

Black Methodist Consultation  
40<sup>th</sup> Celebration Program Launch  
Cape of Good Hope District  
Bongani Circuit: Nyanga  
Trinity Methodist Church

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**Theme:** Telling our own story, shaping our future

## **Introduction**

The Rev. V. G Nyobole, ex Secretary of Conference, Bishop M. Hansrod, the district leadership of the Cape of Good hope District, Ministers present here today, Secretary General of the Black Methodist Consultation, the leadership of the BMC in this my home district, under the stewardship of its chair and all the members of our wonderful and glorious movement, I greet you all in the wonderful name of our liberator and transformer Jesus Christ.

I particularly want to greet and pay homage to the Baartman family and all those who led the birth of the BMC with him as the founding executive of our noble movement. We owe our history and character to your gallant struggles and sacrifices. I salute you

as we begin this journey because your sweat became the water through which the foundations of our movement were laid.

The emergence of this movement is derived from the courageous foundational acts displayed by Ernest Nkathazo Baartman, Andrew Losaba and Khoza Mgojo. It is no exaggeration to claim that we stand on the shoulders of giants. No one can dare challenge us when we say, we are taller today as Black Methodist, dare I say as Black people, because in the midst of an evil, immoral and unethical system, there are like them who dared to stand tall, remained resolute, dignified and declared that our skin color, our blackness, is not a curse from God. Leaders like them shouted from the top of the mountains for generations like us to hear “I am Black and I am beautiful”.

Let me take this opportunity my dear friends and fellow Methodists to welcome all of you today to this important gathering of people called Methodist, belonging to the BMC. On behalf of the leadership and the entire membership we honor you for attending this occasion. It is our privilege and honor to host you this day. We look forward to journeying with you as we look back, **telling our story**, in order to look forward with clarity of vision and act with courage as **we shape our future**.

Today serves as a launch to our program of celebrating 40 years of existence: witness, courage and triumph of God's vision for our land and continent as embodied in the movement of our people called the Black Methodist Consultation. In the midst of the euphoria of freedom, the early rush to a triumphalistic announcement of the arrival of a post racial South Africa and the heralding of the hegemonic power of neo liberalism in post 1994 South Africa, the BMC says there is a different story to be told. At a time where some of our black leaders and brothers have been co-opted into the Eurocentric culture of individualism, insatiable materialism and exceptionalism, the BMC says there is a different story to be told. We live in a time where leaders have found ways to worship the gods of money, opulence, exploitation and demagoguery, the BMC says there is a different story to be told.

It is a story of a people inspired by deep solidarity and compassion. It is a story of a people held together by bonds of love and acceptance. It is a story of a people who know that their identity is bound in the identity of the other. It is a story of a people who knew that a stranger is not a curse but a blessing from God. It is a story of a people led by leaders who knew that their calling is to serve rather than be served. It is a story inspired by a people who knew that their leaders need to be encouraged

all the time to be their best; Yet when those leaders lose their way, there were poets in the nation to correct the leaders. It is a story of a people who know the pain of exclusion and oppression, yet never lost the faith in a future where God's people will stand together judged not by the color of their skin, but the depth of their soul to love completely and unconditionally. It is a story of a people who know the power of wounded love triumphing over brute and vulgar hate. It is a story of a people who know their own weakness before God, and present themselves before that God with contrite hearts and humility without losing sight of God's love. That's the story we will continue to tell.

We choose to tell this story to ourselves by ourselves because we refuse to allow others to interpret our own history for our consumption. We are a people who can and must tell their story in their own words. Throughout the journey from Egypt to Canaan, God implores Moses to institute rituals and metaphors through which future generations are to mediate God's action in the life of the nation. These rituals enabled them to derive meaning as to who they are and who God is in their lives. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to tell our story lest we become objects of enquiry from others; where we are denigrated to be mere things

of curiosity and footnotes, explaining and justifying their civilizing and Christianizing projects in the great pages of history.

The BMC refuses to believe that we are mere objects of enquiry to satisfy the collective ego of the civilized west, who is not only the depository of goodness and virtue, but the benevolent transporter of these to a barbaric and backward Africa. We embark on this journey to affirm that we are subjects of history. We are equal citizens of the world who take their rightful place in the table of humanity with the same dignity as anyone else.

We stand tall as fellow contributors to the evolution of the human race. We do say we have our own languages, our own cultures, our own metaphors and narratives, our own heroes and heroines that can teach the world with the depth of soul what it is to be human. We know the excesses of what has been called civilization: its true expression can be called genocide, plunder, rape in both human and materialistic form. We posit the power of love and transformation, soul force rather than violence and exploitation.

Today, we have gathered to celebrate the life of the BMC as we tell the story of our founding leadership. It is a leadership that includes giants of Methodism in our connexion. It is a leadership of luminaries like Andrew Losaba, Khoza Mgojo and Ernest

Baartman. This moment will be celebrated with a public lecture on Ernest Nkathazo Baartman as the chair of the first executive of the BMC.

There is no doubt that the story of the MCSA in the last 40 years especially as it regards to Black Methodist cannot be told without a focused emphasis on Ernest Nkathazo Baartman. In the life of the BMC he and his generation were not merely pathfinders, they shaped the future of the MCSA. Ernest Baartman is a Colossus in the BMC and the MCSA. In an address delivered at Conference in 1972, three years before the launch of the BMC, he describes Black consciousness in the following way:

***“ It is the black man saying ‘NO’ to white racism in all its forms, oppression and paternalism.....No more is he going to fit into non-white portrait drawn by the white man. No more is he going to say what the white man wants to hear.....no more does the white man epitomize all that is good, just and of value. No more is the white man the black man’s yardstick to humanity. ....its the Black man saying yes to who he is in Jesus Christ.....awakens the Black man to all that he is... love himself because God loves him .. take pride in all that is his.....”***

It is in the No to white racism, prejudice and oppression that inform the formation of our movement. It is the refusal to fit into categories and comforts of the white minority that shaped the character of our movement. It is the refusal to accept whiteness as a yard stick of goodness and virtue that gave intellectual agility and depth to our movement. It is the affirmation of self in Jesus, pride in Blackness and love of self that gives soul and dignity to our glorious movement.

We tell this story and celebrate the 40 years not merely as a self congratulatory nostalgic moment but as a foundation stone to build for the future. We know whatever the journey travelled this is a moment to take stock and embrace the challenges that face us in the now; with the same clarity of vision, depth of soul, deep thinking, affirmation of pride in our blackness and embrace of love from God; so as to act courageously as we shape our future. Let the life of the BMC in the last 40 years illuminate our path and let the life of our leaders in years gone by become stars that brighten up our nights of searching as we shape a new future. God bless us all.