



THE UNITING
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From the Office of the Moderator - UPCSA

GA Moderator's critical reflections on the Gender Justice Seminar

Dear Presbyterians

I was recently invited by the UPCSA 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 eMseni Christian Centre, in Benoni.

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?
Snips and snails, and puppy 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 so grossly and irrevocably inappropriate for our gender-based violence and femicide times. We need to stand this on its head, desist from using it and relegate it to this scrapheap of toxic masculinities as women and children get violated every hour in countries. Children have been socialized using the ideological framework of this dangerous poem as it has been translated into misogyny and violation of womenfolk the world, including inside 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: 25-27 "...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 this should eliminate all manner of current stereotype and prejudice, real and/or perceived, that men/males/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 UPCSA. It should permeate all roles, services, and committees in the areas of governance, oversight, stewardship, discipline, leadership, and coordination in the UPCSA. Across race, country, gender, age, ability/disability, ethnic group, clergy/laity, language, culture, symbols and Presbytery stereotypes, gender injustice and inequity need to be imploded and gotten rid of. But like all change, the Gender Project needs to be managed with circumspection, diligence, and absolute integrity.