



Aerial View of the Campus of Helderberg College of Higher Education, 2019.

Photo courtesy of Ian Kitney.

# Helderberg College of Higher Education

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## YVETTE SPARROW

Yvette Sparrow (Toerien), Higher Diploma of Education (Natal College of Education, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa), serves as a librarian for the Pieter Wessels Library at Helderberg College of Higher Education since 2007. Until December 2006, she had taught for twenty years in Seventh-day Adventist schools in South Africa. A descendant of Adventist literature evangelists, Yvette was married to the late Wayne Mark Sparrow. They have two adult children.

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Helderberg College of Higher Education is an educational institution of the Southern Africa Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

## Overview

The founding of Helderberg College of Higher Education (HCHE) is closely linked with the pioneering of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa. On July 28, 1887, Pastor C. L. Boyd and his wife, Pastor D. A. Robinson and his wife, and two literature evangelists, George Burleigh and R. S. Anthony, arrived on a ship from America, docking in Cape Town. When they arrived there were only forty people in South Africa who were

known to be Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>1</sup> The only directive given to these missionaries was one given to them by Ellen G. White, and that was not to be bribed by wealth nor to be frightened by poverty. None of these individuals were put in charge of the work that was to be carried out. Boyd went to Kimberley, and by the end of September 1887 he reported having a congregation of twenty-six members, a Tract and Missionary Society of twenty-five members, and three Sabbath Schools. Among the first members of his congregation were George J. van Druten and his wife, Pieter Wessels and his wife, D. F. Tarr, Albert Davies and wife, and William Hunt. By mid-1889 Pastor C. L. Boyd's Diamond Fields Region had forty-seven baptized members. By May 1890 a church building had been erected and was ready for use by the members.<sup>2</sup>

Pastor D. A. Robinson had an extremely difficult time preaching the gospel in Cape Town. Renting halls for public meetings was extremely expensive, and a tent from America only arrived in January, 1888. Robinson reported, before he left the Cape in February 1888, that 500 books were sold in Cape Town. Robinson's replacement, Ira J. Hankins, arrived on February 9, 1888. On March 2, 1889, the second Seventh-day Adventist congregation in South Africa was organized in Cape Town, with a membership of sixteen. On April 1 they moved into their newly acquired property, "Somerset House," Roeland Street, Cape Town. This provided accommodation for the church workers, a depository for the books and literature that was being sold, and then it was also a place of worship. At the end of April 1889 there was a meeting of Seventh-day Adventist Workers and Laymen, and this was held in Cape Town, where the formal organization of Seventh-day Adventists in South Africa was created. It was decided to make Cape Town the headquarters of the church in South Africa.<sup>3</sup>

On August 9, 1889, four new Seventh-day Adventist missionaries arrived in South Africa: Mr. and Mrs. N. H. Druillard, Miss Hettie Hurd, and Pastor S. N. Haskell.

The second general meeting of Seventh-day Adventists in South Africa was held in the Beaconsfield Church in Kimberley from May 9–18, 1890. At this time work was being done in the Eastern Cape Colony, canvassers were selling literature in many different parts of the country, and a tour was to be made of the republic to evaluate prospects for evangelization. Consideration was also being given to broadening the work to include other cultures: work was to start among the Black people of South Africa, and a ministerial license was given to Pieter Wessels, making him a church worker in order that he could work among the Dutch people.<sup>4</sup>

In April 1890 the third congregation in South Africa, the Rokeby Park Congregation, near Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape, came into existence. It had 26 members. Mid-1891 another congregation came into being in Cathcart.<sup>5</sup>

The third general meeting of Seventh-day Adventists in South Africa was held from December 12–31, 1890. Some main items discussed were the establishment of a school, the fact that Seventh-day Adventists were employing private tutors, and much concern was expressed at the number of young people leaving South Africa to attend school/college in America. It was also expressed that there was a need for another Dutch worker and additional Dutch literature.

On January 2, 1892, Pastor A. T. Robinson (a younger brother of Pastor D. A. Robinson) arrived to take over the reins of the church in South Africa, and during that year a headquarters office for the church was built at Roeland Street. In this building were several offices, a store room and packing rooms on the lower floor; the church hall was on the main floor. The Roeland Street Church was dedicated on April 17, 1892.

In December 1892 the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa changed its mission status to that of a financially self-supporting conference and became known as the South African Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>6</sup>

## Historical Period 1: The Forerunners of HCHE–Claremont and Spion Kop Locations

Claremont Union College (1893-1917)

The leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa were concerned when twelve of their youth left South Africa over a short period of time to study, mostly at Battle Creek College (now known as Andrews University) in the United States of America. This was in 1890, when they realized how great the need was for a Seventh-day Adventist college in South Africa. Asa T. Robinson, president of the South African Conference, encouraged the building of a school, and in 1892 the church bought twenty-three acres (nine hectares) of land in the rural area just outside of Cape Town.<sup>7</sup> The land was in the village of Claremont, about eight miles (thirteen kilometers) from the city, with the nearest station, Kenilworth, being within walking distance.<sup>8</sup> The land had been used as a dairy farm and was bought from E. A. Ingle.<sup>9</sup>

The Wessels family contributed £1420 towards the £7300 that the Claremont Union College buildings cost.<sup>10</sup> “The funds for its establishment were donated by the many friends of the enterprise who were anxious to assist in founding a school where thorough instruction would be given...” Two buildings were built, one a three-story structure for accommodating boarding students and then another building with ten large rooms for teaching and related purposes.<sup>11</sup> It should also be of interest that Claremont Union College had a museum, as stated in one of the decisions of the board of trustees: “It is very desirable that the college should have a good museum.”<sup>12</sup>

On February 1, 1893, Claremont Union College opened its doors; it was the first Seventh-day Adventist College outside of the USA and thus also the first Seventh-day Adventist College in Africa.<sup>13</sup> Basic schooling, as well as tertiary education was offered, with a total number of 31 students graduating from tertiary education at Claremont Union College.<sup>14</sup>

From the time when the college began and throughout its history, there has been a continuous shifting in its educational philosophy from being very theoretical to being very practical<sup>15</sup> and rarely getting the balance quite right to please its constituency. Music has played an important role in the lives of both staff and students since

the college came into being in 1893. In 1894 Instrumental Musical Tuition was offered, with an additional charge of £1 50 per quarter.<sup>16</sup> In later years music was taught at Spion Kop, as one report indicates: "They have thirty-two pupils, of whom five are vocal, one organ, and the remainder piano."<sup>17</sup> Even after the college moved to the Helderberg campus in 1928, the first principal of the institution there, "Elder Milton Robison, encouraged singing, especially the vigorous and exact singing of hymns and sacred songs." George E. Shankel, his wife, and their daughter Virginia-Gene Shankel (Rittenhouse), gave freely of their talent and interest to develop and maintain the musical life of the community.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile, during the early years of the twentieth century, Claremont Union College experienced extreme financial problems. After the South African War (Anglo-Boer War, from October 11, 1899–May 31, 1902), South Africans experienced the darkness of the economic depression that affected all aspects of society. Thus, even though the tuition fees were very low, the enrollment was at half the capacity of the college. "[H]istorian Virgil E. Robinson makes mention that very often during these times of privation, when the boarding students came for breakfast, the college could only provide them with brown bread and tomatoes, while the teachers were asked to continue their work for the barest remuneration possible."<sup>19</sup>

The encroachment of the city of Cape Town was adversely affecting the wonderful rural atmosphere of Claremont Union College, resulting in a strong desire to move the college to another location. It was felt that there was no longer enough land available for the growing of food for the students. Being able to plant and grow their own food would have allowed the students to become self-supporting, while also allowing for the acquisition of practical experience in different areas. Some also had ideas of establishing another sanitarium on the same land as the college.<sup>20</sup>

There was much division among the people regarding the relocation to Spion Kop Mission Farm, which was a 2,200 acre (approximately 890 hectares) former Seventh-day Adventist Zulu mission that had been established by F. B. Armitage. The Battle of Spion Kop during the Anglo Boer War took place on this site, which is twenty miles (thirty-two kilometers) from Ladysmith, Kwa-Zulu Natal. The reasons given by those that were against the new location was that it was just too remote, that the school would be inaccessible due to a lack of suitable transport, that the site was too far out to be able to trade products with any businesses, and that the soil would not sustain maize farming. Yet despite the opposition, in 1916 it was voted to move the school to Spion Kop Mission Farm. The school was closed during 1918 as this enabled the dismantling of the Claremont Union College buildings and the transporting of these building materials to the site of the new school.

Spion Kop College (South African Training College 1919-1922); (Spion Kop College 1922-1927)

At its new location, the school started off as the South African Training College in 1919 and then changed its name in 1922 to Spion Kop College. The name change came at the same time as the introduction of more advanced courses of study. Spion Kop College accounted for thirty-two of Helderberg's graduates. The college

did indeed turn out to be far too isolated a location: it was too far a distance from the railway, the post office, the market, medical assistance, and particularly during winter the roads were almost impassable. After only nine years the school moved to Helderberg in Somerset West.<sup>21</sup> “The decision to move the European training school from Spion Kop was made at the Division Council of 1925...”<sup>22</sup>

## Historical Period 2: New African Missionary College/Helderberg College–Period of Infrastructure Development<sup>23</sup> (1928–1962)

On realizing that Spion Kop College was not going to prosper with it being situated so far away from Ladysmith or any other town, a specially chosen fifteen-member committee went out in search of a new site for the school. The committee was under the chairmanship of the African Division president, W. H. Branson, and after they had looked at fifty farms in the Western Cape, they unanimously chose Bakkerskloof, a farm of 370 acres (162 hectares). This beautiful farm, with almond and apricot orchards, lay just below the Helderberg Mountain. A stream fed by two springs in the kloofs flowed through the valley.<sup>24</sup> “The fifteen-man committee affixed their signatures on that memorable day, November 7, 1925, to the document to purchase a Mr. Berger’s farm for £10 000.”<sup>25</sup> The tree under which they signed this document was to be seen on the campus until December 16, 2022, when heavy rains caused the tree to fall over.

With a new location came a new name, the African Missionary College; this was situated about four miles (six kilometers) from Somerset West and approximately thirty miles (forty-eight kilometers) from Cape Town. When everybody moved from Spion Kop to the new campus in 1928, two three-storey student residences had been completed, and there were some staff cottages on the campus; plans were being made for the construction of an administration building. The women’s residence (later given the name of Meade House) also served as kitchen, dining hall, and laundry. The men’s residence (Salisbury House) initially housed the administrative offices, the classrooms, and the hall in which everyone assembled.<sup>26</sup>

Moving to a more accessible location saw an immediate and steady growth in enrollment numbers. At Spion Kop the enrollment had been somewhere in the 80’s, whereas in its new location in Somerset West it was 139, and then went to beyond 150 by 1930.<sup>27</sup> The name “African Missionary College” aroused much prejudice and was then changed to Helderberg College, named after the mountain under which the college stood,<sup>28</sup> around 1929.<sup>29</sup>

Of interest is the fact that the buildings on campus were built by students and staff members. As early as December 1925, O. R. Shreve and J. V. Wilson and their families were living in tents on the western boundary of Bakkerskloof. They did the groundwork of turning the farm into a school, building roads, constructing bridges, building homes, and clearing and leveling the ground for the foundations of the school buildings.<sup>30</sup> Stanley Glanz took over from Shreve and Wilson, and for many years took charge of constructing the main buildings on campus, working alongside the students.<sup>31</sup>

At the same time that it was decided that the European College at Spion Kop should be moved down to the Cape, it was also decided that the Cape/ Plumstead Sanitarium should be sold and that a smaller health institution that would be connected with the College would open in the Cape. The committee appointed to select the site of the college included one member selected by the sanitarium board.<sup>32</sup> When the sanitarium was sold, the small Plumstead Nursing Home continued in its place with Miss I. Thomason in charge, with the idea of this being a temporary arrangement until a new sanitarium was built along with the other buildings at the new location of the college. Unfortunately, a new sanitarium was never built, and soon after Miss Thomason retired and returned to America, the Plumstead Nursing Home closed in 1934.<sup>33</sup>

The foundation of Branson Hall, the current college administration building, was laid by students during 1929, and even though incomplete, this building was put into service at the beginning of 1930.<sup>34</sup> On June 2, 1931 electricity was installed at Helderberg. The building in which the first cafeteria, a pantry, a domestic science department, and a store were found (this became the Science Building, and thereafter it became the present-day Information Technology Building), was built in 1934. The actual cafeteria building opened only at the beginning of the school year of 1935.<sup>35</sup>

Around 1932 many of the fruit trees were removed and replaced with the first few thousand pine and eucalyptus trees that were planted in the immediate vicinity of the college buildings.<sup>36</sup> Every year on the college's Arbor Day, approximately six thousand more trees were planted (60 000 trees were planted between 1948 and 1958).<sup>37</sup> South Africa did not have a holiday named Arbor Day until 1973, whereas in the United States of America, the first tree-planting holiday was celebrated on April 10, 1872, after being initiated by J. Sterling Morton.<sup>38</sup> This was considered to be significant as all the presidents of the college from 1893 until 1954 were Americans.<sup>39</sup> Many of the other staff members also hailed from the United States. This reveals how many cultures influenced the college's history.<sup>40</sup>

Over many years the college farm provided many work opportunities for those students who needed to pay their way through their study period. Compulsory Work Program hours were spent on the farm. So many different types of farming activities took place over the years such as dairy farming, chicken rearing, bee-keeping, growing of olives, vineyards, citrus fruits, macadamia nuts, sweet corn, proteas, timber, and much more.<sup>41</sup> The longest serving farm manager was Lionel Webster, who worked for twenty-five years from 1948 till 1972.<sup>42</sup>

The college began operating its own post office, the "Post Office of Montclare," in 1935, but because all the work had to be done by the college's staff, it was no longer a viable option to continue this operation after a year or two.<sup>43</sup>

In 1937 the building that housed the primary school and its hostel was built. This building later became the Theology and Arts Building. In 1973 the new primary school building was erected, and in 1977 the primary school no longer fell under the college administration but became the responsibility of the Cape Conference of

Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>44</sup>

In 1941 construction work was started on a music building at the college's new campus below the Helderberg Mountain. Since its completion in 1942, the building has been in use to this day. In 1945 there were six practice rooms, two studio rooms, and a small auditorium.<sup>45</sup> In 1949 the first A Capella choir was formed under Frances Brown.<sup>46</sup> In 1952 the famous Frances L Brown led choir went on a nation-wide tour of South Africa. R. L. McManaman's band and choir are also remembered fondly by some alumni.<sup>47</sup> The ninth concert tour of Helderberg College took place in 1972, with Wilhelmina Dunbar being at the helm.<sup>48</sup> 1975 was also a memorable year, where the "Three-for-one" evangelistic team toured the whole of South Africa. This involved the presentation of song, drama, and gymnastics under the leadership of Wilhelmina Dunbar, Dave Nieman, Smuts van Rooyen, and Manuel Escorcio.<sup>49</sup>

Dr. Franklin Lusk became chairman of the music department from August 1984, and in 1985 he, Wilhelmina Dunbar and accompanying artist Manuel Escorcio went on a tour to all parts of South Africa, with choir members sleeping in the homes of church members in the different towns and cities of South Africa. In 1996 Jannie Kritzingler became head of music at the college. Many records and CD's have been produced by the college, and Jannie Kritzingler compiled a 4-CD set, "A Millenium Celebration" in 2010 from recordings done through the years.

During George Shankel's tenure as principal (1934-1941), W. F. Tarr, the English teacher, wrote the words of the college song "Hail Helderberg." Shankel selected the tune of "O Canada" for its use.<sup>50</sup> This old college song was held in the highest regard by students and staff throughout the years. However, the need arose for a new anthem, one reflecting the current mission and vision of the college. Gerald du Preez, the college president from 2005-2010, a devoted musician himself, took the initiative, and with the blessing of the College Senate and Council, the college alumni were contacted and invited to come up with a new song for the college. Du Preez also challenged the then head of the Music Department, Jannie Kritzingler, to produce words and music for a new anthem for the college. Kritzingler accepted this challenge.

It happened on a public holiday, Women's Day, on one of those perfect sunny winter days on campus. While waiting for one of his music pupils, he was inspired by the quiet, serene atmosphere filled with lyrical bird songs coming in through an open window in his studio. Words and music fell into place. Upon hearing the end product a few weeks later, it met and even exceeded the expectations of the college president, Senate, and Council.<sup>51</sup>

And so, through the years, tours of either whole choirs or smaller singing groups have continued, either with drama and tumbling teams, or on their own, reaching out and sharing the gospel with others.

Anderson Hall, with an auditorium to seat 750 people, several classrooms, offices, and a library was built in 1951.<sup>52</sup>

It is of interest that in 1955 Helderberg College bought a sawmill, and the three timber duplex homes for students were constructed solely from the wood produced from this sawmill.<sup>53</sup> It would seem, though, that most of the buildings currently on campus were built of brick because of the regular threats of mountain fires.

## A Reflection on Race Relations in the History of the Institution

The history of Helderberg College of Higher Education is intricately interwoven with the history of South Africa. "For anyone born in South Africa after World War II, apartheid was the all-encompassing paradigm of life, aimed at completely separating the different races and keeping them apart." This was official policy in South Africa--a policy of "apartness" enforced in 1948.<sup>54</sup>

When the Claremont Union College opened in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1893, Eli B. Miller, who had formerly taught at Battle Creek College, was its first principal.<sup>55</sup> The College's Calendar, in a message from Miller and the Board of Trustees, stated that "all worthy persons" were welcomed, which when looking at the composition of the students attending the college, was to be understood as referring to a totally multiracial student body.<sup>56</sup> Miller's aim was to train church workers who would work amongst their own people.

However, many white parents of the school children were not happy with the multiracial status of the school. On January 14, 1893, Phillip Wessels, whose family are known to have donated much money toward Claremont Union College, wrote to Ellen G. White, "There is the color line drawn which is very distinctly drawn here in society. For my part I do not care. I can shake hands with the coloured people and so forth. But our associations with them is going to spoil our influence with others who are accustomed to these things,...To have any influence with the higher class of people, we must respect these differences."<sup>57</sup> Some members of the local Seventh-day Adventist constituency threatened to remove their children from the college, but the leadership remained firm, allowing students of color to continue attending the institution. This resulted in some students being withdrawn.<sup>58</sup>

It was believed that no person of color actually graduated as part of a graduation ceremony until 1974,<sup>59</sup> yet the fact that Adeline Victoria Sutherland, a student of color, graduated from Claremont Union College in 1904 disproves this. She came to be known as Miss Vickie Sutherland, "the founder of Adventist Education amongst colored people."<sup>60</sup>

By 1913, persons of color were no longer allowed entry to Claremont Union College. The Seventh-day Adventist denomination in South Africa<sup>61</sup> subscribed to "racial demarcations between blacks, coloreds, and whites," and this was especially seen in our institutions.<sup>62</sup> Helderberg College was a white institution even before apartheid was officially introduced by the National Party in South Africa in 1948.<sup>63</sup> During the years of apartheid in South Africa, the Adventist global church's message was that racism was not part of its message, and that it was not part of the Adventist practice, but the church in South Africa aligned itself with the government.



For example, Alwyn du Preez, who graduated with a two-year theology diploma at the nearby Good Hope College in 1957, went on to complete his third and fourth years at Helderberg in 1967 and 1968. Ron du Preez recalls, "Dad was the first non-white to break the color barrier, but in a certain way. He wasn't officially accepted...."<sup>64</sup> He could not live on the campus and could not use the cafeteria nor sports facilities; only academic facilities, thus the classrooms and the library. At the end of 1968, he was not allowed to receive his diploma at the Helderberg graduation ceremony, but this was presented to him at the Good Hope College graduation ceremony later that year.<sup>65</sup>

Also, in 1971, Robert Hall, a Zimbabwean person of color, was accepted as a fourth-year theology student at Helderberg. He also was only allowed to use the college academic facilities.<sup>66</sup> Despite a large number of students petitioning that Robert Hall be allowed to graduate at Helderberg, this was not allowed, and he graduated at Good Hope College.<sup>67</sup>

The first "official" students of color attended Helderberg in 1974.<sup>68</sup> Ron du Preez, Calvin Plaatjes, and Daniel Douman finished their three years at Good Hope College, coming to Helderberg directly thereafter. However, they were still not allowed the same privileges as white students. Ron remembers sitting in the office of Arthur Coetzee, the principal at that time, being bitterly disappointed at not being able to attend a highlight function for which the students of color had paid. They were not able to attend the function as it was being held at a venue where people of color were not allowed, and this was a direct reflection of the society and the apartheid laws being applied in society at the time. Ron du Preez, however, embarked on a life-long friendship with Arthur Coetzee, built on respect and life lessons learnt during difficult situations.<sup>69</sup>

In 1991, whilst there was much political chaos in South Africa, Bethel College (the college of choice for Black South African young people) in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa closed down its Theology Department. All the theology students had to transfer to Helderberg College of Higher Education; among the theology students who transferred from Bethel College to Helderberg College were Mzonzima Gwala, Lungani Mfeka, Sibusiso Khumalo, Dumisani Ntuli, Bongani Ndlovu, and Bongani Mkhize; there was no other choice in South Africa for Seventh-day Adventist theology students.<sup>70</sup>

Many years later, after South Africa's apartheid regime rule had ended, in 1996 under the presidency of Dave Allen, Helderberg made "a direct statement of apology to those hurt in some way by specific actions or lack of them during the apartheid era." This was printed in the "Maranatha."<sup>71</sup> Helderberg's Theology Department drew up the document for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa that was submitted to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, apologizing for not taking a stand against the apartheid nationalist government.<sup>72</sup>

Practical changes in race relations began to be seen when in 2005 Gerald du Preez was the first person of color to become president of the college, followed in 2010 by the appointment of Tankiso Letseli, the first Black president of Helderberg College of Higher Education. In October of 2007 the College Senate accepted the

recommendation of the Alumni Executive Committee to invite Alwyn du Preez and Robert Hall to march with the 2007 senior class at the graduation ceremony held in November to receive post facto their Bachelor of Arts degrees (theology) earned in 1968 and 1971 respectively.<sup>73</sup> It was a historic milestone for Helderberg when it became open for all religions, races, languages, and nationalities. Thereafter, Helderberg's leadership went out and said, "We are open for everyone, please come and join."<sup>74</sup>

## Historical Period 3: Earthquakes, fires, and Education Innovations (1962–1997)

An earthquake that had its epicenter in Tulbagh, South Africa, shook Helderberg in 1969. More than one building became cracked as a result. The theology building was quite badly damaged; the one wall had to be pulled in, as a separation had occurred and one could put one's whole arm through the space. Lionel Young told of how he worked with Ken Thomas, who thought to drill holes through the walls and put a massive bolt running through the whole width of the building, pulling in the one wall. This massive bolt was built up by welding sections of steel together and then this was bolted onto the side of the building. It was heated up and then the nuts were tightened; allowed to cool, and as it cooled it pulled the wall of the building inward. Then it was heated up again, and the nuts were tightened again, and so on, until eventually the gap was closed. On the outside of the building, till today, you have this bolt sticking outward with this very big flat plate, which acts as a washer, spreading the load.<sup>75</sup>

Something worth mentioning is how often the natural disaster of fire has threatened Helderberg, but not even once has any building burned down. The first fire reported, after the school had moved onto the Helderberg campus, was a large veld fire in 1933, which was said to have turned out to be a blessing as there was suitable grazing for the cattle during the following year. Then in 1938 there was a notable fire on Helderberg Mountain. Again, early in 1943 there was yet another fire.<sup>76</sup> There were more fires through the years; such as the one on November 30, 1998, caused by an electrical fault in the ceiling of an upstairs room of Salisbury House, the men's residence.

There was a whole sequel of providences connected to this event; one of these providences was that Llewellyn Juby, the farm manager, had somehow decided earlier on the same day before the fire broke out to check the fire hose and put together the many parts, which he then connected to the fire hydrant outside the men's residence. When walking down the road later that afternoon he saw smoke coming from the top of the men's residence; he quickly found a ladder and began spraying water on the fire even before the fire department arrived. Insurance covered the cost of electrical wiring, the replacing of worn carpets, and the redecoration of certain areas; much needed upgrading for which there had been no budget.<sup>77</sup>

There was a fire on April 16 and 17 of 2011 when flames came very close to faculty houses on the upper level of the campus, staff houses above the dam, and the farm buildings. This happened while the college president was

out of the country and Mzonzima Gwala was acting as college president. Several hectares of the tree plantation were burned down, but thankfully the water reservoir and the olive grove were spared. Due to the high levels of smoke on the campus, the fire department advised that the campus be vacated, and the college closed three days earlier for the Easter holidays. God's protecting hand was evident as the flames were within meters of the buildings.<sup>78</sup>

Glanz Hall was completed in 1973 and comprised a dining room and kitchen on the ground floor and a gymnasium on the floor above. The college church, which seats 1,000 people, was completed in 1976.

A new women's residence, Anne Visser House was built, and this was occupied in 1977; it also has guest rooms as part of its facilities.<sup>79</sup> In 1979 all the inside walls, floors, and ceilings were removed from Meade House, the old women's residence, with only a shell remaining; and this was then remodeled into what is now the Pieter Wessels Library, a three-storey building on campus.<sup>80</sup> In 1983 an Ellen G. White Research Centre was opened in the Pieter Wessels Library building.

The Helderberg High School used to be housed in Branson Hall, with all scholars and students in an integrated program from 1928 until 1970. In 1975 the first high school principal, Johnnie Muller, was appointed. Even though the high school had its own principal, it was still administered by the college. When Muller became ill in 1980, Oliver Campbell took over from him, and due to the college expanding, talks began in terms of moving the high school to different premises. In January 1983 the Cape Conference of Seventh-day Adventists took over the administration of the high school. "This spurred on the efforts to establish our own campus, and the 'Old Scholars Union of Helderberg High School' was formed to drive the program."<sup>81</sup> In November 1995 Stanley Mason became the principal and enthusiastically worked on raising funds for the new buildings. He asked the School Board to allow him to raise funds fulltime during 1999. Pierre Birkenstock succeeded him as principal in November 1998.<sup>82</sup> One million rand was raised for the first phase of the high-school buildings.

In 2001 a contract between Helderberg College and Helderberg High School was finalized with regard to the land allocation for building the new high school buildings close to the main gate of the college campus.<sup>83</sup> The ground-breaking ceremony took place on March 1, 2001.<sup>84</sup> Helga and Colin Owen donated two million rand for building the rest of the school facility, developing the garden and building a soccer field. Helga Owen paid for the building of the Silverleaf Chapel, which serves as a school chapel, and then also a church facility on Sabbaths. Helga Owen's father was killed during World War II, and during the war a kind doctor helped Helga's mother and her siblings. This made her decide that she would pass on this blessing wherever she could. Many of Helderberg High School, Helderberg Primary School learners, and also Helderberg College students were sponsored by Helga and Colin Owen throughout the years.<sup>85</sup>

Through the years, Helderberg has been seeking to increase its course offering through various means. Theology or Bible study has always been made available. Way back in 1894 a collegiate course, with Latin, Greek, English Literature, Advanced Algebra, Geometry, Zoology, Bible Study, Astronomy, History, Calculus, Chemistry,

Logic, Advanced Physics, Geology, Mental Science, Moral Science, and Political Economy were the courses available for those wanting a tertiary qualification.<sup>86</sup> A few years later there was a change from the intellectual classical academic program to one in which a high academic standard was still maintained; yet, there was a strong religious basis, teaching denominationally relevant material and including a holistic, practical work program.<sup>87</sup>

In 1929, students could study Theology or the Normal Course, which at that stage comprised the subjects Advanced Bible Doctrines, College Rhetoric, Christian Education, Afrikaans Methods I, Methods II, Observation and Teaching, Manual Arts I, Seminar, and Music Directing (Drill).<sup>88</sup> In 1951, Helderberg became a senior college and began offering some degree courses of the University of South Africa (UNISA); this affiliation with UNISA lasted for many years. In 1976 an affiliation agreement was entered into with Andrews University<sup>89</sup> in order that accredited BTh (theology) and BBA (business) degrees could be offered to students. In 1997 Helderberg became affiliated with Southern Adventist University with the aim of accreditation for an undergraduate degree in business.<sup>90</sup>

## Historical Period 4: Period of Renovation of Infrastructure and Replacement of Facilities (1998–Present) <sup>91</sup>

For many years the college bell had been forgotten in its old position above the administration building. It was rusting away, but in 2000, through an alumni funded project, the college bell was bronzed and mounted between two molded pillars. This bell tower was built in the middle of the quadrangle between the men's residence and the administration building.<sup>92</sup> The bell tower now plays an important role as a meeting point on the campus.

In 2001 under the leadership of Gerald du Preez, "Helderberg College received accreditation and registration status from the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which is required by the Higher Education Act (No 101 of 1997)...."<sup>93</sup>

On April 13, 2007, Helderberg received legal academic status when it was registered as a private higher education institution by the Department of Education of the Republic of South Africa. This also included its accreditation by the Council on Higher Education (CHE).<sup>94</sup> Helderberg no longer needed to rely on other academic institutions for affiliations and accreditations. The institution also received recognition by the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities.<sup>95</sup> The business faculty also became accredited by ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), an international organization of professional accountants.<sup>96</sup>

In the past, Helderberg used to train teachers, but to get accreditation, it had to be affiliated with another institution of higher learning. For many years Helderberg struggled for a breakthrough that would enable it as

an institution to train Seventh-day Adventist teachers. The struggle resulted from the moratorium that the government imposed on all institutions on the training of teachers, except by state universities in South Africa.<sup>97</sup> Providentially, at the beginning of 2018 a Bachelor of Education program was approved and launched at Helderberg College of Higher Education.<sup>98</sup>

The teacher training moratorium referred to above, which had been imposed by the South African government, forced Helderberg's sister institution, Bethel College in the Eastern Cape Province, to close down. Bethel College had been relying heavily on the income derived from its teacher trainee students who constituted the majority. Much was done to try and save Bethel College, but when the closing day arrived, the college had twenty lecturers and only thirty students, leaving it with no option but to close, purely for financial reasons.<sup>99</sup> Matabeni and Kanyane<sup>100</sup> reported an allegation "that Helderberg College, the historically advantaged college, benefited from the sweat and blood of the historically disadvantaged black college...." This is because Helderberg became the only Seventh-day Adventist tertiary institution in South Africa, and many of those who would have loved to go to Bethel College had no choice but to go to Helderberg.

Helderberg College now offers degrees in theology, psychology, communication, education, and business. Various diplomas are also offered in addition to a Foundation-year program, which is an extension of the regular curriculum for students who do not have university entrance and who wish to enter any degree program at Helderberg.<sup>101</sup> The administration of Helderberg is always investigating all avenues towards improving and expanding the academic qualifications offered. Along with this, on November 9, 2017, the institution's name was legally changed to Helderberg College of Higher Education.<sup>102</sup>

2018 was a milestone year for Helderberg as it held its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, with much publicity, the welcoming of pioneers to the campus and thankfully accepted funding needed during this period for the renovation of infrastructure and the replacement of facilities.

On Founder's Day, February 1, 2018, staff and students gathered to inaugurate a new monument near the entrance of the college, marking the unveiling of Helderberg college's new name, Helderberg College of Higher Education (HCHE). This name change was necessary to distinguish Helderberg from the high schools in the vicinity that are also called colleges.<sup>103</sup>

The graduation of 2019 was the 93<sup>rd</sup> graduation held on the campus beneath the Helderberg Mountain. When those students who graduated at Claremont Union College (31) and Spion Kop College (32) are included, then the number of students to have graduated from the college since its inception in 1893 reach a total of 3,074.<sup>104</sup>

One of the continuing important departments of the college is the farm. The olive grove and the timber industry continue to be profitable on campus, leading to the purchase recently (in 2018) of an olive sorter and a wood splitter.<sup>105</sup> The availability of college farm land adjacent to the campus makes the practicing of Eco-theology possible, where vegetables are being grown in tunnels. A fruit orchard has also been planted and is being expanded and cared for on a regular basis. The old macadamia orchard has been cleared of all overgrown

vegetation between the macadamia trees, and it continues to be given regular attention.<sup>106</sup> Not only are the theology students required to spend compulsory practical work hours through the Work Integrated Learning, every Helderberg student is now required to take this course.<sup>107</sup>

The importance of the Work Integrated Learning component is clearly stated in the 2019 College Prospectus: "Training in practical skills and the development of habits of productiveness hold an important place in the educational philosophy of Helderberg College of Higher Education."<sup>108</sup> Students who are in need of financial assistance for their studies are able to apply for work bursaries. Work opportunities are offered in various departments on the campus, and the student who acquires such a work bursary is able to earn part of their tuition fees.

## Spirituality at Helderberg College of Higher Education

Helderberg College of Higher Education is a Christian institution with high spiritual values. While the forms of spiritual activity have varied over the years, the basic sources of spiritual nourishment have remained constant—worship services in church, dormitory and chapel, and the quiet times of personal meditation and prayer.<sup>109</sup>

The college's "Three Year Spiritual Master Plans" are working documents that express the importance of spiritual growth in students and staff members at the college. These documents contain clear goals and objectives intended to improve the spiritual life of the entire college family. Input is gathered from all departments and faculties in terms of ideas for spiritual nourishment. Staff and faculty participate in the college churches, attending regular Sabbath and mid-week services and serve as spiritual mentors and role models. Much emphasis is placed on the mentoring of students by staff with a formal program of mentoring in place. In all disciplines of study there is the integration of faith with learning, and regular worship is held in classes each day. At least twice a year there is a Week In Spiritual Emphasis (WISE) program, requiring full attendance by students and staff members.<sup>110</sup> Special meetings are held for students on Friday evenings; through the years these Friday night meetings have been a highlight for students. What was known as "prayer bands" where small groups of students met to pray under the trees or in a quiet corner played an important part in the spiritual growth and development of both staff and students. "This spontaneous reaching up and reaching out is an important facet of the spiritual impact on the lives of students."<sup>111</sup>

The College facilitates ways of providing opportunities for students to participate in the spiritual activities of the three churches on the college campus. Student leaders are appointed for programs such as Voice of Prophecy lessons and VOP spiritual evangelistic rallies, leading out in Master Guide programs on and off campus, and also coordinating and leading out at Branch Sabbath Schools.<sup>112</sup> It's interesting to note that the Missionary Volunteer Society was established in the early days of Claremont Union College. Activities of earlier years included assisting ministers in conducting evangelistic meetings, taking part in the Harvest Ingathering Campaign, being part of the

Medical Band, which gave help to poor communities on Sabbath afternoons; singing groups calling themselves sunshine bands used to go to hospitals and old-age homes. “[T]he Preaching Band would, before embarking on Sabbath outreach activities, collect the remains of Sabbath lunch at the staff homes on campus along with donations of fruit and vegetables to distribute among the needy in the neighborhood.”<sup>113</sup>

Circumstances changed over the years, and the need arose for helping college students, many of the students who felt called to study theology, yet who did not have financial means and were trusting God wholly to provide for their every need. Through the chaplain, donations are organized to feed the students. Pastor Penny Brink has taken on the responsibility of raising funds for those students who are forced to withdraw from their studies due to financial hardships; she is helping these students in collaboration with the campus churches and the College Alumni Association. It also became tradition to provide soup and bread for students at exam time: the staff and others donated toward the filling of the students’ empty stomachs. The chaplain also visited the home of each married student before exams and prayed with the family, including the dormitory students who meet for prayer during worship time.<sup>114</sup>

One of Pastor Dumisani Bucwa’s missions was meeting the needs of the Level 3 staff workers of the college, mainly Xhosa speaking people, living in a village on the campus of the college, yet mostly not belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Attention was given toward improving their living and working conditions, and after three campaigns with special speakers coming to speak at meetings, four of these workers were baptized. It was then felt that a church where the vernacular was used was needed on campus. A building was identified that could be upgraded and turned into a church, and the Southern African Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and people from all over the world have donated toward this project, an amount totaling R125 000 has been collected. Work on the building is still in progress.

The campus itself has become a place for evangelization. Whereas the greater number of students are Seventh-day Adventists, there are still a large number of non-Adventist students studying on the campus, and the chaplain makes time for Bible studies with all students, but particularly those who want to know more about Jesus. If they show an interest, he begins baptismal classes with them, and on average baptizes four or five students every semester.<sup>115</sup>

A center for volunteer services is maintained on campus where students learn to offer their services (time and energy) to the community with no self-gain. Then students also take part in annual community engagement projects. Regular community projects include the local village outreach, volunteer work in old age homes, and hospital singing by students on Sabbath afternoons. Graduating classes take on projects in the community, and then there is an annual college community engagement day where all staff and students join in one project on a specific day set aside for this. Whenever there is a specific need in a segment of the community, a way is found to bring staff and students together to offer help.<sup>116</sup>

During Dr Vincent Injety's tenure as president of the college (which ended on December 31, 2020), there was much emphasis on the raising of funds for the improvement of all facilities on campus. Alumni and friends of Helderberg contributed toward the restoration and upgrading of the following: the Anderson Hall; the Soccer Field; the Mxoli Apartments (annexe building); the English Language Institute; Guest Rooms; the Gymnasium; Helderberg vehicles; Irvin Khoza Crescent; tarring of other campus roads; IT building classroom; partial renovation of theology building; administration building refurbishment–reception area, board room, kitchen; farm machinery and equipment; dam fencing; farm building; an isiXhosa speaking church; Media Center; border fencing; the Fountain; Automated Security Booms; Cafeteria Equipment; Ladies' Residence Renovations; Cafeteria Pizza Oven; Website Project. These projects from 2013 till 2020 have cost a total of R9,300,000.00.<sup>117</sup>

## What Remains to Be Done to Fulfill the Mission

Fulfilling a mission is a group journey, with everyone having a role to play. The future aims of the college are to reach out even more to the community of Somerset West; to be known in the region as an institution with a high standard of education, high moral values and an excellent course offering. HCHE must be known as the tertiary institution of choice for all Seventh-day Adventists in South Africa. Helderberg's primary responsibility is to the church, to educate the youth, to provide a workforce for the church.<sup>118</sup> Its goal states: "We strive to empower students from all backgrounds with leadership and vocational skills, with a passion for service to meet the transformational needs of the church and society."<sup>119</sup>

## List Of Presidents

### Claremont Union College

E. B. Miller (1893, 1894); C. H Hayton (1902-1907); Mrs. A. Druillard (1895); W. S. Hyatt (1907); Miss S. Peck (1896); J. F. Olmstead (1908); J. L. Shaw (1897-1900); A Ruble (1901, 1902); C. P. Cragger (1909-1915); W. E. Straw (1916, 1917).

### South African Training School

J. I. Robison (1919); U. Bender (1920, 1921); J. D. Stickle (1922).

### Spion Kop College

E. D. Dick (1923-1927).

### Helderberg College

M. P. Robison (1928-1933); G. E. Shankel (1934-1941); W. E. McClure (1942–1946); M. P. Robison (1947, 1948); W. E. McClure (1949-1954); E. L. Tarr (1955-1961); P. J. van Eck, (1961-1965); H. E. Marais (1966-1972); A. O. Coetzee (1973-1978); D. Birkenstock (1979-1995); D. F. Allen (1996-2002); G. M. Ross (2003-2005); G. T. du Preez (2005-



2010); T. L. Letseli (January 1-31, 2011); D. P. Shongwe (July 1, 2011-December 31, 2012); V. R. Injety (May 8, 2013-December 31, 2020); T. L. Letseli (January 1, 2021- ).

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