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**MCSA ECUMENICAL AFFAIRS UNIT NEWSLETTER # 4 –**

**April 2021**

**TOWARD IMPLEMENTING:**

**Church Unity  
Ecumenical Diakonia  
African Church Co-operation**

*Greetings in the name of our Triune God: Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer*

**GOOD NEWS: ECUMENICAL BIRTHING IN THE WESTERN CAPE**



**A message from Bishop Yvette Moses, Cape of Good Hope Synod (17/04/2021)**  
*“This is where I am today at the seminal step in revitalizing the Western Cape Council of Churches. A gathering of all member churches as we discuss autonomy / or extension of SACC. Rev Molo is here talking with us as we strategise around this. Moira and Sikawu also part of it. I am sure she will let you know more but I thought I would share it with you for Ecumenical matters.”*



<b>UNPACKING ECUMENICAL DIAKONIA</b>
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In the last newsletter we looked at the core aspect of **Church Unity** with special reference to the work the **Church Unity Commission** and the strides achieved in agreements around **Baptism; Eucharist and Ministry**, recognising that we still have a way to go to reach agreement on episcopate.

At a devotion of 7 April<sup>1</sup> 2021 our **Presiding Bishop Purity Malinga** said that the role of the MCSA Ecumenical Affairs Unit “*Helps the office of the Presiding Bishop and Church to draw our attention to that which needs our participation and involvement together with other faith groups; activists and organisations that seek to bring about healing, transformation, justice and Human Rights*”<sup>2</sup>The church will then through its ecclesial structures discern how and who should action this further.

Most times Justice and Peace issues emanate from the **practise of Ecumenical Diakonia** locally and globally, which the MCSA Ecumenical Affairs Unit has adopted as one of its three-fold approach to working toward a differentiated ecclesial unifying process. The inspiration for this this concept **and practise of Ecumenical Diakonia** through the writings of World Council of Churches of Isobel Phiri, Deputy General Secretary and Dr Agnes Abuom, moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches who unpacked this concept in the following way:

Dr Agnes Abuom, says: ***Ecumenical Diakonia is an integral part of the mission of the church. It is about transformation of lives and working to change a long history of asymmetrical power relationships between humanitarian actors. Hence at the formation of the WCC in 1948, it was a major pillar that addressed humanitarian needs in the aftermath of conflict. The International Convention on Human Rights was also established in 1948. The issue of faith and rights as informing each other, not least in the context of the aftermath of the Second World War and the continuing challenges to human dignity. Declining respect for human rights must force Faith Based Organizations to address this issue.***” [wcc-ecumenical-diakonia-study-document.pdf](http://wcc-ecumenical-diakonia-study-document.pdf) (kirken.no)

Professor Isobel Phiri, at the 2018 AACC Assembly, held in Kigali, Rwanda, passionately **urged us not to see Ecumenism and Diakonia as mutually exclusive**. This would be a mistake. Referring to the working WCC document “*Called to Transformative Action: **The Ecumenical Diakonia - Study Guide | World Council of Churches** is a must read*”. Prof Phiri says that ED “*works on the premise that faith and human rights are not mutually exclusive – indeed quite the opposite. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” says Jesus Christ (John 10:10). A faith-based approach means that, through Diakonia, the Church has a distinctive, authentic and unique voice in dialogue with civil society actors.*

The second strongest point of the working document *Called to Transformative Action: The Ecumenical Diakonia is respect for the dignity of every woman and man is central to a Christian understanding of life in all its fullness. A holistic approach, including justice on grounds of gender, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation is necessary. In this Ecumenical Diakonia Document,<sup>3</sup> the authors “identify nine theological and biblical affirmations. one of which is **that Ecumenical Diakonia is Global Diakonia and is for all people and all of Creation.**” (The MCSA has often expressed its mind on Environmental Justice e.g., Resolution from Yearbook 2012, 91: Environmental Care and many other related resolutions)*

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<sup>1</sup> 7 April 2021 DRC/SA SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT meeting at the MCO, JOHANNESBURG.

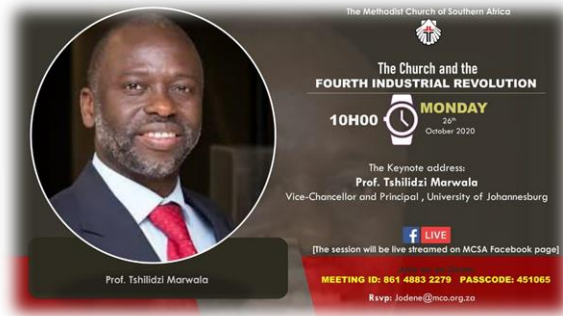
<sup>2</sup> “..” is to bring to the attention of the church any justice and unity issues which emerge from encounters with our ecumenical and interfaith household.

<sup>3</sup> . I find this point, says Phiri, which connects Diakonia to the theme of this assembly, well-articulated in the Ecumenical Diakonia document of 2002 written by Chris Fergusson and Ofelia Ortega

In the MCSA, in simple terms this means that the two tracks of our *raison-detre* is Mission and Unity; the two units are working closer together and every Synod Ecumenical Secretary is expected to be part of the Synod Mission Unit Structure as an expression of Ecumenical Diakonia.

**Emanating from ecumenical encounters** some snippets of how the MCSA has embraced expressions of ecumenical diakonia

- **Fourth Industrial Revolution and the church** (Resolution 2.33, p90 Yearbook 2019) assisting Rev Lauren Matthews with the editing and publishing of a book based on the **MCSA J&S Webinar presentations held on 26 October 2020**, which will become a resource primarily to the MCSA and ecumenical community



- **Xenophobia** with special emphasis on working with churches and religious communities in **the country of origin**, through the Kairos DR Congo programme. This work is mainly done under the canopy of the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council (KZNCC), Anti-Xenophobic programme. We need to note that the MCSA has a number of resolutions related to overcoming Xenophobia for example Yearbook 2016 Resolution 2.20 and others.
- Information about **Cabo Delgado** comes from on the ground activists through inter-religious and church agencies. Under the leadership of the **MCSA Presiding Bishop Purity Malinga**, a **special Crisis team** is being established by the Mission Unit's Justice & Service desk

“According to Bishop Dinis Matsolo of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Mozambique Synod, the general situation in the country is horrific following violent attacks by a group known as Al-Shabaab (no links with the Somali-based al-Qaeda affiliate by the same name)” WCC article



**Bishop Denis Matsolo, Mozambique Synod and Chairperson of The Ecumenical Affairs Unit Advisory Board assessing the situation in Cabo Delgado Province for further action by the MCSA and ecumenical agencies - 21<sup>st</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2021**

- MCSA EA Unit Director has recently been asked to be the **Interfaith advisor to the African Centre for the Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)**. It is hoped that **in every African state religious leaders will be trained** and become practitioners of peace-making & peacebuilding specialising in **early warning conflict identification systems**.
- Communicating **the Call for Ban on Single Use Plastics** to Councils of Churches throughout Africa. Its success remains to be seen. (Resolution 3, p 94; MCSA Yearbook 2010)
- **Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems** with special reference to the **‘Killer Robots Campaign** (Resolution 2.4, p108, Yearbook 2020)’. This work is done in collaboration with World Council of Churches; Institute of Church and Society (Christian Council of Nigeria) and

the African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL), Religions for Peace. Through the office of the **MCSA Presiding Bishop, governments of five countries** within our Connexion have been **lobbied** to follow the **example of Namibia** to call for the banning of the production of Killer Robots. So far only the South African Government has responded.



Follow the [Campaign To Stop Killer Robots; Killer Robots | Human Rights Watch](https://www.hrw.org/topic/arms/killer-robots)  
<https://www.hrw.org/topic/arms/killer-robots>



There is also much work done through our **Ecumenical Affairs Synod Secretaries** in the area of Ecumenical Diakonia, these are reflected in their reports to their respective annual Synod gatherings.

### **SOCIAL COHESION FROM WHERE & TO WHERE: THE ROLE OF CHURCH???**



**KwaZulu Natal Church Leaders Group and KwaZulu Natal Christian Council explore and evaluate what Social Cohesion is and should be theologically and practically. A smaller group is tasked to develop a theological vision of the goal of social cohesion and its theological equivalence.**



**An update was given by Bishop Rubin Phillip who is the co-chair of the KZN Provincial Governments council on Social Cohesion. 26/04/2021**

LET US PRAY FOR HARMONY, A JUST PEACE AND UNITY



Bishop Yvette Moses

***Psalm 133: The Blessedness of Unity***

***<sup>1</sup> How very good and pleasant it is  
when kindred live together in unity!***

***<sup>2</sup> It is like the precious oil on the head,  
running down upon the beard,  
on the beard of Aaron,  
running down over the collar of his  
robes.***

***<sup>3</sup> It is like the dew of Hermon,  
which falls on the mountains of Zion.  
For there the LORD ordained his  
blessing,  
life forevermore.***

*Shalom*

*Rev Mike Vorster*

*MCSA Director of Ecumenical Affairs Unit*

*27/04/2021*