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From the Office of the Moderator - UPCA

GA Moderator's critical reflections on the Gender Justice Seminar

Dear Presbyterians,

I was recently invited by the UPCA Gender Desk to facilitate Bible Studies under the theme of Gender Justice and Gender Equality. The Seminar was a physical consultation that covered three days in October at the elegant Christiania Centre, in Botswana.

Three critical things dominated the discussions, and these were amply generated by the impact of the Bible Studies:

1. A nursery rhyme poem for children

What are little boys made of?
Tups and twups, and pussy dogs' tails
That's what little boys are made of!
What are little girls made of?
Sugar and spice, and all things nice
That's what little girls are made of!

A poetic rhyme is grossly and irretrievably inappropriate for our gender-based violence and homicide rates. We need to stand this on its head, deny them using it and redempt it to this wreckage of how masculinities as women and children get violated every hour in countries. Children have been socialised using the ideological framework of this dangerous poem as it has been translated into idioms, and manner of womenfolk the world, including made distorted power relations with the church.

2. Gender justice and gender equity are divine elements of God's original creative plan. We read in Genesis 1: 26-27 "...in the image of God, God created them, in God's image, male and female, God created them". Gender justice and equity are ordained of God, and the crucial elements of manner of current stereotypes and prejudices, real and/or perceived, that men/male/boys are superior, and women/female/girls are inferior. This is very dangerous especially if it is based on theological, cultural, and historical distortions.

3. This divine creative plan needs to find expression in the way we do our business in the UPCA. It should permeate all roles, services, and committees in the areas of governance, oversight, accountability, discipline, leadership, and coordination in the UPCA. Across race, country, gender, age, ability/disability, ethnic group, language, language, culture, symbols and Presbytery identities, gender justice and equity need to be implanted and gotten rid of. But the *all* change, the Gender Project needs to be managed with transparency, diligence, and absolute integrity.