

**THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**  
**THE LAY PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO CONFERENCE 2018**

**Salutation**

Presiding Bishop; General Secretary; District Bishops; District Lay Leaders; General Presidents of Connexional Organisations, Associations, Auxiliary and Unit, Members of the Connexional and District Executives, Delegates of Conference, Distinguished Guests, All Spouses, fellow Methodists and observers, allow me, to say as you are assembled here in Maputo, the Capital City of Mozambique, I greet you all in the Name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

**1. Introduction**

In life of families, it is common practice that when a member of a family reaches home at the end of the day, the member comes across a question from the house which says, "How was your day?" I also as a family member face the same question at home. Me noting that I have to give the historical report about my day, I without delay give a blow by blow report how my day was. Practically the report I give narrates specific issues on the history how my day was. In this report, I am not giving my day's report but the overview work done by the Lay Presidency Office since the last Conference in 2017 to date, in which I cover the overview objectives set for the period under review, achievements, highlights, challenges, future plans and responses to matters referred by 2017 Conference.

**2. Observations**

Fellow Methodists before I give a blow by blow report on specific issues following the framework of information meant for your consumption, allow me to start by appreciating what I found from the contemporary history of where Conference is this year. History reveals that Vasco da Gama and his crew landed in Mozambique in 1498, which when one looks at it mathematically, the landing happened 520 years ago. The church is now on its 129<sup>th</sup> Conference where it took the Methodist Church of Southern Africa 128 years to decide to hold Conference here in Mozambique. One feels alarmed when thinking of this long overdue decision and say why it took the church so long and why now? However, one realizes some reasons why the church had never thought of holding Conference in Mozambique, but now happy that the church has taken a bold move and resolved to come to Mozambique.

This highlights the church's endeavors to go where it is needed most. This action makes one experience the spirit of over excitement to see it happening. One applauds this big achievement where the Methodist Church of Southern Africa leadership and delegates have finally resolved to conference in Mozambique in 2018 after a long time. In my view, this is history in the making. Therefore I'm of the view that everyone in his/her senses appreciates to be part of this positive and progressive history of good things that happen during his/her time zone where when God directs His church to go to those people who need the church most, the church has listened. Besides that the church has listened, I am also convinced that every Godfearing person present here is more than excited to experience the spiritual aroma of Mozambique people ever since Conference has started.

This has also given hopes that many more things like intentional putting women in leadership, eradication of fears and suspicions about implementation of Every Member Ministry will happen and soon be applauded too. What I believe is expected now from the church to achieve these things is for the church to ride any obstacles and hinderances that prohibits mission and not walk with those obstacles and hindrances.

The notion of riding and walking is borrowed from the assertion made by Warren W. Wiersbe in the book titled **Heirs of the King: Living the Beatitudes** (2007:11-17), where this author cites that sometimes people allow themselves to be governed or ruled by what they should be governing or ruling. When people allow themselves to be governed or ruled, it means becoming servants, and author refers to that walking. When they refused to be governed or ruled by things on which they have been empowered to governed or ruled, it means becoming kings, and the author refers to that as riding. The question that can be asked the church is, **Is the church riding or walking?**

This notion triggered me to make an observation about what church members sometimes do. I've learnt that church members both clergy and laity sometimes allow their fears and suspicions to govern or rule them rather than they themselves governing or ruling those things. Therefore, the church is urged to ride and stop walking. Friends let me leave observations and history to the historians, leave exciting spirit to the professional excitement-wailers as well as leave to the church to decide whether it decides to do riding or walking, but allow me to present this 22<sup>nd</sup> report of the Lay Presidency, being my fourth report to the Methodists of the six sovereign states that form our Connexion.

**3. Report Framework**

**3.1 Objectives set for the period under review**

The main two objectives that were set for the period after rise of Conference in 2017 to 31 August 2018 were: Firstly to motivate the church at all levels to promote involvement of laity in various ministries working in

partnership with clergy which could be the starting point of what the Presiding Bishop gave as a marching order in last years` Conference when he said, "Being Together with God`s Creation". I believe it tallies well with the space created by 2016 Mission Congress` statement of "Breaking Barriers Igniting Mission" so that the Church`s vision on Christ-healed Africa for the healing of nations can be experienced, starting with healing divisions that encroach the church. Secondly to empower laity to understand and implement the strategies that can suitable make mission in the church and community be realized and achieved.

### **3.2 Lay Presidency Office work responsibilities**

This Office following the guidelines mentioned in the Book of Order paragraphs 5.8.2 and 5.8.3 of the MCSA carried its responsibilities under the following framework:

#### **3.2.1 Representation of the Church**

**(a)** This Office represented the church at the following activities: inductions of Bishops of Natal Coastal, Grahamstown and Kimberly Namibia & Bloemfontein Districts respectively; inductions of the General Presidents of the Women`s Manyano and Local Preachers Association (LPA); Youth Consultation with the Connexional Leadership; funeral of the Ex-President of Local Preachers Association of Clarkebury District; Peter Storey Lecture; Graduation at Seth Mokitimi Memorial Seminary; celebration of 20 years of LPA of Natal West District in mission, Natal West Synod, the Ministers Wives Indaba and Cape of Good Hope Evangelical Crusade.

**(b)** This Office as per mandate and delegated duties attended meetings of all Connexional Committees in which it is a member including attending the Governing Council Executive and Governing Council meetings at the Section 21 Institution, Seth Mokitimi Memorial Seminary.

#### **3.2.2 Visit Districts and Circuits**

This Office has been able to visit the Connexional Local Preachers` Associations (LPA) Triennial, Natal West District LPA Convention, Cape of Good Hope District Evangelical Crusade, Clarkebury, Highveld and Swaziland Districts and Natal West District Music Association.

The focus of the visits was to motivate attendees on the value of the Local Preachers Association in mission, the history and objectives of the evangelical crusade, the implementation of Discipline Respect Discernment (DRD) and Every Member Ministry (EMM) models respectively as tools to be used in pursuance of God`s mission and conducting training and motivational workshops to some circuits on the Gift of Giving and Its importance as well as encouraging church structures to involve laity in different ministries and discussions on pertinent issues that have either positive or negative impact in mission.

#### **3.2.3 Mission Project**

Conversations with relevant structures about invigoration and implementation of the Every Member Ministry in societies, circuits and districts as a project selected by this office have taken place and is work in progress.

### **4. Achievements**

When this office motivated Methodists around the Connexion about the advice of oneness and putting women in leadership, this office received optimistic views that Methodists have heard the advice and are working hard towards achieving this ideal. In their views, Methodists believe that the church should take one step at a time, however, this church should never be held in ransom by fears of unknown which are experienced by a minority within the church`s ranks.

### **5. Highlights**

This Office facilitated a highly successful Lay Leaders Consultation which was hosted at Central District. In this Consultation District Lay Leaders interrogated issues that were raised by the Presiding Bishop in his Conference 2017 address. The kind of discussion that took place at the Consultation helped many District Lay Leaders. Nine out of twelve districts have been able to follow in their space these issues that were elevated from the Presiding Bishop`s address. This assertion has been made out of what have been cited in the District Lay Leaders` reports. The increase in receiving invitations from circuits, Organisations and Associations who need guidance and longs to learn more about DRD, EMM and the Gift of Giving and its importance has been one of the highlights in this office. few. The balance of male-female leadership in the church demonstrated by having six (6) female District Lay Leaders and six (6) male District Lay Leaders.

### **6. Challenges**

The church is facing what I call the undying subcutaneous "Segregato-viral syndrome". Segregato is a concept built from the word segregation; viral comes from virus while syndrome refers to a group of. In the eyes of some members who do not have inside knowledge about why certain things are done the way they are done, see the church promoting segregation while on the other hand it talks unity or oneness. This challenge has also been observed when two circuits in the same geographic area are called to unite and form one circuit, they use all tactics to delay the unification or clergy and laity find themselves doing things in segregation rather than promoting unity spoken about by Jesus in John chapter 17. This kind of syndrome in my view affects Societies,

Circuits and Districts. It would be helpful for the church to initiate research on the root-causes of this and find treatment regimen for it. This Office found lack of commitment among some Districts and Circuits to introduce the concept of implementation of Every Member Ministry model among their congregants as a challenge. Motivating for and selling the strategies of An Absolute Anger Debriefing Programme (AADP) to be embraced and implemented in circuits.

### **7. Matter referred by Conference**

The sovereign states of our Connexion historically have been the victims of a patriarchal system whose citizens neither challenged nor spoke about it in the past. They never challenged it freely in the corridors of society and of the church, because it was part of how they were socialized to accept it or elevate and grace it as a norm to live with. The approach of discussing about it openly as laity and clergy alike has brought some transformation and change of heart in many Methodist people.

Methodist people of these sovereign states of our Connexion have since realized that this is an anomaly and felt to start use their local prophetic voices in the corridors of the church, and spiritually advised the church to talk about women empowerment as a way of creating space to work out a mechanism to untangle the patriarchal system that prohibits capable women from being given space in leadership role at different levels of leadership in the church. One wishes to thank those societies, circuits, districts who took the advice of addressing this matter with all sensitivity it deserves. Districts, circuits and societies have seriously started to intentionally elect females in leadership in the structures of the church like electing them as stewards, as presidents for mission groups, as lay leaders just to mention a few. This has happened as a results of a collective motivation efforts done by clergy and laity alike.

### **8. District Lay Leaders' feedback**

District Lay Leaders of districts like Cape of Good Hope, Central, Clarkebury, Grahamstown, Highveld & Swaziland, KNB, Natal Coastal, Limpopo and Queenstown reported on their achievements, highlights and challenges about workshops relating to numerous issues.

Glaring achievements and activities performed in Districts among which were Circuit financial management, revival of classes, work relations, teamwork and training on magnifying women in leadership. Establishment of mission fora, good yields on fundraising, leadership training, reduction of conflicts, youth empowerment, circuits sharing of best practices, career guidance for the youth, starting bursary funds for the youth, providing sanitary towels, children's indaba, teaching on new stationing procedure, Health Related issues and celebration of heritage.

The challenges faced by Districts among others are lack of commitment, lack of knowledge and understanding of roles which lead to conflicts in some circuits, leadership is in the small fraction which is active in the church, struggle to place missional agents in circuits due to insufficient financial resources, lack of co-operation between clergy and laity, lay leadership being viewed with suspicion by many Ministers, low percent of youth leadership in circuits despite the Presiding Bishop's declaration that 2018 as the year of youth. These challenges have been found to be holding mission in ransom.

### **9. Future plans**

This Office plans to continue work with the units and structures that were cited by Conference to assist with ensuring that implementation of Every Member Ministry model happens in the church. This will continue to be work in progress and hoping to see it gaining momentum through continuous motivation with the full assistance of Districts. Planning to motivate the relevant unit to explore the possibility of pursuing AADP mentioned above under challenges in paragraph 6.

This Office plans to encourage Districts and circuits to embark on the programme of mentorship for new leaders who have been elected or appointed to start doing what they have been elected or appointed to do.

In dealing with the aspect of oneness, this office plans to encourage District Lay Leaders to conduct situational analysis in their Districts and find facts and causative-effects of the subcutaneous segregato-viral syndrome that inhibits circuits' leadership from working as one in a common mission and recommend the contextual treatment regimen for this syndrome.

### **10. Conclusion**

In conclusion, on a personal note, I would like to thank you fellow Methodists and appreciate the privilege you have given me to take this second term ministry in laity leadership in collaboration with all Methodist people. I therefore invite each Methodist to ask him-/herself the question, "Am I walking or riding". I hope each Methodist's answer will fit the mandate each one was given by God from conception and adulthood phase.

Shalom

J Mabhalane Nkosi