

Rev Dr David Mushayavanhu responding to the two presentations at the webinar to mark UPCSA 21 from the Context of Zimbabwe (Personal Observations - Not speaking on behalf of the Presbytery of Zimbabwe)

How has Presbyterianism contributed to disunity and injustices in our context?

Presbyterianism allows elders (*ruling and teaching*) to take on the role of leadership at all levels throughout to General Assembly; it demands that the elders or the church is endowed with the responsibility of taking care of its members within the community from different areas, sections, home-groups or districts. The elders' responsibility over various people of different ethnic backgrounds and ages will be incomplete without mentioning the issues of unity and justice. Presbyterianism is placed at a conducive environment in terms of leadership, and as such Presbyterianism is founded in the ground of unity and justice.

The question then is, how has Presbyterianism contributed to disunity and injustice in Zimbabwe? The two key terms 'disunity and injustice' have variant facets. One can view them in terms of economical, social, political, religious, cultural ethnicity coming into play, because they are so many issues, facets that bring disunity and or injustice. We can look at ethnicity, how the UPCSA is planted within different ethnic communities. In Zimbabwe the church is planted within myriad ethnical values. It is critical that we consider culture and ethnicity when we look at how UPCSA does its work. Ethnicity is at stake. We cannot therefore talk of unity and justice outside the church. The church, within itself, has a lot to answer in terms unity and justice. Are we united as a church in Zimbabwe? Yes! That is why we call ourselves 'Uniting Presbyterian Church', owing to the fact that we are not yet there? I can rephrase the question: Are we uniting as a denomination? How did we as a church contribute to the unity amid such disparities?

If we are not talking about the disparity caused by the languages, cultures and ethnicities, then we are not ready to talk about unity as a church. This diversity can only be appreciated the day we begin to talk about simple aspects just like language and culture as part of tradition.

Presbyterianism has been complicit in disunity and injustice in that its system of reaching critical decisions is laboriously slow, and often marred with loopholes of manipulations. Its processes are excellent on paper but practically easy to be manipulated. This is not peculiar to Zimbabwe, I guess that issues of urgent need in light of justice are overworked and eventually overtaken by circumstances.

Presbyterianism comfortably sits on racial or social inequities or inequalities within its systems without any urgency of addressing it but actually promoting policies that perpetrate such sick images. Rich congregations do not share with poor congregations, blacks against whites, and language barriers exhibit gross hypocrisy and superficiality to our message of oneness reducing it to just a cosmetic gospel.

It has contributed to disunity by giving too much authority to the local church. The minister is just as good as any other employee, who we can hire and fire willingly. Again this is not unique