

ST. ANDREW'S THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE



On the 2nd February, 1892, the Presbyterian Theological College (PTC) was opened by Rev. John Morton and Rev. Kenneth Grant. The location was Shady Grove on the Susamachar compound in San Fernando. At that opening Rev. Grant stated: “No church can expect any great success that has to rely upon an imported ministry.” In his opinion, it was “ increasingly imperative that our evangelists should be well instructed (so) that they may be qualified to teach others who are rapidly growing in knowledge.” In fact, as early as 1872 the theological training of local catechists had begun and by 1878 ten had been trained.

This original intent and purpose has remained the guiding light of Presbyterian theological education for the last 119 years. Significantly, the first staff of the PTC in 1892 included Rev. Lal Behari, the first local

Presbyterian Minister. Rev. Morton was the PTC’s first principal.

In 1904 the PTC was placed under the principalship of Rev. F.D. Coffin, who remained principal until 1915. This was a fertile time at the PTC, as indicated by the fact that in 1909 there were 75 men undergoing training. Dr. Coffin also introduced an additional purpose for the PTC, which was to educate and ensure that “the general body of our people (have) clear and intelligent views of Christian truth.” As with the original intent, this additional purpose has also been a clear focus of Presbyterian theological education over the years.

In 1922 the PTC relocated to Paradise Hill, San Fernando, which has since remained the centre of theological education and formation for the Presbyterian community. In 1929 Rev. J.A. Scrimgeour became principal of the PTC and served in that capacity until 1950. During this period the PTC worked together with the principals of Naparima Training College and

Naparima Boys' College (both established in 1894), which were also located on Paradise Hill, to accomplish the common vision of the preparation of young persons for both church and secular vocations informed by Christianity and the values of Presbyterianism. Both vocations were seen as one inseparable mission of the Presbyterian Church.

During this period, the first local candidates for ministry, the Reverends James Sieunarine, Cyril Beharry and Roy Nehall, were also sent to Canada to complete their theological studies. This initiative of training ministerial candidates both locally and abroad continued for several years in parallel with the training of catechists locally. The Order of Catechist was effectively discontinued by Synod in 1959, when it was officially replaced with the Order of 'Ordained Preacher.'

In 1950 Rev. J.W.E. Newberry became principal of the PTC. Under his stewardship students of the PTC also began completing their theological education at the United Theological College in Jamaica. In August 1959, Rev. Newberry was succeeded as principal by Rev. James Sieunarine. He was the first local Principal of the PTC. On the 8th October, 1959 the PTC was renamed St. Andrew's Theological College (SATC), and took as its motto "*Adduxit eum ad Jesum*" (He brought him to Jesus). The logo of SATC was designed by Rev. Laurence Purdy, adapting the logo of the United Church of Canada. The choice of the name "St. Andrew's" and of the motto, was inspired by Andrew the disciple of Jesus, who, tradition holds, brought his brother Peter, the boy who had the loaves and fish and some Greeks to Jesus (John 1:41-42; 6:5-9; 12:20-22). Indeed, Andrew is traditionally known as "*Protokletos*" – the First Called. Under Rev. Sieunarine SATC introduced 'Lay Schools,' in order to expose the general community to theology and biblical studies. Though successful at the time, this initiative has not survived.

In 1961 Rev. A. Dayfoot was made principal of SATC. This was at the time of Independence (1962), and, prompted by this emerging Caribbean self-awareness, SATC joined with the wider Caribbean in a movement towards ecumenism in theological education. In 1966 the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) was established in Jamaica. Previously, Rev. Newberry and Rev. Dayfoot, representing SATC, tutored at the smaller Union Theological Seminary, Jamaica, from which Reverends Harold Sitahal, Michael Karam Chandoo, Kenneth Kalloo and Leroy Elder were the first PCTT graduates in 1963. During this period SATC also opened its doors to Baptists, Moravians, Methodists and Anglicans.

This imperative towards ecumenism, begun under Rev. Dayfoot, has continued and remains a specific focus of SATC. Indeed, the current Vision Statement of SATC states: "*St. Andrew's Theological College offers theological training in an ecumenical setting in order to equip persons for various forms of Christian Ministry locally, regionally and internationally.*"

Moreover, Rev. Dayfoot is to be remembered as the principal of SATC who recommended, in 1965, that women as well as men be trained for Ordained Ministry. In 1968 the first woman, Rev. Mary Naimool (who was trained in Canada), was ordained by the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad.

In 1970 Rev. Idris Hamid succeeded Rev. Dayfoot as principal of SATC. He remained principal until his untimely death in 1981. During this period the College was used as a venue for seminars and for training projects for the laity. His strong social focus resulted in the Ruralede programme being initiated in 1974, which required theological students to work on social-aid projects as part of their theological training and formation. In addition, Rev. Hamid introduced the publication of an annual ecumenical Lenten Booklet and of a SATC Newsletter. In 1978 a revised Deaconess Order, with a three year course of study, was proposed by Rev. Hamid, which was ratified by the Synod and remains a core course at SATC. This period also saw the introductions of the Orders of Lay Pastor and Presiding Elder, for which SATC provided the necessary training.

The period 1981 to 1985 was a transition period, as SATC recovered from the untimely loss of Rev. Hamid. Rev. Harold Sitahal guided the College as its principal during this time. To a large extent the work under the Hamid era was continued, with the College facilitating Church Workers' Conferences, Ministers' Retreats and Elders' Retreats in addition to formal theological education. The most notable development in this period was the delivery by SATC of a complete ministerial programme leading to a Licentiate in Theology (L. Th) and ordination.

In 1987 Rev. Winston Gopaul was appointed principal of SATC (he had been acting since 1985). By this time the Ruralede programme had been phased out. In 1988, with the ordination of Rev. Elvis Elahie on the 26th June, 1988 after having obtained his L. Th., a significant milestone in the history of SATC was achieved. Rev. Elahie was the first graduate of SATC to be ordained following successful completion of the entirely indigenous L.Th. programme. Reverends Ian Gajadar (September 1988) and Joy Abdul (January 1989) would follow, with Rev. Abdul being the first woman to be ordained upon completion of the L.Th. programme.

Rev. Gopaul and Rev. Abdul (who succeeded Rev. Gopaul as principal of SATC in 2002) largely continued the programmes and initiatives that had by the 1980's been established at SATC, and which have more or less continued to date. This was a period of consolidation and relative stability at SATC. Of note was the revival of the Lenten Booklet and the publication in 1986 of a Guide to Church Membership. Other publications that were undertaken by SATC in this period were a 'Book of Prayers for Every Day Devotions' and a collection of popular 'Hymns and Choruses.' This was also a period of significant infrastructural development at SATC, as under Rev. Gopaul a new Chapel and dormintory were constructed at Paradise Hill (completed in 1992) and under Rev. Abdul there was also some improvements done.

In 2004 the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) was established (by Act No. 16 of 2004). All post-secondary educational institutes were required by law to arrange their affairs to conform with the standards set by the ACTT. SATC was one of them. This development arose under the stewardship of Rev. Abdul, who began and carried the process leading to accreditation to the stage of Certification for Candidacy for accreditation with the ACTT.

In 2009 SATC embarked on yet another giant step forward in its development. In July 2009 SATC was incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago. As a consequence the status of SATC changed radically. SATC is now governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Synod of the PCTT. Through this power of appointment of the Board of SATC (and on recommendation by the Board, of the principal of SATC), the Synod retains a measure of influence over SATC. However, by reason of its incorporation as a non-profit company and the Bye-Laws that now govern SATC, its Board of Directors is empowered to function independently and autonomously once appointed.

The first Board of Directors of SATC was appointed by Synod in July 2009 and consisted of the following: Chairman, The Hon. Mr. Justice Peter Jamadar; Vice Chairman, Mr. Hatim Gardner; Corporate Secretary, Ms. Charmaine Dass; General Secretary of the PCTT (ex officio), Mr. Alvin Seereeram; Dr. Michael Dowlath, Mrs. Celia Gibbings, Mr. Gerard Granado, Rev. Kendrick Sooknarine, Dr. Roy Tilluckdharry and Dr. Jennifer Yamin-Ali. A Treasurer, Mr. Dominic Rampersad, was subsequently appointed to the Board in March, 2010. In August 2010 the first Principal recommended by the Board of Directors, Rev. Harold Sitahal, was appointed by the Synod. Rev. Harold Sitahal had previously served as principal of SATC from 1981 - 1985.

Since the incorporation of SATC several other significant developments have occurred. There is now weekly midday worship on Wednesday's that is open to the public; a scholarship fund has been established for needy and deserving students through the generosity of the Terrance Bissessar Trust Fund; an Advent Booklet has been published for the first time (in 2010); and in 2011 "A General Overview and Guide to Presbyterianism in Trinidad and Tobago" booklet will be published. In addition, an Administrative Center has been created with offices for the Principal, Deputy Principal and Staff and also with a Faculty Room. A Board Office and Board Room have also been established. A dedicated Student Association area has been provided. The organizational structure of SATC has been rationalized and reviewed, as have staff positions and salaries. And, all course programmes have been subjected to a rigorous review and revision to meet international quality assurance standards and the demands of accreditation. In 2010 an Endowment Trust Fund for SATC was established. And modern financial protocols have been introduced at SATC to guarantee financial accountability and integrity. From August 2010 SATC commenced publishing a

dedicated SATC Page in the monthly Trinidad Presbyterian Newsletter. And, SATC has established a new web page at: www.satc.edu.tt From 2011 SATC has also commenced facilitating 'SATC Seminars,' on topics of general interest.

At present SATC offers the following formal courses of study:

- Licentiate in Theology (Ordained Ministry)
- Diploma in Theology (Deaconess Order, Lay Pastor Order)
- Certificate in Religious Education; Certificate in Christian Education; and Certificate courses for Presiding Elders and Assistant Lay Pastors.

From 2011 SATC will offer a BA in Theology with options for minors in Education, Administration and Leadership, and Law, as it moves to developing its capacity as a tertiary educational institute.

Indeed, SATC's vision is to become a first- class tertiary educational institute, offering not only graduate studies but also post-graduate studies. In pursuit of this aim SATC is engaging the process leading to full accreditation under the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. In July 2009 SATC was duly Registered with the ACTT, the first formal step leading to Accreditation. Then, in July 2010, SATC was one of only 10 local institutions approved for Candidacy for Accreditation. Actual Accreditation (both programme and institutional) is next and SATC is confident that it will be duly accredited by the ACTT in the near future. However, SATC remains committed to its founding vision and mission and continues to facilitate Christian training and formation at all levels of the Church.