



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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The Methodist Church of Southern Africa Conference 2024 Message to the Methodist People

Introduction

We gathered as the 135th Annual Conference of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in the historic town of Welkom, located in the Northern Free State and Lesotho District. Historically, the area was known as “Matjhabeng”, meaning ‘A place for all nations’, which is reflected in our meeting as people from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa.

We met in spring in the Southern Hemisphere, where the African concept of uMandulo reminds us that winter is over; a season of renewal, when all that was dormant blossoms and bursts forth in life-affirming displays of colour and fragrance, reflected in our gathering itself.

This spirit of passionate energy was reflected in our Conference constituency of 30% Youth, meeting in Children and Youth Month, celebrating the appointment of the first Children and Youth Director of the MCSA, the Rev P Koekoe.

Becoming an Alternative Community / Tornando-se uma comunidade alternativa

We met on a journey of Holy Conferencing, engaging with the Connexional Platform of Work – Awakening Prophetic Urgency and Agency and challenged to “Becoming an Alternative Community.” – a new way of seeing and being.

- We are a pilgrim people, traversing desert, wilderness, valley and mountain.
- We are a pilgrim people, a movement-church with a Wesleyan heritage of being a discipleship movement.
- We are a pilgrim people, led by the Spirit of God who has brought us to this time, a Mount Sinai time, of pausing and redefining who we are.

This is a time of ‘Becoming’- growing in grace and holiness as God's unfinished new creation. This is a time of ‘Unbecoming’ – letting go of ways of being which damage and destroy.

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

Presiding Bishop:
Rev Pumla Nzimande
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General Secretary:
Rev Michel W Hansrod
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Lay President:
Mr Xhanti T Mhlubulwana
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General Treasurer:
Mr Rannoi Sedumo
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As we are becoming God's alternative community, we **CELEBRATE:**

- Historic moments: the constitution of Conference with 52% women and 30% youth; the affirmation of the leadership of women in that both the current and the former PB are female, and a total of six female Bishops.
- The dedicated service of the Rev Michel Hansrod as General Secretary of the MCSA
- The re-election of the Lay President, Mr. X Mhlubulwana, the appointment of Mission Unit Director Rev S Waqu, and the first Children and Youth Director, and the election of three Bishops, Rev F Whitby (Central), Rev V Dlamini (Natal West), Rev T Mkabeni (Camdeboo).
- Positive responses to the Connexional Platform of Work in the Missional work of all the Districts, Organisations, Orders and Units, as evident in reports shared at Conference.
- The 15th anniversary of the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary, which now boasts more than 1000 graduates.

As we are becoming God's alternative community, we are **CHALLENGED:**

- Only 26% of Clergy in the Connexion are women, and only 10% of them Superintendent Ministers. We struggle, not only with inclusion of all, but also with enabling engagement, participation and leadership.
- Our inward-looking focus: Conference 2024 had no resolutions addressing matters of public policy and the conversations in the Church remain disconnected from the lived realities of God's people. People are enslaved by oppressive systems and structures. The world is weeping around us, and we do not see, do not judge, do not act.
- Our identity as a Church: there is a lack of coherence between who we are online and who we are in the physical world; we are events driven, drawing crowds but not making disciples; there is dissonance between what we resolve and how we live. Egypt still lives within us.

As we are becoming God's alternative community, we discover **HOPE and DIRECTION**. This calls us to respond with commitment and action, guided by God's Spirit.

In our becoming, we commit to:

1. **Collectively embarking on a Pilgrimage of Renewal** in our commitment to the Mission Congress 2025. We can only do it together.
2. **Amplifying the missional imperative of Human and Economic Development and Empowerment** as follows:
 - a) Land development and utilisation - every District is requested to identify one piece of land and make it available to the Connexional

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Property Company in 2025 for ethical business ventures to free resources for the whole Connexion.

- b) Each Circuit and District to prioritise financial literacy by ensuring that theological teaching on the Wesleyan theology of money and practical workshops on financial literacy are offered in 2025. This work is to be reported on at CQMs, Synods and Conference 2025.
- c) Intentional support of families – Circuits and Districts to facilitate programmes / workshops for mentoring and support of family life and parents / caregivers. Districts are to engage on care of clergy families at gatherings such as clergy seminars and retreats.

Strengthening our Ministry amongst and to Children and Youth by:

- a) Ensuring that our budgets are intentional in resourcing ministry amongst and to Children and Youth, including assistance to tertiary students at the beginning of the academic year.
- b) Dedicating Education Week 2025 to education on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.
- c) Calling on the Connexion to launch a 'Harvest for Ministry' campaign. This campaign will promote a special focus on encouraging young people, and young women in particular, to listen and follow a possible call to ministry and service in one of the Orders of our Church.

Becoming an Alternative Community

We are on a Pilgrimage of Renewal.

We are a people on the move – a work in progress seeking to be an alternative community which is credible, divergent, tangible and transformative, a lived reality of what is possible as the Body of Christ.

We are becoming – speaking differently in a comprehensible language that brings life and healing to the nations.

We are becoming – committed to having all things in common where the poor, marginalised and vulnerable are our central focus and none will have need.

We trust hopefully in the Spirit of Christ who gives life to creation out of chaos, breathes life into dry bones of death, and whose Pentecost fire forms a living alternative - a diverse, inclusive community through which the power of Christ can flow.

Blow, wind of God, blow.

So that we can become an alternative community.

Tornado-se uma comunidade alternativa.

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