

## **GENDER DESK STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**08 MARCH 2021**

The Lectionary's Old Testament reading for yesterday Sunday the 07 March 2021 was in Exodus 34:29-35.

Today is International Women's Day, a day we should be normally celebrating, the contributions, strengths, and roles women play in our homes, societies, and the world at large. However, under the current circumstances, we lament as women are subjected to gross gender based violence.

We are now so accustomed, inured to living with masks on our faces. We are contented to living with a greater degree of inconspicuousness as we come in and out of our congregations and in our homes. It is an easy way of concealing, the real us behind the masks. Covering up for the people not to see the real happenings in our faces is what we do. The snag that we have is to really identify who we are meeting up with, despite having known them for years even as we see the speck in their eyes. It is a struggle to see the expression on their faces and gauge their mood, whether they are gratified to see us. It is even more grim to know how to approach and react as the person approaches. We only rely on what comes out of their mouth which, sometimes, is also difficult to tell whether the person is thrilled to see you. We do not know whether we are to receive the good news or the bad news, whether we will live after being in contact with the person or die. It is sometimes only this period when something is said that we are able to

make the connection, join the dots and deduct, and sometime a quick decision needs to be made and sometimes it's too late to make that crucial verdict. The time to unveil, unmask is now for all the women and men within the UPCSA. We need to see each other and have informed dialogues and ponderings with people we can identify with, people we can trust, people we can identify and know their intentions. Enough with the coverings, enough we the veils; let us be naked in front of each other and before God.

The UPCSA Gender desk urges the whole denomination to lead in transformation of lives of women from suffering and brokenness into the light of God's presence, to offer hope and joy to the victims of gender-based violence, injustice and inequality, anxiety, and stress.

We call upon the UPCSA not to wait for situations of disparity and or need to arise to do something, for the reality is that it is now confronted with human distress. The UPCSA as it serves God, needs to do that in camaraderie with women. It needs to move away from its cosy situation, social and privilege position to making itself extremely uncomfortable by addressing the questions women face daily. As it strives to be a reconciled community of believers, it is time that reconciliation is taken seriously. There can be no reconciliation as long as women are relegated to nothingness and striped off their human dignity and their right to live peacefully. Women need to be allowed to practice freely and equally to men the skills and talents they have without discrimination. Women need to be

valued as people also created in God's image and likeness and therefore having lives that matter. The UPCSА needs to VALUE, LOVE and APPRECIATE women. It should always AFFIRM and not DENIGRATE women. It will be a heresy for the UPCSА to claim to be proclaiming and expressing the Glory of God if it continually shuts, puts women down, undervalues, dehumanises, and commodifies them.

The reality is that women live in fear and distrust as they do not know which men to trust as most men are wearing masks. At the same time, women are wearing masks as an attempt to hide their fears and their scars. It is the duty and should be the mission of the UPCSА to help unmask the devil and expose the ills in its ranks.

WE also call upon all women not to allow anybody, and not to accept anybody's negative evaluation of their worth. Women should look at themselves as representatives and reflection of the Glory of God here on earth. That they have an obligation to shine out as God's people created in his image and likeness and are placed in this world. "YOU ARE NOT A MISTAKE".

The Gender Desk and the whole family of the UPCSА wishes all women a Happy, Joyfull and blessed International Women's Day. May you have joy, hope and peace, May God continue to bless all women in this world.