

# Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ centenary celebration

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12 May 1923 marks the birth of Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ (MRCC). 12 May 2023 ushered in the centenary anniversary of this church, which has started with 400 members who broke away from the Free Church of Scotland because of understandable theological reasons. This church grew into a formidable entity, affirming the saying, *don't despise small beginnings*. In celebration of this milestone, the church in collaboration with *HTS Theological Studies* decided to have a special collection.

Authors from the MRCC and Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NRCA) [*Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*] contributed to this issue. Contributions have no specific focus or theme – covering mission history, effective elders and deacons training, leadership and pastoral reflections.

The article of Wim Dreyer is about the mission theology of P.S. Dreyer and its contribution to the MRCC. It also points out the practical work P.S. Dreyer accomplished while serving as part-time Superintendent of Mission and chairman of the Board, having to deal with many administrative and financial responsibilities, as well as playing a role in the establishment of at least 60 congregations in black communities, including the theological education of more than 200 MRCC students and ministers of the MRCC.

Zuze Banda's article is about the history of the inception of missions in the NRCA, leading to the origins of the MRCC, which is somehow related to Dreyer's article above.

Alfred Rivombo's article focuses on the significance of the training of elders and deacons. His concern is about the decline in the statistical and qualitative growth of the church. He uses the analysis of elders and deacon's report, which was tabled at the 15th General Church Assembly of the MRCC. Rivombo illustrates that elders and deacons are diverse in terms of age, gender, language, culture, literacy, professional and academic levels. To allay limitations of diversity, he proposes the utilisation of informal education to train elders and deacons. The proposed training also outlines the integration of formal and informal education.

Matsobane Manala's contribution decries the membership decline in the MRCC, with her use of part-time ministers, the lack of appropriate leadership style and inattention to the utilisation of cell groups as the main causes. The article proposes the use of servant leadership and cell groups as important drivers of evangelism and church growth.

The articles appearing in this special collection were subjected to rigorous blind peer review process compliant with the requirements of *HTS Theological Studies*.

We extend our appreciation to Professor Andries van Aarde, the former Editor-in-Chief of *HTS Theological Studies*, for his proactive role in creating this special collection in honour of the MRCC's centenary celebration, featuring peer-reviewed research articles. We also want to express our gratitude to the editorial assistants at *HTS* for their dedication in managing the additional administrative tasks associated with this special collection.

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**Note:** Special Collection: Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ Centenary Celebration, sub-edited by Matsobane Manala (University of South Africa).