

CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

12 July 2013

by SoxLeleki

To the Presiding Bishop, Executive Secretary, Bishops present, Leaders of manyano's and departments, distinguished guests, members of this consultation, allow me, your servant to greet you all this afternoon in the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The BMC executive takes this opportunity to welcome the 38th BMC consultation here at the City of Tshwane. This is the Capital city of the Republic of South Africa. It is a place of rich diverse cultures. Much has already said about this district and this beautiful city.

The BMC is delighted by the overwhelming support given to our Presiding Bishop on his elections for the second term as the Chief spiritual leader of our church. Our Zikhali is indeed a seasoned Christian leader and he has managed to steer our connexion along the correct path. Thank you Butsolo bentonga for leading us well.

We also wish to applaud the elections of Revs Matyhumza and Vorster in the Queenstown and Natal Coastal Districts respectively.

Mandela's critical health condition has continued to be a cause for concern to many people around the world. As the BMC sitting here at Tshwane we wish to add our voice in support and prayers for the Madiba family.

The Western Cape "poo protest" is the latest is the latest indication yet that not all is well in our country.

The theme of our consultation this year says, "Together with Christ in a Life-changing Economy. The passage is about the story of a resurrected Jesus Christ appearing to his disciples to display a life-changing economy. Seven of the disciples were together and in their unity Jesus joined them early in the morning. The disciples went back to their original trade of fishing because they needed to be fed. Hunger comes to everyone even a disciple of Jesus! The story of Jesus together with his disciples in this incident is about empowering them for a life-changing economy.(John 20:2)

We thank God who with his un-measurable love which has guided us through these past five years. The Lord has been good to us through difficult, trying and challenging times. Believe youme, we have achieved a lot in the past five years and we are grateful to God for all the good and positive achievements accomplished by this mighty movement within the Methodist Church of Southern Africa. Yes there are those areas in which we did not do so well, what is important about the latter is that we have tried and failed but we did not fail to try.

To have been colonized is a fate with long lasting and unfair results especially after democracy had been achieved. The status of the colonized people, such as we were, has a danger of

failing to recognize our God-given abilities and talents. The fierce struggle we have to wage and win before we can claim to be free is to discover the African mirror through which we can see ourselves and not use the ones given to us by our colonizers when they were in the land grabbing business.

The contradiction between theocracy and democracy could contribute to the belief that the church is irrelevant and as such it should be on the periphery when people talk of issues of democratic principles.

We can never forget the voices of scores of liberation veterans whose courageous and selfless battle against apartheid legacy exacted high price in the form of being sidelined and sometimes rendered irrelevant. One of the down sides of the Western theology through which we are to base our theological training is that it refuses us an opportunity to acknowledge the truth of knowing that the Western theology is geared toward answering questions asked by the white people in dealing with problems encountered by them as white people in Africa. There is a hidden assumption that there is what called "pure theology" (as practiced by Western academics) and "contextual theology" (theology mixed with politics).

Black people still struggle to attain a liberating language to express our experiences, in fact we make use of the foreign methods to solve our existential problems. The good living example of a black person trying to contextualize his understanding of the Bible is in the book of Acts Chapter 8 verse 34. This remains a relevant question to ask even today "Of whom is this man writing here, of himself or of someone else?"

It is when we begin asking questions, that we see the limitation of this much accepted theology handed down to us from one generation to another.

There is no longer any doubt that South Africa is slowly, steadily and surely becoming a police state in front of our eyes as the church. The question how can we be proactive in preventing unfortunate incidence like Marikana and others.

Bonhoeffer teaches us that you cannot solve the problems and answer the questions that arise in places and times other than your own.

If we are going to do justice in our understanding of why are we not seeing significant progress economically as black people in particular, we must see the naked truth of brutality of colonialism. We still reap the systematic under development of black people by white colonizers in all spheres of society including economic depression. One other important aspect was the subtle inculcation of self-hate and self-depreciation of the black people. Black people seem to admire and adore white people more than themselves. We like it when we are referred to as moderates and reasonable people. The doctrine of Christian Perfection by John Wesley compels us to work hard toward perfecting who we are.

It is not hard to see that in many African countries freedom is enjoyed by elite minority mainly those in power and their friends. Those in power continue to manipulate the poor especially those illiterate into believing that all is well in their countries.

We have been thrown into the 21st century and have moved from our family bases, where everybody was around us and our children were growing up among their nieces and nephews and were getting the care and guidance from up grand-parents. This had led to situation where we have a new generation of children who do not speak their mother tongue and hardly ever see their relatives. Tomorrow's economic leaders will be today's children or youth whose parents have raised them with economic skills.

The leadership development in South Africa is influenced by three things viz skin colour, accent and power dynamics. It is a known factor that more often than not people who trained others are those of economic and cultural dominance. One of the main factors is the belief that black people are inherently less capable and cannot be on the same level as their white counterparts. A growing issues of concern in South Africa is to develop an authentic black leadership programmes aimed at empowering those given responsibility to lead, doing so with confidence and comfort of knowing that there is nothing wrong with being black and beautiful in South Africa.

Being black is not a matter of pigmentation but being black is reflection of a mental attitude. As black people we must challenge all forces that seek to want to use our blackness as a stamp that marks us out as subservient beings. Black people should know that they are not appendages to white society and cultures.

Since we took over five years ago, we put a special emphasis on what we believe to be the core business of this august movement and that is Transformation, Leadership Development and Unity. The word "transformation" has become a fashionable word. The truth of the matter is that transformation does not come by merely talking about it. When does transformation come? Transformation comes when we believe in our vision and live the mission of God (Missio Dei)

More often than not the process of transformation hurts because it shakes the very traditional foundations of our institutions. It can bring about uncertainties, anxieties and lack of balance because it is about something new. For people called Christians, their understanding of transformation is based on their personal knowledge of the saving power of Jesus Christ.

When we are together with Christ in our transformational agenda we are then made new creatures.

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come.”

The leadership development we talk about is that one which helps us to understand what it means to be in charge or to rule, or lead, with the mass of people in mind. We may wonder, if leadership is such a strong force behind almost everything we do, why does society suffer, even in the face of good leadership? The quality of leadership and the people’s ability to recognize good leaders when they are present are important.

Life under a democratic government is more vague than others. Democracy is defined as a “government for the people by the people” but such government is actually impossible to achieve under this system. Democracy is based on which party or group has the great influence, which can mean that the group with the most money to spend on advertising will generally win. Democracy doesn’t really bring equality to the citizens, although it pretends to. In democracy there is no room for discernment.

It is a known fact that black leaders face the challenge of being able to receive negative feedback from their own colleagues despite how much one tries to satisfy their needs. Other challenge faced by black leadership is a lack of appreciation and understanding of African culture and the assumption that western culture is the right one. Black leadership must help itself to develop leadership skills in line with current times and issues.

The BMC remains the backbone of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to ensure the implementation of transformation agenda and continues to be the hope of many hopeless people in our societies, circuits and districts.

Let us remind this consultation of what programmes we committed ourselves to as this movement vizthe Grand Plan, Mandela Day, Mrabulo Business later known as Kalabashe, Transformation Agenda, BMC Rebranding Programme, The Development of our Economic Muscle, BMC Day which falls on the 14thSeptember this year and the creation of space for discernment in all activities.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the Discernment Committee for making our lives easy this time by taking the process of nominating the proposed name for the Executive Secretary position seriously. Let us be reminded once more that the BMC is not anti-white or a racist organization. In its wisdom the BMC has decided on the name of Rev. Charmaine Morgan as our candidate for the office of the Executive Secretary.

The schools this year are geared toward ensuring implementation of the great ideas we usually generate whenever we attend consultations.

This year, I am not going to lament about the life of the BMC in the districts except to say what we see in some districts leaves much to be desired. However there are those which still try very hard to hold high the flag of the movement at their district events.

In conclusion, we must remind ourselves that to make a significant contribution in a life-changing economy means that we should be prepared to work hard for the best results. We have noted with dismay that intellectual fatigue appears to have set in at our gatherings and that results to lack of robust debate and informed conversation.

A good economic justice system is extremely important to the proper functioning of any community. The economic growth and development is not going to happen unless we commit ourselves to transparent, accountable non-corrupt institutions.

It is with great sense of pleasure and privilege to announce the much anticipated visit of the Former President of the Republic of South Africa in the name of uTatauThabo Mbeki on Saturday as promised last year.

Let me end this address by quoting the words of the international saying” A bright future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams”

Shalom!