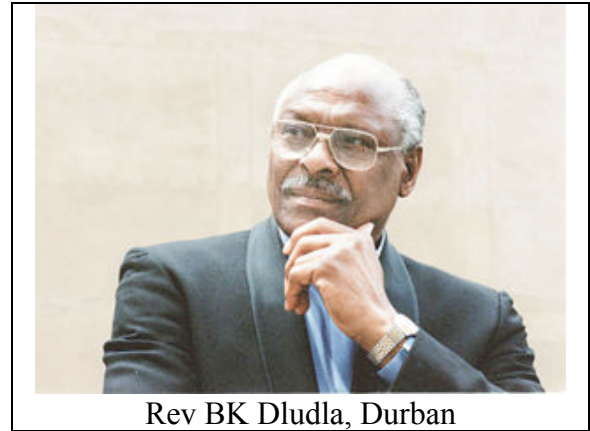


# A Good News Story from Chicago and South Africa

Written by Margaret G. Rogers

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In 1954 I attended my church's summer camp along with about 100 other 15-year-olds at Tower Hill in Sawyer, Michigan. On the first day of camp, we were introduced to a visiting theological student called "Uncle Bud." Uncle Bud was from South Africa and was studying to become a Congregational minister. He was visiting Congregational camps all over the country. Uncle Bud and I became friends and exchanged letters while he was traveling to other camps. He wrote that his full name was Bekizipho Khulekani Dlodla and that I could call him Becky.



Rev BK Dlodla, Durban

In August of 1954, at the conclusion of his travels, Becky was planning to fly to New York and head back home to South Africa. I invited him to come to Lombard to meet my family and see my church, and he agreed. Somehow, Becky made his way from O'Hare to the loop and took the Northwestern train to Lombard where I met him at the station. We walked the few blocks to my home where I introduced him to my mom and my sister who was 10 at the time (dad was visiting his grandmother in the city that night). Mom made dinner and we all talked and had a great time together. Then, Becky and I walked to my church where he met our minister who showed Becky the chapel and gave him a hymnal to take back home. Later Becky and I walked to the train station, and he took a train back to the loop and out to O'Hare. It's been 57 years since I've seen or spoken to Becky.

Last week I came across an 8x10 photo of us kids at the camp dated 1954, and there is Becky sitting in the front row with a little child on his lap. In 1955 a young man from our church group went to South Africa and I connected Becky and him. Becky had been ordained and was working in Cato Ridge. He walked from there to Durban, including crossing a swollen river, and went to the ship docks. Becky found the young man from my church 20 minutes before his ship, the African Crescent, was to leave, and gave him a photo of himself to give to me. I have that photo of Becky and all the letters he wrote, the last one dated 5 June 1972.

As I reread that letter, I realized Becky was now 85 and so wondered if he was still walking the earth. I put his name in my search engine and like magic—there he was. I read that Becky was the first president of the Soldiers of Christ Movement and was co-author of the Constitution of the United Congregational Church of South Africa; that during apartheid he sheltered political activists in his church in Durban; and, as a member of the South African Council of Churches, he helped obtain the release of Nelson Mandela from prison. Today, he is helping less fortunate children by funding their education.

On the morning of May 27<sup>th</sup>, I called Becky in Durban; he answered the phone. Needless to say, he was shocked and amazed to hear who it was. It had been, after all, 57 years since we had seen one another and 39 years since our last correspondence. He told me his niece had just passed away and he was packing to leave the city and go to Zululand for her funeral. If I had called five minutes later, he would have been gone. I mailed Becky a letter and photos of the 1954 camp and of me and my family. He hasn't received them yet, so only God knows if Becky and I will see one another again face to face. But if not, at least we are reconnected and that certainly is a Chicago good news story in my book.