Article

Reformed, Reunited, Remixed: How URCSA's Christian Youth Ministry has Reimagined Missional Ecclesiology in Southern Africa since 1994

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Abstract

On our continent various former mission churches, like the Uniting Reformed Christian Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), struggle with the quest of becoming an African church. In this article I tell the story of how the Christian Youth Ministry (CYM), through its self-identification, has reimagined "church" within its own structures, especially since 1994 when URCSA united. I relate this to the quest for a missional ecclesiology in southern Africa. The article shows how the CYM self-identifies as a uniting movement, as the voice of youth, as a congress movement, but also as a networked space for diverse identifications. URCSA, but also other churches on our continent, are challenged with this re-imagination towards remixing an alternative future.

Keywords: missional ecclesiology; youth; youth movements; URCSA; unity; Reformed; missional

Introduction

Since its inception in 1994, the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (hereafter URCSA) has been trying to keep two concerns together. This is evident from its name: it is a *Reformed* church; it is also a *uniting* church. The structural reunification gave birth to this new church—reformed and reunited. However, URCSA is also a church in (southern) Africa. When one looks at recent synodical reports and decisions, this remains a delicate process of (internal) unification; a process that relates to these themes, namely what it means to be uniting, Reformed and likewise called and sent in (southern) Africa. These are also the concerns of its youth ministry structure, now called the Christian Youth Ministry (hereafter CYM). It relates the broader question of what kind of church it is called and where it is sent to within the times and context of today and

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tomorrow. Indeed, on a more fundamental level, this is a question about the type of missional ecclesiology that we can discern in dialogue with this African youth ministry.

Discernment as Methodology

The postcolonial missiological methodology, which forms the basis for this research, is influenced by the praxis-based approach to missiology (Bevans and Schroeder 2009, 348–295). I prefer to refer to it as "discernment." As Henriot argues, it is about "not simply finding the Divinity in a mystical revelation but finding God's loving involvement in the practical matters of everyday life" (Henriot 2005, 37). He also refers to it as "the theological foundation for 'reading the signs of the times'" (Henriot 2005, 38). We, therefore insist on the moment of insertion as a critical moment in the cycle of missiological reflection. This moment of insertion is about the experience (praxis) of faith—the participation (insertion) in praxis, or as explained by Latin American theologians Leonardo and Clodius Boff, the "op een of andere manier deelnemen aan het bevrijdingsproces, zich inzette samen met de onderdrukte" (Boff and Boff 1986, 30; see also Gutiérrez 1972, 16–28; Torres and Fabella 1978, 269). This praxis of faith also assumes reflexive participation, or what Karecki calls a "Contemplative Encounter" (Karecki 2009, 24ff.). In this regard, she speaks specifically of "the significance of encounter with God in contemplation" (Karecki 2009, 25).

While I was directly involved in the leadership of the CYM between 1995 and 2003 (and before that as member of one of its predecessors, the CJV since the late 1970s), currently I am not an ordinary ("card-carrying") member anymore. I cannot be, because of the CYM constitution stating clear criteria in terms of age, but more importantly, because of a conscious decision on my part to take on the posture of an engaged researcher. During my direct involvement in these associations, as I argued previously, we saw it as our witness (mission) to overcome racism (Nel 2010, 187–205; 2013; see also Matsaung 2006, 123–141). The reflections that follow in this contribution is self-consciously narrative, but also hopefully reflexive and self-critical as I ask the bigger question how the CYM challenges and re-imagines (southern) African missional ecclesiology (Nel 2010, 187–205; 2013).

Reimagining Missional Ecclesiology in (Southern) Africa

The question of missional ecclesiology is neither new—nor a predominantly North American discourse. Puerto Rican missiologist, Orlando E Costas, has been using the term "missional," albeit interchangeably with the term "missionary," since the 1970s, as he engages the paradigm shift and struggle for theological decolonisation, engendered especially from Latin American scholars (Costas 1979, xiii, 12; 1984, 3). Kritzinger also shows that the name for the southern African journal for missiology, chosen in 1973, was *Missionalia* (Kritzinger 2007; Kritzinger and Saayman 2011, 110–111). Against these views, Saayman (2009, 287–300; 2010, 5–16) presents a valuable historical overview of the concept, yet he argues that it is a matter of preference, given one's context. For Saayman, it has an overtly North American and inward countenance.

Despite this valuable critique, I would hold that this is rather a Northern appropriation or reception of missiological developments, which can be traced much further back and is fundamentally about being church through the hermeneutic of the triune God's mission with the world—the church, therefore, being "missionary by its very nature." In a sense, the new phase since the publication of Guder (1998) is a moment of confluence between missiological research on missionary ecclesiology and practical theology, and more specifically its congregational theology sub-discipline. Saayman (2009) is correct, I believe, when he refers to Bosch's argument that the church sacrificed its pilgrim (missionary) character when it became domesticated in the Roman Empire (Saayman 2009, 289). Neither the colonial voyages of conquest and Reformation, nor the missionary endeavours changed much in terms of the dominant ecclesiologies in Europe. As it was exported and imposed during the missionary era, it was inward-looking and focused on maintaining (and defending) the status quo (see also Goba 1981, 50–51). For Saayman then, while this Constantinian, imperial edifice was initially challenged with the devastation of two major European wars (Saayman 2009, 292, 294), it was really "the irruption of the Third World" (Saayman 2009, 292), in the emergence of the Base Christian Communities (Boff 1988), that effected an ecclesiological paradigm shift as alluded to earlier by Costas (1979).

A similar movement took place within the African continent (Goba 1981, 51ff.; Mwambazambi 2011). Goba states:

> The Church has a very significant place in the life of the Black Christian community—hence the prolific growth of the Church on this continent at a time when it is becoming a theological relic in the West. There has been a "self-conscious ecclesiology" on our continent for a long time, one which has not been systematically articulated, but "lived" vigorously in the African Christian communities. (Goba 1981, 51)

Goba (1981, 52) emphasises "the selfhood" of the African church. This is where URCSA's, and therefore also the CYM's quest for an African Reformed selfhood comes into focus in this article.

CYM Remixing its Calling

How did the CYM self-consciously discern its own missional calling within URCSA, since 1994? In answering this question, I narrow my engagement down to its missional self-identification[1] since the unification in 1994 and the Founding Congress in 1995. The question of self-identification is fundamental about how the CYM understood its missional calling in (southern) Africa.

In my doctoral research, I show that four interacting themes emerge, which broadly directed the movement. Firstly, the CYM is perceived as a *unification of ecclesial identities.* As I will explain later, this unification is a transcending of identifications,

1 For a broader discussion, see Nel (2010; 2013).

beyond the colonial script of inherited and constructed colonial ecclesial identities. Secondly, the CYM sees itself as the *voice of the youth*. Thirdly, the CYM is viewed as a *congress movement,* and fourthly, the CYM is regarded as a *networked space for diverse voices*. These different themes do not flow as a chronological development of distinctive phases, nor do they merely replace the one over the other. Rather, as a remixing of themes, these are intimately blended into each other. I appropriate here a musical metaphor which indicates the appreciation of previously performed samples, yet now rewritten, improvised and performed for a new time. The themes flow into each other at various stages of the performances and the challenges they have had to respond to. The CYM is not simply about being reformed or reunited—it is a remixing into new performances. Indeed, one cannot understand the CYM of today, unless one takes this mixing as a lens to read its praxis, but also to critically reflect on it with a view of remixing a future African church. Remixing also suggests that ecclesial identities do not remain static—they are part of and constantly morph into new performances—as has been happening within the CYM.

CYM as Unification of Ecclesial Identities

From its inception, the CYM has expressed itself as part of a bigger narrative of unification, more specifically ecclesial unification or unification of ecclesial identities to overcome institutional racism. Racism, I would hold, is not understood merely in terms of individualist behaviours, but rather as institutional (Nel 2010, 190) and systemic (Nel 2010, 190, 199–200; see also Kritzinger 1988, 117–119)—it is embedded in racially separated colonial church formations and ecclesiologies. The CYM is evidently part of *church* unification—the dismantling and transcending of institutional and structural racism. The Founding Youth Congress gathered from 8–12 July 1995 at the then University of the Orange Free State campus, under the very hopeful and significant theme: "*A Uniting Youth in a Uniting Church for a Uniting society*" (CYM Minutes of Founding Congress 1995).

CYM identifications (embodied through its rituals and symbols) were not simplistically constructed at this Founding Congress. While 14 April (together with the following days in 1994), was the key date for the unifying synod and the mandate for the unification of the various youth associations, it was understood as being influenced by earlier developments within the specific ecclesial context as well as the broader social history. This was a time in the 1990s where "unification" between racially separated communities and institutions was a key narrative. I argued previously (Nel 2010, 193–194) that while an earlier emphasis might have been to understand and contextualise themselves, in terms of black youth resistance and working-class cultures and struggles of the day (against colonialism, but also what Bantu Biko called the "colonial-tainted version of Christianity"), here the emphasis was on forging a new identity, in the pursuit of (ecclesial) unity.

Upon reflection one can, however, ask whether discerning this journey of unification or the specific unification model has been most appropriate, in light of further

developments (and the current struggle for internal unity) within the church and the movement (URCSA Acts 2008, 55). The praxis of the CYM, with regard to its self-identification, is to view itself as an expression of the imperative of the *Belhar Confession* (1986) towards unification. Further deepening is needed to make a more explicit connection between the impulses from a Belhar (uniting) ecclesiology and a variety of new, perhaps marginal identifications. This emerging challenge is more complex and fluid than one model of structural unity, as I will show later. This was, however, not the only way in which the CYM understood itself.

CYM as Official Voice of the Youth

The CYM was also understood as the official "voice of the youth." It might sound tautological and perhaps commonplace to state that the CYM is also a *youth* movement. What is important, though, is that this key narrative is understood in a particular way. Unification is also generational.

While one can understand the work with young people in faith communities or secular institutions to mean older generations or professional institutions working *for* or *on* (the problems of) young people, this was not primarily the way the CYM saw itself as a youth movement and later youth ministry. This self-identification relates to the contestation on the meaning of the notion "youth" as a narrative which continues to shape the CYM today. One of the ways in which members, official CYM documents as well as reports towards an outside audience would speak of itself, is as "youth" or "the only official movement of the youth"; however, it comes with a qualification of "no age limit." I offer some examples of this theme.

From the inception, one finds in the reports of the former *Mokgatlo wa Bodumedi ba Bokreste* (hereafter MBB) to the Founding Congress, the insistence that there be "no age limit" for membership within the new movement (CYM Minutes of Founding Congress 1995). While the notion "youth" could be interpreted to relate directly (and only) to chronological age, here there is a self-conscious resistance against and rejection of a chronological age limitation as a rather reductionist interpretation. In this conceptualisation functions the interpretation that "members" of the CYM—all who hold membership of the movement by virtue of its constitution—are "youth," irrespective of their age. This brings a particular kind of tension among non-members within congregations, irrespective of whether they are church council members or ordained ministers within URCSA, let alone younger confessing members in congregations, who opt not to join the CYM. The Founding Congress recognised this tension from the onset. The former MBB Northern Transvaal referred to this tension in a report to the Founding Congress, in terms of the role of some ordained ministers in their relation to the "youth." They declared:

> Some of the ministers in our region do not take care of whether MBB is improving or deteriorating, instead they discourage some of the old members not to continue in this

> movement. Even today they are still preaching age limit in the MBB. (CYM Minutes of Founding Congress 1995)

A resolution was then accepted by the Founding Congress, which stated: "The congress requests all ministers: a) to respect the voice of *youth* [italics added] in all the churches in the URCSA" (CYM Minutes of Founding Congress 1995).

This tension was also highlighted in a different way within the former *Christelike Jeugvereniging* (hereafter CJV), which was often simply called, *"die jeug"* (the youth). Here one can trace the same narrative of the association[2] being the representative (voice) of "youth" within the church. From the CJV, as recorded in its report to the Founding Congress, comes the narrative of how "the youth" (the respective association) demanded "greater control over their own organisation" in order to indicate to "the church" that it had "an agenda and mind of its own" (CYM Minutes of Founding Congress 1995). These narratives, on the one hand resisting "age limit" for CYM membership, or on the other hand asserting "greater control" over its own organisation, are evidently not new and it is a narrative that goes much deeper. How are we to understand this?

In this usage of the term "youth," it has already been clarified that "youth" is not understood here in a chronological (age) sense, but also not as a problem or anomaly within the church to be solved or eradicated. Rather, it points to a particular sociological category or even social construction, which is organised and has distinct perspectives and contributions to make within a particular ecclesial tradition. In terms of this understanding, the CYM speaks of "the youth" as a social position in relation to the societies and its cultural institutions where the members of these organisations come from. It seems to be, in terms of the tension indicated in the named reports between the former MBB, i.e. the "youth" and the "ministers," or between the former CJV between the "youth" and "the church," a contestation of power. This contestation of power was between the (lay) members of various associations the "youth," on the one hand and the ordained ministry, "the ministers" or "the church" on the other hand. These associations were led by democratically elected lay leaders, seemingly representing the agency of members, organising themselves around the narrative of "youth" which represented a particular expression and embodiment of their faith. These associations—originally introduced by a particular missionary ecclesiology to be spaces of control within a Dutch Reformed *Gereformeerde* missionary ecclesiology—have gradually been transformed into spaces often organised on the basis of a strict democratic ethos and a strong sense of autonomy for the development and expression of lay leadership and

2 CJV stands for *Christelike Jeugvereniging* ("Christian Youth Association"). The *Mokgatlo wa Bodumedi ba Bokreste* (MBB) also means the same. The question of the historical development of the "association-model" within the Reformed churches and its ecclesiological roots were studied at the synods of the DRMC of 1982, 1986 and 1990 (see Agendas and Acts of DRMC Synods, 1982, 1986 and 1990). It requires a separate study of whether the CYM model adopted in 1994, addressed and transcended the ecclesiological concerns identified through these studies.

ministry. Linked to this tension in relation to this category of "youth," this narrative also points to the possibility of contestation, or even exclusion and repression of the narratives of different generations and classes within the institutional church created for domestication and the maintenance of the status quo. What is meant by "youth," here, is socially constructed and an expression of a collective consciousness and agency. The insistence on "no age limit" for membership in the CYM is a response to the aforementioned suspicion that voices and questions of different generations, but also the creative energy and critical contributions of lay-leaders, are purposefully being silenced or, at least, controlled within the church.

In line with this tension then, "youth" is also not seen within the CYM as the objects of the well-meaning ministry or mission by "the church," i.e. ordained ministers or even older youth workers (mentors). Youth is understood to be the agents of this work, ministry or mission, which finds its scope in the church and the rest of society. This tension is, therefore, built into the memory of the CYM until today, who self-consciously wants to be a specific voice or the movement of an unordained, different generation of Christians within the church. In this understanding, perhaps the notion of "the youth" has this important contribution and expression of Christian faith, which has traditionally been suppressed for the sake of older generations, but also for formalistic institutions related to the colonial mentality. On the basis of this agency, therefore, one witnesses the CYM advocating towards getting involved in broader youth policy development in the transformation of the church, as well as ecumenically and in government processes, as, self-consciously, the voices of the youth (URCSA Agenda for Synod 2005, 422–425).

With regards to URCSA, given the particular history as indicated, this journey of representing "the interests of the youth" has not been easy. While the CYM attempted to influence policy in this regard, one can still question whether this has been done successfully, or whether it has led to practical campaigns "on the ground." Apart from these engagements in meetings and preparing policy documents, one can also see this embodied in the formal organising of branch meetings, conferences and congresses, the financial self-sufficiency and self-administration, but also, as a consequence of this organising, in the decisions at congresses. Through creating this institutional space, the CYM speaks of its corporate self interchangeably as "representing the interests of the young people"; "the only authentic and official youth movement in the URCSA"; and of its constitution as being "developed by the youth for the youth" (CYM Minutes of General Congress 1999). Therefore, the CYM also expresses itself as a congress movement.

CYM as a Congress Movement

Alongside the aforementioned themes, the CYM's self-identification is also shaped by the narrative of being a congress movement. One reads this narrative already in the report of the CJV to the Founding Congress, especially in Section 3, "Activities," which is focused on the activities of "branches," "circuits," "regional executives" and "national

executive" and this flows into the new CYM self-identification (CYM Minutes of Founding Congress 1995). This is still the language within the CYM.

The various themes chosen throughout the years relate largely to the organising and gatherings of the various youth congresses, meetings and conferences. The executives tasked with organising these events would reflect on their journey and decide on a "relevant" theme for the upcoming congress, or to a lesser degree a camp in order to capture the mood, but also to shape the agenda. In recent years, new distinctions and terminology emerged, such as "policy congress," "elective congress" and "constitutional workshops." The significance and role of these spaces—the congresses as gatherings of young people from branches all over the region—are critical in understanding the story of the CYM. I call these the "rituals and domain of transforming themselves," representing concentrated times of worship, small group biblical reflection, but also reporting, giving insight into their contextual analyses and debates (Nel 2010, 192f). This is where the youth gather now as "delegates" and "observers" to grapple with what it means to be a member of the CYM. Related to this is another very important symbol in this process, namely the constitution.[3]

As indicated earlier, one of the key elements of the journey towards the Founding Congress was the drafting, discussions and debates about the constitution (CYM Minutes of Founding Congress 1995[4]; (VGKSA Skema van Werksaamhede en Handelinge 1997, 191). This draft constitution was discussed and deliberated at workshops, conferences and camps. After the adoption of the constitution at its congress, the CYM's work was structured according to this constitution, where the roles and responsibilities for these expressions of the CYM are clearly spelt out and regulated. From the aforementioned reports, submitted since the Founding Congress in 1995, one can read the importance of the then concepts, as articulated in the constitution, for example: the "meetings," "structures," "branches," "Presbyterial Union Executives" (PUE), "Regional Executives," "National Executive," later called "Central Executive," and so forth. The language from the former MBB focused on "members," "congregations," "circuits," "executives," but also key terms like "uniform," "membership fees," or "subscriptions" and "fundraising." On the other hand, one finds in the stated report and reflections in the church newsletter from the former CJV on the Founding Congress and Synods, an equally important emphasis on the constitution—here called the *reglement* ("regulations"), but also the *strukture* ("structures"), related to *takke* ("branches"), *ringe* ("circuits" or "presbyteries") and *streke* ("regions"). Here, the emphasis is on the knowledge of and the ability to organise these meetings, in terms of strict constitutional precepts of the constitution.

The CYM, at least from this perspective, sees itself and lives itself out as structures—as meetings. Youth or "the youth" are referred to here, primarily as "members,"

3 See the Church Order and Regulations of URCSA (2016).

4 See specifically Report on Tentative Constitution MBB Southern Transvaal 1995, 4 and Report of the MBB Northern Transvaal 1995.

“delegates” or even the particular positions within the movement, i.e. “chairperson,” the “treasurer,” and so forth. From at least one report it reflects on the lack of “discipline,” which is explained in terms of “the question of uniform, membership fees and fulfilment of the constitution …” This report stated further:

> Problems within ourselves (The Executive Committee)
>
> Some members of the executive never attended even a single meeting since elected during the 1990 congress. We do not know whtehr ther ae [sic] still in our church or they have joined the ZCC or other new churches of today, because leeters [sic] are send [sic] to them asking a respond telephonically or in writing. (CYM Minutes of Founding Congress 1995)

Subsequent gatherings of the CYM are, in terms of this theme, focused on the skills in organising of congresses, conferences or meetings, and in relation to the branches, the key skill of organising either “programmes,” “camps and workshops”—building the movement (VGKSA Skema van Werksaamhede en Handelinge 1997, 196). A key part of this process—this report to the General Synod continues—was the challenge that new regional executives were to be constituted through the planning of regional congresses, presbyteries as well as local branches. The constitution was to be the guidelines for these processes. The first phase was, therefore, characterised internally by the organising of meetings, in particular Presbyterian and regional congresses. One needs to see this in light of the fact that it happened at the time of South Africa’s constitutional transition, also with the adoption of the new constitution in May 1996.

However, within the new CYM, one also reads in the minutes and reports to the subsequent congresses itself that this narrative came under pressure. Since the congress in 1999, the minutes of congresses recount how various congresses struggled with complying with the constitution (CYM Minutes of General Congress 1999; Minutes CYM of General Congress 2003; URCSA Agenda of General Synod 2008). This is specifically with regard to the official constituting of meetings on the one hand, and the practical struggles of structures and delegates on the other, with financing the structures as prescribed by the constitution and the acceptance of the financial reports. All the CYM congresses, since inception, struggled to constitute a “proper” meeting strictly in terms of the constitution. This happened in terms of the minutes of these congresses, because there is no database of all the members, but also, many delegations do not send in proper credential letters as prescribed by the constitution, or they do not send it in time. Many members often arrive only after the first day of registration and the constituting of the meeting, because of logistical and financial constraints.

A key sub-narrative in this struggle throughout the history of the CYM, relates to the “payment of levies” in order to maintain this institution and its operations. This narrative is a legacy from both the CJV and the MBB. Yet, in the congresses subsequent to the unification, it intensified as a key narrative. The financial reports, presented at congresses by treasurers, were mostly not accepted and delegates engaged in long

debates on the problem that members and structures do not pay their levies. At the General Congress of 1999, it is stated:

> The report [of the treasurer—RWN] is not accepted and referred back because of some mathematical and accounting errors.
>
> The congress expresses her dismay at the manner in which business is conducted, whilst bearing in mind that we are a growing church, unanimously calls for the highest standards with respect to our financial management. (CYM Minutes of General Congress 1999)

Congresses then proposed "leadership development" as a key means of addressing these challenges and strains. The specific leadership development programmes remained couched within the framework of maintaining the structures, i.e. complying with what is prescribed in the constitution. This was conceptualised based on the assumption that the members either do not know the constitution or, in terms of the earlier reference, are "undisciplined" in not complying with the constitution. Within this conceptualisation of "leadership development," subsequent congresses emphasised leadership workshops to discuss and teach members the constitution. This is the background of the following decisions of the General Congress in 1999:

> 6. Congress noted with concern that some branches are not adhering to the constitution of the CYM, and resolves that,
>
> 6.1. Each regional executive must arrange workshops to explain to branch executives that the CYM constitution was developed by the youth for the youth and that it has been approved by the General Synod in 1997.
>
> 6.2. Each branch represented at this congress commits itself to the constitution as it currently stands and as it might be amended by the delegates to this congress … (CYM Minutes of General Congress 1999)

When the CYM speaks at its formal gatherings or in other forms of communication to the newspapers and synods, and refers to "stewards," "workshops" or "leadership development," the meanings of these are in terms of the limitations set by the constitution. Additionally, it is set by the decisions from congresses and other meetings like regional and national executive meetings (CYM Minutes of National Executive Meeting 1999; 2000; 2003), PUE meetings and branch meetings. "Leadership development" means the training of executive members to fulfil their constitutional duties and responsibilities. Even when the CYM started the practice to include a group of "stewards," who were to be young people from the hosting region, they were to help make the congress efficient, and because of that, to enhance certain skills to ensure efficient congresses. This initiative highlighted the CYM's commitment to the development of not only a leadership core as executives, but to benefit all the members of the movement in terms of the institutional needs.

One could ask the question as to what lies behind this narrative. Existing economic realities experienced by black youth and communities, in terms of the system of internal colonialism, played a key role in faith communities and started to manifest itself also in the "new South Africa," as well as Lesotho and Namibia. However, one also needs to take into account the historical legacy of the white so-called *Moederkerk's* (Mother church) ecclesiological impact on the so-called *dogterkerke* ("daughter churches")—which would include the youth associations. The question is whether the *Gereformeerde* missionary ecclesiology, which placed a strong emphasis on formal, constitutionally directed meetings as well as expensive administrative systems, could be sustained at all, given the economic realities of the black communities. Neither the type of institution that was to be maintained (as prescribed by a constitution), nor the basis upon which it is built (i.e. a particular functionalist colonial ecclesiology), was ever questioned with regard to its relevance for this community's needs, but more importantly its theological basis within an African context. The deeper ecclesiological question to the CYM and URCSA, as alluded to earlier, is again whether this model can be justified in terms of a Belhar ecclesiology, where the notions of God's calling for unity, reconciliation, justice and costly obedience, do not necessarily imply the maintenance of this colonial edifice.

These self-critical questions can also be asked with regard to other ways in which this theme of the CYM, as a congress movement, came under pressure. The CYM purports to be structured according to the "constitution" but also the Church Order of URCSA, yet in reality this constitutional ideal is under pressure. The question is whether this "congress movement" consciousness and ideal, as articulated and expounded in the constitution, can be sustained in this particular context and in light of further change in the membership, as well as the shift to a notion of "ministry." Has the CYM taken into account the theological underpinnings of the notion of ministry?

This brings me then to a theme that has gradually gained strength in light of these ongoing strains and developments. This last narrative I aim to discuss was perhaps not so evident in the first phase of the development of the CYM movement, yet it emerged slowly; not replacing but impacting on and remixing the previous three. In a sense, it responded to the challenges raised above and expanded within a specific context; thus setting in motion the opening up of new networks and spaces.

CYM as Networked Space for Diverse Identifications

Successive central executive committees, within the various structures of the CYM, focused on transforming and consolidating the movement as an embodiment of ecclesial unification, but also as being the voice of youth and building a (congress) movement. More importantly, the central executive also started to stimulate and facilitate the process of strategic planning within the CYM. In this sense, and resonating with the musical metaphor of remixing, this is another dimension of each of the previous three themes, grappling with the question of how to bring these together in synthesis. Can the CYM be a unifying youth ministry, and how would one give expression to all these narratives in terms of the new realities in the (southern) African context?

As indicated in the previous section regarding the strains on various themes, one can observe the impact of evolving economic and social constraints on members who struggled with rising unemployment, restructurings of companies and retrenchments linked to the broader shift in the economic policies. These structural realities, linked to rising education costs, affected the internal CYM economy of all the structures, which were traditionally and in terms of the constitution based primarily on the system of levies from individuals and local branches.

Within the CYM, as with URCSA, the question of "internal unity" has become a hotly debated issue, more so at the subsequent General Congress in 2007. The then chairperson, Molefe Morake, noted perceptively in his chairperson's address, that the challenge of racism and dealing with diversity still haunts the movement (CYM Minutes of General Congress 2007). However, this time the problems with regard to the constituting of the congress again led to an open dispute over the elections and the legality of all the decisions taken at the congress. The congress was called off and members left confused and with the CYM in disarray (CYM Minutes of General Congress 2007; URCSA Acts 2008, 77). In the aftermath of this General Congress, however, a vigorous and often bitter debate raged. This happened primarily via e-mail and later, to a lesser degree, on the then newly discovered social media website, Facebook. The discussions were amongst young people, ministers, youth leaders and former youth leaders, some of whom were now also living in various countries. One participant, also a former member of the CYM executive, called it, "probably the first open (cyber) discussion we have all seen around issues and concerns with regards to the church (URCSA) and the CYM."

Through this debate between July and October 2007 (often referred to popularly, as "e-congress") various different identifications within and loyalties to the CYM emerged. Some (older) participants, steeped in the liberation struggle and closely tied to the memory of CJV as a congress movement, remained loyal to and invoked this older CJV culture and identity. Others, now also in various senior management positions in private and public corporations, held strong views on the corporate governance of the organisation and called for a "corporatist management paradigm-shift" for the youth ministry practice, as well as in the church. This thinking remained broadly within the narrative of the CYM as a congress movement, with a different slant—the problem was not with the constitution itself, but with the skills of the people involved. The functional and organisational emphasis now shifted from a *political* organisation, within the framework of the congress movement of the 1980s and early 1990s, towards a push for *corporate managerialism*. The CYM, they argued, was to shift from a political narrative towards an economic and, more specifically, corporatist narrative. These participants felt that the church could also be analysed as a corporation and because of the lack of competence amongst the office-bearers, was not doing enough to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

Yet, a growing number of younger voices also emerged. They expressed their alienation from this corporatist language, but also from what they perceived as the "old school" language and style of the "comrades" and older CJV *"maats"* mentality. These younger voices hoped for an affirmation of their own unique needs, but also their own articulations of spiritual transformation and community. They articulated a new language, being born or schooled in the "new South Africa," where the older "struggle" language and working-class cultures were seemingly unknown. They articulated the frustrations of newer generations and a new sense of exclusion within the "structures" and language of the dominant institution. Nowadays, these participants speak of being born into a new struggle of exclusion in church. Whether this sense of exclusion is real or imagined remains a question. What is crucial, however, is that there are the voices articulating a different experience of being the "youth"—beyond institutional structures emerging, but also challenging older narratives. The narrative of how to address the challenge of different identifications has become more prominent.

Indeed, it seems that while the mission of unification, reconciliation and justice has remained high, and unification has taken place structurally, on another level the salience and calling towards a deeper and broader reconciliation—but also the quest for justice in terms of various key identifications and generations—have emerged.

This reformed, reunited, remixed identity has been, so it seems now, a long internal journey. In the brief telling of this narrative and the eruption of "e-congress" one can see the exploration of new spaces for social networking and interaction. It also highlights the way in which shifts in the spaces around the CYM have influenced its development.

Conclusions

What does all of this mean for a church like URCSA as a pilgrim people, performing God's mission today? It was in the challenge from what was known as the Third World, at the time, where the critique of the existing Eurocentric, colonial ecclesiology came. For the next 25 years of URCSA, perhaps it will come from her own children.

Firstly, URCSA needs to reaffirm afresh its unique Reformed identity, in dialogue with the *Belhar Confession* and newer generations of adherents. This affirmation cannot simplistically be a mimicking of the (colonial) Dutch *Gereformeerde* missionary ecclesiological model. The CYM must aim at transcending this colonial heritage. The praxis of the CYM, with regard to its self-identification, views itself as an expression of the imperative of the *Belhar Confession* towards unification. Further deepening is needed to embody and to make a more explicit connection between the impulses from a Belhar ecclesiology and the structures, rituals and habits on the ground.

Secondly, URCSA needs to confront the awkward question of whether the specific unification model has been most appropriate, in light of further developments and the current struggle for internal unity. This challenge is evidently more complex and fluid

than one model of structural unity from the top down. How would these new challenges of diversity—in terms of generation, patriarchy, new cultural expressions, mobility and disability, but more so, sexual preference—reshape ministry (URCSA Acts 2005, 146, 154–155, 156–157). The CYM journey of representing "the youth" as indicated, has not been easy and remains contested. It was, however, seen as a voice for marginalised groups *within* the church. The new challenges of diversity call for ongoing contestations in order to keep on reuniting with marginalised members within URCSA. This may also include the acknowledgement of guilt and lamentation—conversion in the face of new forms of exclusion and marginalisation, i.e. structural sin. Can URCSA grow into a truly intercultural community, where diversity and the variety of backgrounds and experiences are imagined as a gift—not an aberration or irritation? As indicated earlier, the calling towards this deeper and broader reconciliation, but also the quest for internal justice in terms of various marginal identifications seems now, and for the next phase of URCSA's development, a long internal journey. This (as referred to in the "e-congress") will mean the creative exploration and remixing of new spaces for social networking and interaction, but also for witness as a church in southern Africa for the future.

Today this challenge to URCSA comes from her younger voices—her own children and young people. The question that will haunt this church in years to come will perhaps be this: Was the specific ministry form of this church and the thinking behind it—its inherited missionary ecclesiologies—worth more than the witness, but more so the lives of and its communion with her own children?

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