



THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

09th January 2023

Let's Journey Together (LJT) (1/2023)

TO ALL IN THE UPCSA

Dear Fellow Presbyterians,

Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings. (Isaiah 58: 12 NIV)

Compliments of the New Year. We pray for justice, peace, love, and happiness in 2023.

The Moderator of the UPCSA General Assembly, the Rt Rev SJ Mtetwa has, in the past two years, been making a clarion call for the UPCSA to "Go back to the Basics". We are now starting the last six months of his moderatorial tenure. It has been a dynamic epoch, with COVID 19 causing devastation in the lives of many people and institutions. It has left many engaging in exercises of 'redefining', 're-imagining', and 're-engineering'. I urge all of us in the UPCSA to join in different processes to redefine who we are, restate our faith; re-imagine church in the post COVID era; and re-engineer our processes to be a responsive denomination that is confessional and confessing.

In this issue, I bring to the fore our mission and will make some comments thereafter. Our mission determines the agenda of every member, congregation, Presbytery, Fellowship, and structure of the UPCSA. We should all assess our effectiveness and relevance by how much we have done to attain our mission.

Our Mission

We will proclaim our Triune God in Southern Africa through

- *Bearing witness to the saving love of Jesus Christ;*
- *Building vital, reforming congregations for worship, ministry and discipleship; and*
- *Visibly proclaiming the Kingdom of God through unity, justice, peace and love.*

As we begin 2023, I beseech the Presbyterians to strive to live up to the ideals of our mission, as we strive to be church in post COVID times.

Bearing witness to the saving love of Jesus Christ.

My request is that we should **reclaim the pulpit** so that it becomes a spring of living waters to heal the broken and the wounded, and to nurture faith holistically. The gospel should be presented with its saving and liberative power, as a witness to the saving and liberating Lord, Jesus Christ. We should pray that every preacher is ready, equipped and anointed to stand in the pulpit with vigour and to use the pulpit for good news, only. Every effort should be made to ensure that a preacher is healed from brokenness and woundedness, for a broken and wounded preacher is a hazard to the proclamation of the good news. Preachers should, therefore, be consistent with reading the word of God and with prayer. Preachers should be forgiving, so that they hold peace as they rise to the pulpit. Congregants want to listen to healthy and peaceful preachers. Let us **reclaim the pulpit**.

Building vital, reforming congregations for worship, ministry and discipleship.

We have already given a definition of a congregation as follows:

“A Congregation (or worshipping community) is a group of people who gather regularly to meet Christ in Word and Sacrament, practice mutual care and make disciples in our changing contexts. They do so while seeking to participate with God in the transformation of the world. As communities, they move toward sustainability in leadership and ministry.”

One of our congregations has a mantra: **“One service with us will change your life completely”**. It is encouraged that congregations should develop plans on how they will become missional and how they will live up to this tenet of the mission. Ordinary members of the UPCSA and community members experience what the UPCSA is through the life and work of a congregation. We pray that every congregation reflects the UPCSA well. Every congregation must be vital and reforming for worship, ministry, and discipleship. The last two of the four cardinal points speak to the building of missional church and leadership capacity development. It is also encouraged that Presbyteries should oversee that activity and have oversight on the life and work of the congregations. Every congregation should strive to implement the UPCSA’s decade programme: **“Going for Growth. Sowing, Growing and Reaping”**.

Visibly proclaiming the Kingdom of God through unity, justice, peace and love.

We have developed adequate framework and infrastructure to deal with the issues. The gospel is good news as and when it addresses issues of unity, justice, peace, and love.

- ✓ The first two of the four cardinal points talk to mending relations and healing of memories. We already promote conciliation and mediation as ways of addressing tensions and conflicts.
- ✓ The Accra Confession has highlighted the need to address issues of gender justice, economic justice, and environmental/ecological justice. Gender justice finds much expression in the activities of the Gender Desk. The participation of the youth in the life and work of the denomination at all the levels has been underscored. Hence, the relevance of the Youth Desk.
- ✓ The 2018 General Assembly already pronounced on the issue of land justice. Please revisit the statement of that Assembly and make plans to address this issue without delay.
- ✓ The 2022 Executive Commission resolved to establish a stand-alone committee on people with disabilities. The Committee has started with its work. Every congregation is urged to comply.
- ✓ The welfare and development of ministers has always been addressed in the virtual meetings with the officials of Presbyteries. Presbyteries are encouraged to prioritise this ministry.
- ✓ In the course of 2023, we will add impetus to the campaign for economic justice and ecological justice. Let us address these issues, bearing in mind the UPCSA’s transnational character.
- ✓ The Belhar Confession has been advanced as one of the ways of addressing racial justice. We continuously experience the resurgence of racial tensions and intolerance. We have already started a study on how to provide ministry in suburban/city and rural churches. This study will, surely, touch on issues of economic justice and racial justice.

We can succeed in all these struggles and ventures only if Presbyteries place them on top of their agendas. Let us work together as we rebuild the ancient ruins and raise up the age-old foundations and be worthy to be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings, post COVID-19. Let us redefine, re-imagine, and re-engineer together.

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

Yours in Christ.



Lungile Mpetsheni
GENERAL SECRETARY