



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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To All Ministers and Lay Leadership in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa

Grace and Peace to you!

We write to you in the midst of the Covid -19 pandemic which has begun to devour the lives of many in the Southern African region. This new pandemic has connected and is fuelling centuries old pandemics that tend to be ignored or taken lightly. Gender Based Violence and Femicide is one such pandemic! We are mournful and saddened that thousands of women and children's lives have been lost to this pandemic, and each day new names are added to the list. South Africa continues to lead the world in this evil as the lives of young women, old women, pregnant women, three year old baby girls are cut short, their bodies raped, stabbed, burned, maimed by brutal so called men! Some of these perpetrators are said to be confirmed members of the MCSA! As a church, we have over the years sought to offer responses through resolutions, programmes and various activities. Our most recent Conference saw us participating in a March of Lament and resolving to deepen our participation in the eradication of this scourge.

The leadership of the church comprising of all Synods, Units, Organisation and Gender Activists met virtually in the last week and affirmed that Gender Based Violence was a societal evil that needed the collective action of all sectors of our nations including governments, NGO's, churches, schools etc. They confirmed that as a Methodist Church we have a contribution to make in the fight against this scourge! They agreed on embarking on a number of short term and long term responses.

As a short term response to the GBV pandemic:

- The Presiding Bishop and the Bishops will lead an on-line Seven Week Campaign to be launched on Sunday 28th June 2020. During the seven weeks following the 28th June, all preaching and teaching in all Methodist churches will focus on gender justice, prevention and combating Gender Based Violence. The themes, texts and Resource materials will be sent to all ministers and they are free to use their own resources. (Contextual Bible Studies attached as a resource) The Bishops will present sermons and prayers to be shared throughout the Connexion.
- By availing Church Property boundary walls to be Walls of Lament and Protest, where people may pin written messages of protest, lament and awareness.
- That all MCSA church buildings; adhering to Covid-19 regulations, continue to offer safe spaces for Victims of GBV - offering support, counselling, accompanying, referral and any assistance necessary.
- Organisations at Synod levels to create Conversations on-line on Thursday in Black.
- To utilise July as Men's Month, where Gender Desks, Men's Organisations and Local Churches will focus on the Boy child and young men and converse on the effects of toxic masculinities and their contribution to Gender Based Violence. We are encouraged to connect ecumenically and partner with other organisations like Sonke Gender Justice on this initiative. Open Safe spaces for men to share on their pain and experiences.
- To utilise August as Women's Month, where Gender Desks, Women's Organisations and Local Churches will focus on capacity building and support for girls and young women as they navigate patriarchal socialization that make them vulnerable to abuse and femicide. Collaboration with ecumenical and other Women's Movements in this regard is encouraged.

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

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- The Connexional Office to explore the creation of a Gender based Violence Hotline for support and counselling.

As long term responses, the meeting endorsed the Programme of the Justice and Service Desk that was presented and the initiatives of Synod Gender Desks, our Organisations and Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary that were presented were affirmed and celebrated. However, there was a realisation that some of these initiatives are not reaching all Societies or touching the lives of our people. Whilst in our pews we have, even amongst our leaders - lay and clergy, both victims and perpetrators of Gender based violence.

There is therefore a need for a long-term response to:

- Continue encouraging and supporting victims to speak up and not suffer alone.
- Training and retraining Methodist clergy on gender equality and justice.
- Taking seriously utterances, actions and attitudes that demean women and girls and act decisively against them.

All Synods and all Organisations were tasked to develop Plans or Strategies to prevent and combat Gender Based Violence, these will be consolidated into a single Strategic Plan for the MCSA, to be facilitated by the Justice and Service Desk of the Mission Unit and the Presiding Bishop's office. This will be shared with the Connexion as soon as it is available.

This is a moment of crisis in the world, continent and particularly in the countries of our Connexion. It requires the participation of all of us especially the leaders of our local churches - clergy and laity, to be united in our efforts to fight this scourge of our time. No one is un-affected by this pandemic! It knows no race, class, ethnicity or age. It sneaks into the most respected homes and families!

We therefore, through this communique request that all Ministers ensure that all Methodist Societies join this Gospel Call and imperative to work towards the creation of a church and a society where all, especially children and women can feel loved, cared for and safe.

We look forward to hearing of and seeing our church united in action against Gender Based Violence!

Your Fellow Pilgrims on the journey!



Rev Purity Malinga
Presiding Bishop



Rev Michel Hansrod
General Secretary