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# THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA

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DONE

21st March 1978.

Dr Alan Paton,  
P.O. Box 278,  
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3650.

Dear Dr. Paton,

With reference to your Telephone call yesterday, I have pleasure in enclosing the Obituary of the Rev. Seth Mokitimi from the Minutes of the Conference of the Methodist Church of South Africa, 1972.

With every good wish for the Easter Season.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

*Donald e. Veysie*

MINUTES OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA.

His health deteriorated while in the Mahamba Circuit, and after a short illness he passed peacefully to his Lord's presence in the Hlatikulu Hospital on the 7th February, 1972, in the 36th year of his ministry and the 64th year of his age.

2. **Seth Molefi Mokitimi**, who was born at Phahameng in the District of Quthing on January the 15th, 1904 into the humble home of a Christian teacher, John Hames Mokitimi. In an area scathed with stone and thin vegetation he herded the cattle as a boy. Earning a very small salary his father could not afford school fees for two sons in the family so they attended on alternate days; while one was at school the other tended the stock.

When the young Seth was in Standard III his father offered for the South African Ministry of the Methodist Church and the family moved across the border. After early schooling in the Free State, a Secondary Education at Ohlange in Natal and Teacher Training at Healdtown, he began his career as a teacher at Healdtown, in a real sense his Alma Mater, for next to his home Healdtown probably did more than all else to mould his life and character.

It is not generally known that in 1930 he went to Bloemfontein as Principal of the then Higher Primary School now the Bantu High. But God had purposed for him a different vocation and early on fired his soul with a burning zeal to preach the Gospel and to become a Methodist Minister. So he went for training at Fort Hare after acceptance by the Conference of 1931.

After four years at Zastron (a former station of his father's) he spent fifteen years as Chaplain/Housemaster of Healdtown institution which period saw the flowering of his outstanding qualities and preaching gifts, so readily appreciated by his colleagues and friends, Arthur A. Wellington and Edward G. Grant, as well as many others, for by now his gifts of leadership and persuasive preaching were receiving country-wide recognition.

The 1940 Conference appointed him as Secretary of the Board of Examiners, thus enabling him to infuse his own sense of high calling and dedication to the ministry into the hearts and lives of the young ministers who over a period of 21 years come under the spell of his influence. As a member of Conference the Church turned to him instinctively for advice especially in those spheres that affected the well-being, both material and spiritual, of the African people; soon he was serving on every important Connexional Committee, the joint training of ministers at Rhodes and the Federal Seminary being particularly close to his heart. He became the first African Warden of Osborn Institution where he spent nine years, this being followed by five years at Bensonvale and



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finally he all but completed six years in the Centre City of Bloemfontein.

As early as August, 1939 Seth Mokitimi represented The Student Christian Association at the World Youth Conference in Amsterdam; in Toronto in 1947 he acted as consultant on African Affairs in the International Missionary Council Assembly and again in a similar capacity in Accra 1957. He was a delegate to the W.C.C. Assembly at Ibadan in January, 1958, the World Methodist Conference in Oslo in 1961, and the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala, Sweden in July, 1968 as well as numerous consultations and interdenominational conferences, notably Cottesloe in 1960 and Mindolo on Race Relations in 1964.

Yet for all his international fame, nowhere was he more appreciated or happier than amongst his own Methodist people back home, his election in 1963 to the Presidency of the Methodist Church of South Africa being enthusiastically received and more widely acclaimed than on any previous occasion. None of those present will ever forget the prolonged applause and his own moving acknowledgement, for in this election, he declared, the Conference was honouring not only the non-whites but also the missionary Pioneers who believed there was something of the Spirit of God in the sons of Africa. The Church in South Africa had made contentious history, perhaps, but his year of office proved beyond shadow of doubt the wisdom of that decision.

Never did Seth Mokitimi "use the pulpit as a political platform, or give public expression to political opinions, or indulge in castigations of the powers that be", however keenly he felt — and on occasion experienced, the privations of his people. For him it was not a case of thinking White, or thinking Black, but thinking RIGHT, and interpreting the mind of Christ, offering his reconciling power in every human situation — in the home and family, in race relations, in national life, amongst Christian churches, groups and in the Christian brotherhood. Nothing grieved him more than strife and ill-feeling amongst his brethren in the ministry, the regional retreats he organised having been designed initially to eradicate these tendencies and serve as an agency of goodwill and reconciliation.

In conference, in conversation, in counselling, in the heat of debate and controversy, Seth Mokitimi possessed that rare faculty of being able with unflinching touch to speak the right word at the right moment — often it was the last word, for he spoke with the accent of his Master whom he served so faithfully because he loved Him so completely.

The S.A. Council of Churches, too, honoured him as their President in recent years, the All African Conference of

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Churches, as an Executive Member and one of its Vice-Presidents. Did he not speak often of our unity in Christ even as he had quoted on occasion the Xhosa poet, Ntsikana, "God is a great blanket that covers us all"—

His hut-to-hut campaigns in the Transkeian hills, the well-organised lesolo (Sotho for a "great hand") in the Herschel Reserve when in collaboration with the Anglican, Dutch Reformed and other churches a concerted effort was made to bring lapsed members back to their churches and to call the heathen to turn and recognise their God; The Revival campaigns initiated in his own District in recent years with teams of ministers converging on one circuit at a time, spending days in visiting, counselling, preaching — all these speak so eloquently of his passion for the Kingdom of God and the souls of men standing in such great need of shepherding and health of spirit.

Despite increasing physical frailty and weariness, this work had to go on, and overwhelming was the response; no need then to count the cost.

For months he was not well, and then on the 25th November, 1971 the road took a turning and he had left us, perplexed and bewildered, in the sixty-eighth year of his earthly pilgrimage and the fortieth of his ministry. (27)

Through all these years his beloved and devoted wife whom he married as Grace Sello or Morija in 1927 had been his strong support and inspiration. To her, in time of great grief, to their only daughter, Violet Ramathe, only recently widowed, and the grandchildren sympathy and love came from every part of South Africa and of the world.

**3. Moses Josiah Seleane**, who was born at Mokhesi, Sterkspruit, in the Herschel District, on the 25th March, 1894. He was born in a home which was in every respect Christian in character and very strict in discipline. At the early age of eleven years, his father and mother started to take turns in teaching him how to read, to study, and to understand the contents of the First Catechism of the Methodist Church. This early training and discipline received from his parents, laid for him most unshakably, the rudiments of his faith and belief, and carved out a future for him.

He received his Primary education at the Tapoleng Methodist Mission School, Sterkspruit. He then proceeded to the Bensonvale Missionary Institution, where he completed his Teachers' Training Course. He started his career as a teacher in the Orange Free State and taught for many years in Zastron. It was while he was at Zastron that he came under the influence of the Primitive Methodist Church, through the evangelistic campaigns which were led by the late Evangelist Dennis Ramathe and the late Othaniel Mokhele.