

## **Message to the Methodist People**

The 128th Conference of the MCSA, meeting around the invitation “Being Together with God’s Creation,” at Randburg in 2017, celebrating the the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation and 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Methodist witness in Southern Africa hears “the Spirit of God whispering to the People Called Methodist” that at this time we are called to: reaffirm God’s dream and vision, reshape our being, renew our ordained Ministry, and refocus our mission; for the revitalising of our soul, soil and society.

## **Reaffirming God’s Dream and Vision**

We affirm that we, the Methodist People, are part of the Church of Christ, “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.”

We affirm our Wesleyan Connexionality as an expression of unity, of oneness, ‘I am because you are’.

We affirm that we hold our every dream, vision, work, aspiration and material resource in common, as guided by our Creator. None of these are the possession of any person or group of persons, but our common God given gifts.

We affirm God’s mission (*missio Dei*) which is expressed through God’s own self extension, reaching out to creation (*extensio Dei*), as well as through Jesus’ self-emptying (*kenosis*). We, the Methodist People, participate in this mission through our personal self emptying and extending a hand to all creation.

We affirm our Christian witness in obedience to the promptings of the Spirit, as discerned personally and together.

We affirm that the Earth is our mother, who has birthed us and nurtured our breathing, moulded our growing, and given us our strength.

## **Reshape Our Being**

We confess that while we have long committed ourselves to a “one and undivided” church but this has not always lead to action.

We call the Methodist People to extend healing and transformation through the broad reinstatement of anti-bias work as an act of obedience in growing us closer together.

We confess that the slowness of our conversations around inclusivity have led to a deep discontent, rumbling to the surface in people's lives and every corner of our church.

We call the Methodist People to embrace woman, youth and children, and our Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) sisters and brothers.

We confess that our buildings, our money, our people, and the structures by which we organise ourselves, have not been used for those who 'need us most.'

We call for the structures of our church to be fluid and life giving, determined by God's mission. This finds expression in the reformation of our circuits and districts, and the revitalisation of our extension of Jesus invitation to salvation for every man, woman, and child.

We call for our annual Synods to be rediscovered as localised Mission gatherings enabling harvest.

We confess that we have not loved our mother earth or her many children as much as the comforts they could produce for us.

We call the Methodist People to embrace the vision, and cultivate an understanding, of our church as African Wesleyan Earth Keeps.

### **Renew our Ordained Ministry**

We confess that too often fear of failure, fear of condemnation by others, and some of our regulations have kept our ministers from being creative and subversive in prophetic action.

We call the Methodist People to free our Ministers to creatively invest their time in the community, by word and action.

We confess that through their action and inaction, the trust in our Ministers has eroded.

We call our Ministers to deepened accountability through their Orders' Convocations.

We confess that while we have celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ordaining Woman in Ministry last year, still they have not been fully included.

We call for the gift of our Woman in Ministry to be embraced through broad involvement in leadership positions, not for law sake, but because their involvement will bring richness to our life.

### **Refocus our Mission**

We confess that we have not been intentional enough in reaching 65% of the population of our subcontinent.

We call the Methodist People to embrace young people by initiating ministries that seek to meet their deepest needs and desires.

We confess that we have not fully understood, appreciated and included our young people.

We call the Methodist People to nurture our young people and increase the inclusion of them in leadership and decision making at every level.

We confess that the subcontinent has been “outsourcing *our* future and mortgaging future generations to the political and business elites, some of whom have shown that they have little interest in the well-being of the populace” (Quote from: Presiding Bishops Address 2017).

We call the Methodist People to reclaim our Wesleyan heritage of formal and informal modes of education;

- by investing themselves in quality Early Childhood Development and children’s ministry programmes,
- by sustainable economic empowerment initiatives among our youth,
- and by practical involvement in all local institutions of learning.

We confess our focus on the symptoms of social ills; substance abuse, public protest, violence against the other, and a deepening hopelessness.

We call on the Methodist People to seek to eradicate the root causes of social ills within their own contexts.

Finally, we give thanks for the continuing unfolding of God's grace, for even in the face of great challenges God holds us. As we have met, death has entered our meeting, and in the shock of loss, God has comforted and guided us. We commit to extending the enfolding grace of God to all creation. "To God all glory, praise, and love; be now and ever given; by saints below and saints above; the Church in Earth and heaven" (Quote from: *O, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*).