



THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

22nd December 2021

Dear Fellow Presbyterians

In celebrating this Christmas of 2021, let us read from Luke 2:14

"Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and goodwill to all humanity"

This has been another difficult year for many of us in the UPCSA and millions more across our countries and the globe. Common enemy has been Covid-19 and the incalculable, immeasurable, and irrevocable damage this deadly virus has caused. And so, from December 2020 we have lost people whom we love and know - family, neighbours, colleagues at work and in the ministry, best friends, comrades, members of the same congregation. We have also lost our Ministers and Elders, our community leaders, role models, advisors, those who had authority and influence over our lives. Not only that, but we also incurred heavy material losses in our jobs, our businesses, our direction, our faith, our dignity, our sense of feeling down and out, our sense of feeling complete defeat. In all of this, we still need to get to admit this statement of our faith: 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and goodwill to humanity'.

In my private conversation and lamentation with our General Secretary this morning, when he shared with me the untimely passing on of the Rev Tebogo Thobejane-Makhurupetsi in her sleep, we ended up reflecting on losing the Rev Philip Petersen (laid to eternal rest today), as well as the Rev Sean Wells - a day or so ago. An unprecedented loss of three very active ministers in a few days, even on various accounts. Say without fear of contradicting yourself: 'Despite everything that I've been through since last December, despite feeling forsaken from heavy emotional and material losses that I incurred, I'm still blessed'.

We need to give glory to God in the highest for coming to rescue humanity from perishing in sin by becoming one with humanity. We are still blessed notwithstanding every difficult moment we have faced this past year. With so much achieved - a Virtual General Assembly, the historic appointment of Professor Puleng LenkaBula as the first woman ever Vice-Chancellor and Principal of UNISA (she's one of us, remember), steady recovery from the July mayhem and looting in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal where businesses, jobs and lives were lost and a miraculous financial repurposing from certain drowning as a denomination. We need to say and sing: Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth and goodwill to all humanity.

May God Almighty bless and keep you through this beautiful and hectic time. And may He keep our faith and hope shining through these happy festive holidays. Merry Christmas and happy New Year.

With Love, Blessings and Grace

Your Moderator

Sipho Mtetwa
uNyambose