

LISTENING COMMITTEE REPORT

PREAMBLE

Members of the Methodist family from Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia, Mozambique, Botswana and South Africa gathered together at the second Mission Congress of the MCSA from 24 to 27 November 2016 in Pietermaritzburg, under the banner of Methodists Igniting Mission. God spoke to us in song and silence, in pain and tears, in the voices of children and the wisdom of experience, calling us back to the rock from which we were hewn, the stone from which we were cut (Isaiah 51: 1). God spoke to us in voices from beyond the connexion reminding us of our unity in mission

WE CELEBRATE AND REMEMBER

We celebrate a God of reckless, transforming grace, who loves the cosmos with a life-giving, self-emptying love. We celebrate a God who faithfully nourishes and nurtures us with water, life, bread, and grace. We celebrate a God who is with us always and everywhere, who holds and sustains us, calls and sends us, going with us and ahead of us.

Xikwembu xikahle *(God is good)*

We celebrate a missional God who has blessed us with a brand plucked from the fire, a warmed heart, and a passion for the world as our parish. We celebrate a missional God who has blessed us with a rich diverse heritage of those who have gone before us, and who are now a deep well from which we draw encouragement and inspiration for mission in the present context.

Xikwembu xikahle *(God is good)*

We celebrate a God who speaks to us through children, in unexpected and unconventional places, a God who speaks to us through imagination, and inspires us by the Holy Spirit, a God who re-ignites our collective consciousness and passion to keep the flame burning.

Xikwembu xikahle *(God is good)*

WE CONFESS AND REPENT

As we confess, we lament that we do not express in our lives and our structures the prayer of Jesus in John 17. We are:

ONE AND DIVIDED

We confess that we are a bruised and divided church, in which some are more equal than others, in which children's voices are not heard, and gender issues are regarded as women's issues only. We confess that we exist in silos, not living out the communion of our community. We confess the lack of integrity in sharing resources justly and fairly, our selective itinerancy, our inability or unwillingness to support transformative missional strides.

**Dilacerai o vosso coração
e não as vossas vestes como de costume.**

(Rend your hearts and not your garments)

We confess that we are a disobedient church. We are not a listening, feeling presence in the world. We have been playing church, hiding in our warehouses.

We confess that we are a Church more comfortable with rhetoric than action, that we have allowed a disjuncture between the Mission Congress 2004 and the Mission Congress 2016. We are at times dead branches, not abiding in Christ, not bearing fruit.

**Dilacerai o vosso coração
e não as vossas vestes como de costume.**

(Rend your hearts and not your garments)

We confess that we are a Church which looks but does not see, hears but does not listen, cares but does not engage in transformative healing.

We confess that we are a Church which struggles to respond in life-giving ways to hunger, sexual exploitation, economic injustices, and poverty. We neglect the most vulnerable in our communities: children enslaved into child labour, women and men trafficked into abuse and exploitation – we do not hear this voice when we identify the poor. We confess that we objectify the ‘other’, we stigmatise and discriminate. We confess our failure to re-imagine what is possible as a Church in mission.

**Dilacerai o vosso coração
e não as vossas vestes como de costume.**

(Rend your hearts and not your garments)

WE COMMIT AND RESPOND

We believe that Christ calls us to listen to people without resorting to ‘quick fixes’. We recognise that this is an intentional process of self-emptying. We believe that Christ calls us to create spaces for all to speak and be heard, ‘flat spaces’ with equal access for all languages and cultures. Christ calls us to ask new questions as we continue to explore and examine the relevance of our mission strategy.

To this, we commit ourselves.

Gaan uit en maak discipels van alle nasies.

(Go out and make disciples of all nations)

We believe that Christ calls us to greater integrity in the use of all our resources. We recognise the necessity to equip laity and ministers alike, through intentional, focused training – including post ordination training for ministers. We believe that Christ calls us to hold one another accountable, as he holds us accountable, for enabling the ministry of all believers.

To this, we commit ourselves.

Gaan uit en maak discipels van alle nasies.

(Go out and make disciples of all nations)

We believe that Christ calls us to radical hospitality, with integrity, for the most vulnerable. We recognise the

interconnectedness of ‘Soul, Soil, Society’, and that asking the question “Is it well with your soul?” must bring to light opportunities for healing, vulnerability, listening and resurrection. We believe that Christ, God-made-flesh, calls us to participate in God’s incarnational mission in our world.

To this, we commit ourselves.

Gaan uit en maak dissipels van alle nasies.

(Go out and make disciples of all nations)

We believe that Christ calls us to unity in diversity. As members of the MCSA from Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa, we commit ourselves intentionally to living out our Connexionality in practical, meaningful and respectful ways – language, use and distribution of resources, presence, inclusiveness, integration, greater sense of belonging. This should be our culture, our way of being. We believe that Christ calls us to intentional ecumenical and inter-faith relationships, as well as partnering with other life-giving organisations.

To this, we commit ourselves.

Gaan uit en maak dissipels van alle nasies.

(Go out and make disciples of all nations)

We believe that Christ calls us to rediscover our prophetic voice and to re-define our prophetic way of being, particularly in education. We believe that Christ calls us to GO GO GO. We believe that Christ calls us to decisive, determined and intentional evangelism.

To this, we commit ourselves.

Gaan uit en maak dissipels van alle nasies.

(Go out and make disciples of all nations)

SENDING OUT: FRANCISCAN BLESSING

May God bless us with a restless *discomfort* about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that we may seek truth boldly and love deep within our hearts.

May God bless us with holy *anger* at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless us with the gift of *tears* to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless us with enough *foolishness* to believe that we really can make a difference in this world, so that we are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

What shall our greeting be...