

UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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27 September 2021,

Dear fellow Congregationalists,

UCCSA SEPTEMBER 21-23 2021 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH

Grace and peace to the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA), one Church in five countries, serving Southern Africa. Buoyant and inspired by the foundation made over the past 50 years of mission and witness, the Church met in the context of a life altering, threatening and indeed, a decimating COVID-19 pandemic. Many amongst the Church have transitioned to be with the Lord. Many are battling the effects of this merciless pandemic. Similarly, the spirituality, stewardship responsibilities and governance processes in the Church are suffering because of the disempowering effects of the pandemic. Many meetings of the church were put in abeyance. Our 2021 Assembly is a case in point. The threat of a new COVID-19 variant persists. Even though one thing remains sure and gives us hope, this is the Lord's promise "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Exodus 33:14.

The UCCSA Executive prays comfort to all and stands in solidarity with the entire Church and all the people of God as we cross this difficult frontier. The local churches are exhorted to continue extending the love of God to the world and communities around them. In this context of a global COVID-19 pandemic – the Lord is still speaking. Let us as the UCCSA membership and all in our mission organs follow His direction. The world has much to learn from the Church in this hour, as was the case when it adopted such ministries and professions like nursing in the early Church, also during a time of pandemic. The executive meeting is thus convinced of the sufficient grace of the Lord that enables us to face our current context.

The meeting also noted with concern the sporadic unrests in the SADC region. These include public unrest in Eswatini for democratic change, recent unrests in Mozambique, including an armed insurgency and the acts of public violence and destruction in South Africa in July this year. We continue to stand in solidarity with all God's people. A lamentation is however, made against injustices around the distribution, commercialisation and the inaccessibility of COVID-19 vaccines. The Church, bound by its theological nature and value of justice, do condemn these

inhumane and profit-driven tendencies around the availability of vaccines, which themselves are a means to a healthy life. The unavailability of vaccines to poorer nations further exacerbates global economic inequality between industrialized economies and emerging markets.

The Executive Committee Meeting discerned the need for a new spirituality with an ethic of hard work and investment. For a lengthy time, we have benefitted from the benevolence of mission partners. The Church senses a call to a new stewardship over the resources that God has gifted us as a Church. Time has come for us as a denomination to be self-sufficient to the point that we can extend grace to those who are in bond-servanthood with us in mission. This calls for a high level of faithfulness and accountability in all levels of the Church. We are called to a life of excellence, a life worthy of the calling we have received from the Lord.

The Church has come to a Kairos moment in her pilgrimage of faith. The September 2021 Executive Committee Meeting thus upheld the strategic formulation process. The UCCSA membership is called upon to a prayerful visioning process and reflection towards a missional strategy. As this process makes progress, the Church is called upon to note all skills and gifts in our ranks. These must be used for the furtherance of mission. The meeting gave counsel that the Pillar of Mission in the strategic framework must focus on young people as a matter of priority. Similarly, the Church is exhorted to be deliberate in promoting and reviving youth ministry. History and theology demands that we put emphasis on youth ministry. Furthermore, on the formation process, the issue of ministerial training was brought to the fore. Its themes and processes will be fully explored in the mission and ministry conference. We are all invited to pray as we prepare for it.

The Meeting noted with concern the issues of injustice both in the Church and society. Similarly, of concern is the slow pace of resolving historical social injustices in our region. These include due recognition of the Khoi and San in Southern Africa; gross human rights violations and an ongoing genocide in Mozambique; Gukurahundi atrocities in Zimbabwe; unresolved Apartheid crimes against humanity in South Africa; the Nama, Herero and Abavanderu genocide in Namibia, and those in diaspora. In the light of political engagements between the Namibian and German governments, the Church rejects any process that excludes the victims of genocide. As a Church of justice, we must introspect and move away from theorising the issue of justice because it demands decisive action, solidarity and restitution to those who are excluded in the internal processes and are thus, continually disadvantaged.

In the same breath, the Executive Committee meeting celebrates the positive development within the region. These include the peaceful transitions of power in Malawi and Zambia. The Executive Committee also notes the significant role played by the SADC, especially in Eswatini and in Mozambique in fighting the insurrection in the Cabo Delgado province. The UCCSA prays that this will add impetus to the peaceful developments within our region. As a region we look forward to the upcoming

local government elections in South Africa on 1 November this year, and we pray for tolerance and peace. May God's reign of Peace be established in the world.

The UCCSA Executive from its September 2021 Meeting, commend the Church and all the people of God to his loving care. AMEN.

Signed on behalf of the Executive Committee,



Rev Kudzani SBM Ndebele
General Secretary



Rev Sikhalo Cele
President

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