1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is primarily a health crisis and a human tragedy, but it also has far-reaching socio-economic ramifications. The pandemic is graphically exposing local and global socio-economic inequalities that have been hiding in plain sight all the time\(^1\). Despite countries instituting necessary interventions and policies to protect public health, none of these will adequately address the pandemic’s jeopardizing impact on the economic well-being of citizens and institutions. The acute pullback in economic activity is disrupting millions of people’s livelihoods, with a disproportionate impact on poor households\(^2\). It is also threatening the future of national economies, formal and informal business, and civic institutions including the churches.

As the crisis unfolds, leaders in the public, private, and development sectors are taking decisive action - both to save lives and to protect households, businesses, and national economies from the fallout of the pandemic\(^3\). The pandemic has also visited the world with several unknowns and uncertainties that continue to confound leaders across a variety of sectors. Along with responding to the immediate crisis, leaders in every sector, are faced with mapping out a path and crafting well-targeted strategies and policies that will assist organisations to resiliently survive, re-imagine and re-focus, and arrive at a new and perhaps evolved normally.

The Church is not exempt from these economic realities and future challenges. When governments imposed full national lockdown and the subsequent restricted on economic activity and public gatherings, it suddenly became apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic will surely have a long-term impact on the financial life of congregations, regardless of their denomination, size or makeup\(^4\). My particular denomination, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), like other churches is seemingly overwhelmed by the magnitude of the crisis. As non-profit organisations, churches largely depend on offerings, pledges to fund their mission, maintain properties, and remunerate their personnel - including pastors and priests. With no public gatherings and some church members confronting anxious economic futures, the churches’ financial future looks vulnerable.

Over the few months of the crisis, formal MCSA correspondence on the financial future of the church as a whole oscillates between thinly veiled anxiety and tentative hopefulness. The church does not seem to have a choice between institutional survival (form) and the task of fulfilling its mission (function). Is the context of a crisis what comes first, form or function? Is the pandemic a purification of means and purpose? What is the relevance of church polity in the shaping of our responses to a crisis? These are certainly difficult questions.

Reflecting on the realities facing churches, Bill Wilson remarked, “Is this the death of the church or the rebirth?”\(^5\). Beyond the debates about institutional survival and mission, for the church to adequately respond to these questions, there is a need for a theological reflection on the public role of the church in the context of a crisis. Perhaps death is a natural consequence of a system that becomes consumed by self-centred panic, and the need to survive, as opposed to living into the dynamic tension between resilience and courageously assuming its role in the public space.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this article is; first to understand the social and economic effects of Covid-19 on church and society, second, to discuss a theological basis for conversation between theology and economics,

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and third, the need for the church to be involved in discerning issues of economic justice. While I draw on a variety of disciplines, I primarily invoke some pragmatic aspects of methodist theology and spirituality. Ultimately, I hope that the article offers pastoral insights and constructive recommendations for action.

1.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF COVID -19

The spread of the Coronavirus across countries that constitute the MCSA has revealed the obvious differentials of poverty across the Connexion. These include poverty, unemployment, the gap between the rich and poor, the vulnerability of women and children, threats to the family job security, access to medical care as well as basic services such as water and electricity.

During the national lockdown, I heard some people saying, “We are all in this together.” At face value, the statement authentically acknowledges common anxiety, fear, and uncertainty that characterised the lockdown. But, as the lockdowns prolonged and the weeks multiplied, we soon realised that the pandemic has exposed the deep social and economic inequalities that mark our society. As the circumstances increasingly revealed these injustices, Damian Barr, columnist, and author, wrote a sensational poem that appears to have resonated across the world. This poem is succinctly summed up in the following words that he shared on his Twitter handle on April 21:

We are not all in the same boat. We are all in the same storm. Some are on super-yachts. Some have just one boat. — Damian Barr (@Damian_Barr)

Understanding that the Covid-19 pandemic affects us differently is fundamental to the shape of our responses as a church and society. What is true is that we are all in a storm. Some have better chances of surviving and others will need greater support to make beyond the storm. On the one hand, accepting that we are in the same storm is an important recognition of our common humanity and shared socio-economic future. On the other hand, we have to ask the question, how then do we make sure that we ALL survive and lend on a safe harbour. But first, let me highlight some of the key facets of the storm.

Pandemics and socio-economic inequalities. Research shows that pandemic often worsens existing inequalities in any society. Covid-19 has brought to the surface across the world, a particular in African countries is the socio-economic injustices that mark our society. The most basic impact is felt by individuals and families. During the lockdown, some were excited about binge-watching their favourite shows on Netflix, while others had to work two jobs and trying to home school their kids. Some were angry; some are bored; some are terrified at the possibility of losing their jobs, and some are trapped inside a house with someone abusive. Others had enough savings and others could barely make it past the first week of the lockdown. Some people in cities could afford to remain indoors, in the townships and rural areas a different etiquette of life exists.

Fragile Social Security Structures. Covid-19 has also revealed the fragile social security structures of most African countries. As a case in point, I would argue that the South African lockdown rules assumed that every person had a house, and the family structure is adequate and peaceful enough, every person will have enough food to last them the duration of the lockdown. In reality, the health crisis is a double whammy, with an immense economic toll, that will probably take years for countries and individuals to recover. A combination of the household financial stress with the underlying social fissures that shape family life often leads to increased substance abuse, domestic violence, and even suicide.

Poverty. Sadly, poverty is not a new theme for most African countries. As soon as the countries in southern African instituted lockdowns, the number of people that expected food parcels and public assistance increased. If you add to these figures the growing numbers of people who are losing their jobs due to companies closing and downsizing, we are certainly faced with an aggressive hike in poverty levels.

Theorists say that the common markers of poverty include lack of capital (both income and wealth) and human capital (such as education and good health) and social capital (such as positive and trustful communities). In extreme poverty means people lack necessities for survival. As the church in southern Africa, it is worth asking, how adequate is our insight into the statistics about the lack of basic resources in the countries of our connexion? In light of that we need to ask the question, what does it mean to be the Church in a context of increased levels vulnerability, homelessness, child-headed households, extreme child neglect, social exclusion, and hunger?

A compounding of factors. People living in poverty lack income and resources, and because they are caught up in systemic chains of injustice, they may experience multiple disadvantages through unemployment, low
income, poor housing, inadequate health care, and barriers to lifelong learning. A compounding of COVID – 19 health and economic vulnerabilities with the historical economic injustices that exist in the SADC countries, is a classical recipe for an economic time-bomb. It is important for the church and society to be awake to these realities and to critically think about the content and shape of our theology and philosophies as it relates to economic justice. Otherwise, we must anticipate a deepening of our social problems such as crime, lawlessness, corruption, poverty and unemployment.

The church’s prophetic duty. Given all these factors, it is important for the church as a public citizen to consistently undertake an informed study and analysis of social, economic, political, and internal issues that impact on the well-being of society. This is what is often referred to as the prophetic duty of the Church. In a time when every second preacher regards themselves as prophetic and radical, I wonder if as a church we are adequately equipped to speak truth to power and address the economic injustices and the injustice of poverty and unemployment. At the heart of the Church’s prophetic duty is to speak and bring the gospel values to bear on political, economic, and social matters.

1.3 DISCERNING THE ECONOMICS OF JUSTICE

In a context of sound bite theology and the prevalence of rhetorical expediency, the church needs to carefully consider its theological convictions regarding human existence concerning the economic order of our day. Common on the lips on preachers, theologians, and activists is the ability to offer a litany of the social and economic injustices that shape our social order. The common culprits in these litanies of critic and lament are often government failure, unjust market forces, and inhumane economic frameworks and policies. While the issues are key to understanding the systematic chains of inequality that exacerbate poverty and economic vulnerability, the basis of our criticisms needs to be clarified and theoretically supported.

When we speak of the economy or economic system we are referring to policies and plans which control the wealth and resources of the country, about how resources are distributed, and about the means of production - such as land, factories, and technology – are owned and controlled. Each economy has a moral quality which makes it possible for us to make judgments on whether or not it is a just economy. The economy itself is in its origin a word for housekeeping. It is about to think about what it means to belong to the same household and in large terms a global household. This implies a set of rules for understanding how to hold things in common for all the members of the household.

In what follows, I will discuss some areas of engagement to make a case for the need for discerning economic justice.

1.3.1 A dialogue between theology and economics

Economic consequences are by their nature a result of human agency. At the heart of an every economic system lie human needs, human abilities, and human decisions, and it is the choices we make in addressing those needs, sharing those abilities, and making those decisions, that determine the justice or injustice of the economic system.

Jim Wallis argues that the church has lost the ability to speak about the economy in moral terms about economics. He further points out that there is a need to recover an ethical and values-based language about the economy. Every pandemic heightens the need for the church to give expression to how God enters the suffering of the world as a participant in its economic and social life. Similarly, the church cannot be a victim of fate or leave history in the hands of politicians and economists. Rather as Fretheim suggests, we are people of faith and not victims of faith. Our theological metaphors and action are critical pieces in the shaping of the future God has in mind for the world. Let us look at a few issues that might assist our imagination of a moral economy.

Totalising economic narratives. Firstly, Rowan Williams argues that contemporary economic language has a totalising approach that often threatens to reduce all kinds of discourse to its terms. As an antithesis to this privileging of economic language, he suggests that the first task of theology is to demystify the notion that economic systems function by some innate indispensable

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6 SACBC, ‘Economic Justice in South Africa: A Pastoral Statement.’ (Johannesburg: South African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, September 1999), 5. factors underlying the system as well as the outcomes of that system.
laws. Along with this, we should also avoid the danger of doing our theology in religious silos that fail to capture the imagination of anyone beyond church doors.

At its core, theology is about understanding who God is in a relationship with the created order, and the task of doing theology is always a form of public engagement. For the church to effectively engage in the public space it needs to stretch its imagination and language. In doing so, the church will be throwing into the public arena metaphors that are infused with a sense of God’s justice and righteousness. Our theological language must move from the altar to the market and should have the power to incarnate better images of human dignity into the social and cultural milieu of our everyday lives.

The Bible does not prescribe an economic system. Secondly, to understand the relationship between the church and economic systems we must come to terms with the fact that the Bible does not prescribe an economic system.

The Christian theologian seeks to go beyond the left and right, conservative and liberal, socialist and capitalist, Marxist and Keynesian binaries and stance. In practice, the church views every economic system as a set of principles with potential strengths and weaknesses. It is therefore beyond the churches’ mandate to favour any particular economic system. Apart from the fact that economic systems are dynamic, in most countries a mixture of economic systems prevails. At best, the church makes it assessments and makes moral judgments of economic systems through analysis of the underlying factors and consequences of a particular economic system.

Christian economic values. At best, the church ‘reads the signs of the times’ and offers some theological principles and moral values that can guide economic deliberations. a good starting point is the economic principles contained in Catholic social teachings. These principles have contextual and denominational adaptions across the ecumenical landscape. For the limited purposes of this article, I list a few Christian economic values: the common good, transparency and accountability, solidarity, the option for the poor and protection of the vulnerable, subsidiarity, the common destiny of goods, integrity of creation and people-centeredness.

The theological task of the Church is to infuse these values into the different forms of Christian activity, including its teaching, preaching, liturgy, pastoral ministry, and polity. These expressions can form a particular Christian politics and translate it into the forms of doxology and pastoral power. This is particularly important because the church is the one institution that exists in the crucible of the widening gap between rich and poor and the culturally elite and the culturally marginalized.

1.3.2 A biblical understanding of Justice

There are conflicting views on justice. Some people believe in commutative justice – fairness in agreements and exchanges. Others believe in procedural justice – the step and processes taken should be fair, transparent, and protects the freedom and rights of individuals. And others believe in distributive justice - how the goods of society – money, health care, and educational opportunities shared fairly. These types of justice shape public life in varying degrees. To go back to the Bible, the two key Hebrew words for justice are mishpat and tsedaqah. These are frequently, these words are translated as “justice” and “righteousness,” but they both refer to the right relations in the socio-economic order. An examination of these perspectives demonstrates that most countries utilise both procedural and distributive justice.

According to Walter Brueggemann, a biblical perspective on justice is about sorting out what belongs to whom and return it to them.

Such an understanding implies that there is a right distribution of goods and access to the sources of life. There are certain entitlements that cannot be mocked. Yet through the uneven workings of historical process, some have come to have access to or control of what belongs to others. If we control what belongs to others long enough, we come to think it is rightly ours, and forget it belonged to someone else. So, the work of liberation, redemption and salvation, is the work of giving things back.

To achieve justice, Brueggemann suggests that the church should perform three fundamental prophetic tasks: (i) to tell the truth about social reality, (ii) to help the people of God grieve and repent from their circumstances, and (iii) invite them to a radical hope. Put

9 Rowan Williams, Faith in the Public Square, Reprint edition (Bloomsbury Continuum, 2015).
10 Wallis, The (Un)Common Good.
differently, justice concerns the right reading of social reality, social power, and social goods. Sider points that this kind of reading needs to be supported with an adequate articulation of a Christian perspective on four normative issues, namely; the nature of persons; the shape of justice; God’s special concern for the poor; and the role of government.

While discussing these normative issues is beyond the scope of this paper, it is fair to conclude this section by highlighting a few biblical principles of justice. First biblical justice is dynamic and restorative. Second, God's justice goes beyond fairness, it has a special concern for the poor. Third, God's justice is a form of restoration to community. Lastly, biblical justice arises from a form of human relationships, dialogue and reconciliation that is underpinned by the values human value, dignity worth and freedom. This form of understanding justice moves us toward a faith that rooted in faithful discernment and refuses to be domesticated by the totalising nature of economic discourses.

1.3.3 Equality, inequality, and equity

I have no disciplinary claim to explain these concepts from an economic perspective, rather I seek to try and create a discussion that can help us clarify our points of entry into public discourses about human dignity and economic justice. This is important because the mechanisms that create a just or unjust economy are often obscured by a series of relationships, decisions, and policies that procedurally bequeath positive or negative outcomes. Let me start by looking at equality.

Equality. Most revolutions and theological discourses are premised on the conviction that people are born equal. While people may be born equal, they are not born the same, either in their faculties or in their possessions. Equality sounds like a simple thing but in fact, it is one of the most complex terms to translate into social reality. According to Wells

Equality means having the same worth, being entitled to expect from others the same dignity and respect, rather than being devalued on grounds of race, caste, gender, class or physical or mental capacity; and at the same time having the same rights, being entitled to expect from society the same level of access to justice, education, healthcare, housing, social interaction and economic opportunity.

Inequality. Inequality as a form of injustice created by class-based hierarchies that are characterised by unequal distribution of the resources that form the basis of human flourishing. Placing equality and equality side by side leads us to a conversation about class, historical injustices such as the apartheid system in South Africa. It also throws us into the conflict generated by the competition that underpins markets. In such a context, how do we understand the inequality of opportunity concerning the inequality of ability? How can we think about inequality in a systematic way?

A Christian moral reflection on these factors evokes the need to assess how we treat those we meet in the marketplace. Beyond economic ethics, how the rich treat the poor and vulnerable in economic and political life is a constant theme in the Bible. Maybe the question is, how does the Bible help us understand equality and inequality as a central theme to our theology of salvation.

Equity. Equity refers to a situation in an economy in which the apportionment of resources or goods among the people is considered fair. Introducing the concept of fairness brings into focus the social and cultural norms shape our economic systems. If we make values central to the discourse, we need to ask how to do our public policies promote fairness and equity? While there is a consensus that extreme inequality of income, wealth, or opportunity is unfair, there is equally little agreement on what constitutes a fair distribution of wealth.

Attempting to define the three concepts reveals that these issues are quite knotty because they are inextricably intertwined with social values. That being said, Christian theologians and ethicists should assist us to navigate how

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15 Sider.
17 Wells, 53.
these issues play in the drama of world economics, government policies and market machinations. In the wake of tragedies, there is a need to give character to the values of solidarity, fellowship, subsidiarity, redistributional justice, and the commitment to an equitable distribution that minimises material suffering. Is our theological imagination able to understand the social and economic hierarchies created through people’s relationship to means of production, distribution, and consumption? Perhaps, it fair to say the church often performs a contradictory mode of social formation through its worship. How can our worship heighten our awareness of the economic discrimination suffered by certain groups because of their class, gender, race and ethnic origin?

1.4 SHAPING OUR RESPONSES – AN AFRICAN WESLEYAN PERSPECTIVE

In this section, I draw on some Wesleyan perspectives to address the current injustices and possible future challenges that face the Church and society. According to Kumalo, the church over the last century has oscillated between several responses towards the public space. The church has moved in no particular order, between critical opposition, intensive resistance, uncritical acceptance, mediatory role, critical solidarity, and critical distance. While his analysis is premised on the South African historical context, the application of these stances can be extrapolated into many other spaces beyond the political space.

Forster offers both critique and perspective on the MCSA’s public role. On the one hand, the MCSA has a rich legacy of engagement in the public space and addressing public issues. On the other, Forster observes that the MCSA bears the risk of being a state church. What is the implication of such a pointed critique? The Church can become too close to power in a manner that blinds them to the greater responsibility of theological imagination. I want to suggest that in several ways, our theological discernment could be at risk. Forster makes a case that the church has the enormous responsibility of shaping public discourse through a clear articulation of its public theology.

To be fair to the MCSA, a lot of its public theology is visible in its mission imperatives and its historical record of conference resolutions, notable of this commitment is the MCSA Obedience’81 statement, the Journey to The New Land, and the two Mission Congresses. Each of these movements was an expression of the MCSA’s desire to be authentic and responsive to its context of ministry. The distance between the declared intents and the reality on the ground might differ.

Noting these critical moments, I want to argue that *little work has been done in the MCSA to articulate positions on the economy of the countries in which it exists*. I also want to argue that sometimes, most Methodist people in the MCSA do their political and economic analysis by deference to their political affiliation. There is by and large a wholesome acceptance of one’s political party economic position. The danger with limiting the Church to such a default status is that we can be seduced to uncritically accepting the status quo. With this legacy and reservations in mind, I now highlight some Wesleyan insights and map out the levels of our responses as a church.

1.4.1 A Wesleyan perspective and African values

The discussion thus far has outlined key issues and set a theological basis for dealing with the social and economic injustices of our context. I now conclude by offering a Wesleyan and African perspectives on these issues.

Inclinations toward liberation theology. As a point of departure, it is important to recognise that the theological discourse of the Church in Southern Africa (perhaps Africa as a whole) has been largely shaped by liberation theology and black theology. Mainly, this is because of the continent’s colonial history. Liberation theology is rooted in a commitment to the poor. This commitment is a critical posture for the church during a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of this commitment, we need to translate into the current context three basic premises of liberation theology: (i) that there is something wrong with the way that society is structured,
and (ii) that unjust institutions cause much suffering among people, (iii) that concentrated land ownership lies at the heart of social injustice.

One of the greatest gifts of liberation theology and hermeneutics is its emphasis on reformulating a theology in the interest of the poor and marginalised. Such a theology shows more respect and concern for people than for the neatness of system and scientific theory. Rather, it identifies the Christian faith as the implicit worldview that motivates Christians toward faithful commitments of solidarity with the oppressed, not as a set of abstract theological claims. Drawing from liberation theology and Wesleyan emphases, Maddox identifies the following as key ingredients for critical theological reflection for a new society:

- A theology that interweaves biblical and historical studies integrally with theological reflection – unified
- A holistic theology – integrating orthodoxy and orthopraxy – doctrinal and ethical reflection fused into one experience. Such a theology rejects the dichotomy between spirituality and justice creating a constant dialectical connection between what we believe and what we do.
- A theology that affirms the primacy of praxis and refuses to be consumed with abstract issues and theoretical precision, neglecting the praxis-related tasks that authentic theory is meant to serve.
- A theology that is embedded in a community of faith and is truly practical theological and inherently transformative.
- A theology that deeply contextual embracing all the social and political dimensions of the Christian life. Along the MCSA timeline, there are moments when varying degrees this ethos was explicit and there is a need to re-invoke such an emphasis.

Salvation and the emphasis on social holiness. The purpose of the Methodist movement was to ‘spread scriptural holiness throughout the land’. Wesley once claimed that there was no holiness but social holiness. The original context of the saying was concerning the necessity for Christian fellowship. Wesley was countering a privatised notion of Christian faith. One cannot go to heaven alone, but one needs friends. It is within the Christian community that the holiness of life is to be realized. Today social holiness needs to be extended beyond ecclesial koinonia. It is within the socio-economic and political community that holiness of life is to be realized. As part of our social analysis, we need to find ways through which our theological ethics can turn tables of extravagance and exclusion into places of economic fellowship, communion, and fraternity.

Linked to this understanding in the need to constantly stretch our conversion on salvation and sanctification beyond the personal to structural realities of power relations, domination, greed, and violence that dominates our public discourse. Wesley’s horizon of holiness was the whole world, created and recreated. The failure of the Methodist holiness project was ultimately the failure of the Methodists to stand in radical solidarity with the poor. Also, Wesley’s anthropology was essentially relational and holistic and provided a basis for his commitment to human rights, spurring us towards a form of radical social and economic transformation. Social holiness will require that we take scriptural holiness as a worth worthy Methodist principle. Such a principle will give us the hermeneutics tools for reading scripture and theology from a new socio-political perspective. It is possible to read scripture in a way that rattles the powers principalities and powers of racism, poverty, nationalism, ethnocentrism, and systemic violence?

African values and the economy. I want to conclude this discussion by making an invitation to African values. one of the things that Covid-19 did was to remind us of the value of human life and our need to live in relationships. Human relationships are central to both African spirituality and philosophy. Is it possible to invoke the wisdom, practices, and values that is inherent in African humanism concepts on such as Ubuntu, Ujamaa, Umoja, Weku and Botho. The values that underpin these concepts include unity, self-determination, creativity, cooperation, caring, solidarity, connectedness and respect. All these concepts provide an integrative framework for understanding African personhood, connectedness and mutual flourishing in a community. Translated into leadership and development framework they promise a broadened perspective on community and consensus building, responsible

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24 Runyon.
citizenry and creating life-giving and sustainable systems. Ntibagirirwa believes that translated into practical public and business responses, they promise to accelerate Africa’s renewal and advancement and create an ubuntu-based economy.

**Ethic of love and grace.** Key to Methodist theology and the epistemological premises of African spirituality is an ethic of love, connectedness, community, solidarity and belonging. We call it grace: the power of God to pardon and empower the people of God to live fully into the promise of perfect love. Further exploration of the connection between the Wesleyan spirit of grace and the African cosmology of community might be a helpful bridge toward a more humane conversation about social and economic justice. Maybe grace and love and ubuntu are the keys to unlocking to effects of the pandemic.

### 1.4.2 Shaping Our Responses

The last question is how do we craft an effective church response to the pandemic and subsequent economic realities? Firstly, we must recognise that the task is multi-layered and multi-levelled. The basis of such a response would be a firm conviction by leadership at all levels of our church structures that this is a timely agenda for the church to bring to the forefront of its mission and healing response to the world.

It is worth noting here that as Outler points out, the Methodist theological perspective is its very nature holistic, pragmatic, orthodox, generously ecumenical and deeply embodied in the tradition. Put differently, Wesley’s theological activity was communal, occasional and contextual. As such the shape of our responses should be shaped by our understanding of our distinctive theology of grace as well as the theological and biblical principles outlined in the preceding sections.

Conradie summarizes the churches’ response to the six manifestations of the church in the world:

(i) the ‘church’ as the individual people that forms the local congregation.

(ii) the church as a worshipping community with an organised liturgical of life and ability to think theologically and engage society.

(iii) the church as a denomination that has particular structures and resources to speak to society and governments.

(iv) the church as an ecumenical structure that involves partnerships with different churches and international organisations.

(v) the church and its expression through Para-church organisations; and

(vi) the church as God’s people living as the church that speaks for climate justice in their daily lives.

May I dare say, as I alluded in my introduction, that before the MCSA embarks on its role in the public space it is critical for the church to navigate what does it mean to uphold the Christian economic values. Along with that, it is also critical to investigate financial models that will assist the church to strengthen its commitment to economic justice within the church and beyond. At every level of our response, we need to be guided by a contextually attuned theological imagination as well as the values of economic justice. At an individual level, it means adopting practices and values that exhibit a commitment to justice and the common good. At a policy level, we are called to promote equity that can boost social cohesion, reduce unemployment, and promote access to health and education. In particular instances, it will mean challenging systemic and embedded power imbalances that cause and sustain inequity including government. This is a life of advocacy at every level of society.

### 1.5 CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the social and economic effects of COVID-19 in light of the pre-existing systemic challenges in southern Africa. It argues that there is enough biblical and theological basis for the church to act as a responsible and active public citizen that addresses the social, economic and political issues of the day. It is perhaps possible to create a future in which everyone can find a space in the boat and lend all of God’s children to a safe harbour.

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