 13.01.1951). This committee did not have official status as far as the Department of Education was concerned but they performed a useful role with the nomination of teachers who applied for vacant posts.

The meeting agreed to buy a plot of ground at the farm, Vaalkoppies, from a certain Mr. J.C. Strauss for an amount of £25 (R25). The intention was to erect a place of worship on the site for Congregational church members residing there. This idea engendered hope and enthusiasm among the people there. This is borne out by the fact that the meeting decided to request the Vaalkoppies ward members to pay into the church's treasury all monies raised locally for the purpose of erecting a place of worship so that a proper record could be kept (Upington Church Council meeting, 22.02.1951).

Unfortunately, for reasons not stated in the minutes, the decision taken on the sale of the plot did

not materialise. Nevertheless, there was a spirit of excitement among the members of the outstation when the hope was nourished that the people could look forward to the day when they could hold their services and other church activities in their own building. There was for instance, a reference to a bazaar which was to be held at Vaalkoppies in aid of the proposed place of worship. The Church Council deputised one of its senior elders, bro. M.C. Visagie, to open the bazaar.

#### **4.19 Some concluding observations about the term of office of the Rev. S. Bimray**

It has already been pointed out that the term of office of the Rev. Bimray was brief: it spanned slightly more than a year. In many respects he had a chequered passage at Upington. Mention was made of the fact that he had encountered problems with the longstanding custom of the annual bazaars. Unfortunately there was a measure of insensitivity in the handling of the matter. He apologized, as mentioned before, to the members if he had hurt their feelings when he voiced his opposition to the idea of holding bazaars. However, in the same breath he asked the Lords' forgiveness in his closing prayer at the members' meeting for the people for organising a bazaar (cf. Upington members' meeting, 08.04.1950). He also encountered stiff opposition when he raised the other contentious issue, namely tithing. It is obvious that the people were not, at that stage, ready to accept such a radical change in their method of giving to the church. Likewise, he picked up the same problem when he objected to the baptism of babies born out of wedlock in the vestry. These issues were resolved at a later stage – sometime after he had left Upington. However, on balance it can be said that his stay was not entirely without significance. By challenging some of the old established customs it caused the people to think seriously about these issues.

#### 4.20 The brief period of vacancy

With the departure of the Rev. Bimray the Upington church was again vacant, but this was to last for less than a year. At the April, 1951 Church Council meeting it was decided to request that the Rev. King be appointed consulent for the duration of the vacancy (Upington Church Council meeting, 06.04.1951). The following month the Church Council received written confirmation from its Keimoes counterpart that they would allow their minister to serve the Upington church as consulent. They further stated that the Rev. King would be available for three Sundays per quarter. A letter from the Moderator of the Western District Association, the Rev. W.N. H. Tarrant, was also tabled. In it he expressed the hope that the Upington church would be guided in their choice of a minister. He also informed the meeting that he had asked the Rev. King to serve the church as consulent. It would appear that the Rev. King acted prior to his appointment as consulent for the Moderator, for the March, 1951 members' meeting was chaired by him. At that meeting the request of the Prieska branch to secede from the Upington church was discussed. The meeting was sympathetic to the Prieska branch's request and agreed to recommend to the relevant structures of the denomination that full church status be granted, on condition that £150 (R300) be paid to the mother church in lieu of extensions financed by the Upington church during the period 1935 to 1950 (Upington members' meeting, 31.03.1951). The matter was shelved for a while since the branch was not at that stage able to pay the amount required.

As far as the Settlements were concerned the Church Council gave consideration at its March, 1951 meeting to a recommendation from the Head Committee. It was to the effect that an agreement be entered into with Messrs P.M. Compion and J. Sutherland for prospecting rights. There were apparently indications of mineral deposits on the grazing fields of the farms Curriescamp and Soverby (Upington Church Council meeting, 31.03.1951). This matter was brought to the members, meeting where it was agreed to proceed as recommended by the Church Council. At the quarterly members' meeting the following month it was agreed to sell the lorry

owned by the church since it was felt that it had become a liability rather than an asset (Upington members' meeting, 31.03.1951). However, the sale of the lorry was broached again at a special Church Council meeting in April, 1951. There it was pointed out that the procedure which was followed was not in accordance with the relevant constitutional provisions. In terms of Article 36, matters raised in the members' meeting should first be referred to the Church Council for consideration. In view of this it was then decided that the sale of the lorry not be proceeded with and that the constitutional stipulations be followed (Upington special Church Council meeting, 19.04.1951).

#### **4.21 The planning of the golden jubilee celebrations and other relevant matters**

Mention was made earlier of the idea to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Congregational Church in the lower Orange River Valley. Like in the case of the other two churches it aroused a fair amount of interest in the Upington church. In April, 1951 a special Council meeting was convened. In the absence of the consultant it was decided that one of the senior elders, bro. M.C. Visagie should chair the meeting. One of the matters under discussion was the introduction of a five year plan. It was also decided that a deputation consisting of the brethren F.D. Van Rooi, E. Delie en T.T. Titus be appointed to engage in a discussion with the Keimoes church with a view to prepare a commemorative brochure to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Congregationalism in the North-western Cape. The meeting noted that the Revs. Damon and Alex Stewart were willing to write the history of the church which would cover the period.

It was felt that 1000 copies of the brochure should be printed so that it could be available to members of all three churches, including the Prieska branch. A suggestion which the meeting approved of was that for the celebrations, the chairman of the denomination, the Rev. F. Harris, be invited. It was understood that if he could attend in his official capacity the denomination would in all probability meet his travelling expense. It was also felt the Revs. Alex Stewart and H.C. Samuels, the then minister of the Worcester church, should be invited as well. The

travelling expenses of the Revs. Stewart and Samuels would have to be borne by the three local churches jointly.

The meeting noted that a committee had been appointed from the ranks of the Church Council to deal with matters pertaining to the planning of the celebrations. One of the elders, br. F.S. Van Rooi, who served on the committee, then reported that they, in the committee, had identified two major problems, viz. the financial situation of the church which would have placed some constraints on the proposed celebrations and the school which was housed in the church building. As a result of that the church building was badly in need of renovation. It was also felt that the door frames as well as the doors and the windows had to be replaced. Furthermore, a ceiling would have to be installed in the church. The estimated cost of all these improvements would be approximately £3000 (R6000). At that time the church had only managed to gather a meagre sum of £280 (R560) towards the planned renovations and improvements.

The practical problem the committee was up against was that these proposals could not be implemented fully as long as the primary school classes were housed in the church building. The ideal solution would be to move the school out of the church. But in order to do that money would be needed in order to erect classrooms on vacant property owned by the church. Unfortunately, the church was not at that time able to undertake such an ambitious project.

After the report had been fully discussed it was decided to levy members with a fee of £1 (R2) per annum for a period of five years and that the first £1 (R2) would be payable not later than 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1951. The purpose of the levy was to finance the envisaged celebrations as well as renovations. The renovations proposed by the committee were referred to the Finance Committee (Upington special Church Council meeting, 19.04.1951).

The renovations of the church and the installation of the ceiling preceded so well that by January, 1952 the following year the work was completed. Apart from these matters referred to above, there were a number of other domestic matters which claimed the attention of the consulent and the Church Council. One was the problem of young couples who wished to get married, bearing

in mind that the church did not have a resident minister at that time, and it was not always easy to obtain the services of the consulent since he resided at Keimoes. It was then decided to approach the Rev. D.H. De Villiers, the resident minister of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church at Upington for assistance. A deputation consisting of the brethren M.C. Visagie and N. Witbooi was appointed to interview the Rev. De Villiers (Upington Church Council meeting, 24.04.1951). After the interview with the Rev. De Villiers, they reported at the following meeting that the Rev. De Villiers was quite prepared to assist with weddings when necessary. The meeting further agreed to call upon the Rev. King to perform marriages when the Rev. De Villiers was not available. In the event of the Rev. King performing a wedding, his travelling expenses would be met at a rate of £1-10-s (R3) per occasion (Upington Church Council meeting, 31.05.1951).

On a personal note the Church Council at their April, 1951 meeting received an invitation from the Rev. Damon to attend his wedding celebration which was due to take place on May, 26<sup>th</sup> at Kenhardt. He also asked the permission of the Church Council to make the church's car available in order to convey the parents of his bride from Keimoes to Kenhardt for the occasion. This the meeting agreed to. This is an indication that the relationship between the Rev. Damon and his former parish remained healthy even after he had left them (cf. Upington Church Council meeting, 26.04.1951).

The June, 1951 monthly Church Council meeting was again chaired by the elder, M.C. Visagie. It would appear that the consulent only chaired quarterly Church Council meetings; for the intervening ones local arrangements were made. At that meeting it was agreed that part of the orchard of orange trees in the church's garden at Upington be uprooted and replaced by lucerne. The reason was obviously because lucerne was a more viable product than oranges. The Head Committee then recommended that the honoraria of its members be increased from £12 (R24) to £18 (R36) per member per annum. The meeting agreed to recommend this increase to the members' meeting.

Another matter relative to the Settlements was the sale of the lorry which the Head Committee

had recommended. The meeting agreed to recommend to the members' meeting that it be sold for at least £200 (R400) (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.06.1951). At that same meeting the ward elder of the Grootdrink outstation, bro. Jan April, reported that the Dutch Reformed Mission Church Council had placed an evangelist to work in the area. A request was made to the Upington Congregational Church Council for the use of the school building for a reception in order to welcome the Evangelist. There was a further request that the Evangelist be permitted to conduct a service every Sunday at the school. Unfortunately both the ward elder as well as the principal of the school, Bro. L. Theron, were not in favour of the request being acceded to. The meeting then decided not to accede to the request since it was argued that the D.R. Mission Church Council did not readily co-operate with the Congregational church at outstations where the work of the two churches overlapped, and where the school buildings were owned by them (Upington Church Council meeting, 30.06.1951). This was unfortunate since it was an indication that there was still a lack of co-operation between the two churches in the district where their work overlapped.

#### **4.22 The call of a minister**

The Upington Church Council realised that the filling of the vacant pastorate was a priority. In October, 1951 they invited the probationer, H.W.D. van der Linde, who was then serving the Wynberg church in Cape Town, to pay them a visit. At the October quarterly meeting of the Church Council meeting he was present as guest of the Upington church. He attended the members' meeting as well and was cordially welcomed by the consulent, the Rev. King. The meeting agreed that he could attend as a guest. At that same meeting it was decided to convene a special members' meeting for 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1951 the purpose of which was to call a minister.

At that special members' meeting there were 28 Church Council and 141 members present. The names suggested by the Church Council for consideration were the Revs. S. Damon and H.C. Samuels and the probationer, H.W.D. v.d. Linde. The meeting decided to reduce the list to two

names, viz. the Rev. H.C. Samuels and Mr. H.W.D. v.d. Linde. When the voting was taken, a large majority of members present decided that a call be extended to the probationer, H.W.D. v.d. Linde. The conditions offered were to be as follows: the stipend would be £300 (R600) per annum; plus cost of living allowance of £98-16s (R197,60c) ; and the pension contributions would be £12 (R24) per annum. The meeting further decided that if the call was not accepted the Church Council should convene a special members' meeting at least three weeks prior to the date set aside by them in order to consider the situation (Upington members' meeting, 27.10.1951). At the next monthly meeting of the Church Council which was chaired by bro. M.C. Visagie, it was reported that the call had been accepted and that Mr. v.d. Linde had indicated that he would assume duties on 1 February, 1952. At the same meeting a letter was tabled from the Moderator of the Western District Association, the Rev. W.N. H. Tarrant, in which he stated that the call had been approved by the relevant structures of denomination. Furthermore, he conveyed the good wishes of himself and the Western District Association to the church on the ministry of Mr. v.d. Linde. The meeting noted the contents of the letter.

It was then decided that in view of the fact that the new minister was to assume duties at the beginning of February, 1952, the January communion services would be shifted to the first Sunday of February. Another routine matter was brought to the attention of the meeting, was the acting chairman's report on a conversation he had had with the two young members of the church who had played the organ during divine services. They were Johannes and Rose van Rooi, both children of the elder F.S. van Rooi. They said that whilst they had played at services, they were never formally asked by the Church Council to do so. According to them their father had pressurised them into doing it. In the light of this report, the meeting agreed to send them both letters of appreciation for the services rendered and to ask them formally to act as organists of the church. It was also decided to give each of them a gift as a token of gratitude. The last part of the proposal was referred to the Finance Committee (Upington Church Council meeting, 29.11.1951).

#### **4.23 The first year of the Rev. H.W.D. v.d. Linde's term of office**

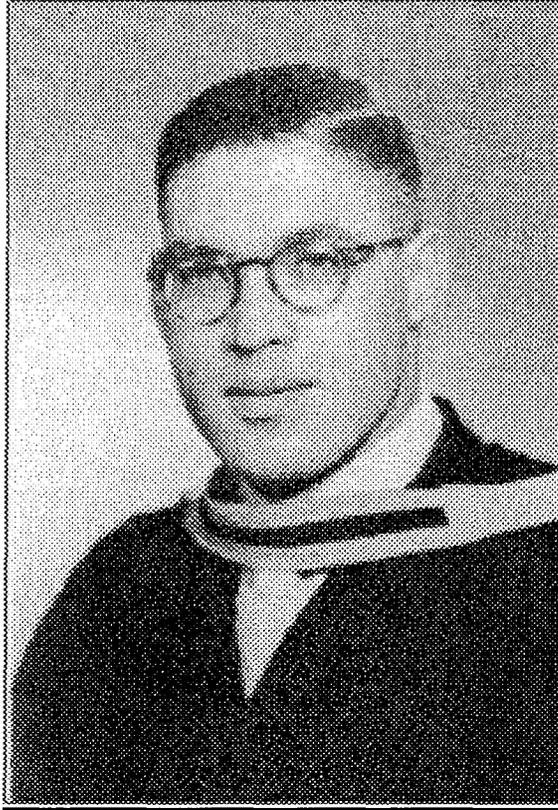
The period covered in this study concluded with the first year of the Rev. v.d. Linde in office. In the official English magazine of the denomination in the February, 1952 issue, there was a brief reference to the settlement of the Rev. v.d. Linde in the Upington church. It stated simply that the church had been vacant for the past year and that they had extended a call to the Rev. H.W.D. v.d. Linde. He completed his training at Fort Hare and thereafter he served his term of probation at the Wynberg Church in Cape Town. His ordination took place at that church on 20 January, 1952 (*The Congregationalist*, Feb. 1952, p 15). In the meantime of the Upington Church Council at its January, 1952 meeting discussed arrangements for the welcome of their new minister. His arrival and settlement coincided with the rededication of the church building after the extensive improvements were affected. The date for a welcome social was tentatively fixed at 1 February, 1952. The format of the occasion was then considered and it was felt that the elder, bro. M.C. Visagie, should do the word of welcome on behalf of the church and invited guests present. Bro. F.S. van Rooi was asked to do the vote of thanks to all who had assisted with the cleaning and improvements to the church building. The secretary, bro. T.T. Titus, would give a financial report in which the cost of the renovations and improvements would be reflected.

It was further agreed that since the Golden Jubilee celebration arrangements took so much of the Church Council's time, it would not be possible to organise the annual bazaar. However, members were asked to contribute generously on the collecting lists which would be circulated (Upington Church Council meeting, 24.01.1952).

At the February, 1952 Church Council meeting, the consulent, the Rev. King, was in the chair. The new minister was also present. One of the rather unusual cases the meeting had to deal with, was that of Johannes van Zyl, a ward member of the Swartkop outstation in the district Gordonia. He was found guilty of murdering his brother, while under the influence of liquor. He served a prison sentence and after completing his term, he was summoned to appear before the Church Council. After his case was thoroughly investigated, the meeting agreed to recommend to the

members' meeting that he be excommunicated. The quarterly members' meeting held that same afternoon was chaired by the Rev. King for the last time in his capacity as consulent. Among the recommendations approved by the meeting was that of the increase of the honoraria of the Head Committee members to £18 (R36) per annum. At that point the Rev. King took the opportunity to thank the Church Council and members for the co-operation he had received from them during his term of office. The treasurer, bro. A.J. Ferreira, then thanked the Rev. King on behalf of the church for the services he had rendered during the period of vacancy and wished him well for the future (Upington members' meeting, 02.02.1952).

As mentioned before, the arrival of the new minister and his settlement there, coincided with the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the churches in the North Western Cape. That overshadowed, to a certain extent, the induction and welcome of the new minister. Nevertheless, the welcome proceeded as planned and the induction service took place on 03 February, 1952. The Rev. Damon was deputised by the Moderator to preside at the service in his stead and the Rev. King also took part.



*Rev. H.W.D v.d Linde*

#### **4.24 Jubilee celebrations and other relevant matters**

Just as in the case of the other two sister churches, the Upington church also took appropriate steps to observe the event in a suitable way. The monthly Church Council meeting held the last Thursday of February, 1952 was chaired by the new minister. One of the main items discussed at that meeting was the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Congregationalism in the lower Orange River valley. It was agreed to slaughter an ox or if needs be, two oxen on condition that these could be obtained at a reasonable price. Furthermore, it was decided to make £40 (R80) available to the Women's Association in order to prepare a meal for members and guests as part of the celebrations. A small committee was appointed consisting of the brethren, E. Delie, G. Beukes and C.J. Jansen to attend to the purchase of the ox.

The arranging of accommodation for guests from Keimoes and Kenhardt, as well as seating arrangements and the programme, were referred to a sub-committee for attention. The committee was to consist of the chairman, the secretary and the elder M.C. Visagie. At that point the chairman asked the permission of the Church Council for the use of the church's car to enable him to travel to Cape Town on 26 March, 1952. He was due to get married there on 29 March and would be back in Upington by 31 March. The meeting agreed to this request on condition that he took the responsibility for the fuel needed for the journey (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.02.1952).

As a result of the absence of the chairman, it was agreed that the next monthly meeting should be chaired by one of the elders, bro. F.S. van Rooi. At that meeting, there was again an application by Henry Boonzaaier, the elder of the Leerkrans outstation, in which he solicited the aid of the Church Council to support his application to the Western District Association to candidate for the ministry. This meeting agreed to and recommended it to the members' meeting. This application was discussed and supported by the members' meeting and it was forwarded to the Western District Association.

The application of the Prieska branch for full status was considered by the Western District Association. The meeting was informed that the Rev. Stewart was asked by the District Association to request the Upington Church Council to allow the Prieska branch to repay the £150 (R300) charged by the mother church at a rate of £25 (R50) per annum. The meeting responded, however, by re-affirming its previous position on the issue. The feeling was that the denomination should rather lend the money to the Prieska branch and then allow the branch to repay the loan in instalments (Upington Church Council meeting, 27.03.1952).

In view of the magnitude of the administration work of the Upington church, it became imperative to employ a full-time secretary. The incumbent was the bro. T.T. Titus and at the April, 1952 quarterly members' meeting it was agreed to re-appoint him in that capacity for a

further period (Upington members' meeting, 05.04.1952).

At the monthly meeting of the Church Council held in late April, among the matters before the Council, as was a letter from the secretary of the primary school committee, the Rev. D.H. de Villiers.

In it he asked for the use of the kitchen and the adjoining room which was used by the principal as an office, for classrooms. The background to this request was that the primary school grappled with a problem namely additional classroom accommodation. The school was housed in three different localities, viz. the Lutheran, Congregational and Dutch Reformed Mission Church buildings. To aggravate the situation further these localities were situated in different parts of the town. Both rooms applied for were on the Congregational church site. After careful consideration the meeting felt, however, that it could not accede to this request.

Another matter brought to the attention of the meeting was an invitation by the Keimoes Church Council to attend a farewell function in honour of the Rev. King and his family on the eve of their departure to Uniondale. The invitation was accepted and it was decided to hire transport in order to enable members who wished to attend the function at Keimoes. It was, however, understood that members would be expected to pay for the transport if they wished to attend the function (Upington Church Council meeting, 29.04.1952).

In view of the Rev. King's pending departure from Keimoes a request from the Church Council was tabled at that meeting. It was, as mentioned earlier on, a request to the Upington Church Council to allow their minister to act as consulent during the period of vacancy. This the meeting readily acceded to and stipulated that the chairman could serve them for three Sundays per quarter.

Another request came from the local Dutch Reformed Mission Church Council in which they asked for the use of the building owned by the Congregational church in the Keidebees township for additional classroom accommodation for the primary school which was under their management. The meeting agreed to this request subject to the following conditions: the rent was

fixed at £3 (R6) per month. It was further expected that one teacher belonging to the Congregational church should be appointed to the staff of the school. In addition to that the building should be available for Sunday services.

The year 1952 was important for the Uppington community in general for apart from the celebrations of the Congregational church it was the first time that a Teachers' organisation had held its annual conference there. The Teachers' Educational and Professional Association (T.E.P.A.) to which reference has already been made in a previous chapter, decided to use Uppington as the venue for its annual conference. In view of that, the local branch of the T.E.P.A. which was to host the conference, approached the Church Council for the use of its church hall for the sessions of the conference for the period 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1952. This the meeting agreed to and fixed the rent at £1-10s (R3).

Furthermore, the branch was expected to take full responsibility for any extra expenses incurred by them during the duration of the conference. Another request came to the Church Council meeting from the other Teachers' organisation's local branch – the Teachers' League of South Africa (T.L.S.A.); their request was to use one of the classrooms of the high school for their meetings on a regular basis. After the matter was carefully considered, it was decided not to accede to this request. The issue of the baptism of babies born out of wedlock was then raised. As mentioned before, this was a very emotional and contentious subject during the ministry of the previous minister. The meeting agreed that since this was an important issue, time should be set aside to have a full discussion on the issue and the chairman and the secretary were asked to introduce it then (Uppington Church Council meeting, 05.05.1952).

The matter was finally discussed and resolved at a meeting held in December that year. It evoked a lively discussion but in the end it was decided that only members in good standing could have their babies baptized. Those members who were under censure, could bring their babies for baptism after they had been reinstated. All baptisms would henceforth be in front of the pulpit; that brought an end to the old custom of baptizing babies born out of wedlock in the vestry (Uppington Church Council meeting, 17.12.1952). This arrangement has proved to be satisfactory

and has been in force ever since. The question of church sites in the Buchuberg Irrigation scheme came under discussion at the July, 1952 Church Council meeting. The chairman reported that his contact with officials of the Department of Land Affairs in Cape Town, on the issue had revealed that it was not their policy to sell sites to churches. A concession had been made by the Department to lease sites to churches under certain conditions. One of the conditions was that religious denominations under the control or management of the white section of the community, would receive sympathetic consideration.

In order to understand the problem the Government of the day, had to contend with applications for sites from the large numbers of splinter churches in the non-white community, and it was almost impossible to make church sites available in any given area when there were a large number of applications. Hence the Government laid down further condition that where a denomination had a membership of a million or more, it would qualify automatically for a site. In the case of smaller denominations their membership would be a factor for the allocation of a site.

In the light of this the Upington Church Council decided at its October, 1952 meeting, that when church sites became available in the Buchuberg Irrigation scheme, the denominational headquarters should be approached to make application for the sites on behalf of the local church (Upington Church Council meeting, 02.10.1950).

Reference was already made to the unsuccessful efforts the Church Council made to acquire a site at the farm Vaalkoppies. At the July, 1952 Church Council meeting the chairman reported that a certain Mr. F. Strauss, the owner of a farm in the area, was prepared to lease to the church a site of 400 square metres in extent which could be utilised for religious purposes and if the existing school needed extra classroom accommodation, it could be used for that purpose as well. The rent would be fixed at 1/- (.10c) per annum and the site would be available for the church during the lifetime of the owner or as long as he owned the farms. In the event of the farm changing hands, the improvements made by the church on the site could be removed within three months. The meeting agreed to accept these conditions in principle. A lease was to be prepared

by the firm of Attorneys Messrs. Malan and Malan (Upington Church Council meeting, 03.07.1952). The action of the Church Council was ratified by the October quarterly meeting (Upington members' meeting, 04.10.1952). The Church Council then paid the rent in advance for 23 years. This enabled the church to use the building material gathered to erect a building on the site which was dedicated the following year.

Another matter, the meeting had to consider, was the sale of a plot at Swartkop in the district of Gordonia. The erf (no.97) had been bought by the church some years earlier, but it was never used. Mr. Jacobus Gideon Nel approached the Church Council through the ward elder, bro. J. Adams, with a view to buying the plot. The meeting agreed to recommend to the members' meeting that the plot be sold for not less than £40 (R80). At the July, 1952 quarterly members' meeting the sale of the plot was approved. When the transaction was finalised, the buyer agreed to pay £45 (R90) for the plot (Upington members' meeting, 31.07.1952).

#### **4.25 Bond repayment issue**

The repayment of the bond on the Settlements was a matter of serious concern, both to the local church as well as the bondholder which was the denomination. When the sale of the Witputs grazing area fell through as a result of stiff opposition encountered from a number of the settlers, the money which would have been available to the church to settle the bond, was not there. Moreover, the church was faced with extra legal expenses when it obtained the opinion of an advocate on the issue. He advised the church not to go to court since the agreement the settlers had, gave them grazing rights. This has been referred to earlier on, but the result of it all was that the church was not able to repay the bond at the rate it originally intended.

At the July, 1952 Church Council meeting a letter from the Board of Trustees of the denomination was tabled. In it they wanted to know whether the church could pay at least £500 (R1000) on the bond for the period 11.07.1951 to 30.06.1952. They further asked whether the treasurer, bro. A.J. Ferreira, could be included in the church's delegation to the Assembly

meetings, which were due to be held in October, 1952 at Paarl. The idea was to arrange that the Board of Trustees meet with him and the minister during the Assembly meetings, where the issue of bond repayments could be discussed. The treasurer was, however, not able to attend the Assembly meetings. It was then decided that the secretary, bro. T. Titus, and the minister should meet the Board of Trustees. The bond repayment issue was then discussed in the Church Council in order to formulate a response to the Board of Trustees. It was clear that the income generated from the Settlements, was not sufficient to increase the instalments. The alternative source of income to be tapped, would be the rent of the town properties of the church. That would ensure a regular income every month, which could be used to redeem the loan. The income accrued from that source at the time stood at £900 (1800) per annum. The chairman and secretary were then mandated to make the offer to the Board to repay the capital amount at a rate of that amount plus the interest. The bond at that stage was £8700 (R17400). During the Assembly meetings, the minister and the secretary met with the Board of Trustees where the proposition was put to them and it was accepted. The Board realised that the bond would be redeemed within a reasonable period of time. What this amounted to, was that the repayment of the bond came from other sources of income of the church and not from the Settlements.

#### **4.26 Visit by the Government Commission**

At the July, 1952 Church Council meeting, it was reported that the Department of Land Affairs had indicated that a commission had been appointed to investigate the maintenance, continuation and development of the Eksteenskuil and Witbank Coloured Settlements. This Commission was led by Dr. I.D. Du Plessis, the then Commissioner for Coloured Affairs. The request of the Commission was to meet with representatives of the Upington church during their visit to the Eksteenskuil Settlement. The reason for this request was that in 1949 the church had asked the Government to consider taking over the church settlements. This was apparently done when the church Council felt very frustrated when the Witputs sale fell through.

Since some time had lapsed after this unfortunate episode, the chairman managed to persuade the Council to withdraw their offer to the Government to take over the Settlements. The meeting responded to the request of the Commission by stating that the Council would be willing to meet with them on condition that the venue be at Upington and not on one of the islands in the Eksteenskuil area, as had been suggested (Upington Church Council meeting, 31.07.1952). At the August monthly meeting of the Church Council, a report on the meeting with the Commission was given. The Commission was informed that the church had decided to withdraw the offer made to the Government in 1949, as it had changed its mind about it. This was noted by the Commission.

#### **4.27 Prieska branch**

At the August, 1952 Church Council meeting, it was reported that the Evangelist W.T. Kruger, who was stationed at the Prieska branch had tendered his resignation. The implication of this would be that the Chairman would have to take full responsibility for the work out there. This the meeting noted (Upington Church Council meeting, 28.08.1952). During the early part of October, the chairman paid a visit to the Prieska branch and he reported afterwards to the Church Council on his impressions of the state of the work there. At that time the branch was getting on reasonably well, both as far as the work in town was concerned, as well as at the outstations Westerberg and Marydale. The Prieska branch had also reconsidered the question of separation from the Upington church. Their wish was to remain part of the mother church.

The resignation of the evangelist Kruger was due to take effect on 31 October, 1952, but it would appear that the local Church Council had asked him to reconsider his decision to leave Prieska. He then withdrew his resignation. This the Upington Church Council noted with thanks (Upington Church Council meeting, 02.10.1952).

At the quarterly Church Council meeting of October, 1952 the chairman reported that he had been notified that the elder, Henry Boonzaaier's application for admission as student for the

ministry had been turned down by the Ministerial Committee of the Western District Association for the second time. This was noted with regret. That was the last time that he made an attempt to enter the ranks of ministerial student (cf. Upington Church Council meeting, 04.10.1952).

## **5. Conclusion**

The first five years of independence marked an interesting phase of development in the life of the three churches. Keimoes and Kenhardt churches adapted well to their new status. Keimoes had the Rev. King as resident minister and as pointed out, he had a stable ministry there. The term of office of the Rev. Damon at Kenhardt, also ushered in a period of steady growth. The Upington church had to adapt to the situation where a fair amount of its work in the outlying parts was handed over to Keimoes. This decentralisation started a process which in the years to come caused the Upington church in particular to become essentially an urban congregation. The road to full independence for the Prieska branch still had to be completed, but it fell outside the scope of the period covered in this study.

The major event during the period covered here, was the Golden Jubilee celebrations. The Rev. Alexander Stewart gave detailed reports on his visits to the churches of the North Western Cape to the Executive Committee of the denomination. In the October, 1952 issue of the "The Congregationalist" full cover was given to his visits and the celebrations. This was seen as an historic event since it was the first time in the history of the denomination that the founder of a local church had attended its Golden Jubilee celebrations. Mention had been made of the renovations for the occasion undertaken by the Upington church; it included the installation of a steel ceiling as well as a new set of lights. It was all done by local labour and it cost the church £800 (R1600).

The extension to the Keimoes church building at Kruger Street cost them a little over £1000 (R2000). The erection of the hall and other improvements at Kenhardt, also cost the church just over £300 (R600) because local labour was used.

The Rev. Stewart was invited by the three churches to be their guest preacher and he travelled from Cape Town to the North Western Cape by air. The journey only lasted five hours in all, which was in sharp contrast to his first visit which was undertaken by ox wagon, at the beginning of the century and lasted three months. He spent three enjoyable weeks in the area and was well received by all who remembered him. At Upington two oxen were slaughtered and at Kenhardt three sheep and two oxen were prepared for the dinner where he and the congregation and other guests were entertained. The attendance at each of the services was excellent, and the churches were crowded; at Keimoes in particular some of the people had to stand during the communion service. At the baptismal service, 172 babies were christened and 77 new members were confirmed (The Congregationalist, October, 1952, p 71).

## CHAPTER 6

### THE SETTLEMENTS – A CRITICAL EVALUATION

#### 1. Introduction

The circumstances which led to the Upington church's decision to acquire some farms along the Orange River and which it converted into church settlements have already been dealt with. The Head Committee which was charged with the supervision of these Settlements was given added responsibility to take care of other rent-producing properties owned by the church in and around Upington.

Since the Management of the Settlements fell within the ambit of the Head Committee it had to on occasion face serious challenges. The proposed sale of Witputs to which references were already made earlier on, was a case in point. The reason why this particular matter, as well as others alluded to in previous chapters, is dealt with here in more detail, is aimed at providing a more complete picture of the work of the Head Committee. It must also be borne in mind that the Committee was impeded by its lack of capacity and financial constraints.

#### 2. The Witputs issue

The Witputs Issue was one of the major challenges the Head Committee and the church had to deal with. It was sparked off when the church meeting at Upington decided in April, 1946 to sell the grazing area of the farms Soverby and Curriescamp known as Witputs. As mentioned earlier on this decision was opposed by the Erfholder Jan Daries of Curriescamp and he was later joined by a few other Erfholders. They were determined to put a spanner into the works and thus prevent the proposed sale to go through. They then engaged a Kakamas-based attorney, a Mr. J.A. Loubser, to act on their behalf in this matter. In the meantime the Head committee approached a Cape Town based firm of attorneys – Messrs. Jeffrey, Robertson and Metelerkamp - for advice before proceeding with the sale. The advice received from these attorneys was tabled

at the May, 1948 meeting of the Head Committee. In their response they stated that after a careful study of the Rules for the Settlements it was their considered opinion that the church would not have a strong case should the matter be tested in a court of law. The clause in the rules which gave the Erfholders grazing rights would weaken the case of the church. It could be argued that the sale of any portion of the grazing area of the Settlements without the approval of all the Erfholders could be interpreted as an infringement of their grazing rights (Head Committee meeting, 16.05.1948).

In order to understand the rationale behind the decision to sell Witputs it needs to be observed that as far back as 1945 the church decided to approach the denomination to take over the bond on the Settlements. When the matter, which originated with the Head Committee, was discussed in the members' meeting at Upington, the following proposition for the bond repayment was tabled. The repayment of the bond for the first two years, i.e. 1946 and 1947, would be £600 (R1200) plus interest. For the next two years it would be increased to £800 (R1600) per annum; then the following two years it would be increased to £900 (R1800). For the years 1952 and 1953 it would be increased to £1000 (R2000) per annum. Thereafter it would be increased to £1050 (R2100) until the bond was fully paid. This proposal was debated at the June, 1945 members' meeting and, barring Jan Daries, there was general approval of it. It was then forwarded to the denominational headquarters in Cape Town and approved (cf. Upington members' meeting, 15.06.1945).

Subsequently the church experienced difficulty in meeting its obligations as far as the bond repayments were concerned. The reasons for this will become clear when an assessment of the general state of the Settlements is looked at. The sale of Witputs would have given the church the opportunity to redeem the bond and to settle other debts and there would still have been money available to be spent on improvements on the Settlements.

However, since the church realized afterwards that it would not have a strong case in a court of law the only course open was to cancel the sale and to open negotiations with the dissatisfied group. Attempts were made to persuade that group to change their mind. Somewhere after the middle of 1948 the Head Committee asked for a meeting with Daries and his group. They replied

through their attorney, Mr. J.A. Loubser, that they were not interested in meeting with the Head Committee (Head Committee meeting, 30.08.1948).

The prospective buyer, Mr. W. Zaaiman, a businessman from Keimoes, was allowed by the Head Committee to move his livestock to Witputs while negotiations were still in progress. But when the sale fell through his presence at Witputs became another bone of contention for the dissatisfied group. However, it would appear that Zaaiman understood the dilemma of the church and both he and the attorney of the group played an important role in mediating between the Head Committee where it was agreed to request that Zaaiman remove his livestock from Witputs not later than the end of January, 1949 (Head Committee meeting, 11.10.1948). The Committee further agreed to pay the legal costs amounting to £162 (R324) which the dissatisfied group had incurred in connection with the case. But the Head Committee still tried to persuade the group to change their mind on the Witputs or alternatively, a smaller portion of it to W. Zaaiman. They were prepared to give an undertaking that the proceeds of such a sale would be used exclusively for the redemption of the benefit of the Erfholders. If a positive response could be elicited from the Settlers within 14 days the Committee would recommend that the church meeting approve of it.

However, at the November, 1948 meeting of the Head Committee, the dissatisfied group conveyed their response to the offer to the church's attorneys, Messrs. Malan and Malan. Their reply was in the negative and they demanded that Zaaiman should remove his livestock not later than 31 December, 1948. The meeting then agreed that Zaaiman be requested to vacate Witputs by the end of December that year.

The general feeling of frustration among the Head Committee members at the trend of events was articulated by the chairman, the Rev. Damon. He expressed the view that the Settlers should be informed that it was the intention of the Head Committee to recommend to the members' meeting that 300 morgen of the land under irrigation be offered to the Government for sale. The State could then convert it into a settlement for the Coloured community under the same regulations which were in force at the time. Whilst there is no reference in the minutes that such an offer was formally put to the Government, it is clear from subsequent events that an offer of

that nature was made. That accounts for the fact that in 1952 a deputation appointed by the Government met with representatives of the Upington Church Council. This has been referred to previously (Head Committee meeting, 11.11.1948).

After the Rev. Damon's departure from Upington early in 1949 local arrangements were made for the chairing of the Head Committee meetings. The two elders who were elected at different times to take the chair at the meetings were the brethren F.S. van Rooi and M.C. Visagie. In spite of the seemingly intransigent attitude of the dissatisfied group, the Head Committee kept up its efforts to enter into dialogue with them in order to find a solution for the problem. Eventually through the kind offices of their attorney, Mr. Loubser, a meeting was held on 20 May, 1949 in the courtroom of the Keimoes Magistrate's Office. It was chaired by Mr. Loubser and the dissatisfied group was present as well as the members of the Head Committee. The spirit displayed by both parties at that meeting was conciliatory; both expressed willingness to resolve their differences. The only matter that Jan Daries and his group was not happy about the fact that W. Zaaiman did not remove his livestock from Witputs by the end January, 1949 as requested.

The chairman went on to explain that the legal costs involved in the case would amount to £91.11 (R183.10c). It was then agreed that Zaaiman be requested to pay that amount. It was further agreed that if Zaaiman was amenable he would be allowed to keep his livestock at Witputs until 30 September, 1949 since his ewes were in gestation. At that point Zaaiman was invited to join the meeting. He was then informed about the decision taken by the meeting. This he agreed to except that he asked for a further extension of one month to keep his livestock on the farm. The meeting acceded to this.

This brought the whole problem to an acceptable resolution. The treasurer of the Upington church, bro. A.J. Ferreira, then thanked the chairman for the part he had played in effecting a resolution of the problem. Zaaiman on his part also expressed satisfaction that reconciliation between the two parties had ultimately been reached. Thereafter followed the customary handshake and all left in good spirit (Head Committee meeting, 20.05.1949).

### 3. Leasing of Witputs

The resolution of the Witputs issue was conveyed by the Head Committee to the Erfholders during their visits to the Settlements (Head Committee meeting, 20.06.1949). After the matter was settled Mr. Zaaiman approached the Head Committee in August, 1949 with a request to lease the grazing area of Soverby and Curriescamp to him. The initial response of the Committee was that it could not accede to his request. This is to be understood since the Witputs issue had caused the Committee to be particularly cautious in matters relating to the grazing aspect of the Settlements (Head Committee meeting, 30.08.1949).

However, at the September, 1949 meeting of the Head Committee, Mr. Zaaiman repeated his request. The meeting was informed that the group who had opposed the sale Witputs was in favour of leasing the grazing area to Mr. Zaaiman, barring Jan Daries who was still reluctant to give his consent to it. In the light of this the Committee then decided to inform Mr. Zaaiman that it could not accede to his request (Head Committee meeting, 12.09.1949).

However the matter did not rest there, for in October that year a special Head Committee meeting was convened where this request came up for discussion again. At that meeting Mr. Zaaiman was present in person as well as the Erfholders who had opposed the sale of Witputs, viz. J. Daries, H. Losper, J.J. De Wee, N. Kotze, J. Mouton, G. Klaaste and Willem Visagie. Zaaiman informed the meeting that he was desperately in need of grazing for his livestock. He had spoken to Jan Daries about his plight. Daries indicated that he had no objection to the church leasing the grazing area to Zaaiman on condition that it was limited to the Soverby section of the farms. Daries in turn confirmed that he would be amenable to such an arrangement. Zaaiman, on his part, undertook to fence the area leased by him. The meeting then discussed the terms of the agreement. It was agreed to lease the top portion of the grazing area of Soverby to Mr. W. Zaaiman for an initial period of five years commencing on 1 November, 1949. The expiry date of the lease would be 31 October, 1954. Zaaiman on his part undertook to pay for the erection of the fence between the Head Committee and the lessee. The meeting further agreed that the income derived from this lease would be used for improvements on the Settlements.

As far as the extension of the lease was concerned, it was decided that when it was due to expire it could be negotiated six months prior to the expiry of the five-year term. It was further stipulated that the lessee should not sub-let any portion of the grazing area under his control. Permission was given to the lessee to sink a borehole and to put up a windmill on the clear undertaking that it should not be removed when he vacated the farm. At the conclusion of the meeting it was agreed by both parties that the rent payable by the lessee would be £15 (R30) per month (Special Head Committee meeting, 31.10.1949). This agreement was then conveyed to the Settlers. At the November, 1949 meeting of the Head Committee which was held at Curriescamp, the Settlers there were informed about the lease, which the church had entered into with Mr. W. Zaaiman. At the same meeting the Settlers were also informed that the cost of erecting a fence between Soverby and Curriescamp amounted to £700 (R1400) (Head Committee meeting, 24.11.1949).

One of the after effects of the unsuccessful sale of Witputs was that the Head Committee realized the deficiency of the existing Rules for the Settlements in respect of grazing rights. In order to obviate this, a decision was taken at the February, 1950 meeting of the Head Committee to have a new set of rules drawn up by a competent person who could safeguard the church in future. For this reason the attorney, Mr. J.C. Metelerkamp of the firm Jeffrey, Robertson and Metelerkamp, referred to earlier on, was approached. He was asked to draft a new lease for people who applied to become Erfholders. In terms of the new lease, all new applicants, if approved by the Head Committee, would be accepted on an annual basis as lessees. The rent charged would be payable every six months. The clause in the old Rules relating to grazing rights was omitted. This lease was an improvement on the old agreement but the problem was that it could only become applicable to new applicants; it could not be extended to the existing Erfholders (cf. Head Committee meeting, 13.11.1950).

#### **4. Prospecting at the settlements**

It would appear that there was evidence of mineral deposits in the grazing area of the farms Soverby and Curriescamp. This was borne out by the requests of people to the Head Committee to undertake prospecting on these farms. As far back as 1948 the Head Committee was

approached by a certain C.H. Robinson for prospecting rights on the farm Soverby. The Committee was inclined to accede to this request since it would hold out the possibility of extra income from the Settlements (cf. Head Committee meeting, 30.08.1948). However, precautions were taken, for at the October, 1949 meeting the Committee decided first to ascertain from the church's attorneys, Messrs. Malan and Malan, whether the granting of such rights would in any way be in contravention of the terms of the agreement the Settlers had with the church (Head Committee meeting, 17.10.1949). The reply of the attorneys was tabled at the November meeting, 1949 of the Head Committee. In it they pointed out that the Settlers could object to such a contract with a prospector. He advised that an indemnity clause should be inserted into such an agreement in order to safeguard the church. While the Committee was not averse to enter into an agreement with Robinson in respect of prospecting rights and they even fixed the rental at £3 (R6) per month, nothing came of it (cf. Head Committee meeting, 14.11.1949).

However, at the November, 1950 Head Committee meeting it was decided not to proceed with the agreement since Mr. Zaaiman was not prepared to attach his signature to such a document (Head Committee meeting, 13.11.1950).

Another request for prospecting rights was considered by the Head Committee at its October, 1950 meeting. It came from two gentlemen, Messrs. P. Compion and J. Sutherland. The minerals they were interested in prospecting were beryl, wolfram, tungsten and silver. They offered to pay £8 (R16) per month for the right to prospect in the area, and, in the event of mining operations commencing there, they would be prepared to pay to the church one sixth of the gross income of the mines. They also gave an undertaking that all records relative to this matter would be open for inspection by the Head Committee. They indicated willingness to enter into a contractual arrangement with the Head Committee subject to the approval of the Settlers. The meeting agreed to consider this offer (Head Committee meeting, 16.10.1950). At the next meeting of the Head Committee it was decided to enter into an agreement with Messrs. Compion and Sutherland in respect of their request (Head Committee meeting, 12.11.1950).

This decision evoked a reaction from the lessee of Witputs, viz. W. Zaaiman. At the April 1951 Head Committee meeting he voiced strong objections to the granting of mineral rights to the

gentlemen. His contention was that the Head Committee had granted permission to them without prior consultation with him. He was particularly perturbed by the fact that in the course of their prospecting activities they had damaged some of the grazing in the area leased to him. In response to these objections the Head Committee pointed out to Zaaiman that the agreement they had with Compion and Sutherland covered this. It was specifically stated in the agreement that the prospectors must ensure that the grazing in the area where they operated must under no circumstances be damaged. The meeting agreed nevertheless to speak to the two prospectors about it (Head Committee meeting, 23.04.1951). Since there was no further reference to this matter in the minutes, the deduction is it was laid to rest.

It would appear that the Head Committee was very cautious about the granting of prospecting rights to people who applied for these. This was to be expected because of the Witputs episode. For that reason the committee consulted a Cape Town firm of attorneys - Messrs. Jeffrey, Robinson and Metelerkamp - for advice. The Head Committee could have approached the church's attorneys - Messrs. Malan and Malan - at Upington. But a likely reason why they had had with them when they obtained advice on the proposed sale of Witputs, as mentioned before. Moreover, one of the partners in that firm - Mr. J.C. Metelerkamp - was a Congregationalist; he served for years on the denomination's Executive Committee and on its Board of Trustees. The reply of these attorneys was tabled at the January, 1951 meeting of the Head Committee. They stated that the Head Committee could not grant prospecting rights to people without being in conflict with the Lessee of Witputs or with Settlers. They advised therefore that a new set of rules be drawn up for the Erfholders. This matter was then referred to the next meeting for consideration (Head Committee meeting, 09.01.1951). As mentioned earlier on the new lease was drafted by Mr. Metelerkamp at the request of the Head Committee and approved (cf. Head Committee meeting, 15.03.1951).

Nevertheless prospecting at Witputs went ahead for at the July, 1951 meeting of the Head Committee, P. Compion reported that he had sent samples of mineral deposits for analysis to the laboratory. The initial results showed that there were fair quantities of titanium and manganese deposits at Witputs. He was awaiting a report on further results. In the light of these encouraging reports, it was decided to recommend to the church meeting that the prospecting rights be

extended for the period 28 June to 27 September, 1951 (Head Committee meeting, 09.07.1951). In October that year the prospectors - Compion and Sutherland - asked for an extension of their term by another three months. The meeting agreed to that (Head Committee meeting, 15.10.1951). At the same meeting the offer made by the two prospectors was considered. In their offer they asked for permission to open up negotiations with a mining company to do prospecting at Curriescamp and Soverby for a period of three months at £25 (R50) per month. They would be prepared to pay the church a pro rata share of the money received from the company, if a contract could be entered into with the church, the company would be prepared to pay them £2000 (R4000). Of that amount the church would receive £1500 (R3000). The balance - i.e. £500 (R1000) - would be retained by Messrs. Compion and Sutherland. That amount would be in lieu of the church's permission to them to transfer their prospecting rights to the company. In the event of a contract entered into with the company, it would pay 8% royalty on the nett profit of the mine. Of this 4% would be paid to the church 4% to Messrs. Compion and Sutherland. If a mining contract was entered into, it should not be for a period in excess of 20 years (Head Committee meeting, 14.11.1951).

While on the surface it appeared that new exciting developments were due to take place, it seemed that the stage was never reached to put any of these encouraging ideas into practice.

In July, 1952 Messrs. Compion and Sutherland asked the Head Committee to grant them a remission on their outstanding debt which amounted to £2.10c (R5). They also asked permission to do prospecting at Curriescamp gratis for the following three months. They promised further to show their work to the Committee for inspection. The Head Committee agreed to grant them all their requests (Head Committee meeting, 16.07.1952). What happened subsequently seemed to suggest that these men failed to honour the offer they had made to the Head Committee. At the August, 1952 Head Committee meeting disappointment was expressed when it was reported that the two men did not turn up to meet the Committee at the time and place agreed upon. Moreover, they failed to produce the samples they had promised to show to members of the Head Committee.

It was then agreed to place on record the disappointment of the Committee at their irresponsible

behaviour in this regard. The meeting then decided to convey its displeasure to them. It was also decided to warn them that if this was to recur in future it would be at their expense.

All these developments looked very encouraging on the face of it but it did not lead to any mining activities. A possible explanation for it could be that mining companies approached by the prospectors did not see their way clear to start work in the area. Factors which could have caused reluctance to open up mines in the area would be the relative isolation of a place like Keimoes which was the nearest village to Witputs. Larger centres like Kimberley and Johannesburg were situated some distance from the area. Road transport would have been a factor since most of the roads were untarred and rail transport would not have been a good alternative. Keimoes was only on the branch line between Upington and Kakamas. Another factor which would also have had a bearing on the matter was the state of the international market in minerals. A case in point is the fact that at a later stage, copper ore deposits were also discovered in the area. But at the time the market was saturated; mining would therefore not have been a viable proposition<sup>1</sup>. It is conceivable that it might have been the case with some of the other minerals discovered as well. No company of substance would, under such circumstances, engage in large-scale mining operations. Furthermore, the church did not have the financial means or the expertise from its own ranks to undertake mining activities.

On the more positive side, it needs to be said that the Head Committee received money from the prospectors in terms of their agreement with church, but it was not really as much as might have been expected had they gone beyond the prospecting stage.

It is significant that the Head Committee had taken all possible measures in order to avoid problems with the Settlers, bearing in mind the Witputs issue which was already dealt with. Yet there is no indication that the Settlers objected at any stage to the granting of prospecting rights to people who applied for it. A possible reason for this was because the area where the prospecting was done was in the vicinity of Witputs which was leased by W. Zaaiman.

Although the prospecting proved in the end not to be a viable proposition, the idea to mine there

---

<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from a former minister of the Upington church, Rev. D.M. Abrahams.

was never completely abandoned.

## 5. The post-Witputs era

In the aftermath of the Witputs episode the chairperson of the Head Committee endeavoured to carry out its mandate to manage the Settlements to the best of its ability in terms of the Rules and Regulations<sup>2</sup>. It was not always easy for them to get the Erfholders to co-operate as will be seen in cases referred to here. Several Erfholders broke the Rules and then the Head Committee had to step in and apply disciplinary measures.

A case in point was when the Head Committee had to take appropriate steps to invoke Rule 12 of the Rules and Regulations for the Settlements. This particular rule stipulated that all public work on the Settlements like road repairs, the cleaning of furrows and dams as well as the renovation of buildings owned by the church, which included classrooms and stores and any other improvements, were the responsibility of the Erfholders. The work was to be done on a call up basis. In order to ensure that such public work was carried out effectively the Erfholders would be organized in teams under the supervision of the Local Committee. The teams were expected to elect from among their own ranks suitable people who could act as foremen. As an incentive the Head Committee could, from the Administrative funds of the Settlements, award a prize to the team that performed best during the course of the year. Erfholders who did not heed the call to report for duty and absented themselves without valid reasons on the days when the work was to be done, would be liable to pay a fine of 2/- (20c) for each working day that they failed to report for duty.

It would appear that the Head Committee at time experienced difficulty in getting Erfholders to report for duty when called up. In February 1949 a report was made to the Head Committee by one of the Local Committee members that there were some of the Erfholders who had failed to take their turns when the cleaning of the irrigation canal was undertaken. This matter was referred to a later meeting. While there is no specific reference to what happened to this particular case, in the minutes it is clear that it would have been dealt with in terms of the Rules

---

<sup>2</sup> The complete Rules and Regulations are attached at the end of the study in an appendix.

and Regulations (Head Committee meeting, 14.12.1949). In Practical terms this type of action the Head Committee would have taken under such circumstances would either be to reprimand the defaulter, or in more serious cases to decide on the imposition of a fine. In cases where circumstances demanded, it would have been expulsion from the Settlements.

In terms of Rule 10 of the Rules and Regulations, Erfholders were expected to plough their agricultural plots and to keep them clean so that crops could be sown or planted as the Head Committee from time to time may recommend. There were, however, instances when Erfholders evaded this rule. At the August 1950 Head Committee meeting it was reported that no fewer than five Erfholders at Soverby had made themselves guilty of dereliction of duty. They were then summoned to appear before the Head Committee and they admitted guilt for neglecting to implement the Rule referred to. They were reprimanded by the Head Committee and given an ultimatum to carry out the provisions of the Rule. Should they fail, however, to comply by December, 1950 they would face expulsion from the Settlements (Head Committee meeting, 21.08.1950).

The implementation of Rule 15 also created some problems for some of the Erfholders. This particular rule stipulated that when an Erfholder (which included Tenants as well) was found guilty of the abuse of alcohol or immoral behaviour he/she would either be fined or expelled from the Settlements depending on the seriousness of the offence. In its application the Rule was apparently interpreted to mean that when the child of an Erfholder or tenant committed an immoral offence, it was incumbent on the parents to see that such a child leaves the Settlements. While this particular stipulation did not appear in the Rules and Regulations in that form it would appear that it was normal practice.

At the July, 1950 meeting of the Head Committee one of the Local Committee members, of Curriescamp - Floors Steenkamp - requested that the meeting reconsider this particular Rule. He also stated that he had a problem with the imposition of fines as a means of punishment. When asked whether he could put in its place a better alternative as a means of disciplining people who were guilty of such an offence, he admitted that he had none to offer. The matter was then dropped and for the remainder of the period under review it remained in force. (cf. Head

Committee meeting, 24.07.1950).

It must be conceded though that this Rule appeared to be harsh and insensitive in its application. The late Rev. S. Bimray had a problem with it. The reason why he had reservations about this Rule was that it was his contention that to expel a young person from the Settlements - particularly in the case of girls - seemed, under the circumstances, to be cruel. After all, that was the time when a young person was most in need of parental support<sup>3</sup>.

Without condemning the Rule it must be seen against the background of the time when it was made. With strict rules like these for the Settlements the church was obviously endeavoring to set and maintain high moral standards of behaviour on the farms under its control. To achieve this, strict discipline was considered the most effective way of ensuring it. It needs, however, to be observed that although the Rule was eventually tacitly dropped, it remained at any rate officially in force. But it was realized with the passage of time that it was not morally correct to retain it in the Rules and Regulations for the Settlements. Moreover, the Head Committee and the Local Committee became disinclined to enforce it (cf. Head Committee meeting, 28.07.1950).

Not only did the Head Committee have to deal with applications of the Rules; there were also instances when Erfholders approached them for assistance. Each of these requests was treated on their merits. In July, 1950 for instance, the Erfholder Dirk Koetzee, asked the Head Committee for a loan of £5 (R10) to buy a school outfit for his child who was enrolled at the high school. In this particular instance the Committee agreed to grant him the loan he asked for (Head Committee meeting, 24.07.1950). Earlier on in April, 1950 the Head Committee was approached by the Erfholder, Nicolas Losper, for a loan of £9 (R18). In this case the meeting agreed to meet him halfway by granting him a loan of £4-10-0 (R9).

While it is true that the Head Committee rendered assistance to Erfholders where possible, at some point it became necessary to change its attitude about it. At the December 1950 meeting it was decided that because the allegation had been made by some Erfholders that they did not

---

<sup>3</sup> The writer recalls that this sentiment was expressed by the Rev. Bimray in a conversation

receive the assistance from the Committee when they applied for it, no more help would be given to people in future. It was further decided to communicate this decision to Settlers during the annual reckoning on the farms (Head Committee meeting, 19.12.1950). This was a drastic departure from the position the Committee took previously in this regard. However, it must be borne in mind that the Head Committee did not have at its disposal the necessary funds to help all who asked for it. Moreover, the unfair comparison which existed in the minds of some of the people when assistance was given to some, and refused in other instances, caused this reaction on the part of the Head Committee. The point at issue is that it was not unwillingness by the Committee to assist in cases of need but rather the financial constraints under which it had to operate. What lends credence to this contention is, that in spite of this decision of the Committee, applications for help still came in afterwards from the Settlers. For instance, in June, 1951 a few applications for loans from Erfholders at Soverby and Curriescamp were received by the Committee. The onset set of applications from Soverby amounted to £38 (R72) and those from the Curriescamp Erfholders totaled £65 (R130). The meeting felt, however, that it was not able to grant these loans. But in a spirit of willingness to help, the Committee agreed that those who applied for loans would be permitted to gather firewood for the Head Committee. They would then be remunerated at a rate of £3 (R6) per load of firewood (Head Committee meeting, 14.06.1951).

A matter which was brought to the attention of the Head Committee was the Administration and Improvement levy which amounted to £1 (R2) per annum. In terms of Rule 4 all Erfholders were expected to pay this levy over an above their normal rent. In February, 1950 a few Erfholders of Curriescamp under the leadership of Jan Daries approached the Head Committee with the request that consideration be given to reduce the Administration and Improvement levy. They felt that the fee was too high for them. The Head Committee's response to Daries and other members of the group was that they should submit their request in writing and state their motivation. The matter would then receive further attention. Nothing is further reflected in the minutes of the Committee concerning this request. The deduction is therefore that the matter was tacitly dropped (cf. Head Committee meeting, 13.02.1950). The stipulation in Rule 8 was that no

---

sometime in October, 1953.

Erfholder may lay claim to any crops harvested and may not sell, use or alienate it in any way, or destroy this. The crops should be placed in the Head Committee's stores and could only be removed once the Erfholders at Soverby - Louis Coetzee - sold the Lucerne that he had harvested without following the normal procedure as laid down in this Rule. When interviewed by the Committee he admitted his guilt. The meeting then agreed to impose a fine £5 (R10). By adopting this line of action it was hoped that it would act as a deterrent to others who might have been inclined to follow his example.

The Committee then adopted the following guideline to be followed in cases where Erfholders were found guilty of breaking the rules of their Agreement with the church. For the first offence, a fine of £5 (R10) would be imposed, and if the same Erfholder persisted in breaking the Rules, he would be expelled from the Settlements.

The general practice followed by the Head Committee in respect of firewood gathered on the Settlements was that Erfholders were entitled to use it for personal and domestic purposes. But no Erfholder would be allowed to sell firewood to outsiders without the permission of the Head Committee. There were, however, instances where Erfholders broke this Rule. In January, 1951 the Head Committee decided at its meeting to impose a fine of £5 (R10) on the Erfholder, Willem Klaaste, who sold firewood privately without the necessary permission (Head Committee meeting, 29.01.1952). This problem seemed to have recurred on the Settlements. In February 1951 the Head Committee had to discipline the Erfholder, Jacob Beukes, of Curriescamp who sold firewood privately. He was fined £5 (R10) for committing this offense (Head Committee meeting, 15.02.1951). At Soverby the Erfholder Adriaan Klaaste was also found guilty of committing a similar offence. He was also fined £5 (R10).

In view of the fact that the Settlers tended to cut firewood on the Settlements for local schools without prior permission of the Local Committees, the Head Committee decided at its May 1950 meeting to include an additional clause to Rule 20 since this simply stipulated that it was within the competence of the Head Committee to carry out any rules not mentioned there, if in its opinion it would be in the best interest of the farms and the bond repayment. In line with the

additional rule as formulated this would permit the Head Committee to grant permission to Settlers to gather firewood in the grazing area under exceptional circumstances; for instance when the River came down in flood. The request of Settlers for such permission had to be made first to the Local Committee who would then forward it to the Head Committee for approval (Head Committee meeting, 20.05.1951).

The cases referred to are indicative of the fact that the Head Committee had to exercise the necessary discretion when circumstances necessitated disciplinary action against tenants and Erfholders. In 1951 one of the Erfholders, Willem Kotzee of Soverby, was reported for growing dagga on his agricultural plot. The Committee quite rightly felt that his action was in contravention of Rules 10 and 15 of the Rules and Regulations. Rule 10 was very explicit in this regard; it stipulated that the Erfholders could only sow crops which were recommended or approved by the Head Committee. Kotzee's case was thoroughly investigated after which the Head Committee decided that he should be banned from the Settlements. This banning order was to take effect a month from the time that he received the notice (Head Committee meeting, 09.01.1951).

There were instances when the Head Committee had to take a strong stand against Settlers who trespassed. Apparently problems were encountered when people were ordered to leave the Settlements. In March 1950 the Head Committee decided to call in the help of the Police in order to evict the Erfholder, Cornelius Visagie. He was considered to be an undesirable person on the Settlements. No details were given as to why his presence on the Settlements gave offence but it can safely be assumed that he gave reason for it (Head Committee meeting, 05.03.1950).

At the April, 1950 Head Committee meeting it was reported that a deputation had met with the Station Commander of the Keimoes Police. The chairman, the Rev. Bimray, served on this deputation and they were well received and had a very fruitful discussion with the Commander. He was sympathetic and showed appreciation for the problems the Committee had to deal with. He advised that the Local Committee should be instructed to take steps to prevent unauthorized persons from settling on the Settlements. In cases where Settlers overstepped the mark by ignoring the Rules they could be prosecuted. The Station Commander also undertook to institute

appropriate steps against Cornelius Visagie. The meeting was informed that Visagie was evicted after the interview with the station commander of the Police (Head Committee meeting, 13.04.1950).

The modus operandi of the Head Committee was to hold some of its meetings at the Settlements over and above those held at Upington. In June, 1950, for instance, the meeting was held at Curriescamp. That was a very representative meeting; there were 45 Erfholders from Curriescamp, 15 from Bloemsmond and 42 from Soverby in attendance. The Rev. S. Bimray chaired the meeting and one of the issues raised by the Erfholders, Jan Daries, was whether consideration could be given to present the financial reports of the Settlements locally.

The situation was that the church's reports, which included that of the Settlements, were given on a quarterly basis at Upington. Reference was already made to the fact that the majority of the Settlers were members of the Keimoes church. But the farms were vested in the Upington church and the bond repayments were the responsibility of that church. The argument that Daries and some of the Erfholders advanced was that reports given at the Settlements would keep the people informed particularly in respect of the bond repayments. In response to this request, the chairman explained that since the Head Committee was subject to the Church Council, it had to be referred to that court of the church and from there it must go to the members' meeting for final approval (Head Committee meeting, 30.06.1950). This explanation met with general approval in the meeting.

Nevertheless, the Committee took additional precautions, for in July, 1950 it was decided to obtain legal advice first before proceeding with the matter (Head Committee meeting, 03.07.1950). There is no reference in the minutes about the outcome of the Committee's contact with the attorney. But in the light of what happened subsequently it can be deduced that there were no legal obstacles for the church to accede to the request. Neither did it compromise itself in any way to the Settlers. Consequently a detailed financial report was given at a combined meeting of the Settlers held in September, 1950, at Curriescamp.

The statement covered the period 1 April, 1945 to 30 March, 1950. The meeting was well

represented by Erfholders from Bloemsmond, Geelkop, Curriescamp and Soverby. The statement showed that the total income for the period under review amounted to £23 157 - 11s - Od (R46 315, 10c) against an expenditure of £20 861 - 10s - 11Od (R41 723, 21c). The credit balance at the bank at the end of March, 1950 stood at £2 296 - 0s - 1d (R4 592, 01c). During that period the church paid on the bond on the Settlements, the amount of £3 874 (R7 748) leaving a balance of £8 726 (R17 425) (Head Committee meeting, 01.09.1950). It would appear that the giving of reports at Settlements was not repeated subsequently. No reason for this is given in the minutes; the deduction can be made that there was not sufficient enthusiasm on the part of the Settlers to insist that it be done on a regular basis. Moreover, Daries himself was a member of the Uppington church and he would therefore have been informed at quarterly members' meetings about the financial situation of the Settlements like all other members of the church. In the end the matter was tacitly dropped.

## **6. New admissions**

In line with the decision taken by the church, after the Witputs episode, all new applications for admission to the Settlements as Erfholders, the Head Committee consistently applied. The decision as referred to before was that all new applicants would be admitted under the new lease. During the period 1947 to 1952 a fair number of applications were received from church members for admission as Erfholders. The cases referred to here represent some of a fairly sizeable number of applicants which the Head Committee had to deal with. It does not exhaust the list of all applicants received but it serves as a good indication of the extent of the need that existed to accommodate people with an interest and some skill in agriculture. Moreover, it provided employment to people who had been without any source of income.

At the April, 1951 Head Committee there were, for instance, a few applications for plots under irrigation on the Settlements. One came from a certain Jan Snyders who applied to rent an erf at Curriescamp. It was agreed to grant him the erf on the basis of the new lease. The rent, like in other similar cases, was fixed at £10 (R20) per annum. Permission was also granted to him to rent a house on the Settlement at 7/6 (R0.75c) per month. The lease was to be valid for a year

with option of renewal at the expiry date (Head Committee meeting, 11.09.1950). A year later more applications for admission to the Settlements as Erfholders were received. At the July, 1952 Head Committee meeting the following people applied for admission to the Settlements as Erfholders viz. Willem van Rooi and Dawid Pieters. They applied for erfs at Soverby, and Jan Snyders for an erf at Geelkop. All these applications were approved by the Committee under the new lease and the rent in all three cases was fixed at £10 (R20) per annum (Head Committee meeting, 21.07.1952). In September that year the applicant Johannes Steencamp who applied for a plot at Soverby, was approved in terms of the new lease and the rent was the same as in the previous cases (Adjourned Head Committee meeting, 11.09,1951). These were some of the new applicants as erfholders dealt with by the Head Committee.

## 7. Tenants

Mention was already made earlier on one of the two categories of people admitted to the Settlements. Those who rented the 2 or 2 ½ morgen of land under irrigation were referred to as Erfholders and the other group were the tenants. The reason why this category was created was to address a need that existed in the church community. The tenants were the people who rented accommodation on the Settlements and who found employment on neighbouring farms or in the town. One of the conditions for their admission to the Settlements was that they had to be members of the Congregational church. Theoretically a member of any Congregational church could qualify as a tenant, but in actual fact those who were admitted were mainly linked to Keimoes or Upington churches.

Prior to 1950 they were admitted on an ad hoc basis; there were no definite rules applicable to them was recognized though and in May, 1950 the Head Committee decided to draw up a set of rules for the tenants (Head Committee meeting, 15.05.1950). These rules were completed during the term of office of the Rev. Bimray<sup>4</sup>.

The rules were approved in June, 1950 by the Head Committee. The following is a brief

---

<sup>4</sup> The rules for tenants are attached as an appendix at the end of the study.

summary of it. It stipulated that a person who wished to be admitted as a tenant in one of the Settlements had to be a member of a Congregational church. All applications for admission were to be made personally by prospective tenants or in writing. If an application was successful, the rent would be fixed at 5/- (R1.00) per month. However, the Head Committee reserved itself the right to adjust the rent if, in its opinion, it was considered necessary, but three months prior notice had to be given to the tenants before implementing a change. The procedure was also set out when an application for accommodation by a prospective tenant was approved. The Local Committee would then allocate a building site where the applicant was expected to erect a brick house. The situation was that prospective tenants were allowed to put up temporary structures pending the processing of their applications and approval by the Head Committee. Once approved, the Head Committee's stipulation about the erection of a permanent building would have to be implemented. The intention obviously was to discourage temporary structures since these could create the appearance of an informal Settlement.

In order to maintain good discipline on the Settlements it was stipulated that if a tenant was found guilty of misbehaviour he/she would face punishment, the most extreme form of which would be expulsion from the Settlements. If a tenant was to leave the Settlements of his/her own accord or, if expelled on account of misbehaviour, no damage could be claimed from the Head Committee or the church. All improvements made by the tenant on the building sites would remain the property of the Upington church.

A further stipulation was that tenants would be entitled to firewood for personal use at the behest of the Local Committee. However, tenants would not be allowed to gather firewood on the Settlements without the concurrence of the Head Committee. The people guilty of breaking this rule would be prosecuted.

If a tenant was found guilty of inebriety, immorality or any improper behaviour, he/she would face expulsion from the Settlements.

As far as live-stock and draught-animals were concerned, it was stipulated that tenants would not be allowed to keep donkeys on the Settlements. They were, however, allowed to keep three

small-stock for which a levy of 1/- (.10c) per month was to be paid. Apparently the prohibition of donkeys was not always observed by tenants. This is evident from an observation made by Local Committee member for Curriescamp, Floors Steenkamp, at a Head Committee meeting held in June, 1950. He referred to the fact that there were tenants who did not observe the rule. This the meeting noted (Head Committee meeting, 30.06.1950). It would appear that the tenants enjoyed many of the privileges accorded to the Erfholders. The rent charged was by all standards, reasonable, and they had access to firewood and water for domestic purposes. It was against this background that the Head Committee decided at its June, 1950 meeting that it should be differentiated between Settlers and Erfholders. The meeting also felt that the admission of tenants to the Settlements should be linked to the carrying capacity of each farm (Head Committee meeting, 30.06.1950). This was in reference to the fact that in the course of time the tenants could conceivably outnumber the Erfholders.

At that same special Head Committee meeting referred to, one of the Local Committee members of Curriescamp, Floors Steenkamp, made a pertinent observation. He expressed the view that tenants should also make a contribution towards community work on the Settlements such as the building of bridges across the tributaries of the river, repairs to the irrigation canal and the erection and maintenance of boundary fences (*ibid*). Quite obviously this observation would not have been made if tenants assisted with public work on the Settlements. Moreover, they benefited from the conveniences provided by the church.

On balance it can be said that the church fulfilled the role of both benefactor and custodian to tenants who otherwise would have been destitute. As mentioned before the church made accommodation available to them at a nominal rental. Furthermore they enjoyed other privileges such as firewood which they did not pay for and water for domestic purpose like all other Settlers. In some instances they were also employed by the Settlers on their erfs. Yet there were instances where some still failed to honour their obligations.

In December, 1952 at the Head Committee meeting a rather unusual request came up for consideration. The principal of the primary school at Curriescamp, a Mr. C.J. Jansen, applied to lease an erf on the Settlement. The meeting's response underlined the position of the Head

Committee and the church in regard to the admission of people as Settlers. They stated that the Settlements were developed in order to provide assistance to people in need. However, it was felt that Mr. Jansen did not fall into that category (Head Committee meeting, 19.12.1952). The deduction is that the position taken by the Committee would apply equally to aspiring tenants as well.

### **8. Properties outside the settlements**

Reference has been made to properties owned by the church other than the Settlements which were also placed under the jurisdiction of the Head Committee. The Head Committee's responsibility included the maintenance of these properties. At Upington and the Lemoendraai Extension the church owned properties under irrigation. It was the Head Committee's responsibility in both cases to arrange for leasing these properties, or to arrange for and appoint suitable people to work on the land. The Committee's task was also to supervise the work done on these properties. A case in point was when the tenant, N.J. Theron, who leased the Lemoendraai property, informed the Head Committee at their August, 1948 meeting that he had experienced problems with the sluice. The Committee agreed to attend to the matter.

At the same meeting of the Church member, Marthinus Mouton applied for permission to make bricks on the Lemoendraai property. He was a builder and contractor and while the Committee was sympathetic to his request, it was agreed to investigate the feasibility first before approval was to be given to him (Head Committee meeting, 09.08.1948).

In view of the church's operations on the Settlements two motor drivers were engaged on a full-time basis. The one was used as chauffeur driver to take the minister to the outstations when he visited these periodically. This became particularly necessary when the work-load became very demanding on him. The other driver was employed to drive the church's lorry when transport work was needed on the Settlements. The question of the feasibility of retaining the service of both drivers came up for discussion at the July, 1949 meeting of the Head Committee. One of the drivers, viz. Saul Klaaste's position was considered. The meeting decided to retain his services in view of the fact that he could also be used to attend to the repairs of the fence at the church site

and also the fence at the site which housed the Carlton Van Heerden High School (Head Committee meeting, 14.07.1949). This was apparently a temporary arrangement, for the following month the Head Committee decided to retain the services of Saul Klaaste for one week only at a remuneration rate of 1 - 16s (R3.60c). A possible reason was that there was apparently not sufficient work to keep him on the pay-roll indefinitely.

The other person engaged by the church to serve as lorry driver was Dawid Gewers. In October, 1948 he applied for permission to erect a temporary dwelling place on the property commonly known as the Theron's Erf<sup>5</sup>. He also asked the Committee to increase his rate of remuneration. The meeting responded by agreeing to allow him to erect a temporary dwelling on the erf. The condition was that he would be permitted to stay there as long as he was in the service of the Head Committee. However, it was decided not to accede to his request for a rise in wages (Head Committee meeting, 11.10.1948). A possible reason for the Committee's decision not to grant him an increment was because he was staying gratis on the premises.

There were members of the church interested in buying the Theron's Erf. During 1952 two applications were considered by the Head Committee from people who were interested in buying the property. They were P.D. Leukes and Petrus Jansen. Leukes made an offer of £1 700 (R3 400) and Jansen's offer was £1 800 (R3 600). However, the meeting decided not to depart from the original price of £3 000 (R6 000). Consequently, the property remained in the hands of the church for the rest of the period covered in this study and well beyond it.

The person appointed to take care of the garden normally stayed in the house on the premises. When one of the members of the church, John Dick, made an offer to the Committee to erect toilets on the property it was because there was a need for such facilities. He was prepared to do it gratis on condition that the church would supply the material needed for the work. This offer was accepted with thanks by the Head Committee (Head Committee meeting, 08.08.1949). The maintenance of the church's town properties included matters such as the cleaning and renovation of the church building at Upington. This matter was considered at the February, 1950

---

<sup>5</sup> This property was referred to as the "Theron's Erf" because the first lessee was a certain bro. N.

meeting. Five tenders for the work were received. The meeting decided to refer it to the Finance Committee for consideration (Head Committee meeting, 13.02.1950).

After the matter was dealt with by that Committee it was again referred to at the May, 1950 meeting of the Head Committee. It was then agreed to accept the tender of D. Adams. His tender price was £10 (R20) (Head Committee meeting, 11.05.1950). Other matters dealt with by that meeting in respect of maintenance work at town properties included the moving of the toilets. It was agreed to move two of the existing toilets situated near the church hall in Mission Street to the other side of the church building. Furthermore it was decided to give attention to the house next to the manse in Van Wyk Street where the verger was staying.

Reference has already been made to the church's garden which also fell under the jurisdiction of the Head Committee. It would appear that this committee at times experienced difficulty in finding a suitable person to take care of the garden. For instance, at the March 1950 meeting of the Head Committee it was decided to advertise the leasing of the erf (Head Committee meeting, 28.03.1950). It would appear, however, that the leasing of the garden erf did not materialize for in subsequent minutes there is no reference to it. Then early in 1952 the Head Committee took a decision to appoint a certain Mr. Christiaan Blom as gardener. His remuneration was fixed at £1-10s Od (R3) per week. The meeting took cognizance of the fact that he was a senior person and it was therefore clear that he would not be able to hold the position for any length of time. The house on the premises normally offered to the gardener was also to be made available to him. The Committee agreed further that it should be renovated before he took occupation of it. From the outset Blom made it clear that he was not quite satisfied with the remuneration offered to him but he was prepared to accept it provisionally (Head Committee meeting, 11.02.1952). Apparently he had hoped that adjustments to his rate of pay would be made fairly soon for at the April, 1952 Head Committee meeting he asked for an increase in his remuneration. However, the meeting did not see its way clear to accede to his request (Head Committee meeting, 21.04.1952). In all probability the reason for this decision was because the meeting was not convinced that the incumbent would be able to render the service expected of him satisfactorily

---

Theron - a member of Upington church.

on account of his age<sup>6</sup>.

The following month the Head Committee decided to terminate the services of C. Blom (Head Committee meeting, 12.05.1952). Apparently he experienced difficulty in finding alternative accommodation for at the June meeting of the Head Committee he asked for an extension of his stay on the premises. The meeting readily agreed to this request since they took pity on him in his plight (Head Committee meeting, 09.06.1953).

After Blom's departure the post fell vacant again and in August of that year the former motor driver, referred to earlier on, Saul Klaaste, asked the Head Committee for permission to occupy the vacant house in the church's garden. He was then unemployed and destitute. The meeting agreed to allow him and his family to stay in the house on a temporary basis. However, he was advised to keep his children out of the garden (Head Committee meeting, 11.08.1952). Since the post of the gardener was still vacant then the Head Committee decided to appoint Klaaste as gardener.

This appointment was also a humane gesture if it is to be borne in mind that Klaaste had developed epilepsy since which made it difficult for him to get employment elsewhere. He was then still responsible to support his family. This appointment was therefore a case of extending a helping hand to a member of the church in a situation of need.

Apart from the garden the church also owned some fixed properties adjacent to the manse at Uppington. On one of these plots stood a building which was leased to a certain Mr. W. Berg. He used it as a dry-cleaning workshop although it was not designed for that purpose. The result was that the church was called upon by the lessee from time to time to make adjustments to the property in order to meet the requirements of a workshop of that nature. For instance in June, 1950 the lessee complained that they did not honour their undertaking they had given him to erect a rest-room on the premises. His concern was that if such facility was not provided he could run the risk of losing his license. The Committee realized the urgency of the situation and agreed to provide a rest-room for use by the lessee and his staff. It was further decided to attend to the

---

<sup>6</sup> This particular episode occurred during the term of office of the writer.

cleaning of the drains which was also brought to the attention of the Committee (Head Committee meeting, 13.01.1950).

Other improvements the Head Committee had to attend to was the provision of additional toilet facilities for the employees of the lessee. The meeting agreed in principle to provide the toilets, and in order to expedite matters, it was decided to ask Mr. Berg to recommend a suitable builder to undertake the work. It was to be understood that the tender price for the builder must be reasonable (Head Committee meeting, 13.01.1950).

The following year the Head committee decided to fix the working time of the employees in the church's garden. It was agreed that during the summer season workers were expected to report for duty at sunrise and to stop working at sunset. During winter they were expected to start just after sunrise when the soil would be reasonably dry (Head Committee meeting, 14.06.1951).

## **9. General assessment**

In assessing the situation it is important to ask the question; did the Settlements serve the purpose for which they were originally intended? The point has been made earlier that the reason why the farms were bought and converted into settlements was because there was a need to be addressed. In an interview with a former minister of the Upington church, Rev. D.M. Abrahams, on the subject of the Settlements the following emerged<sup>7</sup>.

It was never the intention of the Upington Church to buy those farms for security investment, or enrichment and still less for profit or gain. It was - in his words - "simply as a service to the providence of God through God's people". When the church agreed to buy the farms it took a bond on its town properties in order to obtain loans which were needed to conclude the transaction. Reference was already made to the fact that the denomination, who was the bond holder, at some stage requested the church to step up the rate of repayment of the bond. The church used the rent-producing properties to cover the instalments on the bond.

---

<sup>7</sup> The Rev. D. M. Abrahams served the Upington church as resident minister during the years 1973-1988.

If cognizance is taken of the benefit's the Erfholders derived from the Settlements, it can truthfully be said that they were helped to get on their feet again. In 1946 the then Moderator of the Western District Association, the Rev. B.H.M. Brown, paid an official visit to the churches in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts. Reference was already made to the favourable impression the work done on the Settlements made on him. At that time the income of each of the Erfholders amounted to approximately £30 (R60) per annum. It may not sound like a lot of money, but there were the fringe benefits enjoyed by the Erfholders which included accommodation, free access to firewood for domestic purposes and grazing for their livestock. The church also paid for the water from the domestic purposes and grazing for their livestock. The church also paid for the water from the Steyn's canal for irrigation purposes and it built diversion ducts to draw water from the Orange River.

Admittedly, these facilities were not all provided at the time when the Settlements were started; they came in the course of time but the important thing is that the Erfholders reaped the benefits. Furthermore, fresh water for domestic purpose was provided by the laying on of kilometres of pipes to fill storage dams which were erected by the church through its Head Committee.

From the very beginning the church provided schools on every farm where the children of Erfholders could receive at least a basic education. It is therefore true to say that the church succeeded in achieving the aim it had set out for itself - in the words of the Rev. Abrahams, "because it did not compromise on any of the Christian principles which it practiced".

The financial constraints of the Upington church prevented it from providing additional amenities such as holiday cottages, the upgrading of bridges and picnic facilities for which there was also a need. Mention was made in this study of the need of a maternity home on one of the Settlements. The need was recognized but financial constraints caused the church to abandon this laudable idea.

Decentralisation has been covered earlier in this study. When the churches in the group decided in 1946 to separate, and each called their own resident minister, it did have implications for the

Settlements as well. As noted before, when the future of the Settlements was discussed, the Keimoes Church Council declined the offer to take over some of the Settlements. Their contention was that since the bond on the Settlements was not fully paid at the time, the Keimoes church did not see its way clear to start the road to independence with a mill-stone of debt round its neck. The result was that the Upington church had to take full responsibility for the repayment of the bond and management of the farms. Mention was already made of the fact that the repayment of the loan was made to a large extent by the Upington church from the rent generated by its rent-producing properties in the town. In the end the Erfholders benefited because they were given security of tenure which extended even after retirement when they were no longer able to pay. Yet they still remained Erfholders. They could then sublet their erven and the income derived from this was divided in the following ratio: 1/3 to cover running costs; 1/3 for the Erfholder and 1/3 for the lessor. In the course of time the Head Committee recognized that the erfs measuring 2 to 2 ½ morgen were not really adequate and in order to assist Erfholders the Head Committee adopted the following scheme. When an erf became vacant it would be awarded to the Erfholder whose plot adjoined it. In that way the plots were upgraded up to 5 morgen in extent. That, in turn improved the Erfholders' income capacity.

While Settlements became the responsibility of the Upington church, most of the Erfholders and tenants were members of the Keimoes church. This gave rise to the perception that the loyalty of the people on the Settlements should from then onwards be to them, but it was purely in terms of financial obligation. Under those circumstances the task of the Upington church was not only to manage the Settlements but also to provide leadership. The disloyalty displayed by the members not linked to the Upington church, was met with understanding and compassion. The church recognized the fact that those Erfholders were not being disloyal per se but that they were loyal to their own church, even if it was to the detriment of the hand that fed them.

Many Erfholders espoused the idea that by paying their normal commitments in terms of their agreement with the Upington church they would enrich it. They erroneously laboured under the impression that by paying their rent and other commitments it was an indirect form of bond reduction.

Like in the case of the grazing right clause which led to the Witputs episode, which was dealt with already, another misconception, reared its ugly head albeit well after the period covered in this study, it refers to Rule no. 22 of the Rules and Regulations of the Settlements. This particular rule made mention of the issuing of a certificate to Erfholders who completed payment of the £120 (R240) as laid down in Rule 4. This certificate was to be issued after the bond on the Settlements had been fully paid. The way this rule was worded could (and did as the writer discovered afterwards) create in the minds of some, the impression that they could claim title of their plots since the rule stated that after farms had been fully paid, Erfholders would be issued with a certificate of ownership.

But the idea was obviously to grant to Erfholders who qualified under this rule, occupational rights. This would accord to them certain advantages such as the right to sell their produce to whoever they wished. However, there were certain restrictive conditions they had to comply with. Although certificates would be issued to those who qualified, they would remain subject to the rules laid down by the Head Committee. One of these conditions was that the Erfholders could not sell or alienate their plots without prior approval of the Head Committee. They were, however permitted to bequeath their erven to their wives or any of their children after death or when they became physically incapacitated.

But Rule 23 stipulated that the farms would remain the property of the church as reflected in the Title Deed of the farms. No Erfholder would be issued with a separate Title Deed. There is therefore no question about the ownership of the farms. While the validity of the interpretation of this clause was not tested in a court of law, the misconception held by some persisted for a long time.

The church applied discipline in terms of its code of conduct as reflected in the Rules of the Settlements. During the period under review the Head Committee took steps to ensure that the Settlers obeyed the rules. In later years it became increasingly clear that a fair number of Settlers failed to meet their financial obligations. This problem was highlighted by the Annual Auditor's Report which stated that the church should take steps to recover the short-fall or to write off the debt. The Head Committee was reluctant to resort to evictions or legal action in respect of

defaulters. The stance which the church adopted was one of tolerance and understanding.

As pointed out in the study, the church learned through experience that the well-meant provision in the Rules to grant Erfholders grazing rights could have negative effects. The Witputs episode is proof of this. This matter was fully dealt with already. It needs to be observed though that the fact that the Settlements were under the control of the Upington church while the vast majority of the members on the farms belonged to the Keimoes church, did not create tension or division at ground level. The relationship of the Settlers living on the farms irrespective of their church affiliation, was amiable and harmonious. They lived as one community all the time.

To quote again the Rev. Abrahams, the farms which formed the Settlements stretched for kilometres and sustained hundreds of families. "To think", he said, "it covered only 2 300 morgan, a purely Samaritan outreach of this scale must surely go down in the annals of South African Church History as unique. Surely, all this achievement was only possible by the grace of the Almighty God".

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### 1. Introduction

One of the important questions considered in this study was to look at factors which led to a schism in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church's congregation at Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Another matter germane to this was the factors which led to the Congregational Union of South Africa's involvement in the situation<sup>1</sup>.

As mentioned earlier on mission work was commenced at Olyvenhoutsdrift - the original name for Upington - as far back as 1871 by the Rev. C. Schröder. He was appointed by the Mission Commission of the Dutch Reformed Church to start a mission there at the request of the Koranna leader, Klaas Lukas. Although Schröder had a Rhenish background the Dutch Reformed Mission Commission appointed him to this new charge since they did not have at the time a missionary available to go there when the request came. Schröder's term among the Korannas was relatively brief for in 1879 he accepted an invitation to work among the Basuto people at Witzieshoek. But in 1883 he returned to Upington - as Olyvenhoutsdrift was then renamed - to continue the work there (J.M. Laubscher, p.1).

However, hostilities developed between White stock farmers, who moved into the area, and the Korannas. It led to armed clashes and the Colonial Government tried to restore order by sending troops into the area. But it was soon realized that in order to stabilise the situation would cost the Government much more in terms of money and manpower than they had bargained for. The alternative was to solicit the aid of the Bastards who also settled in the area with approval of Klaas Lukas since they were mainly stock farmers. By arming the Bastards the Colonial Government was able to expel the Korannas from the area. In order to compensate the Bastards for their assistance the Colonial Government with the approval of the British Crown set the

---

<sup>1</sup> The Congregational Union of South Africa was the official name of the denomination but for convenience sake the designation Congregational Church will be used.

Gordonia district aside as a homeland for the Bastards.

But the situation did not remain so for long. When the area was opened up a fair number of Whites settled in the North-Western Cape. Upington was established as a town and thus ceased to be a mission station, and Gordonia changed from a homeland for the Bastards to one of the districts in North-Western part of the Cape colony. This development had important implications for the people living there. On the one hand the Rev. Schröder who had at first the responsibility of ministering to the Korannas only then also had to take the Bastards under his wing. When the Korannas were expelled the increasing number of Whites who moved into the area had to be ministered to as well. But by 1893 a separate congregation for white inhabitants was established at Upington.

Another implication for the Bastard community was that the district ceased to be a preferential area for them. The point made by the historian, Prof. J.S. Marais, quoted earlier on, has validity. He contended that the Government took no steps to prevent the Bastards from selling their agricultural lands to Whites despite the fact that it was at the time still regarded as a Bastard homeland. There were admittedly other factors which caused Bastards to part with their properties. These include the thriftless weakness of some and the exploitation of the peoples' ignorance by unscrupulous traders (cf. Marais, 1939, p.95). Over and above these it needs to be observed that climatic factors such as low rainfall, natural disasters - mainly periodic droughts and floods - and also the adverse effect of the economic recession of the late 1920s and early 1930s impacted negatively on the peoples' ability to keep head above water.

## **2. General observations**

### **2.1 The schism**

The schism within the Dutch Reformed Mission Church's congregation in the North-Western Cape had been dealt with. Broadly speaking there were three main contributory factors which caused it. One was the Rev. Schröder's involvement in the irrigation project at Kakamas. It claimed much of his time and attention which he otherwise could have spent in his parish. This

affected his popularity with his people. Furthermore, he became involved in Party politics to the extent that he was even elected as a member in the Colonial Parliament representing the Prieska constituency. He failed, however, to solicit the support of his parishioners in this regard. Finally, the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902, brought matters to a head. When a commando from the Free State arrived at Upington, Schröder aligned himself with them but his parishioners did not follow him. In the end he was arrested at Kakamas when the Free State commando withdrew. With his arrest the churches served by him fell vacant.

## **2.2 The advent of the Congregational Church in the area**

The request of the church council of Upington for a minister reached the London Missionary Society's Cape Town office. But that Society was neither able nor keen to supply a missionary to them. The situation might have been different if the Dutch Reformed Mission Church could provide a substitute soon after the departure of the Rev. Schröder. But since this was not possible, the people had to look for help elsewhere. Unfortunately the people transferred their dissatisfaction with their minister to the denomination he represented.

The request for a minister was referred by the London Missionary Society to the Congregational Church. Evidence supports the contention that the Congregational Church did not enter the field precipitately. Genuine attempts were made to engage the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, the congregational church agreed to receive the group into its fold as an associate church. Permission was then given to them to extend a call to the Rev. Alexander Stewart the then resident minister of Heidelberg Congregational church in the Cape.

Stewart came out to this country from Scotland in September, 1898 in response to an invitation from the Congregational Church to serve one of its vacant pastorates in South Africa. At the time he was a final year student for the ministry at Harley College in London and the Rev. T. Gamble who was on a visit to the United Kingdom called at that institution and made contact with him. At that time the Congregational Church experienced an acute shortage of ministers in this country and Stewart was then persuaded to accept a call to the Heidelberg church (A. Stewart, 1956, p 22). While at Heidelberg he acquired a facility in Dutch which was then officially at any

rate the other main language next to English in the Cape. His term at Heidelberg lasted until 1902 when he moved to Upington to take over the work there.

### **2.3 Consolidation**

To the Rev. Stewart's advantage it was that when he started his ministry in Gordonia he was conversant with Afrikaans consequently he had no communication problems with his parishioners. But he had several challenges to face. The disruption caused by the Anglo-Boer War and in particular the schism itself posed major challenges he had to address. As mentioned in this study one of the problems he had to deal with was to find new church sites at the three major centres and to erect places of worship there. This became necessary when the Supreme Court ruling was that the church buildings used by the breakaway group were legally vested in the Dutch Reformed Mission Commission. But this problem was resolved when sites were donated by members of the church and in the case of Kenhardt a site could be bought from the Local Authority which was available. The erection of the church buildings took place during the ministry of the Rev. Stewart.

Furthermore, he was able to start schools at the three main centres - Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt. After the Rev. Stewart qualified as a teacher he managed to train teachers locally in order to staff the schools under the control of the church. He worked under difficult circumstances since transport was fairly primitive at the time. His main means of transport was the horse and cart and much of his visitation was done on horse-back.

To his credit it can be said that he maintained a good working relationship with his Dutch Reformed Mission Church counterparts. It needs to be observed that there was an element of realism in his approach to the situation. He knew that in order to minister in a community which was fairly closely-knit it would not augur well for the success of his work to adopt a confrontational approach. The old adage is true, ministers come and ministers go, but the people remain behind and they have to live together. Unfortunately that spirit took time to work through to the people at ground-level.

On balance it can be said that the Rev. Stewart did much to establish Congregationalism in the area. He was cautious not to introduce drastic changes. He retained, for instance, the system of elected deacons and elders and the members' meetings which was in any case common to Congregationalism. During the time of the Rev. Schröder the election of church council members was done thus the transition from the Dutch Reformed Church's system of church government to a Congregational one went off smoothly. However, it took time before the community fully adjusted to the reality that there was room enough for both local churches to co-exist. The fact that Uppington developed in the course of time into a growing country town and since the Gordonia district was incorporated into the rest of the Cape colony it caused other denominations to enter the scene and they also catered for their own members' spiritual needs who lived out there.

Unfortunately with the passage of time the Rev. Stewart felt that the pressure of work weighed heavily on him. When his wife's health also gave trouble the Rev. Stewart accepted a call to his former parish at Heidelberg where he served from 1918 to the end of his term in the active ministry.

After his departure an interregnum followed when the churches in the North-Western Cape were served by consulents. A consulentship is at best a temporary measure and the unfortunate feature is that several ministers served the churches for brief periods. In the absence of a resident minister a further problem reared its head at those churches namely group formation. Several attempts were made to effect reconciliation but without success until the consulentship of the Rev. Damon in 1931.

## **2.4 Post-Stewart era**

The second resident minister called by the group of churches in the North-Western Cape was the Rev. S. Horne, another Scotsman and fresh from college. His term covered the period 1923 to 1927 and it differed in some respects from that of his predecessor. While the Rev. Stewart had the advantage of gaining experience in his ministry of a rural community in the South-Western Cape, Horne had to find his way in unfamiliar circumstances. As mentioned before the Rev. Stewart was conversant with Afrikaans while the Rev. Horne by contrast had to acquire a working knowledge of the language within a very short space of time. Initially this seems to have posed a problem in some of the churches particularly Kenhardt (cf. Kenhardt Cong. Kerk, 1902-1979, p 7).

However, this was not an insurmountable problem for with the passage of time he overcame it. But in addition to this there were other difficulties he had to cope with. The main one was the economic depressed situation of the area which also had its effect on the people. Some people lost their farms which as their source of income and were thrown on a depressed labour market. These impacted negatively on the church and the result was that the Rev. Horne was unable to build up the work on the outstations since the church could not provide him with a motor car to be used in his work. Members fell in arrears with their normal contributions and as mentioned before his stipend could not even be paid regularly.

Under these adverse circumstances the Rev. Horne did his best but when the call from Bethesda Congregational church in Port Elizabeth came he accepted it. But he still served Upington and Keimoes churches as consulent in order to enable them to pay the arrear stipends they owed him. He could not include the Kenhardt church since it was not possible for him to fit in another week-end for them during the course of a quarter.

## **2.5 The Rev. Saul Damon's term of office**

The Rev. Damon's contact with the churches of the North-Western Cape first came when he was appointed consulent of Kenhardt church. As pointed out in this study, thereafter he was

appointed to serve Upington and Keimoes churches in that capacity. He made history in the sense that he was the first minister of colour to serve those churches. During the years 1933 to 1949 he served as the churches' resident minister and when he took over the work the community as a whole was badly affected by the depression of the 1930s. That posed several challenges to him. But in all it can be said that his term of office ushered in one of the most colourful periods in the history of the Congregational Church in the area. The following highlights can be listed more or less in chronological sequence. These have been dealt with fully in this study but by way of summarizing them a brief reference will not be out of place.

### **2.5.1 African work**

It was during his term in office that he made contact with the African congregation at Upington. They were originally linked to the Upington church and after they severed ties they operated as an independent congregation in the old location but followed the Congregational system of church government. Ministrations they obtained on an ad hoc basis from a minister based in the Eastern Cape but who was not on the roll of ministers of the Congregational Church. The Rev. Damon managed to persuade them to return to the Congregational fold in the mid-thirties and for some 14 years he served them as consulent gratis.

### **2.5.2 Prieska**

Another highlight in his ministry was the extension of the Congregational Church's work and witness to the town of Prieska. In line with his style of ministry he responded to a need for spiritual care to those families who belonged to Upington or Kenhardt churches were technically an extension charge of the Upington church the intention was obviously that it should ultimately develop into a full status church. The way it was structured and also its operation support this contention. The branch had its own elected church council members meetings as well as other office-bearers and operated its own bank account. Although it functioned under the supervision of Upington church it enjoyed a fair measure of autonomy.

### **2.5.3 Education**

Mention was already made of the important contribution the Rev. Damon made in the field of education in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts. He concentrated on the establishment of schools on the outstations of the church where children could at least receive a basic education. This was particularly important since in many cases the people who lived on the farms could not afford to send their children to the town in order to attend school. By the time the Rev. Damon left Upington in 1949 the churches which were formerly part of the group all had primary schools under their management. At Kenhardt, Upington and Keimoes the local primary schools were united and the establishment churches managed them on a joint basis.

At Upington the establishment of the first high school for people of colour in 1943 crowned all Rev. Damon's efforts in the field of education. For years he fought, at times a lonely battle, to persuade the Department of Education to sanction the establishment of a high school in the North-Western Cape. Eventually the church had to step in and provide a building which could house the proposed school. Again the other established churches at Upington were involved with the management of the school. But it took years before the Cape Education Department put up a building to accommodate the Carlton van Heerden High School.

### **2.5.4 Decentralisation**

When the Rev. Damon started his ministry at Upington he continued to run them as a group of local churches. This was the way the work was managed even in the days of the Rev. Schröder before the Congregational Church entered the scene. This was continued by both Revs. Stewart and Horne but with the expansion of the work into present day Namibia and Kalahari as well as the Buchberg Irrigation scheme it became extremely demanding for one minister to cope. As pointed out the settlement of an assistant minister based at Keimoes during the early part of the 1940s did not work out as envisaged. From 1943 onwards the Rev. Damon was again faced with the full burden of the work single-handed. It became increasingly clear that it was physically impossible for one minister to do justice to the work in a circuit that was so spread out. Consequently in 1946 at the instance of the Rev. Damon, Keimoes and Kenhardt churches

decided to secede from the group and to call their own resident ministers. With this development the Rev. Damon was able to concentrate on the Upington church while the other two churches extended calls to their own ministers. For the group its dissolution had important implications. They had to adjust to their new status and develop their own identities. On the more positive side it needs to be observed that the basis of co-operation among the churches which was laid prior to decentralisation continued afterwards. A measure of overlapping did occur although the boundaries of the churches were agreed upon during decentralisation discussions. Fortunately it was limited to a few isolated cases. For instance at Louisvale Village both Upington and Kenhardt churches had wards. The same applied to Curriescamp where Upington and Keimoes had wards. But in neither case did it cause any friction between the churches concerned.

### **2.5.5 Outstations**

The development of outstations was a normal feature in local churches particularly in rural areas. It must be seen as the extension of a local church's ministry to its members who moved to settle elsewhere but who wished to retain their links with the home church. This pattern evolved also in the North-Western Cape. As mentioned before some of the people settled as far a field as Kalkfeld some 1300 kilometres away from Keimoes. Those families who moved to the Rehoboth area were some 800 kilometres away from Keimoes. In both instances the people appealed to their home church to arrange that they receive ministrations. The response of Keimoes church council was to establish outstations there. The same situation pertains in respect of the families who moved to the Kalahari and some had links with Upington church and others with the Keimoes church. Upington and Keimoes church councils agreed that this work should be placed under the care of the latter church. All these outstations were started during the term of the Rev. Damon.

Some of these outstations developed during the course of time to such an extent that full church status could be given to them. This was the case in respect of the outstations which were established in Namibia. In a sense the Rev. Damon can thus be seen as a pioneer of what in later years became the Synod of Namibia. However, it is true that not all outstations reached full status as churches for the simple reason that they did not reach the level of development where

full status could be accorded to them. Neither the Rev. Damon nor any of his colleagues forced the pace by encouraging outstations to apply for full church status while they were able to stand on their own feet. The Rev. Damon and the ministers who took over the work in the other two churches after decentralisation were realistic enough not to encourage development towards independence from the respective mother churches before they qualified for that status. It was realized that the creation of weak non-viable local churches without adequate growth potential would have been a futile exercise.

### **2.5.6 Golden jubilee celebrations**

Shortly after the Rev. Damon started his second term at the Kenhardt church towards the end of 1950 he became the prime mover to encourage local churches to observe the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the advent of Congregationalism in the area. Both Keimoes and Kenhardt church councils endorsed the idea enthusiastically. One of the important aspects of the celebrations was the dedication of the church hall at Kenhardt which was named after the Rev. A. Stewart, the founder of the work. The highlight of the festivities was the fact that the Rev. Stewart was able to attend the celebrations in person.

A commemorative brochure was issued in which the half century of the Congregational Church's work and witness was covered in popular form. The Revs. Damon and Stewart were the compilers of it. All churches including the Prieska branch participated in the celebrations and it was on the whole well patronized.

### **2.5.7 Church settlements**

Much space has been devoted to the origin and the development of the Settlements. It was during the term of office of the Rev. Damon that farms were bought by the church which were converted into Settlements.

The point has been made in respect of the Settlements that it was the original intention to provide homes for church members in need; furthermore the Settlements provided employment for those

who were out of work and in general to enable people to make a fresh start again. Apart from the Erfholders other people were also accommodated as tenants who were without refuge. On the Settlements they could at least get a roof over their heads for which they paid a nominal rental. In some instances they were employed by the Settlers on their Erfs.

The rules made by the church applicable to Erfholders and those made for the tenants aimed at ensuring an orderly and disciplined community on the Settlements. It was inevitable that some Settlers and tenants abused the privileges offered to them. But the Head Committee could then deal with such cases in terms of the disciplinary code provided for in the Rules for the Settlements.

The point has been made that the Settlements were started not with a view to generate extra income for the church but solely to assist people who lost their means of income. Some were stock farmers who lost their farms as a result of droughts and other natural disasters. Still others had an interest in agriculture but lacked the means to buy land near the Orange River. Some were unemployed and therefore destitute. Thus for a variety of reasons the church was called upon to lend a helping hand.

Credit belonged to the Rev. Damon for he recognized the need and persuaded the church to buy the farms mentioned and converted them into Settlements. The way the farms were managed by the church lends credence to the contention that there was no intention to maintain the Settlements for gain. In fact the church did not derive any financial benefit out of the farms.

It is true that the co-operation needed from the Settlers was sometimes lacking. What lent credence to this contention is the fact that in later years when some of the Settlers failed to meet their water bills which were payable to the Steyn's Canal Water Board, the church had to come to the rescue and settle the accounts. The same applied to the Divisional Council rates which the church had to meet when some of the Erfholders ran into arrears. Reference was already made to a measure of reluctance among some of the Erfholders to perform public work during the winter months when the work on the Erfs came to a standstill.

The Witputs episode had been dealt with fully. The crux of the matter was that when the church was prevented from selling part of the grazing fields the flaw in the agreement with the Erfholders became evident. The fact that the church gave grazing rights to the Settlers proved to be an obstacle to the church's decision to sell part of the grazing lands. The way it could have been resolved was to obtain the permission of all the Erfholders to the sale. Unfortunately there was a group who remained adamant in withholding their permission. Although a new lease was drawn up where a reference to grazing rights was omitted the church could not make it applicable to existing Erfholders who were admitted under old Rules. It could only be made applicable to new applicants.

Another matter which lent itself to misinterpretation was the certificate of occupation which was to be issued to the Erfholders who complied with the provisions of their agreement with the church and in particular the amount of £120 (R240) they were expected to pay. Some of the Erfholders misunderstood it to mean that the certificate was tantamount to a title deed. As mentioned before this was only a perception in the minds of some of the Erfholders but it could not stand the test in any court of law. The agreement between the church and Erfholders covered the question of ownership adequately but the perception nevertheless persisted for some time to come.

It is quite clear that when the rules and the agreement were drawn up the church could not foresee the problems which could have arisen like the Witputs issue since it acted in good faith.

In retrospect it can be said that the church's intention to provide a service to its members in need with establishment of the Settlements was in itself a philanthropic act which cannot be gainsaid. It did provide to many people a new lease of life but it became increasingly clear that with the passage of time it would become extremely difficult to maintain the farms and to provide the improvements needed. The problem was that the church did not have the funds to provide the infra-structure that was needed. This was further aggravated by the Settlers' inability and in some instances unwillingness to meet their financial obligations to the church. Years later the church handed the Settlement over to the Government and received in lieu of it a nominal compensation. But that falls outside the scope of this study.

Decentralisation also impacted on the Settlements in that while the majority of the Settlers were linked to the Keimoes church, the Upington church owned the farms in terms of the agreement reached at the discussions among the churches. However, it did not cause any problem between the two churches. The Keimoes church council confined itself to the spiritual care of its members living on the settlements, while the Upington church council through its Head Committee concerned itself with the management of the farms. At ground level it did cause not any problem among the members of the two churches who were in residence there.

### **2.5.8 The eventful decades**

There are two matters in reference to the 1930s and 1940s meriting attention since both exercised to greater or lesser extent an impact on the local churches of the North-Western Cape. Mention was made of the fact that during the 1930s serious attempts were made by the three denominations - viz. the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches - to unite organically.

While these discussions were in progress the local churches were also given the opportunity to state their view on the matter. The churches in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts were also asked to express an opinion on the matter. The position taken by the Rev. Damon was also reflected in the stand the group of churches took on the issue. He was of the opinion that the motive for Church Union was fear-driven rather than a genuine desire to bring the three denominations together. While this could not be proved or refuted on the basis of available evidence, Church Union discussions ultimately broke down. The three denominations, as stated before, failed to reach agreement on some of the important issues.

History has shown that the road to Church Union among denominations is a long and laborious process. The churches of the group served by the Rev. Damon concurred with his view on the matter. Part of the reason was that since there was no Presbyterian Church presence in the Upington area there was a measure of reluctance to enter into union with a denomination the people had no knowledge or contact with. It was perhaps a case of 'unknown, unloved'.

On the political side the 1940s ushered in a fairly stormy period hence it is referred to in this study as the 'Roaring Forties'. The Coloured community was particularly adversely affected when the Coloured Advisory Council (C.A.C.) was established in 1943 by the Government of the day. The intelligensia mainly represented by the teachers' corps and the profession section of the people as well as the African Peoples' Organization (A.P.O.) were sharply divided on the issue. Some of the people favoured an outright rejection of this Council since it was to them the precursor of a Department of Coloured Affairs analogous to the Native Affairs Department. Another section of the people felt that this Council should be given a chance. The Teachers' League of South Africa (T.L.S.A.) split on this issue at its annual conference held at Kimberley in July, 1943. It led to the establishment of another teachers' organization, the Teachers' Educational and Professional Association (T.E.P.A.).

For some time there were serious differences between the two organisations bordering at times on animosity. Both organisations had branches in the North-Western Cape. But the situation affected only in a limited way the position of the teachers in the area. This was, as stated before, largely due to the fact that although both Rev. Damon and Mr. A.J. Ferreira, the church treasurer and principal of the Carlton Van Heerden High School, accepted nomination on the C.A.C. they kept their political convictions to themselves and did not drag them either into the church or the school. The result was that the stormy period experienced in the political arena elsewhere did not affect the local community to the same extent as in other parts of the country.

## **2.6 Post-decentralisation era**

In retrospect it can be said that the churches of the group adjusted well after independence. They were challenged to stand on their own feet and on the whole they managed reasonably well. The Keimoes church which was numerically the strongest of the group made good progress during the five year term - 1947 - 1952 - when the Rev. L.C. King served them as residential minister. With strict financial discipline the church made steady progress. During that period as mentioned before the sanctuary in Kruger Street was enlarged. It needs to be observed that Keimoes was essentially a rural church. The town only received municipal status in the late 1940s but even

after it had been upgraded it remained rural in character. Most of the members of the church stayed on the islands near the Orange River and others on the church settlements and some moved to the Kalahari and to present-day Namibia. But they were cared for by the Keimoes church as far as their spiritual needs were concerned. The new manse was built in 1953 to replace the old small one that served for years as accommodation for the ministerial students who did supply work there and also for both Rev. Windvogel and Rev. King.

Keimoes had growth potential and in the course of time it became a progressive town and that was also reflected in the development of the church. The point has been made that an important factor as far as the church was concerned was the fact that Keimoes did not start the journey to independence with the mill-stone of debt on the Settlements round its neck. The Upington church had to bear that burden and take responsibility for the management of the farms.

The Kenhardt church also made reasonable progress. The difference there was that unlike Keimoes and Upington which had stable ministries during that period, Kenhardt church first had a probationer for 19 months; thereafter it had to revert to consulentships until the Rev. Damon commenced his second term there towards the end of 1950.

It must be conceded though that Kenhardt was not so favourably positioned as the other two churches since the economic development of the town was stunted. It never had a direct rail link with the rest of the country; its nearest railway station was at Putsonderwater. For a long time it had to rely on a bus service for both goods as well as passenger service. In the town itself there was very little economic growth. Unlike Upington, Keimoes or even Kakamas it was situated some distance from the Orange River. Kenhardt is situated in a semi-arid part of the country; it is dependent for its water supply on rain and boreholes. The main source of income in the district was derived from stock-farming and without any industries the town had a low economic growth potential. Unemployment was rife. During the early part of the Rev. Damon's ministry at Kenhardt several families moved to Macassar and the Strand in the Western-Cape because of the lack of job opportunities at home.

That accounts for the fact that the church's strength laid largely in its outstations particularly

those in the Buchberg Irrigation scheme. The factors referred to impacted negatively on the church as well but despite such constraints the work showed some progress albeit not as rapid as was the case of the other churches of the former group.

Mention was made of the situation at the Prieska branch during the term of office of the Rev. Damon when he was resident minister of Upington. Prieska is also situated along the Orange River some 240 kilometres from Upington. It had been linked by rail with De Aar before 1915. Thereafter the line was extended to Upington and later further to the then South West Africa. However, the growth of the branch was slower than in the case of Upington or Keimoes. The historical circumstances which led to the development of a Congregational presence at Prieska differed from those of the other churches of the group. One of the factors which needs to be borne in mind is that the Congregational Church entered the scene comparatively late when the other denominations were already established in the town. Furthermore, the economic growth of the town was not as rapid as one could expect it to be. Prieska at that time did not attract large numbers of people because it did not offer sufficient employment opportunities for people from outside the district. The slow growth of the town was also reflected in the rate of development in the branch. Moreover, the work was cared for by an evangelist who served under the supervision of the minister of the Upington church. For a long time the branch was not able to obtain full church status since its progress was not considered to be fast enough to warrant it. Decentralisation also had an effect on the Prieska branch. In terms of the agreement reached between Upington and Kenhardt church at those discussions some of the outstations like Wegdraai and Brandboom which were formerly linked to Prieska were placed under the care of Kenhardt<sup>2</sup>.

The Prieska branch did apply for full church status through the mother church and the relevant structures of the denomination as mentioned earlier on. But these were turned down at first because it was not considered at the time as sufficiently ready for that status. One other factor which hampered the granting of full church status to the Prieska branch was the qualified approval the Upington church gave to the request for upgrading. The Upington church council made its approval conditional to the branch paying the mother church out for the plots it

---

<sup>2</sup> The writer gained this impression from conversations held years ago with the late Evangelist J. Adams at Prieska.

purchased at Prieska on which the church and later on the manse were erected. At that time Prieska branch was not in a position to meet that requirement. Fortunately with the passage of time the situation improved. As far as the town was concerned the economic prospects improved and the branch benefited by it. The stage was eventually reached where it qualified for full church status but it falls outside the period covered in this study.

After the Rev. Damon's departure from Upington early in 1949 the church reverted to consuentships for a relatively brief period. The term of the Rev. S. Bimray was covered in this study. It was eventful since both he and the church experienced difficulty to adapt to the new situation. Without going into the detail of the situation it is reasonably certain that the people expected to find in the Rev. Bimray something of the Rev. Damon's style of ministry to which they had grown accustomed to. For instance when he responded at a welcome social held in his honour shortly after his arrival at Upington he tried to dispel the idea that he would in a sense be a carbon copy of the Rev. Damon.

The example he used pointed to this; he referred to the different choir conductors who all had different ways of conducting but in the end produced good music. By the same token his contention was that while his methods may differ from those of his predecessor the end result may be the same<sup>3</sup>.

Unfortunately as pointed out it did not work out as he had hoped for since neither the people nor he himself were prepared to accept or make drastic changes. The main issues concerning the baptism of babies born out of wedlock and the tried and tested methods of fundraising which the people were accustomed to were fully covered in this study. Although the Rev. Bimray challenged longstanding customs in the congregation and met with very stiff opposition it was not entirely without significance. In retrospect it can be said that it caused people to reconsider their own attitude and understanding of these issues.

When the Rev. Bimray left Upington in 1951 a brief period of vacancy followed and in February, 1952 the Rev. H.W.D. v.d. Linde commenced his ministry there. He came in the throws of the

---

<sup>3</sup> This particular point came out in a conversation with the late Rev. Bimray in October, 1953.

golden jubilee celebrations of the Congregational churches of the area. During his term in office the contentious issues which caused sharp differences of opinion in the time of his predecessor were addressed and laid to rest. The church council was also prevailed upon to rescind its previous decision about the handing over of the Settlements to the State.

Looking at the course of the history of the Congregational Church's work and witness in the area it can truthfully be said that it made important contributions to the spiritual and material upliftment of the community. After the schism, time the great healer, brought about reconciliation in the community and the local churches co-operated reasonably well in matters of common concern.

## APPENDIX I

### REËLS EN REGULASIES VAN DIE CONGREGATIONAL KERK NEDERSETTING VAN BLOEMSMOND, GEELKOP, CURRIESCAMP EN SOVERBY SOOS OPGESTEL DEUR DIE HOOFKOMMISSIE VOLGENS ARTIKEL 7(d) VAN DIE KERK KONSTITUSIE

1. Erwe sal die grootte van twee to twee-en-'n-half (2 tot 2½) morge wees.
2. Enige een wat 'n erfhouer wil wees sal skriftelik aansoek doen by die Hoofkommissie: en sy aansoek sal alleen in ag geneem word as hy 'n lid van die Independent gemeente, en 'n intree fooi betaal van vyf pond.
3. Enige erfhouer wat goedgekeur is deur die Hoofkommissie, sal sy erf ontvang vir die grootte waarvoor dit opgegee is, en sal die reg hê om dadelik enige besware teen die erf te maak waaroor hy nie tevrede is nie: mits hy na verloop van vyf dae vanaf die dag van ontvangs geen reg sal hê om enige besware in te dien nie, en sal die volle huur betaal waarvoor die erf opgegee is.
4. Elke erfhouer sal die bedrag van Een-honderd-en-twintig pond (£120) betaal, plus ses persent (6%) rente, en administrasie en verbeterings koste as volgend:-  
Minstens £10 per jaar op kapitaal, (£12 in geval van Bloemsmond) plus 6% rente of volgens die rente koers mag styg of val, plus £1 administrasie en verbeterings koste: mits die rente altyd die eerste aanspraak op enige bedrag sal hê wat 'n erfhouer mag afbetaal.
5. Elke erfhouer sal 'n handboekie aanhou waarop die sekretaris van die hoofkommissie alle afbetalings sal inskrywe, en wat sal dien as 'n bewys vir die erfhouer, niemand anders sal die reg hê om die reg boekie in te skryf nie, behalwe die Secretaris of sy plaasvervanger nie.
6. Elke erfhouer sal 'n weireg op die veld hê vir 25 kleinvee, en 10 grootvee: mits hy nie meer donkies mag aanhou nie, as wat die Hoofkommissie van tyd tot tyd mag bepaal nie. Enige erfhouer wat met toestemming van die Hoofkommissie donkies oor die getal mag aanhou, sal 'n bedrag van 2/- die kop per maand betaal, en vir bees 6d die kop per maand, vir kleinvee teen 5/- die honderd per maand. Nieteenstaande die voorafgaande pryse nie, sal die hoofkommissie die reg hê om dit te verander van jaar tot jaar na hul goedkeuring, vir die behou van die veld en die diere. Geen erfhouer mag diere op sy reg in die veld aanhou nie,

wat nie sy wettige bona fide eiendom is nie.

7. Indien enige erfhouer met sy huur agter is, sal die Hoofkommissie die eerste aanspraak hê op enige van sy vaste of roerende waarde, soos geboue, grootvee, kleinvee, waens, karre of pluimvee. En hy sal nie reg hê om enige van die genoemde dinge wegmaak, vervreemd verkoop, of op enige ander manier van die hand afsit sonder toestemming van die Hoofkommissie nie.
8. Geen erfhouer sal aanspraak hê op enige oeste nie, en mag geen oeste verkoop, gebruik, vervreemd of op enige manier wegmaak of beskadig nie: maar sal alle oeste veilig in die kommissie stoor lewer, totdat sy huur betaal is. Intussen mag die Hoofkommissie vir kos en ander benodighede, indien hul dit nodig ag. Alle oeste sal deur die erfhouders gedors of getrap word, net soos die Hoofkommissie mag van tyd tot tyd reël.
9. Die Hoofkommissie sal 'n verslag hou van jaar tot jaar, van die opbrengs van elke erf, en vir die doel sal hul die reg hê om die getal van elke erf se opbrengs of gerwe te laat tel: en elke erfhouer sal verplig wees om die regte en ware getal van sy oeste op te gee.
10. Elke erf moet diep geploeg en skoon gehou word, dit moet gesaai en geplant word met saad en gewasse wat die Hoofkommissie van tyd tot tyd mag aanbeveel: en alle gronde moet gewerk word volgens reëling van die Hoofkommissie. Geen erfhouer mag die reëling van die Hoofkommissie weier nie.
11. Elke erfhouer sal 'n bouterrein kry, wat vir hom deur die kommissie aangewys sal word; en waarop hy vir hom 'n huis van gebakte stene sal bou, of soos die Kommissie vir hom mag toelaat; hy mag ook daarop pluimvee en ander huislike vee aanhou.
12. Alle werk op die nedersettings soos paaie regmaak, watervore skoonmaak of damme bou of repareer, store of skoolkamers bou, stene vorm, of enige verbeterings vir die algemene gebruik van erfhouders sal deur oproeping gedoen word; deur erfhouders wat in spanne gedeel sal word. Enige erfhouer wat versuim om sy plek in te neem by enige oproeping waarvan sy span kennis gegee is, sal 'n bedrag van 2/- per dag wat hy afwesig is aan die kommissie betaal; en die kommissie sal een aanstel teen 'n som van 2/- per dag.
13. Elke span sale en uit hul span kies, wie erken sal word as die span voorman, en dit sal genoeg wees as die kommissie aan hom kennis gee van enige oproeping waarvoor sy span nodig mag wees, en hy sal skuldig wees om sy span kennis te gee van sodanige oproeping. Die Hoofkommissie sal die reg hê om na hul goedkeuring uit administrasie fondse, 'n klein

prysie aan die span wat die beste gedrag en getrouheid te gee by die einde van elke jaar.

14. Die Hoofkommissie sal sorg dra oor die geskikte en beskaafde gemeenskaplike lewe van die erhouers op die nedersettings, en sal Godsdien en samekoms voorsien; behalwe dat die kerkraad oor die Godsdien en Geestelike lewe van erhouers sal reël. Enige erhouer wat himself skuldig maak aan die oortreding van die lands wet, sal voor of na hy by die lands wet voorgekom het voor die Hoofkommissie verskyn, en hom verdedig in die klagte teen hom; en as die kommissie hom skuldig vind mag hul hom van die nedersetting verban, en in so 'n geval verloor hy alle voorregte op die nedersetting, en sal die reg hê om enige vergoeding van die Hoofkommissie, die kerk, of die nedersetting te eis nie. Hy sal ook nie die reg hê om enige verbeterings af te breek, verkoop, of op enige wyse te beskadig, of daarvoor skade te eis nie.
15. Enige erfhouer wat aangekla word vir onsedelike gedrag, dronkenskap of die gebruik van sterke drank, of vir die oortreding van enige van hierdie reëls sal voor die Hoofkommissie verskyn en die reg hê om himself te verdedig, en as hy skuldig gevind word, mag hul hom van die nedersetting verban, of straf met 'n redelike boete na die erns van sy oortreding.
16. Die erfhouers sal elke jaar drie van hul beste manne voorstel vir kiesing as Plaaskommissie, na so 'n voorstelling sal die name skriftelik aan die Hoofkommissie ingedien word; daarna sal die Hoofkommissie ook drie manne voorstel en uit die ses manne sal hul twee kies wat sal dien as plaaskommissie, kiesing sal deur stembriefies geskied; en die Hoofkommissie mag nie vooraf praat oor wie hul gaan kies nie. Enige plaaskommissie mag herkies word.
17. Die Plaaskommissie sal sorg drag oor die nedersetting, en sien dat die reëls en bevel van die Hoofkommissie uitgevoer word. Hulle sal goeie orde hou op die nedersettings, en sien dat erfhouers hulle werk goed en behoorlik doen. Hulle sal die oë en mondstuk van die Hoofkommissie wees; en enige bevel, besluit of daad wat hulle doen sal die aanspreeklikheid van die Hoofkommissie wees. Geen erfhouer mag die besluit of bevel van die plaaskommissie weier of teestaan nie, maar sal die reg hê om hom daarna op die Hoofkommissie te beroep; as hy meen dat hy deur die plaaskommissie mishandel is, en die Hoofkommissie mag enige bevel, besluit, of daad die plaaskommissie verwerp of verander na hulle goedkeuring.
18. 'n Plaaskommissie sal ontslaan word van huur te betaal op sy erf vir so lank hy gekies is, behalwe dat hy die rente van 6% of volgens die wissel koers van tyd tot tyd, op sy erf sal

betaal asook sy oor getal vee en administrasie en verbeterings koste; al die ander voorregte wat aan die erf behoort sal hy vry hê.

19. Die Hoofkommissie mag na ondersoek 'n plaaskommissie van sy pos afsit vir enige misdaad of wangedrag, en 'n ander in sy plek aanstel vir die tydperk wat hy nog sou dien; en in die geval sal sy vry erf voorreg wegval; en aan die een toegeken word wat in sy plek aangestel is; en hy sal vanaf die datum huur betaal.
20. Die Hoofkommissie mage enige reëls uitvoer ook wat nie hier beskryf is nie, wat na hul goedkeuring sal dien tot die goeie bestuur en afbetaling van die plaas.
21. Wanneer 'n erfhouer sy kapitaal met rente afbetaal het, sal hy nie meer huur betaal nie; behalwe dat in geval van oorlog, misoeste, watervloede of enige onvoorsiende moeilikheid wat mag voorval; mag die Hoofkommissie 'n huur toelaag vereis van erfhouders totdat die plase afbetaal en sonder skuld is. Daarna sal die Hoofkommissie 'n toelaag op elke erfhouer lê voldoende sal wees om administrasie en verbeterings koste te dek.
22. Na afbetaling van die plase sal erfhouders 'n sertifikaat van eiendom ontvang wat sal toon dat elk die vrye eienaar van sy erf is; en wat hom die reg sal gee om met sy oeste te maak wat hy wil; mits hy die reg sal hou onderhewig aan die kommissie reëls, en goeie gedrag. Hy sal nie die reg hê om sy erf te verkoop, vervreemd, verband of op enige manier wegmaak sonder toestemming van die Hoofkommissie nie; maar mag dit skriftelik aan sy vrou of enige van sy kinders oormak by sy sterfte of deur enige liggaamlike onbekwaamheid.
23. Dit word verstaan dat die plase bly die eiendomme van die kerk onder een kaart en Transport, en dat geen erfhouer aparte kaart en Transport sal kry nie. Enige erfhouer wat aan 'n ander kerkgenootskap sluit sal al sy voorregte verloor en dadelik die nedersetting verlaat en geen skade vergoeding sal hom uitbetaal word nie.

Ek herken hiermee dat die voorafgaande reëls aan my verduidelik is, en dat ek dit alles goed verstaan het. Ek verklaar ook dat ek gewillig is om my onder die reëls te onderwerp, en dit sorgvuldig te onderhou.

Geteken te ..... in die distrik van .....

Op hierdie ..... dag van ..... 19.....

.....

**HANDTEKENING**

**GETUIE:** .....

.....

## APPENDIX II

### REGULASIES VIR BEWARING VAN VELD EN OOR BUITEHUURDERS VAN DIE UPINGTON CONGREGATIONAL KERK NERSETTINGS VAN BLOEMSMOND, GEELKOP, CURRIESCAMP EN SOVERBY, DISTRIK GORDONIA.

1. Onder reël 16 sal 'n derde Plaaskommissie gekies word om te ageer as veldwagter.
2. (a) HOUT: Die Hoofkommissie hou die reg uit om droë hout aan Nedersetters toe te laat uit die buite veld, onder buitengewone omstandighede b.v. wanneer die rivier vol is, op aansoek van die Nedersetters deur die Plaaskommissie aan die Hoofkommissie. So 'n toelating sal slegs wees vir dragies hout en nie kar, lorrie of wa vragte nie.

Oortreders van hierdie regulasie sal beboet word.

(b) Nedersetters het geen reg om hout van hulle erf te verkoop aan enige persoon, behalwe die Hoofkommissie teen 'n prys vasgestel deur die Hoofkommissie.

Hout kan alleenlik van die Hoofkommissie erwe gesleep word vir die Hoofkommissie en nie vir private doeleindes nie.

Oortreders sal beboet word.

Die Plaaskommissie sal verantwoordelik gehou word vir toesig hou oor die Hoofkommissie se erwe se hout - ten boete as daar oorvleueling van toesig is.

3. BUITEHUURDERS: Enige persoon wat verlang om 'n buitehuurder te wees op een van die plase sal skriftelik en persoonlik aansoek doen by the Hoofkommissie.

(a) Sulke persone moet lede wees van die Congregational Kerk.

(b) As hulle ingeneem word sal hulle 5/- per maand betaal. Die Hoofkommissie hou die reg uit om huurgeld te verander op kennisgewing van drie (3) maande.

(c) Van hulle sal verwag word om 'n steenhuis op te rig op 'n plek wat aangewys sal word deur

die Plaaskommissie. Wanneer 'n Buitehuurder verban word vir wangedrag of wanneer hy op sy eie vertrek, sal hy geen reg hê op enige skadevergoeding teen, die Kerk, Hoofkommissie of Nedersetting. Hy sal geen reg hê om geboue af te breek nie. Alle geboue so opgerig bly die eiendom van die Plaaseienaar.

(d) Buitehuurders sal vuurmaakhout kry van die Hoofkommissie erwe wat deur die Plaaskommissie slegs vir persoonlik gebruik aan hulle gegee word. Hulle sal geen reg hê om hout in die buiteveld te gaan haal nie. Oortreders sal beboet word.

#### 4. DONKIES, BEESTE EN KLEINVEE

(a) Buitehuurders sal geen reg hê om donkies aan te hou op die plaas nie.

(b) Enige ongeoorloofde donkies en vee sal geskut word, donkies en beeste teen 9/- per kop en kleinvee teen wat die Hoofkommissie besluit.

(c) Skuldige persone sal die plaas moet verlaat.

(d) Enige donkie of bees wat ongebrand is, sal geskut word.

(e) Buitehuurders sal reg hê op 3 kleinvee teen 1/- per maand en 1 koei teen 2/- per maand.

(f) Buitehuurders of erfhouers wat in klaar gemaakte huise intrek, sal huur betaal wat vasgestel word deur die Hoofkommissie. Uitgereik op las van die Hoofkommissie te Upington 13de Junie, 1950. Bekragtig onder ons handtekening en seël namens die Hoofkommissie. Geteken T. Titus (Sekretaris): S. Bimray (Leraar).

## APPENDIX III

## THE CONGREGATIONALIST

## Preliminary Basis of Union

## I.

## A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH'S FAITH

1. **God:** This Church acknowledges and adores the one living and true God, Who is Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being; the Father Almighty, loving, just and holy.
  
2. **The Lord Jesus Christ:** God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to the Saviour of mankind; Who, being the very Son of God, for us men and for our salvation became man in Jesus Christ. In perfect obedience to the will of God and in love towards men He lived on earth and died for our sins: by the power of God He was raised again from the dead and is now exalted Lord over all. He ever lives to make intercession for us and at the end He will come to be the Judge of the living and the dead. The Lord Jesus Christ has perfectly revealed the Father, and is the only Mediator between God and man. In Him, the incarnate Son, suffering for the sins of men, and bearing their sorrow, God speaks to men His word of forgiveness and eternal life and calls them to repentance and faith. By faith the Church confesses Him to be Lord and worships Him together with the Father.

3. **The Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son; Who spake through the prophets; the Spirit of Truth, Who guides into all truth; the Life of God in the soul of man.

4. **The Holy Trinity:** The Church, knowing God through Jesus Christ His Son and through the working of His Spirit in the lives of believers, confesses and adores one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

5. **The Holy Scriptures:** The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, given by inspiration of God, record the unfolding of His gracious purpose of redemption which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. To their truth the Holy Spirit witnesses in the hearts of believers, and through them the same Spirit speaks to the Church, which acknowledges them as revealing the mind and will of God to all mankind, and accepts them as the supreme rule of faith and life.

6. **Sin and Redemption:** God created man in His own likeness for fellowship with Himself and obedience in His will, giving to him freedom and responsibility; but through sin is alienated from God.

Man's true nature and destiny are brought to light in Jesus Christ our Lord. God is love, and seeks to win all men to Himself that they may be perfectly at one with Him. To this end He gave His Son, who being tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin, offered Himself willingly in death for us upon the Cross. He is the living pledge of the

Father's pardon; He overcomes the power of sin in those who believe; by His grace they are more and more brought to love what He loves, and to seek only to do His will.

7. **The Church:** There is one holy, catholic Church, which includes all the redeemed in heaven, and all His true disciples upon earth. There is a visible Church gathered for praise and prayer, for the hearing of the Word and the observance of the Sacraments, to the mutual comfort and growth in grace of the members, and for the service of the Kingdom of God.

The primary condition of membership in the visible Church is the acceptance and confession of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

8. **The Holy Sacraments:** The Lord Jesus Christ, the supreme Head of the Church, has committed to her the gifts of the Word and the Sacraments.

The Sacraments appointed in the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are given as tokens and pledges of God's saving love, as means through which He imparts His grace, and as ordinances whereby the Church confesses its Lord.

9. **The Ministry:** Our Lord has appointed in His Church a Ministry of the Word and of the Sacraments, and calls men to this Ministry. The Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognises and chooses those whom He calls, and ordains them.

10. **The Christian Life and Service:** All who receive the Gospel are called, and in the strength of God, enabled to live in fellowship; with Him as His children, to obey the law of Christ, grow in knowledge of God's love, and in all things to trust His fatherly care; thereby in their whole life shewing themselves thankful to Him for all His gifts.

They are called likewise to abide within the fellowship of the Church, to persevere in the diligent use of the means of grace, earnestly seeking the peace and welfare of the Church, which is the Body of Christ; also to seek the righteousness of God in individual, social and national life; in love serving their fellow men for Christ's sake, and by all means in their power striving to secure that the Gospel shall be preached to every creature.

11. **The Last Things:** It is the faith of the Church that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained, who shall then be manifested in power and great glory; that wickedness will not go unpunished; that faith and fidelity will be rewarded by perfect fellowship with God and among the spirits of just men made perfect; that the eternal purpose of God shall be accomplished that He may be All in All.

These things, as all else, in the Christian Faith, the Church holds in reverent submission to the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, Who is truth; and will ever humbly seek of Him enlightenment and grace to unlearn error, and also more fully to learn the mind and will of God; to Whom be glory for ever and ever.

## II.

### **POLITY OF THE CHURCH (SUMMARY)**

The Joint-Committee was faced with the task of presenting a polity for a Church comprised of European and Non-European members. It was felt that provision should be made for the rightful development of each section along its own lines, while preserving the unity of the Church under one head. The polity of the United Church of Canada was a useful guide, but it had to be modified to meet our South African conditions.

A careful examination of the forms of Church government of the three Churches shows,-

1. That while the officers and courts bear different names there is a substantial degree of similarity in duty and function.
2. That the Three Churches have been steadily approximating to each other in forms of Church government and methods of administration.
3. That there are distinctive elements in each, which will add to the efficiency of a United Church.
4. That it is possible, without the surrender of essential principles on the part of any, to provide for substantial local freedom, and at the same time secure the benefits of a strong connexional tie and co-operative efficiency.

The scheme which is here presented in outline secures, we believe, these advantages by providing a co-operative freedom, and giving to each racial section opportunity for self government and self development.

## COURTS OF THE CHURCH

There are four courts:-

**The Pastoral Charge** is the present Congregation, Church or Circuit.

**The Presbytery** corresponds to the present Presbytery, or District Association, or Synod.

**The Conference** is a regional annual meeting with large, but restricted powers.

**The General Council**, meeting once in three years, is the Supreme Court.

It will be noted that the unit of organisation is (as in each of the negotiating churches) the Pastoral Charge. The racial groups here meet separately, as at present, and this separation is extended to the Presbyteries. This will give each group considerable powers of local government and development.

## I. THE PASTORAL CHARGE

### A. Charges existing prior to Union.

1. In the management of their local affairs no change in organisation or practice is contemplated.
2. All property should be vested in a common trust, which would contain the provision that it is held for the use of the Pastoral Charge as a part of the United Church.
3. Any property or funds held by a Congregation at the time of Union solely for its own use, will not be affected by the provision of Clause 2.

### B. Charges to be formed subsequent to Union.

1. The liberty of the Pastoral Charge shall be recognised to the fullest extent compatible with the ordered life and development of the Church as a whole.
2. The members of a Pastoral Charge entitled to full membership are those, who on a profession of faith in Christ, and willing obedience to Him, have been placed on the Roll of Membership. Admission to the Roll shall be by action of the Session, or by the action of those in full membership where so desired by the Pastoral Charge.
3. The members shall meet annually, or more frequently, if they deem it desirable.
4. The members shall elect a **SESSION**, who shall hold office under regulations

to be determined by the General Council. The Session has oversight over the spiritual interests of the Pastoral Charge.

5. The members elect a **Committee of Stewards or Managers** who are entrusted with the temporal interests of the Charge.

## II. THE PRESBYTERY

Consists of the Ordained Ministers within the bounds and an equal number of lay representatives, to be chosen by regulations made by the General Council.

Its duties are similar to those exercised by the Presbyteries, District Associations, or Synods of the negotiating Churches.

## III THE CONFERENCE

Consists of one third of the Ministers within its bounds, together with an equal number of lay representatives to be chosen by regulations laid down by the General Council.

The duties are:-

1. To meet once a year.
2. To determine the number and bounds of the Presbyteries, have oversight of them, and review their work.
3. To receive and dispose of appeals, and when necessary to forward appeals to the General Council.

4. To see that, as far as possible every Pastoral Charge within its bounds has a pastorate without interruption, and that every effective Minister has a pastorate.
5. To examine and ordain candidates for the Ministry.
6. To promote the religious life of those living within its areas.

### **III. THE GENERAL COUNCIL**

Consists of an equal number of Ministerial and lay representatives chosen by the Conferences.

It meets once in three years.

Its presiding officer is the chief executive officer of the Church.

It has full power:-

- (a) To determine the number and bounds of the Conferences, have oversight over them, and review their records.
- (b) To legislate on matters affecting the doctrine, worship and government of the Church, provided,-
  1. That before any rule or law may become permanent it shall have the approval of a majority of the Presbyteries, and if advisable of the Pastoral Charges.

2. That no terms of admission to full membership shall be prescribed other than those laid down in the New Testament.
  3. That the freedom of worship at present enjoyed shall not be interfered with.
- (c) To legislate on all matters affecting property, subject to the approval of the Conference within whose bounds the property is situated.
  - (d) To prescribe and regulate the courses of study for the Ministry.
  - (e) To dispose of petitions and appeals.
  - (f) To determine the Missionary policy of the Church.
  - (g) In general to enact such legislation and adopt such measures as may tend to promote godliness, repress immorality, preserve the unity and well-being of the Church, and advance the Kingdom of God.

**IN GENERAL:**

- (a) There should be a just and fair number of Coloured and Native representatives in the Conferences and in the General Council.
- (b) Every effort should be made to preserve the unity of the Church consisting of members of different races. To preserve its discipline and direct its activities all the energy, wisdom, initiative and goodwill of the European section will be in constant demand. We need each other in a racial sense, if the Church is to fulfil its God-given Mission in Africa.

### III.

#### THE MINISTRY (SUMMARY)

The methods in use in the three Churches are practically identical.

4. Candidates must be recommended by their Pastoral Charge.
5. The course of study strongly recommended is a University Degree followed by at least three years theological training. Special provision is made where this is not practicable.
6. Reports on progress, moral fitness and suitability must be made annually to the Presbytery.
7. Properly selected evangelists and lay-preachers shall receive such training as is practicable.

#### RELATION OF A MINISTER TO THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH.

1. Before Ordination candidates shall be examined by the Conference on the statement of the Doctrine of the Church, and satisfy the examining body that they are in essential agreement therewith, and that as Ministers of the Church, they accept the statement as in substance agreeable to the teaching

of Holy Scripture.

2. Further, in the ordination service, in the presence of the Conference, these candidates shall answer the following questions:-

- (1) Do you believe yourself to be a child of God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?
- (2) Do you believe yourself to be called of God to the office of the Christian Ministry, and your chief motive to be zeal for the glory of God, love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and desire for the salvation of men?
- (3) Are you persuaded that the Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrines required for eternal salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ, and are you resolved out of the same Scriptures, to instruct the people entrusted to your charge, and to teach them nothing that is not agreeable thereto?

NOTE.-All Ministers, Evangelists and others engaged in the spiritual work of the three Churches at the time of Union shall have a similar status in the United Church.

N.B. 1. In the event of Union it would be prudent to promote a private Bill in Parliament to secure the properties for the United Church. The cost of such legislation is not known, but would probably be not less than £5,000, and might be as high as £10,000.

N.B. 2 In the event of Union all pensions and other rights would be preserved for the persons concerned.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 1. Archival Sources

#### 1.1 Unpublished Material

##### 1.1.1 Dutch Reformed Church Archives, Stellenbosch

Correspondence: Revs. R.B. Blake - W.A. Alheit; Alexander Stewart, Independent Church, Upington, April, 1901 August, 1902.

This volume includes correspondence of the Rev. Dewdney Drew with Dr. Andrew Murray as well as correspondence Rev. Drew conducted with the Rev. W.A. Alheit, May, 1901.

##### 1.1.2 Supreme Court of the Cape of Good Hope

Order - 8 December, 1902.

##### 1.1.3 Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt Congregational churches

Minutes of Church Council, Members' and Combined Church Council Meetings, 1918 - 1946.

Minutes of Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt Church Council and Members' Meetings, 1947 - 1952.

Baptismal Registers.

Marriage Registers.

Church Settlements - Head Committee Minutes, 1945 - 1952.

##### 1.1.4. Government Archives, Cape Town

Superintendent - General of Education Reports, 1906.

##### 1.1.5 Kalahari-Oranje Museum, Upington

Laubscher, J.M. undated. Die ontstaan van Upington en die distrik Gordonia. 'n Kort lewensbeskrywing van eerw. Schröder die geestelike vader en stigter van Upington. (Unpublished material).

### 2. Periodical Publications

*The Congregationalist: Official Magazine of the Congregational Union of South Africa.* 1918 - 1952.

*Die Kerkberig. Afrikaans Magazine of the Congregational Union of South Africa.* 1947.

*The Congregational Union of South Africa. Year Book,* 1911/12; 1965/1966.

*The Gordonia News,* 1943.

*Carlton Van Heerden Jaarblad.* Undated.

### 3. Bible

*Holy Bible.* King James Version.

### 4. Unpublished Dissertations/Theses

Steenkamp, J.A.J. 1953. *Die Christelike sending langs die benede Oranje met besondere verwysing na die werk van die N.G. Kerk in Korannaland. (teenwoordige Upington en omgewing). 'n Historiese oorsig, 1870 - 1950.* Unpublished M.Th. Dissertation, University of Stellenbosch.

Van der Linde, H.W.D. 1993. *Origins of Congregationalism in the Cape. 1799 - 1849.* Unpublished D. Phil. Thesis, University of the Western Cape.

### 5. Literature

Briggs, D.R. & Wing, J., 1970. *The Harvest and the Hope. The Story of Congregationalism in Southern Africa.* Johannesburg.

Damon, S. 1952. *Die verhaal van vyftig jaar van Congregational Kerk werk (sic) in die Noordweste 1903 - 1952.* Upington.

Davenport, T.R.H. 1987. *South Africa. A Modern History.* Braamfontein: Macmillan South Africa.

De Villiers, D.H. 1950. *Ebenhaeser 1875 - 1950. Feesboek van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendinggemeente Upington om die gemeente se driekwart-eeufees te herdenk.* Upington.

Du Plessis, J. 1965. *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa.* Cape Town.

Ferguson, G.P. 1940. *C.U.S.A. The Story of the Churches of the Congregational Union of South Africa.* Paarl: Fisher & Sons.

Hommel, M. 1981. *Capricorn Blues. The Struggle for Human Rights in South Africa.* Toronto.

*Kenhardt Congregational Kerk, 1902 - 1979. 75 Jarige Bestaansfeesviering.* Upington.

Lewis, G. 1987. *Between the Wire and the Wall.* Cape Town: Philip.

Marais, J.S. 1939. *The Cape Coloured People, 1652 - 1937*. Toronto.

Stewart, A. 1956. 1856 - 1956. *Die Verhaal van die Eerste Honderd Jaar van die Independent Congregational Kerk gestig deur Henry Charles Helm, Heidelberg, Kaapland, 1856*. Cape Town.

Van Bart, M. & Scholtz, L. (Ed.) 2003. *Vir Vryheid en vir Reg. Anglo-Boereoorlog Gedenkboek*. Kaapstad: Tafelberg Uitgewers.

Van der Ross, R.E. 1986. *The Rise and Decline of Apartheid. A Study of Political Movements Among the Coloured People of South Africa, 1881 - 1985*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

Walker, E.A. 1987. *A History of Southern Africa*. London: Longmans, Green & Co.

Walker, W. 1963. *A History of the Christian Church*. Revised Edition. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.

Wing, J. (Ed). 1987. *Pilgrimage of Faith. Confirmation Training Handbook*. Cape Town.

## 6. Other Primary Sources

Damon, S 1990. *Lewenservaringe van eerw. Saul Damon oor die afgelope eeu*. Unpublished memoirs of the Rev. Saul Damon on the occasion of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Funeral Service pamphlet of the late Rev. B.N. Windvogel. February, 1968.

Inscription on a marble tablet in the Congregational church building, Paballelo, Upington.

## 7. Interviews

Rev. D.M. Abrahamas;

F.S. Mouton;

P. Nel.

## SUMMARY

The intention with this research was to remedy a deficiency in the Congregational historiography in respect of the work done by that denomination in the North-western Cape. The Dutch Reformed Church was the first Christian denomination to undertake mission work among the indigenous people in the area in the 1870s. A scientific treatise on the work done there was covered by the Rev. J.A.J. Steenkamp in his M.Th. Dissertation which was accepted by the Stellenbosch University in 1953. The title of the dissertation is *Die Christelike sending langs die benede Oranje met besondere verwysing na die werk van die N.G. Kerk in Korannaland*.

Apart from this, only a few commemorative brochures were published in which the history of the work done by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Congregational Church is reflected. The one written by the Rev. D.H. De Villiers, entitled, *Ebenhaeser, 1875 - 1950* was to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the work done by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church at Upington and its environs. The other by the Rev. S. Damon was entitled, *Die verhaal van vyftig jaar van Congregational kerk werk (sic) in the Noordweste, 1902 - 1952*. This brochure was issued to coincide with the golden jubilee celebrations of the Congregational churches' work in the area. Both were written in popular form and intended for the member in the pew. Over and above these there is still the unpublished autobiography of the Rev. Damon entitled, *Lewenservaringe van eerw. Saul Damon oor die afgelope eeu*. This was done to mark his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations and contained his memoirs. However, none of these were by any means scientific studies.

In the absence therefore of a scientific study on the involvement and contribution of the Congregational Church in the area this study was undertaken as a modest attempt at remedying the deficiency.

Areas covered in this study include the schism in the Dutch Reformed Mission congregation at Upington at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the involvement of the Congregational Church in the situation; its settlement and contribution to the community. The entry of other denominations in the area once it was opened up made co-operation among the local churches particularly in the

field of education, possible. It is to the credit of the Congregational church and its minister, Rev. Damon, that the first secondary school for people of colour was opened up in 1943 at Upington.

In the economic depressed situation which prevailed in the country in the 1930s caused unemployment with its concomitant hardships. Under these circumstances the Congregational church responded to the need of its members who were adversely affected by it. The farms bought by the Upington church along the Orange River in the vicinity of Keimoes were converted into settlements. There the members with an interest in agriculture could rent plots and in that way make a fresh start again.

Although the area is relatively far removed from the bigger centres it was not entirely left unaffected by developments which took place elsewhere in the country. A case in point was the 'Roaring Forties', as that period is referred to here. The creation by the Government of the day of a Coloured Advisory Council in 1943 caused divisions within the ranks of the community. Some rejected it outright while others were prepared to give it a chance. Two leading members of the Upington Congregational church accepted nomination on this Council, viz. the minister, Rev. Damon and the treasurer, Mr. A.J. Ferreira. But it did not deteriorate into open animosity in the community as was the case in other parts of the country.

Another development during the 1930s was the Church Union discussions among the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian denominations. The local churches in the Gordonia and Kenhardt districts were also invited to state their position on the issue. Their reaction was on the whole negative which to some extent could be ascribed to the fact that there was no Presbyterian presence in the area. In the end the expected merger did not materialise.

For more than forty years the Congregational churches operated as a group under one minister. With the passage of time it was realized that the situation became untenable. The experiment in the early forties to settle an assistant minister there did not produce the desired effect. The alternative was decentralisation and when it was implemented in 1946 it proved ultimately to be a viable option.

Church extension was started in the 1930s when Prieska was developed as an outstation of the Upington church. Work among the African section of the local community can also be seen as church extension especially when the group who severed ties with the Upington church in the late 1920s was persuaded in 1935 by the Rev. Damon to return to the Congregational fold. Although this congregation operated as a separate local church it was always ministered to by the minister of the Upington church.

The development of outstations by the Upington, Keimoes and Kenhardt churches in some instances in areas far beyond the boundaries of the mother churches can also be seen as a form of church extension for by these outstations a Congregational presence was established which in time to come could develop into full status local churches.

Although this study only covers the first fifty years of the Congregational Church's work in the North-western Cape it is hoped that it will serve as an incentive to others to undertake research into the period subsequent to 1952.

## OPSOMMING

Die doel met hierdie navorsing was om 'n leemte in die historiografie van die Kongregasionalistiese Kerk vul met betrekking tot die werk wat deur dié kerkgenootskap in Noordwes-Kaap gedoen is. Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk was die eerste kerkgenootskap wat sendingwerk onder die inheemse inwoners in die area in die 1870s onderneem het. 'n Wetenskaplike verhandeling waarin die werk van die betrokke kerkgenootskap aldaar gedek is, het neerslag gevind in die M.Th. verhandeling van ds. J.A.J. Steenkamp. Die verhandeling is deur die Universiteit van Stellenbosch in 1953 aanvaar en is getiteld, *Die Christelike sending langs die benede Oranje met besondere verwysing na die werk van die N.G. Kerk in Korannaland*.

Behalwe hierdie werk is daar 'n paar gedenk-brosjures gepubliseer waarin die geskiedenis van die werk wat deur die N.G. Sendingkerk en die *Congregational* Kerk gedoen is, gereflekteer word. Die een, geskryf deur ds. D.H. De Villiers getiteld, *Ebenhaeser, 1875 - 1950* is gedoen met die oog op die viering van die 75e herdenking van die werk van die N.G. Sendinggemeente te Upington en die omgewing daar. Die ander een, geskryf deur eerw. S. Damon is getiteld *Die verhaal van vyftig jaar van Congregational Kerk werk (sic) in die Noordweste, 1903 - 1952*. Albei werke is geskryf in populêre trant en is bedoel vir die gewone lidmaat. Daarenbove is daar nog die ongepubliseerde outobiografie van eerw. Damon getiteld *Lewenservaringe van eerw. Saul Damon oor die afgelope eeu*. Dit het saamgeval met die viering van sy 100e verjaarsdag en bevat sy gedenkskrifte. Nietemin, nie een van hierdie is wetenskaplike werke nie.

Derhalwe, by ontstentenis van 'n wetenskaplike studie oor die toetrede en werk van die *Congregational* Kerk in die benede Oranjerivier is hierdie navorsing 'n beskeie poging om die betrokkenheid en bydrae van die *Congregational* Kerk in daardie omgewing tussen 1902 en 1952 uit te lig.

Onderwerpe wat in die studie gedek word, sluit in die skeuring in die N.G. Sendinggemeente te Upington aan die begin van die 20e eeu; die toetrede van die *Congregational* Kerk; sy vestiging en bydrae tot die opheffing van die gemeenskap in. Nadat die gebied oopgestel is, het ander

kerkgenootskappe inbeweeg wat onderlinge samewerking veral op die vlak van die onderwys moontlik gemaak het. Krediet is gegee aan die *Congregational* kerk en hul leraar, eerw. Saul Damon vir die stigting van die eerste sekondêre skool vir anders-kleuriges te Upington in 1943.

Die ekonomies depressiewe situasie wat sedert die dertigerjare in die land geheers het, het werkloosheid met die gepaardgaande lyding meegebring. Die *Congregational* kerk het in hierdie omstandighede uitgerek na sy lidmate wat nadelig daardeur getref is. Die plase wat deur die Upington kerk langs die Oranjerivier naby Keimoes aangekoop is, is in nedersettings omskep. Daar kon die lidmate wat 'n belangstelling in landbou gehad het erwe huur en langs hierdie weg weer 'n bestaan voer. Andere wat dakloos was kon as huurders op die nedersettings gevestig word.

Hoewel die omgewing betreklik ver verwyder is van die groter sentra, is dit nie onaangetas gelaat deur verwikkelings wat elders in die land plaasgevind het nie. 'n Goeie voorbeeld is die 'Onstuimige Veertigerjare' soos hierdie tydperk in die studie getipeer word. Die skepping deur die Regering van die dag van 'n Kleurling Adviserende Raad in 1943 het groot verdeeldheid binne die geleedere van die gemeenskap teweeggebring. Sommige het dit totaal verwerp terwyl andere bereid was om dit 'n kans te gee. Twee vooraanstaande lede van die Upington *Congregational* kerk het benoeming op die Raad aanvaar, t.w. die leraar, eerw. Damon en die tesourier, mnr A.J. Ferreira. Dit het egter nie ontaard tot openbare vyandskap soos dit die geval in ander dele van die land was nie.

Nog 'n verwikkeling in die dertigerjare was Kerkeenheidsgesprekke onder die *Congregational*, Metodiste en Presbiteriaanse kerkgenootskappe. Die plaaslike kerke in die Gordonia en Kenhardt distrikte is ook gevra om hul standpunt oor die aangeleentheid te stel. Hul reaksie was hoofsaaklik negatief wat tot 'n mate toegeskryf kan word aan die feit dat daar geen Presbiteriaanse teenwoordigheid in die omgewing was nie. Uiteindelik het die verwagte kerkeenheid nie gerealiseer nie.

Vir meer as veertig jaar het die *Congregational* gemeentes as 'n groep geopereer onder een leraar. Mettertyd het die besef egter posgevat dat die situasie onhoudbaar word. Die proeflopie in

die vroeë veertigerjare om 'n hulp-leraar daar te vestig, het nie die gewenste vrugte afgewerp nie. Die alternatief was desentralisasie en toe dit in 1946 sy beslag gekry het, het dit uiteindelik as beste lewensvatbare opsie geblyk.

Met kerkuitbreiding is daar reeds in die dertigerjare begin toe Prieska as buitewyk van Upington ontwikkel het. Werk onder die Afrikane oftewel die swart deel van die gemeenskap kan ook as kerkuitbreiding gesien word. Die groep het bande met die Upington gemeente in die laat twintigerjare verbreek. In 1935 het eerw. Damon egter die groep oorreed om weer by die *Congregational* kerkgenootskap in te skakel. Hoewel die gemeente as 'n afsonderlike plaaslike gemeente gefungeer het, is hulle altyd deur die Upington kerk se leraar bedien.

Die ontwikkeling van buitewyke deur Upington, Keimoes en Kenhardt kerke soms ver buite die grense van die moeder-gemeentes kan as 'n vorm van kerkuitbreiding gesien word. Deur hierdie buitewyke is daar 'n *Congregational* teenwoordigheid gevestig wat met verloop van tyd tot selfstandige plaaslike kerke kon ontwikkel.

Hoewel die navorsing slegs die eerste vyftig jaar van die Congregational Kerk se werk in Noordwes-Kaap dek, is die hoop dat dit as aansporing sal dien vir andere om die tydperk na 1952 na te vors.