



THE UNITING  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
IN SOUTHERN  
AFRICA

6<sup>th</sup> April 2021

*Let's Journey Together (LJT) (1/2021)*

## **TO ALL IN THE UPCSA**

Dear Fellow Presbyterians,

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. (Colossians 3:1-2 NIV)

Congratulations! You are still alive. God spared you from all the perils. Be thankful. Every Easter always reminds us about the news of triumph – Jesus is not on the cross, he is not in the tomb, but he is risen. The disciples are receiving the news with joy. We have been raised with Christ. We have conquered the sting of death. We can conquer COVID-19.

As a community of resurrection, I beseech all of us to revisit the values that we share as the members of the UPCSA. I will list without exposing any of them: *Love; Holiness; Scriptural; Integrity; Spiritual growth; and Servanthood*. Let us hold these values firmly and grow together as members of the same fellowship. We shall be able to surmount the seemingly insurmountable obstacles if we work together and love one another.

COVID-19 has played a god over our lives. But our faith has remained strong and unshaken. That is our strength to beat the pandemic and its effects. While we observe all the protocols, let us grow stronger in faith, hope and love. Let us build resilient spirituality to stand the tests of times. The UPCSA, like many other denominations, suffers from all the difficulties that are brought about by the pandemic. The finances of the denomination are getting strained. It is recognized that the congregations go through similar hardships. However, an appeal is made to the congregations to do their utmost best to meet their obligations, doing so cheerfully and out of love.

The denomination has embarked on programmes of growth and development. We call upon the leadership at all the levels to prioritise these issues in every sphere of operation in our denomination. We are confronted by the realities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) with its pros and cons. We, nevertheless, need to take advantage of technology to advance our connections, so that we may grow and develop together. We have held virtual meetings to address several issues, including the alignment of the work of the General Assembly Committees - considering COVID-19, Gender justice, Youth capacity building, Presbytery empowerment, and building missional congregations. We want to grow together.

The General Assembly of the UPCSA will, for the first time, be held virtually. The supposed location of the Assembly will be Pietermaritzburg in June 2021. The UPCSA leadership will be there physically to be able to conduct certain phases of the Assembly that include the induction of the Moderator and the service where the new Moderator will preach his sermon. That will also be an opportunity to interact with the hosting Presbytery – Drakensberg and for the leadership to confer on the business of the Assembly as it may be needed. The commissioners will participate virtually. They are being orientated on the workings of

the virtual platforms. They are also urged to do the best to ensure strong connections. It is hoped that the GA Committees will come with proposals that will take the UPCS forward at such a time as this. We are still pursuing the Moderator's theme, "Live your legacy" until the constitution of the General Assembly. The Assembly will run under the new theme, "Back to basics", which will run for the duration of the term of the new Moderator.

The UPCS leadership has held discussions with the GA Assembly Committees and the Presbytery officials, respectively, on some issues which the leadership has been occupied with in our challenging times. The members of the UPCS are implored to continue the dialogue on these issues and keep on advising the leadership on what should be done to keep abreast of the ever-dynamic environment. The Presbytery officials will come together again on 24 April 2021 to continue the dialogue. Your views may be shared with the Presbytery officials, directly or with the office of the Clerk of Assembly. The questions are as follows:

1. How the ministry of the UPCS is (should be) prepared, empowered, equipped, supported, sustained, and executed in these times and beyond.
2. How is ministry provided to the UPCS in general, but also looking at the specifics of rural, township, and suburban/city churches? Are our methods still relevant and sustainable? Who is participating in the ministry of the local church?
3. Is the UPCS there throughout the entire ministry of a UPCS minister – considering different stages of call discernment, formation, placement/appointment/call, performance, remuneration, retirement?
4. How is oversight provided to the congregations? How are congregations built/to be built to be vital and reforming for worship, ministry, and discipleship? How are the relationships between congregations and Presbyteries, and Presbyteries and the General Assembly Office? Are there any accounting mechanisms in place? If so, are they adhered to?
5. Do we need to re-invent the UPCS? What turn-around strategies ought to be considered?

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) pursues its programme on COVID-19 and beyond. Central to this programme is how the church should respond prophetically to a world that has "fallen among thieves". During the running of the programme, it has been identified that the biggest challenge that the world is faced with is global apartheid. The Church has to speak prophetically against it as the church has challenged every demon that has raised its ugly head to undermine the dignity and integrity of all of creation and to work against justice. All the members of the WCRC member churches are invited to follow and own the developments of this programme. The process will culminate in a conference that will release a statement or confession that will be a successor to (and not by any means a supersession of) the Accra Confession. The information on the developments will be made available on the UPCS website.

At this time of uncertainty, let our values define who we are and guide us to a type of spirituality that will make us frown upon any form of injustice but promote *Love; Holiness; Scriptural; Integrity; Spiritual growth; and Servanthood*.

Let's Journey Together **"To be a reconciled community of Christians exercising a prophetic witness to Christ"**.

Yours in Christ.



Lungile Mpetsheni  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**