

LISTENING REPORT: THE RESOLUTION ON THE WORK OF GOD

Cape of Good Hope District: Synod held in Helderberg Circuit:

19 – 22 May 2022



The 192nd Synod of the Cape of Good Hope District gathered from 19th – 22nd May 2022 under the theme “Re-imagining Social Holiness: Sustaining Hope and Healing”. The gathering was presented for a second time in a hybrid format, with a main hub and five other strategically placed hubs adhering to the required Covid-19 pandemic safety protocols, with Coronation Avenue Methodist Church in the Helderberg Circuit, hosting the executive, superintendents and Synod delegates in both formats.

At the opening and witness service, the Ordinands – Reverends Loyiso Molosi, Sarah van Wyk, Russel Norman shared their testimonies and their journey of meeting with Jesus through their time as probationers and it was a blessed moment of recognising the very real and powerful presence of God, reminding us that we serve a living God. A candidate to the ministry – Mr Xolani Tutu also shared his experience of Christ at work in his life and his experience of the conviction of his call into the ministry of word and sacrament. The Bishop of the Cape of Good Hope District, Rev Yvette Moses encouraged the ordinands and candidate that they should remember that Christ will be their hope in their journey and to each member of synod the call was given to pray, to dream, to listen to the Holy Spirit and to remind each other that we are the body of Christ throughout the whole of synod. Reading from 1 Peter 1: 1-9, 13-21, we were reminded that our hope is in the resurrection of the living Christ and our hope is a practical, life-giving hope.

During the ministerial convocation, we were given the opportunity to lament the current reality of the socio-political landscape of our varied contexts, including inequality, poverty, corruption, racial tensions and violence against women and children. In our lamenting, not only was the recent racist act at Stellenbosch University strongly condemned, but a Macedonian call was heard as every minister committed to go to Namaqualand for a weekend and preach in one of the Societies in this vast Circuit over the 6 months.

In the Bishop’s address to synod, Rev. Moses spoke of how we have suffered with the rest of the world, being shaken by incalculable losses during the year in review – all we have as a church is our ability to offer God’s loving hope to the world in this time, not because we have it all together, but because our hope is a living hope that is based in the resurrection of Christ.

One of the common themes throughout synod is a clear call that the church needs to Listen – reimagining Social Holiness helps us listen to the deafening voices of poverty, unemployment, abuse, violence, social and environmental lack of justice, and it empowers us to respond to what we hear by making some difficult choices. The world needs ministers who are obsessed for Christ and not ministers who are focused on the things that are not important. It will cost us prayer, faith, co-operation with God’s Spirit to live and reflect the hope the world needs. Rev Keith Benjamin reminded us that in these times we must not forget whose Church this is.

Synod honoured the Reverends Pam Delport, Derrick Maragele and Pam Ellwood, who are applying to superannuate as well as the Reverends Dave Newton (40 years), Brian Wilkinson (40 years), Ivan Abrahams (40 years), Peter Story (60 years)

and Maurice Fearn (70 years) who have remained faithful in ministry. In recognising the ongoing nature of the call, Rev Pam Delport passed the stole on to Rev Russell Norman. We also mourned the end of the vision of the Heatherdale Children's home, but we could celebrate the birth of the Heatherdale Training Centre at Marsh Memorial Homes that has been born out of this.

Our ecumenical partners encouraged us on our journey towards a practical hope and holiness. Rev. Cheryl Uren from the Anglican Church admonished synod not to focus on governance alone, but to allow the synod record to become a living document and our witness to the world. Rev. Dr Lionel Louw, chairperson of the SACC Western Cape encouraged synod to continue to work at using our spaces to start and sustain food gardens, ECD centres, and to encourage young entrepreneurs under 35 to apply with the SACC and their partners for skills training in the agricultural sector.

In Dr Miranda Pillay's Bible study, Re-reading 2 Samuel 11:26-12:13 in the context of GBV, we were reminded that we need a sustainable approach to gender based violence that addresses the pervasive and systemic nature of GBV because the social construct of male headship and benevolent patriarchy lead to oppression of the vulnerable and patriarchy as "holy hierarchy" leads to spiritual abuse.

Synod wrestled with the ethic of how we collect and administer our finances. The increase in the repo rate and fuel costs, the ongoing effects of covid continues to put the clergy and churches at risk and as a move towards fiscal accountability and equality, synod agreed that in 2023, no minister will receive a bonus, unless all ministers have received stipends. The Connexional Assessment Review Commission presented proposals for dealing with the current financial crunch in the MCSA. The proposals included replacing the assessment model with a new apportionment model for circuits and organisations, as well as changing the way in which ministers procure medical aid. Further consultation on the proposals will occur in circuits prior to Conference.

In our ongoing conversations and ministry, we were encouraged to be bold and to take risks. The Education desk has played a pivotal part in our ministries of social and personal development. The Health and Wellness Desk has recognised how we are in a state of crises in the area of mental health, but with programs such as *Connecting The Dots* launched in the Heathfield circuit, we are able to connect with young people in this regard. The main host centre and satellite hub at Park Avenue Methodist were visited by the Western Cape Department of Health; MEC Dr. Nomafrench Mbombo. Furthermore, all those at synod had the opportunity to have vaccination and boosters, and health screening done at mobile clinics stationed at the host centre and all satellite hubs.

Ms Onke Ngcuka, an environmental journalist, engaged with synod regarding the Church; which is the moral compass in society and for each other. The Church can play a big role in redefining wealth and redirecting wealth. We heard the call to challenge industry and our members as individuals to make a difference in protecting and caring for the earth, which is our God given home. The church needs to be a louder voice in this conversation. If we have not taken up this mantle already, we have an opportunity to do this using the resources available for the season for the care of creation.

Synod closed with expressions of thanks across the various platforms, with the hosting hub symbolically passing the invitation to the Worcester circuit, the 2023 Hosting hub.

AMEN