



THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

22nd February 2023

Let's Journey Together (LJT) (2/2023)

TO ALL IN THE UPCSA

Lenten greetings fellow Presbyterians,

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? (Isaiah 58: 6-7 NIV)

The 22nd of February 2023, being the Ash Wednesday, marks the beginning of the Lenten period. Many Christians across the globe will observe this period in various ways. We are also going to join in the observance of Lent.

I, hereby, make a call that we should approach this year's Lent in one spirit and with a common prayer that the UPCSA becomes "A reconciled community of Christians exercising a prophetic witness to Christ". If I may break the vision into two parts: We want to pray that we be a reconciled community of Christians. We also pray that we be guided by the Spirit of God to exercise a prophetic witness to Christ.

Let me start by commending the Presbyterians for giving works of reconciliation chance and for allowing themselves to be reconciled. We can attest to many breakthroughs that have been granted by the Spirit of God in many environments and situations in different parts of the UPCSA. Indeed, the first two of the four cardinal points are materialising. The relations are mended, and the memories are healed. There is still a lot to be done. The mending of relations contributes to the building of vital and reforming congregations for worship, ministry, and discipleship. Let us forgive one another. Let there be peace among us. *Singabazalwane, usapho lweNkosi enkulu* (Xhosa hymnal 184 - we are brothers and sisters, family of the great Lord)

We need to work on our spirituality. I consider Section 16.1 of the Manual of Faith and Order as the basis for sound spirituality.

Ministers are obliged to be faithful in the study of Scripture and prayer, to live holy lives, to preach the Word, to administer the Sacraments, to care for the people entrusted to them, to participate in the work and the fellowship of the ruling Councils of the Church, to be subject to the authority and discipline of the Church and to seek its unity and peace.

Ministers should model the way: "Do as I do" vis-a-vis "Do as I say". Congregants are inspired by their spiritually sound ministers. Some exceptions cannot be ruled out. What is important is that ministers should always be found to be moral campuses, promoting fellowship, and preserving the unity of the Church.