

Evangelism, Church Growth and Planting
A brief Outlook: The case of Mozambique
By: Carlos Fumo, Lay Leader

**Presiding Bishop,
District Bishops,
District Lay Leaders,
Leaders of Organizations
Dear Participants and Guests,
Sisters and Brothers in Christ,**

Allow me to greet you all in the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen!

It is with amazing joy and privilege that I stand before this magnum Mission Congress to share few ideas about the very important but challenging topic that we have been given by the Mission Congress organizers, which is: Evangelism, Church Growth and Church Planting.

1. The conceptual and biblical framework: What are we talking about?

In addressing the topic for discussion, I will start by briefly talk about concepts in a biblical framework so that then I can reflect on the specific context of Mozambique and provide very concrete recommendations to face the challenges of the present times.

The first fundamental questions that come to my mind are: what is the Church? and what are the multiple tasks and functions of the Church? Certainly there are various responses that can be given to these questions. I would like to touch on four biblically based perspectives that I have come across with, which are the following:

Perspective 1

To proclaim the Gospel throughout the world and make disciples of all kinds of people. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). "And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The passages above, often referred to as the Great Commission, were among Jesus' final admonitions to His disciples before He ascended to Heaven. Mark's gospel refers to Christ's command for his followers to "go preach the gospel to the world," while Matthew's reflects His emphasis for the church "to go and make disciples of all nations." The combination of these two elements, evangelism and discipleship, are generally considered as Christ's primary mission for His church. "Evangelism" is the ministry of proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ that will

bring people's souls into fellowship with God, while "discipleship" is the training of believers to become disciplined followers of Jesus and His principles.

Perspective 2

To serve as a community of worship and fellowship — to manifest the presence and love of Jesus. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). This is the Church and Jesus Christ is passing it on to us with a strong promise of Him continuing to bless us with His presence.

Perspective 3

To mature believers and prepare them to perform works of ministry. "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (Eph. 4:11-12).

Perspective 4

To represent the interests of the Kingdom of God in the world, and to influence our society with the ideals of the Lord. "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt. 5:13-14).

Jesus used salt and light as metaphors of the influential characteristics of His church in the world. Historically, salt has always been a valuable commodity used, among other things, as an antiseptic to withdraw infection. Light, of course, dispels darkness and is an essential element of life.

How are we doing it?

It becomes clear that our God given mission as a Church, in which Evangelism, Church Growth and Church Planting are a consequence and a crucial part of it, is the continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ that He also received from His Father when He was sent to the World. The key question to us is: how are we doing it? When Christ rose from death He went to His disciples and said to them: "Peace be with you. **As** the Father has sent me, **so** also I am sending you." (John 20:21). I put in bold the little words **As** ... and **so** ..., because they stress the fact that the mission that the Father gave to the Son is exactly the same that the Son is giving us. Therefore, in order for us to understand what is the Son sending us to do we need to understand what the Father sent the Son to do. I would imagine the Father saying to the Son: Go to the needy, go to criminals, go to drug addicts, go to prostitutes, go to the corrupt, to the stinky who are not even allowed to enter the church, to street children, to jails, to the sick, go, go, go.

The issue Sisters and Brothers is that we are not going or if we are going we are not going enough to carry on the work of Evangelism as we are supposed to do. We tend to stay too long within our church buildings to do what I call to fish the fish that has been fished already. Is what I call the inward evangelism, which may be

necessary but definitely not the only focus of our work, particularly when we talk about evangelism, church growth and church planting. We cannot transform our church buildings into “warehouses of believers”. We are not going out to undertake the task of evangelism. Our Presiding Bishop, in dedicating a church building in Matola Rio, Maputo, Mozambique, made an interesting analogy by saying that a church building is like a petrol station. He said when a driver takes the car to the gas station is not for the car to remain there for a long time, in fact is to stay there a very minimum amount of time possible, to refill and go to do its work. So, we go to the church to refill ourselves with the Holy Spirit, with spiritual energy, knowledge and power to go out on mission to present Jesus Christ, so that through us the world may be saved and, indeed, for healing and transformation.

Critical questions are related to understanding: what is specific of us as Methodists? Why do we call ourselves Methodists in the first place? What makes us different from other church denominations? Having good answers to these questions is crucial to understanding the methodology through which we do mission and witness and, consequently, evangelism, church growth and church planting. It sends us back to John Wesley method of mission and evangelism, he said: “The World is my Parish” So, let us go to the World to deliver the Good News of Jesus Christ. My other favourite one on John Wesley’s approach to evangelism is a letter that he wrote to a certain Minister in which he said: “My Dear Brother, Is it true that you have baptised several children since the Conference? If it is, I cannot but interpret it as a clear renunciation of connection with us. And if this be the case it will not be proper for you to preach any longer in our society. But the land is wide. You have room enough to turn to the right or to the left. I am your affectionate brother. John Wesley” (*In Peter Storey booklet: Our Methodist Roots*). We must, therefore, go to all the corners of the land which is wide, to save the souls of the people and bring them to Christ.

2. The case of Mozambique

2.1. The situation

The fire of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa in Mozambique was ignited by Roberto Machava inspired by his experience in South Africa.

Mozambique is a long country, with the Capital City of Maputo in the extreme south, stretching up to more than 2.5 thousand kilometres to extreme north. Our Church is relatively densely present in the city and province of Maputo and in the province of Gaza in southern part of the country. Recently, mission initiatives were started in “Zona Centro”, the central part of Mozambique”, in the province of Manica as well as in “Zona Norte”, the northern part of Mozambique, in the province of Nampula.

The whole District has got a total number of about 6.000 members. Considering the modest number of members and the very limited geographical presence of the church throughout the country, surely Mozambique becomes a fertile land for evangelism, church growth and church planting.

The Church in Mozambique is growing slowly but steadily, with all modesty. Almost every year, in recent times, new church buildings are completed or started. In 2016,

for example, 4 new churches were dedicated. In 2017, the estimate is that about 6 new churches will be dedicated early in the year and, probably another 4 towards the end of the year.

The district is blessed to have permanent mission support from MCO and the British Methodist Church. Recently we also got support from Sailors Society from which we are undertaking mission to seafarers. We are blessed to have Pastor Moongyun Yi, a Missionary from the Methodist Church in South Korea, who has moved from Swaziland to Maputo and who is helping immensely in mobilizing resources to build churches, water boreholes in churches for the benefit of not only church members but also the entire community around (evangelism in action). He has also mobilized resources for medical support to the sick and vulnerable people by bringing medical teams and medicines from South Korea, among other precious donations that he has been able to mobilize for the District.

Children in the District are playing an active role in evangelism, church growth and planting, not only in calling other children but also by the Macarretane – Gaza example where children built their themselves their own church using local material, a very emotional experience which shows God's presence among those children. Surely, these children need encouragement and support!



The Hona contributions are also growing in the District. A total of an equivalent to 210.000 Rands was collected in 2014 and 269.000 Rands in 2015. These figures are continuing to grow. These contributions are mainly for Evangelism, Church growth and Church planting.

We also witness growth in the level of contributions for church building, especially with the practice of organizing spiritual revivals dedicated to raising funds for construction of churches. The results are not yet enough for this giant task but surely a good and blessed beginning.

Important initiatives are being taken towards promoting trans-border collaboration between Mozambique District and other neighbouring districts. It is a good example the recently launched initiative of building a church in Ponta do Ouro, a touristic spot in Mozambique, with the support from the District of Natal Coastal. With Highveld and Swaziland and Limpopo Districts there have been mutual contacts and conversations about future opportunities.

2.2. Main challenges

The District of Mozambique is still facing challenges, especially in addressing the task of evangelism, church growth and church planting, the most crucial of which are the following:

Financial contributions

The phenomenon of low levels of financial contributions in Mozambique District is still prevailing and probably far to be resolved. However, it needs historical contextualization and the following elements can explain the root cause of the situation:

- Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the World, which reduces the financial capabilities of the most vulnerable people in the society, significant part of which are members in our churches;
- The country has been faced by occurrence of war situations, moving from the 10 year liberation struggle in the 60/70's to 16 years civil war in the 80/90's to recent political instability since last year, coupled by the cyclic natural disasters ranging from floods to droughts and cyclones, events that have exacerbated the level of economic vulnerability of majority of Mozambican citizens.

The two above mentioned situations always led to huge emergency assistance by the donor community by providing grants and all kinds of donations. Whilst this gesture was necessary in times of need, the truth is that it created a syndrome of dependency which unfortunately became part of citizenship culture in a wide majority of Mozambicans. So, talking about financial contributions, even in the church, becomes a critical challenge.

Peace and stability

There is a political conflict right now between the RENAMO and FRELIMO Government, resulting mainly from non-acceptance of the last election results by the major opposition party. Many innocent people have been killed so far and the ongoing negotiations with international mediation seem to not be reaching consensus yet. The church is called to use its prophetic voice to end violence and

restore life and dignity to the people of Mozambique. The Bishop of Mozambique has been part of peace making initiatives together with other religious leaders. However, more needs to be done. The challenge is: how do we do evangelism, church growth and church planting within a context of armed violence in the country?

Social Issues

The prevalence of endemic diseases such as HIV/SIDA and malaria, the problem of human trafficking, the abuse of women and children and the killing of people with albinism for extraction of organs for obscurantist aims, are crucial challenges that the Mozambican society is facing. The church has to deal with these social issues within a clear strategy of action oriented evangelism, using Christ's given power of healing and transformation.

Limited number of Labourers

The whole District of Mozambique has got only 12 Ministers, 11 Evangelists and 10 Bible Women. Clearly, a very small number of labourers to carry out the work of God, especially towards evangelism, church growth and church planting.

Ministers, unlike in the rest of the Connexion still benefit from a very minimum level of stipend. To be more specific a Minister in Mozambique gets a stipend of approximately 2,600.00 Rands a month, which is not enough for their survival and of their dependents, especially considering the rise of cost of living in the country presently. This requires an emergency solution. In parallel to that there is the issue of housing and transport facilities for Ministers.

2.3. Recommendations

Connexionality

In as far as the spirit of a united Church is concerned, certainly, in our perspective, the connexionality issue remains the most critical challenge that the church as a whole is facing at the present moment, especially as regards the inclusion of Mozambique. The Connexionality spirit should not continue to be viewed as a mere good intention but it should be a concept that has got practical implications that must be addressed. It should be our culture, our way of being and living as a Church. It should be characterized by principles such as: unity in diversity where diversity becomes a strength and not a weakness, inclusiveness, integration, mutual support and greater sense of belonging and communion of a collective goal as we move towards our God given mission of healing and transformation. Some concrete recommended actions in this regard are as follows:

- Expand to Mozambique District the whole itinerancy approach, to allow Ministers from other districts to be stationed in Mozambique and Ministers from Mozambique to be stationed in other Districts across the Connexion. Let us go, let us go, as we were commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ. Language should not be the hindrance to this noble aim, especially when we talk about evangelism, church growth and church planting.

- Plan and organize short term exchanges among Ministers from other Districts and Mozambique which must result into more exposure of the church reality in Mozambique, as well as cross cultural fertilization, mutual learning and mutual strengthening. Again, language should not be an impediment. In fact mission and evangelism have no specific language, because they use God's language.
- Move towards the application of common policies and standards across the Connexion especially as regards, for example, Ministers stipends, housing, pension, medical aid, education.
- Enhance trans-border cooperation, in the case of Mozambique, more especially with neighbouring districts of Natal Coastal, Highveld and Swaziland and Limpopo.
- Encourage evangelism activities, such as tours, crusades and other events, across the Connexion, including Mozambique.

Resourcing

- Promote self-sustainable mechanisms of resourcing Church Planting, paying particular attention to Mozambique District, to allow significant outreach in evangelism and church growth throughout the country. What about launching a scheme such as "One Rand per month per member", for an individual may mean a small contribution but collectively we can build a good level of financial resources.
- In the area of church construction, given the cultural reality and the economic situation described above, what about if launching a Matching Grant Scheme, in which for X Rands raised in a society, circuit or district Y Rands are provided for the purposes of construction of worship buildings. This could enhance a greater outreach, particularly in the case of Mozambique.
- Encourage members of the church who would like to invest in Mozambique in economic ventures in partnership with the church in Mozambique and other potential partners in a manner that resources can be generated for the purposes of evangelism, church growth and church planting. Mozambique is a wealth of opportunities for investment: plenty of arable land, availability of water and hard working people.

Communication

- Facilitate processes of communication between Mozambique District and other Districts, through mechanisms such as the implementation of the idea of an insert of articles in Portuguese in the New Dimension as well as translation of key policy and working material into Portuguese. We congratulate MCO for having taken a robust step forward of introducing simultaneous translation facility from English to Portuguese and vice-versa, in meetings starting from the Mission Congress we are having right now.

Capacity building

- Create all the necessary conditions for the introduction of a training curriculum in Portuguese for local preachers of the same standard as the one used at connexional level to allow not only for uniformity but also to enhance the capacity of these brothers and sisters who, in the prevailing insufficiency of

Ministers, have been the ones who sustained the Church ensuring evangelism and church growth.

In Conclusion,

My sincere hope is that this Mission Congress may come up with implementable decisions and mechanisms to allow evangelism, church growth and church planting to advance successfully as a fundamental imperative of our God given mission of healing and transformation. Fundamental to that is to equip ourselves with the necessary tools and knowledge not only to undertake action but also to transfer this knowledge to future generation for the purposes of continuity of the church.

Sisters and brothers I thank you for your attention and may God bless you all.