



THE UNITED
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

17 November 2023

TO: ALL IN THE UPCHA

Re: Celebrating the Election of the Rt Rev Lydie C Nkomo as the first Woman President of the All Africa Conference of Churches

"Certainly, I will go with you," and Deborah, "But because of the storm you are facing, the answer will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Jacob into the hands of a woman." (Judges 4:9-10)

The United Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa welcomes and celebrates the election of the Rt Rev Lydie Nkomo as the first woman President of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACCC). The AACCC marked its 50th anniversary at its General Assembly that was held in Abuja, Nigeria from 18 to 23 November 2023. We praise and thank God for the appointment which comes at an opportune time, a calling like that of Deborah. We commend the efforts of many who, through their discernment, elected Lydie. The leaders of the Continental Council of Churches who attend the Assembly will for ever be appreciated for their concerned effort and unwavering commitment in nominating and enthusiastically supporting the election of Lydie.

Lydie's rise to the office she now occupies can be attributed to many factors. Within the UPCHA environment, we see it as a culmination of the decision that was taken more than forty years ago, as the two denominations that merged to form the UPCHA, the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, intentionally laid the decision in their respective Assemblies to ordain women as ministers. The Presbytery of Durban subsequently appointed Lydie as its Clerk. By virtue of that appointment, she served as a member of the UPCHA General Assembly's Interdenominational Relationships Committee. The UPCHA appointed her to serve as its representative to the General Members Meeting (GMM) of the Council for World Mission (CWM) for a period of four years, 2018 to 2022. Over that period, she was elected to serve as the Designator for two of its meetings. She was later elected as the GMM Moderator in 2020, a position which she will hold until June 2024. The 2023 UPCHA General Assembly elected her, unopposed, as the Moderator Designate and was inducted into the office in June 2023, which she will hold until June 2025. And now, she has become the AACCC's seventh birthday gift. The term is for four years, with a possibility of a re-election for another term, making it ten years, if re-elected.

Lydie's election is of the greatest honor (not just a matter of affirmative action, but of competence. She is conscientious, diligent, and active in her work. She would herself be the pro-Assembly for women in Abuja with her sterling performance. She was appointed a preacher in one of the services on Sunday. She moderated one of the Assembly sessions. The three events sufficed to convince many who did not know her that she is a true leader to a people she she served a lifetime with. In addition, as she had already left for family and UPCHA business by the time the elections were conducted. Her election brought together the whole continent, particularly the women.

Her election is a challenge to us in the UPCHA. We are called to stand "**stronger together**" and support her in prayer and in action. It is especially so deliberate in this space the many challenges that confront Africa, some of which she will need to address in person. Let us pray without ceasing.

Yours in Christ,

Joseph Mphahlele
GENERAL SECRETARY