



THE UNITING  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
IN SOUTHERN  
AFRICA

Friday, November 8, 2019

Dear Friends

This has been a wonderful enriching period for our Church where we have distinguished ourselves in a number of areas.

In the first place, the Rev Prof Dr Jerry Pillay who is currently the Dean of the Faculty of Religion and Theology at the University of Pretoria has been short listed for the position of General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. The Search Committee conducted interviews late in October and have informed the Moderator of the WCC that two persons would be presented to the Central Committee in March 2020 for a decision: Jerry and Dr Elizabeth Joy of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. This is a great honour for a wonderful servant of Christ and the Church. We must pray for those who will make this decision and commit the process into God's hand.

Second, the Rev Sauros Phaika, Moderator of the Synod of Zambia was recently elected to head the Christian Council of Zambia. Again, this is a recognition for the major role that our Church plays on the ecumenical stage in Zambia and a recognition of the superb leadership that Sauros has exercised for many years both in our church and in the broader Christian community. We continue to wish him and the Church in Zambia God's richest blessings.

Third, Ryan Johnson, the General Treasurer and Convenor of the Finance Committee asked me if he could enter the Church for an award in the category of PBO / NPO sector of the Institute of Risk Management. Of course I agreed that he could. In support of this application, Ryan presented the IRM with the papers of the Executive Commission showing our governance structure, risk matrix, finance and management protocols and strategic plan. We were entered with 18 other organizations in this particular sector. The awards were handed out on the 1<sup>st</sup> November and we won the award in our sector. We must record our congratulations to the Finance Committee, the team at Tiyo Soga house and all those involved in earning us this prestigious honour.

In my letter of August 2019, in connection with some questions I had received from various parties in connection with the Hansie Wolmarans case, I made the following statement, "What we have to determine are the places where the Confession of Faith determines the limits and boundaries of the points of doctrine that are fundamental to the faith." This statement needs to be corrected. All points of doctrine passed by the Assembly and all doctrinal statements included in the Manual are not open to debate. Also, Douglas Bax reminded me that in 2012, the General Assembly had already passed the following 23 points of essential doctrine as being essential for anyone ordained as a minister or elder in the UPCSA:

1. There is only one true and living God.
2. God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit reveals the triune nature of one God existing in three eternally distinct but indivisible ways of being: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
3. God created all the universe and created it very good.
4. God created all humankind in the image of God, to walk humbly with God and in mutual love, justice and mercy toward one another.
5. Yet all human beings, however real their virtues, have become trapped in a state of sin and guilt, unable to rescue themselves or put themselves right with God.

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**PBO 18/11/13/1612**  
Moderator: Rt Rev Dr PD Langerman BCom, LLB, BTh MTh DMin  
General Secretary: The Rev L Mpetsheni PGDSS MTh  
Clerk of Assembly: The Rev WV Mkhungo DipTh  
General Treasurer: Mr R Johnson MCom (UP) MIRMSA

6. God in holy love and grace has acted in Jesus Christ, through his incarnation, ministry, life, teaching, death, bodily resurrection and exaltation, to atone for our sins, rescue us from judgement, reconcile us with God and reveal God's nature and will to us. "He was handed over to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification."
7. As both fully divine and fully human, Christ is the only Mediator between God and humankind, humankind's only Saviour and the decisive revelation of God as God is.
8. Jesus Christ as he is attested to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the one Word of God whom we have to hear, trust and obey, in life and in death. In and through Scripture, preaching and personal witness, by the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ encounters us as Lord and Saviour. Thereby he is the living Word of God who himself addresses us. This Word, as revealed and defined by Scripture, which is the sufficient and uniquely authoritative witness to Jesus Christ, is the final rule of faith and life.
9. The Holy Spirit working within us enables us to hear God's Word, convicts us of sin, brings us to repentance and enables us to accept God's saving and sustaining grace in Christ by faith and live according to God's holy will.
10. Through the Holy Spirit Christ acts also in the sacraments, as they accompany the Word, to reveal himself and save and seal those who respond with faith in him. Baptism is a once-for-all initiation of believers and their children into the community of the covenant, with its promise of forgiveness, cleansing and salvation. The Lord's Supper is a communal meal in which Christ comes to us in the power of his death and resurrection and through faith feeds us with his saving body and blood and renews his covenant with us.
11. We are put right with God only by God's grace in Jesus Christ, when we receive Christ as Lord and Saviour, which we do through faith alone.
12. True faith involves obedience to Christ as Lord and Saviour: "only the person who believes is obedient, and only the person who is obedient believes."
13. Nevertheless when we do sin, if we turn to Christ in repentance and faith, he covers all the shortcomings of our obedience with his atonement and righteousness. Thus to be a Christian means to give unending thanks and praise for God's goodness and grace in Christ.
14. As Christ is Lord over every area of life, obedience to him means to obey his will in both the private and the public areas.
15. In Christ there is no ground for separation or discrimination between people on grounds of race, colour, social status, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation, either in Church or in State.
16. The gospel calls us to worship regularly with God's people, to study and meditate on Scripture, to be diligent in prayer, and to find assurance in the seal of our baptism and regular nourishment for our faith at the Lord's Supper.
17. God commands us to be strictly chaste outside marriage and exclusively faithful in marriage.
18. God calls the Church to be a Church for others: a missionary Church reaching out to the world with the gospel and a serving Church that aids the poor and seeks to serve society.
19. God calls the Church to serve as a sentinel vis-à-vis the State, calling every level of Government to order for unjust or corrupt policies and practices.
20. God calls us as stewards of our money and possessions to use them not only to care for ourselves and our families but to aid the poor and to support the Church.
21. We are to care about, and care for, the environment.
22. God does not stand aloof from us but cares for us all and is present with us in all our tragedies and our joys.
23. A day is appointed when God will come in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to judge the living and the dead and finally triumph in victory over all evil, sin, oppression, suffering and death itself.

Your partner in the gospel



Peter

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