

Maluti Adventist Hospital

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Maluti Adventist Hospital, situated in the Lesotho Kingdom, is a medical institution owned and operated by the Southern Africa Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Developments That Led to the Establishment of the Institution

Maluti Adventist Hospital, situated at Mapoteng, was named after the Maluti Mountain on whose slope it is built. According to Catherine Lebina,¹ who has served as matron at Maluti Adventist Hospital (MAH) for a very long time, the inception of the hospital may be traced back to around 1947. At that time Nokuphila Adventist Hospital (1936-1959) was still operating in Sophia Town, Johannesburg, in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. The circumstances that led to the closure of Nokuphila Hospital arose from the South African government's opening of two hospitals in Johannesburg; namely, Coronation Hospital (1944) and Baragwanath Hospital (1948), which had 1,200 and 1,500 beds respectively.

The new Baragwanath Hospital, within a mile of Nokuphila Hospital, offered free services, and this cut the income of Nokuphila Hospital just when it had increased its beds to sixty to meet the South African Nursing Council's provisions to continue nurse training. For almost ten years Nokuphila's position was plagued by increased costs of medicines and food and by difficulties to secure the licence for nurse training.² Nokuphila Hospital was forced to close when the Group Areas Act forced all the natives living in the Western Native Township area (Sophia Town) surrounding Nokuphila hospital to move to the South-Western Township (Soweto), an area 12 miles (19 kilometers) from Johannesburg, where the government was already operating the 1,200bed Coronation Hospital for non-Europeans. Based on a property valuer's report, Nokuphila Hospital was sold to the Johannesburg City Council for £33,750. It then officially closed its doors on October 31, 1959.³

Founding of the Institution

To spearhead the founding of Maluti Adventist Hospital, on June 25, 1949, all Sabbath School members around the world were given the privilege of contributing to the Thirteenth Sabbath Offering, the overflow of which was

to go to the new Maluti Hospital project in Basutoland (Lesotho).⁴ Other funds used for the establishment of the hospital were solicited from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Funds were given with the understanding that the Southern African Division would facilitate subsequently the further collection of funds through Harvest Ingathering. A few years later, in 1953, Elder R. S. Watts, president of the Southern African Division, gave the following report:

In 1949 Maluti Hospital was the beneficiary of the Thirteenth Sabbath Overflow offering that amounted to almost £13,000. This amount with approximately £10,000 obtained from Ingathering Comeback Funds and £2,000 contributed by Dr. J. J. Bell has helped us to build a creditable hospital with a capacity of 30 beds on the Basutoland hills.⁵

Maluti Hospital was established on a 25acre (10 Hectare) tract of land below the Maluti Mountain. The hospital commenced its services on March 7, 1951,⁶ with only two patients in admission. The official inauguration ceremony was conducted in 1952. Dr. F. W. Slate (first medical director) and his small staff that included Martha C. Hanson (matron) and W. B. Piercey (business manager) were the pioneering workers. Then Dr. Leon Rittenhouse and family came to carry on with the work.⁷ During the first year of operation, there were requests for outpatient clinics and health posts, which were later established and were situated in five districts of Lesotho.⁸ Pastor R. A. Buckley, director of the Maluti Mission, played a critical role in the establishment of Maluti Hospital and so did the local chiefs.

With only a few years of operation, the hospital building became very crowded with the beds pushed close together to make room for more patients. When the beds were full, mattresses were put on the floor under beds and in passageways to take care of all who needed treatment. So, the staff eagerly looked forward to the building of a new two-storey wing, which was made possible in 1955 by a grant of £1,500 from the governor general's War Memorial Fund, supplemented liberally by the South Africa Union Conference from Harvest Ingathering funds.⁹ G. S. Stevenson lauded the donation of the funds to Maluti Hospital, saying:

Through the generosity of the governor general's War Memorial Health Foundation, which made a liberal grant (of £1,500) for enlarging the hospital's facilities, we now have at Maluti an establishment sufficient to provide for over a hundred inpatients and accommodation for a nurses' training school.¹⁰

On the day of dedicating the hospital's new wing to the service of God and the people of Basutoland, Pastor A. W. Staples, president of the Natal-Transvaal Conference, offered the dedication prayer. Then His Honour, the Resident Commissioner, cut the ribbon stretched across the front entrance and declared the new wing of the hospital open. Dr. W. E. Staples, who was happy with the progress made so far, reported the following in 1959:

Gradually prejudice has been overcome, and from a small beginning the hospital has grown to accommodate 130 beds. The staff has been increased to include another doctor and his wife--Dr. R. A. Holbrook came to Maluti a year ago--a male nurse and his family, and three women nurses. A large proportion of the work done at the

hospital is surgical. Former patients carry the word back to their homes about the doctors who pray before they operate, and many come long distances rather than enter the government hospitals. The type of surgery is wide and varied, with perhaps emphasis on surgery on the eye.¹¹

The eye services were very popular at Maluti Hospital due to high quality eye care, and this had a great impact on the people of Lesotho kingdom. The hospital's reputation spread everywhere among all races. In 1955 Martha C. Hanson wrote, "By degrees, even the Europeans in the neighboring communities have found that a hospital run by Christian, God-fearing doctors, has much to offer than better-equipped, more modern hospitals cannot give. As a result, we now have quite a thriving European practice."¹² A donation from the Chamber of Mines in 1961 was used to erect a new modern block, housing two operating rooms with all facilities and an X-ray department.¹³

Maluti Adventist College

In 1958 there was need for the hospital to train its own nurses. Regarding this identified need, Dr. Staples wrote:

The growth of the hospital has made a nurses' training school possible. Last year our school was inspected by representatives of the nursing council, and they granted permission for us to start the school. A few months ago the first nursing class began with seven girls from various parts of Basutoland and the Union of South Africa. We trust that with the blessing of God this school may develop successfully. It is the only recognized Adventist training school for African nurses in the Union of South Africa and the Protectorates, and, as such, may do valuable work in the future.¹⁴

The nursing training school was registered with High Commission Territories' Nursing Council in 1958, and the first graduation of trained nurses was realized in 1962. The Maluti Adventist Hospital School of Nursing, which is now known as Maluti Adventist College, graduates about one hundred twenty students each year in the General Nursing and Midwifery programs combined—with students coming from as far as Malawi, Zambia, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Botswana.

There was also a need to have a primary school in order to cater for the children of workers and as part of community engagement activity. It also became a social responsibility through the introduction of an English Medium Primary School that came to be known as MACSEM Primary School. This was a good retention strategy for workers as those with young children were enabled to work at Maluti Hospital while their children were receiving a good Adventist education.

Spiritual Life at Maluti Hospital

Since Maluti Hospital was a Seventh-day Adventist medical institution from its beginning, the spiritual life at Maluti was maintained on a high level by Dr. W. E. Staples, the director, with his counterpart Dr. H. E. Clifford. A

fine church edifice was erected in 1960, and much was done to improve the station's service materially, professionally, and spiritually.¹⁵ The medical staff conducted an *It Is Written* program for the patients. Nearly fifty Bible studies a week were given by the nurses and student nurses to the patients.

When D. M. Swaine visited the wards while he was at Maluti Hospital in 1962, he saw some of these studies in progress. Tracts were freely distributed to those who came to visit their sick friends. Evangelistic meetings were conducted three times a week by the chaplain. These gave him some long distance travels on horseback over hilly terrain to reach the places of meetings. Studies were also conducted in the village not far from the hospital by the European male nurses.¹⁶

Thus, at Maluti Hospital, proper emphasis was placed upon all aspects of the enterprise, including evangelism. In 1965 the hospital chaplain's report contained these items from a period of six months: publications distributed-1,392; Bible studies conducted- 385; Voice of Prophecy enrollments-96; decisions made to join the church-8; non-Adventist nurses in baptismal class-4; baptisms during the term-5; number of Seventh-day Adventist nurses-12.¹⁷

During 1965 the bed capacity of Maluti Hospital had reached 140. The medical operations were very successful. The report for twelve months of services revealed the following: patient admissions-2,284; average daily inpatient census-110; major operations-437; minor operations- 925; outpatient visits-11,477.¹⁸ By 1974 the bed capacity had increased further to reach 175. And the number of nursing students had reached about twenty-five per intake. This was happening under the capable directorship of Dr. Clifford from England.

Earlier in 1970 new maternity ward buildings were added to increase hospital space. A donation of R15,000.00 from Anglo-American Corporation, plus another sum of R12,000.00, had been raised to make the connection of electricity to the hospital possible.¹⁹ In 1972 a children's ward was opened. In 1974 a new children's ward and a new student nurses' home and a duplex for the nursing staff were also erected.

New Health Program Developed

In 1977 a South African physician, Dr. David Glass, developed the Comprehensive Health Care Program (CHCP) after extensive study, planning, and research. One of the most important ways of providing preventive health education to the population was through the training of village health workers chosen by their own communities. These individuals received an intensive one- or two-week course in the prevention and management of the major health problems identified in a given area. Their skills and interests were maintained by regular refresher courses. Chosen and given moral support by the village leaders, these workers were not "little doctors," or curative practitioners, but they worked effectively by instruction and example to demonstrate the prevention of illness.²⁰

In 1981 Maluti Hospital reported the success of its Comprehensive Health Care Program. The program's emphasis had focused on preventive medicine and health education. The program had been developed around the most common medical problems and the expressed health needs of the surrounding communities. Contrary to the general medical programs that utilized expensive curative medical practices, this program aimed at prioritizing the investment of a small fraction of money in community sanitation, safe water supply, health education, and immunization that could prevent diseases. It was with this realization that the Maluti Adventist Hospital CHCP was conducted.

Another part of the program was the publication of a monthly educational newsletter in the language of Lesotho. This contained news of the program and practical items of health education. Regularly a relevant spiritual topic was included in the overall message of the paper. Enthusiastically supported by the director of health services of Lesotho, Maluti's school-health education program was conducted on a weekly basis. Emphasis on the prevention and early detection of disease represented a fairly new concept of health care in Lesotho. Thirty schools in the area, representing approximately ten thousand children, were visited following a regular schedule. During each visit new students were examined thoroughly, and all students received a brief screening examination. Some visits included the services of an audiologist, Deanna Pitchford, armed with a portable audiometer. Hearing disorders and other ear problems were discovered.²¹

Other medical problems found during the school-health examinations included dental problems, visual defects, and infectious skin diseases. All students received initial and booster BCG vaccinations for tuberculosis. As the school-health program developed, increasing emphasis was placed on health education for both teachers and students.²²

Maluti Satellite Clinics

Aside from the regular hospital activities, Maluti has also been involved in the supervision and regular visitation of the nearby clinics and health centers affiliated to the hospital, such as: Maseru Health Center, Emmanuel, Fobane, Kolo, Mapheleng, and Maputsoe. Through these health facilities, patients who are not able to go to the hospital are seen within their respective vicinities. Furthermore, patients requiring further treatment or admissions are transported to the hospital where additional care and medical-surgical interventions are rendered. These satellite clinics have brought the much needed health services, including the mobile eye clinics, to the communities.

Maluti Hospital's Platinum Jubilee Celebration

Sunday, March 7, 2021, marked the 70th year anniversary (also known as the Platinum Jubilee) of the existence of MAH. A celebration event was planned to be conducted under the *Theme: From Past to Future With God*. With the Covid-19 pandemic not allowing a big gathering to take place, the celebrations had to be convened virtually.

Most presenters offered their talks from the comfort of their homes and some, especially those from the local vicinity, made their presentations within the nursing college's computer center. All presentations were given virtually, and many participants were able to follow the celebration program. Most of the participants who joined virtually were from Britain, United States, Ireland, Australia, and from several African countries.²³

The celebration event made it possible for selected speakers to outline the history, growth, and spatial expansion of the hospital. It was felt that the 70th year anniversary of MAH had to be celebrated despite the corona virus that has ravaged the country and the world at large. The hospital board appointed a committee to make preparations for this event. The committee was composed of two members from the Southern Africa Union (SAU) Conference; two members from the Lesotho Conference (LC); two members from Maluti Adventist College (MAC); and three members from MAH. However, although the SAU provided three names of directors, only two managed to attend the committee meetings. Finally, the 70th anniversary celebration of MAH was held even under serious restrictions of Covid-19.²⁴

During the celebrations, Catherine Lebina, who has already been referred to above, traced the history of MAH back to around 1947. She gave the names of medical superintendents, chief executives, and matrons that served in the hospital.²⁵ It was mentioned that the work has been progressing well except for a setback that occurred around the early 1990s that nearly led to the closure of the facility. This was due to lack of funds. The Seventh-day Adventist Church intervened through the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to redeem the hospital from a possible closure due to the serious financial crisis it was experiencing. The Lesotho government took a resolution to pay the salaries of workers. The government through the Lesotho Millennium Development Agency improved the physical infrastructure of the hospital and its six peripheral health centers.²⁶

Pastor Clifford Nhlapho, who was identified as the guest speaker, due to his interest in the history of the church in Southern Africa, commenced his talk by reiterating on the history of MAH as narrated by Mrs. Lebina. He gave the historical account of Maluti by also tracing it back from the closure of Nokuphila Hospital to the present. He emphasized that the mission of MAH is of rendering service to all people from all walks of life. He stated that he was pleased to see that the mission still continues under the current administration. This is irrespective of pestilences, political instabilities, and many other challenges including those of a financial nature. He encouraged the hospital staff to maintain the vision of service to humanity and to ensure that they offer excellent service. The thrust of the celebrations was to put God first, then service and all other things to follow.²⁷

The royal representative at the ceremony was the mother of the principle chief of Mapoteng, commonly called the Chieftainess Mantoetse Lesaoana Peete. She commended the hospital for its long standing commitment to serving people in the part of Berea district. She further stated that Maluti is a hospital for all Basotho (people of Lesotho). She mentioned that the attitude and approach of the workers toward patients and clients are different from other hospitals. She stated in uncertain terms that MAH is a treasure to the people of Berea and Lesotho as a whole. She appealed to the government to provide enough funding to sustain the institution as this will go a

long way in the improvement of the welfare and livelihood of the people of Lesotho. She ended her speech by commending workers for their bravery in attending to patients that presented Covid-19 related diseases using limited resources, and she thanked the Adventist Church for its continued support for the important ministry of health.

The celebration program continued with music, featuring different church groups and choirs. One of the choirs featured included that of Maluti SDA Church. The program was directed by Paseka Temana (MAH worker). The first church administrator to speak after the music renditions was Pastor Lerato Thotolo, the executive secretary of the Lesotho Conference, who was also tasked to offer an opening prayer and devotion message. He read from the book of Joshua 24:12, 13. The thrust of his message was that we should trust in the Lord and His faithfulness as the hospital continues to serve the patients and other clients. He said that God is happy when we fully trust Him and reflect on His guidance in the Christian journey. He mentioned that as people, we go through hard times and tend to think that God has forsaken us. But we are always encouraged to remember His Word that He is always with us to protect and shield us. He highlighted that during the 70 years of the hospital's existence, people came and went. Many people who served at the hospital left, but God has remained faithful in the past, and this assures us that He will continue to be faithful in the future. To conclude, the speaker stated that our trust in God will enable MAH to heal diseases that cannot be healed by other health facilities.

Then Pastor Chete Bohale, the president of Lesotho Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, gave a warm welcome to the other special guests; namely, Dr. David Spencer, president of the SAU and chairperson for MAH board of governors. A special welcome was extended to the director of health in the SAU, Dr. Thabo T. Molutsoane, and the other administrators of the hospital and the nursing college respectively. Pastor Bohale indicated that that August occasion was but a foretaste or forerunner for a big physical one to be held around this time of the year 2022. He indicated that the coming meeting will reveal the impact that the institution has had in the lives and livelihood of the people of Lesotho and advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by the church. He requested that all affected people should build bridges for the work in the hospital to progress, for *"Together we stand, and divided we fall!"* He concluded his speech by welcoming all participants to the celebrations for Malutis having reached the milestone of 70 years in existence, but still strong in service to all people from all walks of life.

The chaplain of the hospital, Pastor Lehlohonolo Linakane, emphasized in his speech, the staff motivation, both internal and external, and expressed further appreciation for the institutional achievements. He highlighted the importance of serving even when circumstances do not allow it. For instance, there was a nation-wide strike amongst workers, to the extent that the MAH became overloaded with patients, but because of our dedication and commitment, our staff managed to serve with open hearts, love, and compassion. The chaplain encouraged the staff to continue to serve even under uncertain and challenging times of the Covid-19 crisis. He emphatically assured that God is always with us at every step of the way. Two testimonies were presented by a patient who converted from another denomination to Adventism, and the other testimony was given by a student in the

college who surrendered her life to Christ.²⁸

The closing remarks were given by Dr. Dave Spencer, the president of the Southern Africa Union and chairperson of MAH board of governors. He thanked the church in Lesotho, South Africa, and abroad, which through its many organs made contributions to support the health ministry at Maluti. He thanked the staff of college for their support to the hospital and as well as the dedication of the staff of the hospital; namely, the doctors, nurses, support staff, and every cadre of the hospital as they render services to public, as well as the patients and clients who come to MAH for health services, which keeps the hospital running.²⁹

Some Notable Doctors Who Served at Maluti

Some of the notable doctors who have served at Maluti Adventist Hospital and greatly enhanced the health work of the world-wide church are Dr. Allan Handysides and Dr. Eustace Penniecook. Dr. Allan Handysides from Canada served in the 1970s as obstetrician-gynecologist in addition to his double specialty in pediatrics. From Maluti he was called to be the health director of the Eastern African Division in Harare, Zimbabwe, and later was appointed as General Conference health director starting in the mid 1990s. Dr. Eustace Penniecook, ophthalmologist from Costa Rica, helped to expand the eye clinic serving Maluti in the early 2000s. He is currently (2022) the founding dean of the Adventist School of Medicine in East-Central Africa (ASOME) located in Kigali, Rwanda.

At present, MAH serves more than three hundred sixty thousand patients per annum, out of the 2.1 million population of the kingdom of Lesotho. The facility comfortably caters for patients from both urban and rural areas of the kingdom.

List of Medical Directors

F. W. Slate (1951); L. K. Rittenhouse (1952); W. E. Staples (1953-1961); H. E. Clifford (1961-1968); K. D. Guston (1968-1971); H. Mueller-Grojan (Acting: 1972); A. R. Johnson (1972-1975); W. E. Hurlow (1976-1978); F. C. Hayter (1979 to 1980); W. M. Mason (1981-1992); R. M. Buckley (1992 to 1993); W. E. Hurlow (1994-2011); J. Rodriguez (2012-Present).

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NOTES

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3. Clifford Nhlapo, *Tears of the Black Pulpit: A Celebration of the Legacy of Black Ministers in the North Bantu Mission Field From 1925-1965* (Wandsbeck, South Africa: Reach Publishers, 2012), 118.
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13. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), s.v. "Maluti Adventist Hospital."
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