

## MESSAGE TO THE METHODIST PEOPLE

### CONFERENCE 2018

The 129th annual Conference of the MCSA, meeting around the invitation 'Shaping Tomorrow – Today,' at Maputo in 2018, celebrating this historic first gathering of Conference in Mozambique hears "the Spirit of God Whispering to the People Called Methodist" that the future is not "a destination of time passing, but rather a horizon of the exploration of new possibilities."

Together we affirm the beliefs we hold, acknowledge the challenges our church and the world face, and offer for discussion at every level of our Church the commitments of the Conference.

We believe...

We believe that God has brought the MCSA to a Kairos moment, not a moment that passes quickly but a length of time. A time of reimagining our church as God sees us, trusting that each one of us finds ourselves wherever God has placed us, "for such a time as this."

We believe the Methodist Movement was born from the margins, embracing and taking seriously the 'other'. Women, children, people with disability, the LGBTQIA+ community: the excluded; God is a God of the margins, calling slaves out of Egypt to be the people of God and calling us from lives of sin.

We believe that our church is shaped by God to be a 'Connexion, against all odds.' This is not by accident or because of need, but rather because the Triune God expresses unity even within Godself. Our existence is bound to one another, "estamos juntos" (We are together -Portuguese).

We believe children are a central part of the Family of God, not a gift for the future but our very life blood. Children are able to contribute to the life of the church in every way. The Psalms reminds us that God establishes a stronghold through the praises of children.

We acknowledge...

We acknowledge that we like to be comfortable and like be on the 'inside'. This has meant that too often the 'other' has been unheard or excluded, and left at the margins.

We acknowledge that our world is overwhelmed by abuse, pain, and violence, all too often at the hands of those closest to us.

We acknowledge that our world and church is damaged by misinformation and half-baked truths.

We acknowledge with contrite hearts that South Africa has dominated the Connexional agenda and conversations.

We acknowledge the temptation to treat our finance and property as the possession of 'this or that' Society and Circuit.

We acknowledge that we have excluded our children from Holy Communion when it is our rule that they be included.

We acknowledge that we have not created spaces that are welcoming for our children in services, but put our comfort and convenience above their place in the church.

We acknowledge that we have not worked enough to celebrate our common humanity and restore human dignity. If we are serious about restoring dignity it will mean amplifying the 'other's' voice.

We acknowledge that technology, artificial intelligence, and autonomous systems could be used to harm, and it is our responsibility to ensure that these shape the future for the better.

We acknowledge that peace, shalom, is a “divine gift and a product of the efforts of all of us.”

**Therefore, we acknowledge that God is shaping our Church; God is shaping our lives; God is shaping our world; for us to be shaped from that which is, into that which God sees, it will take decisive action and a rich imagination from all of us.**

We commit ourselves...

We commit ourselves to realising this Kairos moment where God has placed us.

We commit ourselves to responding to the call of the Gospel to go to margin to find the 'other' and draw them to the centre.

We commit ourselves to continually reimagine our boundaries for mission.

We commit ourselves to be responsible and accountable in our use of all current and future social media and technology platforms.

We commit ourselves to reimagine the use of property, land, money, and our people for the benefit of all.

We commit ourselves as church leaders to learn, and to intentionally provide money, for ministry to children.

We commit ourselves to including youth and children in decision making and leadership.

We commit ourselves to intentionally advance the role of women in leadership.

We commit ourselves to opening up Youth Month to include all youth and children, beyond the Wesley Guild, and allowing them to reimagine how to do Youth Month.

We commit ourselves to standing against violence in every form.

**People called Methodist, the time is now! Humbly but boldly reimagine our church. Shape an experience of life that rebels against the darkness and death of the world to embrace the light of Christ. “Shaping tomorrow-today is possible through grace and love.”**