



THE UNITING  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
IN SOUTHERN  
AFRICA

20<sup>th</sup> December 2021

*Let's Journey Together (LJT) (2/2021)*

**TO ALL IN THE UPCSA**

Dear Fellow Presbyterians,

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12: 9-10NIV)

Compliments of the Festive Season.

On behalf of the leadership of the UPCSA, I write to commend and congratulate you for holding firm to your faith and daring to hope, even when everything said NO. You did so, trusting not in your might. On our own, we are weak and frail. But Christ, who strengthens us, has been our pillar. His power has been made perfect in our weakness and when we were weak, we were strong.

We are coming to the end of 2021. It is needless for me to state how challenging the year has been. We are grateful to God that we remained afloat and the UPCSA continued to be a missional church. Thank you to technology, we were able to achieve the following, among others:

- The General Assembly was held successfully in June 2021, and important resolutions were taken.
- We journeyed together with the leadership of the Presbyteries through the monthly consultations. The consultations served as information sharing sessions that have been used for communication and for strengthening the officials of the Presbyteries. They were also used to drive the implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly.
- We held the meetings of the Conveners of the General Assembly Committees, and the GA Committees held their meetings successfully.
- We held webinars to address important issues for church and society, especially gender justice, and health and wellness issues.
- The Gender Desk conducted roadshows to the Presbyteries to assist the Presbyteries in establishing/strengthening the Desks.
- Two memorial lectures were conducted in honour of the late Rev Prof Vuyani S Vellem.
- We conducted an unprecedented 24-hour prayer marathon whereby the UPCSA was united in prayer and fasting.
- We came together in a memorial service to remember our fallen members. We were surprised by a high number of the Presbyterians who have passed on since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020 (but not all COVID-19 related deaths). This afforded the Moderator of the General Assembly an opportunity to comfort those who were still grieving the loss of their loved ones.
- The UPCSA was represented in meetings of the ecumenical partners and ecumenical forums.
- The revival services were held and the worship services by different congregations were shared.

In the course of 2021, COVID-19 continued to deal a devastating blow on the world economies, in the ways of doing and being church, and in the welfare of many people. It exposed many weaknesses in church and society. The moral fibre of the societies was compromised. Many people were taken from hero to zero, as they were implicated in acts of greed and corruption. The church has been found to be at its weakest performance levels as far as witness, mission and diakonia are concerned.

Nonetheless, his grace was sufficient for us, and his power was made perfect in weakness. We commend those congregations and ministers who showed great works of faith in small and huge scales. Some of our congregations remained or grew to be vital and reforming “*worship, ministry and discipleship*”. They restored hope against despair. They were missional.

As we approach 2022, we reiterate the call to focus on the four cardinal points that the UPCSA adopted, namely: **Mending relationships; healing of memories; building a missional church; and leadership capacity development**. The need to focus on the four areas was underscored during the 24-hour prayer marathon. The congregations and Presbyteries are called upon to identify those factors/people that hinder and/or break unity and deal with them deliberately. Each congregation and Presbytery have unique circumstances that need to be attended to. At the denominational level, we will be intentional about addressing inequalities and injustices, especially as they are manifested, among others, in transnational issues, racism, sexism, gender-based violence, and women and youth not/less considered in decision making structure. We will push the implementation of the decisions of the General Assembly, pertaining to the establishment of structures to address healing and reconciliation in the denomination. We implore the congregations and Presbyteries to cooperate, as they have oversight on people who need healing and reconciliation. We have always stated that we are so much into the maintenance ministry mode. Some of our congregations are dying and at a brink of closing. We need to break from this practice and make sure that our congregations are missional and work towards life-flourishing communities. The issue of leadership capacity development is a serious one. Where there is dearth of leadership, there is no way that the decisions of the general assembly can be implemented. The Presbyteries will be expected to report on the progress made towards addressing the four cardinal points.

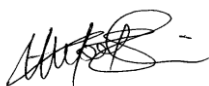
The congregations and Presbyteries are further encouraged to establish Gender Desks and Youth Desks. When the Gender Desk conducted the road shows, it was discovered that many Presbyteries have not done much to prioritise this ministry. We cannot continue to leave issues of gender justice and youth representation to chance. The two desks are some of the vehicles that take us to the realisation of our visions of a reconciled community.

As we end the year, we are grateful for the support that we received as the staff of Tiyo Soga House. God has heard your prayers. We are indebted to many congregations who continued to pay their assessments, amidst the economic difficulties. As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, let us be assured that he is our strength. We can do all things through him who strengthens us (Philippians 4:3). We uphold in our prayers those families who will spend the Festive Season for the first time without the loved ones. We also pray for those of us who are critically ill during this period. May God heal them.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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

Yours in Christ.



Lungile Mpetsheni  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**