- 1. Presiding Bishop Sir
- 2. Madam General Secretary
- 3. Lay President
- 4. Bishops and lay leaders
- 5. Our Guest of honour
- 6. Members of Conference

I greet you all in the powerful name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

I would like to thank the Presiding Bishop for giving the Women in Ministry a voice this morning as they mark **forty years** of ordination in the MCSA.

It has been a road **worth travelling**, a journey full of **joy**, but one that has also been at times full of **tears** and **degradation**, **pain** and **frustration**, at times it has been characterised by **trials** and **testing** but through the grace of God this journey has been worth travelling because the ONE who called us is **faithful indeed** (1Thes 5:24).

At times we found ourselves in Paul's position when he says in I Cor 4: 11-13 "to this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our hands. When we are cursed, we bless, when we are persecuted we endure it. When we are slandered, we answer kindly, we have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world right up to this moment".

Presiding Bishop Sir, in my 36 years in the ministry of the MCSA and 30 years as an ordained minister, I have journeyed with women who struggled to get stipends when their superintendents got everything and above. I personally have had my painful journey but through the Grace of the Faithful One, I too am still here.

I have journeyed with **brilliant** and **gifted** women who struggled to get stations because they spoke out with courage against all odds. They were not afraid to challenge the status squo, and are labelled angry, bitter, frustrated and rowdy. But we thank God because we are all still here (Acts 16:28).

I have travelled with women who are labelled **emotional** but when men become emotional they are said to be **passionate** and **visionary** and **dreamers** – they are said to be people who see where no one sees.

I am still travelling with women who go for maternity leave and do not get their packages as prescribed in the book of order. In some places the leadership of the Church, like the synagogue rulers have become a law unto themselves.

I have seen how Young Women's Manyano have been ridiculed by the rulers of the synagogue just because they want to be independent. In my thirsty six years in the ordained ministry I have seen it all and I have heard it all, I even understand the tricks of the synagogue rulers and the cliques they form against others.

The forward bending is not comfortable, it is a burden, it is a prison. How can we sing the Lord songs of **celebration** in a place of imprisonment?

Presiding Bishop Sir when women ministers met at their consultation in August this year they declared that it is not yet Uhuru, Alluta Continua. Celebration has to follow liberation.

Today we are committing ourselves to new beginnings – our position is that the coming 40 years and beyond should be a different journey from the one we have been through so far.

We look forward with great anticipation to a journey with a difference

- If the next 40 years and beyond are to be a journey with a difference it cannot be "business as usual" in the MCSA but "business unusual"
- The GOAL of new beginnings should not be just for women in the ministry but for the whole Church.

We have been bending forward for too long – says Rev. Malinga

Celebration has to be preceded by liberation – how do you celebrate when you are still in a bent over position. But I **do** understand that when you are in a bent over

position you can still praise God with great anticipation that the day of liberation will come which will give reason for celebration

Until we accept that there is inequality there will be no equality – says Rev. Mtshiselwa. This coming forty years thorny issues must not be avoided for the sake of pleasing the synagogue rulers of our time. They should be confronted head on, no matter labels we are given. **Chaos** will erupt but **calmness** will eventually come when we have **dealt with crocodiles of our hearts.**

- Women in Ministry need to be listened to when they say they are not celebrating, not yet and they are not lamenting either.
- Rather we are at the place of reflection and we have come to realise that thus far the Lord has being with us.
- The statement we are not yet at the place of celebration is not one of protest or rebelliousness but an invitation for the Church to listen with a compassionate ear and respond

It was in 1972 when this Conference of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa adopted a resolution to have women ordained into the ministry of the church after years of deliberations on the matter.

In 1975 the first woman, Rev. Constance Oosthuizen, was ordained into the ministry of word and sacrament after she had been in the ministry of word and service for nearly 18 years, and the first black woman, Rev. Nikiwe Mbilini who was ordained in 1985. Let me also point out that the first three women to be ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament were already ordained in the ministry of word and service, Constance Oosthuizen, Nikiwe Mbilini and Dorothy Spink. So the ORDER has contributed immensely to the ERMEGENCE of women who were ready to be ordained into ministry of word and sacrament. They knew the hostile culture of the church towards women and I think they were ready than most of us to handle it.

Although the Church had said **yes** – to the ordination of women, attitudes and practices of a patriarchal culture still continues to hinder the women's progress in the church.

Let is be mindful however that in pursued of justice, fairness and equality women ministers established in 1995 what today we call **Women in Ministry Consultation**. Its aim was to allow women ministers to **share their experiences**, **support each other**, **speak with one voice** and **influence structures** of the church.

One of the mayor achievements of this period was the appointment of Rev. Purity Malinga as a bishop in the MCSA. The appointment of Rev. Malinga did not just happened by chance, it happened because of **intentional** and **strategic** move by the Department of Education for Ministry under Rev. James Massey and Women in Ministry Working Group which consisted of both female and male ministers and was under the leadership of Rev. Paul Verryn.

Today our young sisters in the ministry are asking us a question, understandably so, how could you have asked a man, a white man for that matter to lead the women working group with other men being members of that group? I was there; I was part of that decision. The answer is: that was the strategy – when you want to defeat the enemy or the oppressor you must use the people who know how he **operates** and what **tactics** he uses and what **language he** prefers the most.

In 2005 the Women in Ministry Consultation encouraged one another

- to expose situations of discrimination and inequalities where they exist
- to be the conscience of the Connexional Executive on issues of women
- to encourage more women to offer for the ministry
- to ensure that where the bishop is male the lay leader is a woman
- to ensure the implementation of 40/40/20 policy

Five years after the above undertaking by women, *all was still not well*, the then Presiding Bishop, **Rev. Ivan Abrahams** made this remarks to Conference:

"Last year, (he said, referring to 2009), my heart was filled with pain when I looked at the composition of Conference...... why must women still demand their place at the table and "struggle" to be included in the leadership and decision making processes when they are the majority in the Church".

In 2011, *all was still not well*, the same leader of our transforming church said "Despite being a "ground-breaker" on two occasions having women clergy lead Conference Bible studies and giving the charge at ordination, women are still marginalised in the life and witness of our church".

In 2015, *all was still not well*; the incumbent Presiding Bishop, Rev. Siwa had this to say on the issue of women inclusion and leadership

"However at this Conference, we launch the celebration of Conference's decision to allow the ordination of women as presbyters – 40 years ago. This was a move that was in obedience to God's call of how to be and do church. It is time to pause and praise God that our mothers and fathers acknowledged that in Christ we are one.

I must (pause here and) applaud the South African government as it is ahead of the pack in addressing gender justice. Prior to 1994 there were 2.7% women parliamentarians. Today they stand at 42%. Big strides have been made in just 20 years. I lament the fact that in our 40 years, we have only had one woman Bishop. Only 4% of our Superintendents are women and I have no record of how leadership at Circuit and Society levels stand".

This was the first year of Rev. Charmaine Morgan as the General Secretary of the MCSA – the second milestone in 40 years.

According to the General Secretary report of 2015 at the Women in Ministry Consultation, statistics showed that in 40 years the church has managed to attract 164 women into the ordained ministry. This reveals that for forty years the Church has been getting 4 women candidates per year, and only 4% of them are superintendents.

But we know, we have heard we have seen women who have been refused to offer for the ministry by their male superintendents.

All is still not well! What can be done to correct the situation? We need the leadership to be INTENTIONAL; a leadership that has, itself, transcended the subgroup mentality, leadership that grows in faith and service not in POWER over others.

WHAT DO WE SUGGEST AS OUR SHORT TERM IMPLEMENTATION GOALS (QUICK WINS)

- a. We have 133 ordained and active women ministers in the Connexion 50% of them should be superintendents by 2019
- b. Half of the bishops should be women.
 Districts needs to be told that for those bishops who will be finishing their term in the near future women shall be nominated as bishops until we get our statistics right.
- c. SMMS Chancellor should be a woman (there should also be gender mainstreaming in the employment of lecturers especially fulltime ones)
- d. Where the bishop is a male the vice-chair should be a woman
- e. 40/40/20 should be implemented in all societies, circuits, districts and Connexional structures
- f. WiM District Coordinators should be part of District Management Meetings (for full participation and doing Monitoring and Evaluation)
- g. WiM Connexional Coordinator should be part of the Connexional Executive Meetings (for full participation and doing Monitoring and Evaluation)

Long Term

- a. To make theological discourse an integral part of Methodist women's lives beyond seminary and ordination
- b. To establish a feminist/ womanist/ African women theological training institute for Methodist People (MCSA)

- c. To incubate, support, educate, advise and advocate for women ministers
- d. To Develop Women Ministers Profiles, Succession Plans and Influence their Stationing
- e. To Forge Relationships with other Wesleyan Women in the Continent and Abroad
- f. To engage in a 10 year recruitment drive

Drivers of the Program

