



**The Black Methodist Consultation**  
**Chairman's Address 2017**  
**Port Elizabeth Grahams Town District**

***Theme: Love thy neighbour: re-imagining a society of  
Justice and love***

**1. Preamble**

The Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Rev, Ziphozihle Siwa, the Bishop of the Grahamstown District, Rev Andile Mbethe, the Bishop elect of the Grahamstown District Rev, Jacob Freemantle, all the Bishops and the Bishop elects throughout the Connexion present here today, the leadership of the Black Methodist Consultation under the stewardship of our General Secretary Mr Xhanti Mhlubulwana, District Chairpersons of the BMC and your executives, the ministers present here today, members of our movement, guests and visitors I greet you all in the wonderful name of our Lord and Liberator Jesus Christ.

It is my honour and privilege to welcome all of you to this our 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Consultation of our movement, the BMC. It is wonderful to gather with all of you in this august gathering during our time. We, as the leadership of the BMC, at this time, are humbled by your faith in us that you continue to show by supporting us as we lead in the BMC on behalf of our people.

Before we proceed I believe that it is proper for us as the BMC to express our word of congratulations to our Presiding Bishop upon his election for a second term as President of the South African Council of Churches. We further want to express our congratulations to the election of the people of Limpopo of the Rev R S Mokgothu as a nominee for their next Bishop. He is a brother of ours whom we honour and commend to the guidance of God as we anticipate the decision of conference. Rev B Setshedi deserves our congratulations and prayers after the election as bishop elect of Northern Free State and Lesotho.

We are gathered today aware that it is only through the power and grace of our Lord and Liberator, Jesus Christ that we are here. It is this guiding grace that we acknowledge and invite all of us to remember the words of the Tswana Hymnal:

***Bakang Mong wa thatha yothle,***

***Mo rateng, le mmoife gothle***

***Ke mosekisi wa tiro***

***Wa tsebo le wa boitshiro***

We look back at the year, with all its challenges, possibilities and triumphs with a deep sense of gratitude and we declare:

***Repholositsoe ka mohua,***

***Ka lineo tsohle tsa hao;***

***Reko la hao le leholo***

***Le re thabisitse pelo***

We have no doubt in our minds that without the presence of God we would not be here because God indeed is our refuge and strength in times of trouble:

***Ulihlathi lethu uThixo***

***Ungamandla ethu yena***

***Ekuxakekeni konke***

***Uluncedo lweNyanisa***

## **2. Introduction**

We meet in a province of great history and contribution to the evolution of our people. The hopes and dreams of our people had to battle the stubborn inhumanity and violence of the Apartheid regime. The chants of our people for freedom in the streets of the townships of this province defied the loud noise of guns, the fragrance of hope outlasted the suffocating power of the tear gas in these streets. This province gave birth to many sons and daughters who sacrificed for the cause of the people. Eminent amongst those is a birth that took place

in Bhizana 100 years ago to Julia and Mizeni Tambo, they named him Oliver Reginald Tambo. He selflessly served the cause of our people with no regard to self and no craving for power, adulation and material gain. He is our standard bearer of leadership. It is in the hills of Middledrift that 70 years ago, Mamcethe and Mzingayi Matthew Biko, gave to the nation a beautiful mind and a fighter for black dignity in the person of Bantu Steve Biko, who 40 years ago, his 30-year young life was cut short by the murderous machinery of the Apartheid regime.

It is in a house 16 years ago, whilst the Methodist people were gathering for their second Triennial Conference under the inspired leadership of the Rev. Mvumelwana Dandala with the theme: "Throw the net on the other side" that some of us had the privilege to hear the fragile yet determined voice of a leader of our people Govan Mbeki imploring us " my children, freedom is good, freedom is sweet, freedom is beautiful, freedom allows you to do things to change the lives of our people, do not take it for granted, defend it and never lose it." It is in the stillness of our soul that if we listen carefully in the collective symphony of the people of this area we can hear the gospel-inspired voice of JC Mvusi, a President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa

The voices for freedom and transformation are ancient as they are current. This places on us a special responsibility as the current generation to continue the journey towards a world that reflects the values of our God.

### **3. The State of Countries of Our Connexion**

During our time, the peoples of our Connexion are going through a challenges that brings forth great opportunities for rediscovery and renewal.

The people of Swaziland continue to struggle against the persistent scourge of poverty and the burden of disease especially those who are in the rural villages. This reality is complicated by a political system that refuses to leave a medieval monarchic era and embrace a modern accountable democratic system. This creates a morally bankrupt reality where the elite, who are tied to the monarchy, live in opulence whilst surrounded by dehumanising poverty. The challenge of conscientizing our people for transformative activity where they can take responsibility for shaping their future remains an urgent task for all who wish for the people of Swaziland to have a different future. The MCSA is a visible presence in the life of the people

of Swaziland and our mission through education and social outreach is an important sign of what is possible.

The people of Lesotho are continuing to search for national unity and reconciliation so as to reconstruct their national life and confront the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment. As we celebrate their recent elections we are saddened by the persistent violence that is reflected in the alleged assassination of the wife to the newly elected Prime Minister, Mr Tom Thabane. As the ministry of our Church in that part of the Connexion is beginning to be on firmer grounding as we are breaking with the sad internal struggles and division of our recent past, we know that our ministry will need to be more visible and consistent.

The people of Botswana continue to inspire us with their political and economic stability. Their progress on issues of health and education are worth our admiration and gratitude to God. They bade farewell to President Ketumile Masire, one of their outstanding sons and servant for peace and development in Africa. We stand with them as they celebrate his life and thank God for his witness. There is no doubting the yearning of the Methodist people in Botswana for Methodist to play a more visible and public witness. This poses a challenge that the MCSA must respond to with creativity and wisdom.

The people of Namibia are continuing to build their country with a determination that is born in their conviction that the future will become what they make it out to be through their chosen acts of transformation. They have just mourned the loss of one of their best sons, and an icon of African liberation Andimba Toivo ya Toivo. In the midst of the mourning they move forward inspired by the life of this illustrious son of Africa. Issues of poverty are still a huge challenge for the nation. Their hope in the future is not diminished by these challenges.

South Africa is in a midst of a titanic struggle between the forces of goodness and of evil and darkness. Every headline is a flood of darkness that seeks to envelope every part of the national life and soul. The violence visited on women and children is more than a national tragedy. It is becoming endemic. Our mothers and sisters are not only unsafe in the dark night of the streets they are unsafe in their homes and bedrooms. The hands that kill them are not hands of strangers and enemies but the hands of those who call them baby, honey or sweetie. Death comes in the hands of those who are supposed to protect and nurture. We live with violence against the LGBTI people, especially in our townships, through what is called

‘corrective rape’ of our sisters who are lesbian. This happens under the veil of silence and secrecy. As if this is not enough we experience the tragedy of the killing of people with albinism under the misguided belief that their body parts have some *muti* value.

Every indicator in South African life points to a deep crisis of hope and development. Poverty is not only persisting and entrenching itself, it is actually growing. Our country is now the most unequal in the world. The economy is not only on junk status, it is in recession and not far from depression. Unemployment is reaching a crisis point as the unskilled in our society are growing by the year. Whilst this is what is confronting our people, a report published on the Times newspaper by Deloitte which claims that many executives of JSE listed companies earn up to 500 times what the employees earn, some earning R69 000. 00 a day. Even a liberal economist like Azar Jarmin is alarmed by it and shows his disgust by saying “**it is a huge problem that lies at the heart of our social and political context of massive unemployment and low income compared with the grotesque remuneration of certain individuals.**” Our education system is failing our young as almost 70% of those who register for grade 1 will be lost to the system when they get to grade 12.

The project of national reconciliation especially where it is concerned to race is being challenged by the outburst of racism that manifest itself in places like Spur restaurants or Facebook posts.

The political elite are becoming more indifferent to the realities of the ordinary people of our country. Those who govern us are an elite which is becoming more as arrogant, unresponsive and unaccountable. There is a growing sense that our country is becoming nothing more than a private fiefdom for self-enrichment for those who wield political power and have access to the public purse. There is no denying that governance has been mortgaged to the highest bidder and the state and the organisations we once revered are controlled by financial interests that do not have the interests of our people at heart. The state is no more in the hands of those who have been elected but those who have bought it. The work done by the SACC through the unburdening panel is instructive as it is scary. For the SACC to call a democratic country a mafia state is a reflection of a deep national crisis.

#### **4. The Call to Action**

The question before our peoples is not how bad things are in our respective countries but rather how deep is our faith in God and what God has promised. Do we have a vision deep enough to see further than the blinding fog of the moment? Do we have a strong enough resolve to act consistently in ways that contradict the stifling darkness in the present? Do we have a courageous hope that risks safety, resources and reputation in the pursuit of the noble vision of God for our people?

The BMC is born of a people who believe in a God who is responsive to the cries and pains of the people and comes down and establish a people, a church, and a movement for the liberation of his people. It is that God that was heard in a burning bush declaring: ***“I have heard the cries of my people; I have seen their affliction and now I have come down to rescue them.....tell Pharaoh to let my people go” Exodus 3***

The BMC firmly believes that a salvation doctrine that does not engage the social setting and the structural sin that is pervasive and dehumanising is no salvation at all but escapism that creates an illusion of heaven in the reality of hell. The BMC knows that any Spirituality that does not create a rebellion in the presence of death and does not allow its practitioners to confront such death reality with a righteously unadjusted belief of the goodness of life and the beauty of God’s vision is no spirituality at all but a false pietism that is a numbing drug that destroys the soul of the people. The BMC rejects any notion of a church that is so preoccupied with heaven in the sky that it cannot have a vision of a society infused by God’s imagination. A church of Christ is one that is spent in the world because it knows the love that God has for the world, a love that makes God give his only begotten son for that very same world. A church that has no vision of a society inspired by God is irrelevant to its people and becomes a club of self-righteous people detached from what God is doing in the world. It is with this fundamental belief that we approach our theme for 2017.

#### **5. Love Thy Neighbour: Re-imagining a Society of Justice and Love.**

The pivot of our theme is the call to re-imagine, which we have engaged in our last year’s theme. Suffice to remember that at the core of re-imagining is the call to go to the roots of something so as to remake it radically new. It is to see not only with a new set of eyes but to see something different from what it is from a given perspective.

This calls on us, as we engage our context, to go to the roots of what we call society and see how we can imagine it differently than what it is. It is a firm belief that we cannot continue to see society in the same way in the light of the tragic and hopeful paradoxes of our current realities.

At the core of this re-imagination is the question of Justice. This concept of Justice is located in the belief that it is a divine command - that is the claim that God is a just God. God loves justice and the laws of God are just. It is God's intention for the world to be ordered in a just way. God's justice demands the defence of those who are vulnerable.

If we are going to be guided by Justice, then Love must be the foundation on which we build Justice. As we have argued before, love is not emotional attachment, warm fussy feeling. Love is not some unaffected sense of being together no matter what. Love is not an unaccountable existence that does not challenge that which is wrong and wraps evil in a hug of emotions.

Love is an unconditional and radical commitment of one to the cause and transformation of the other. Love is the embrace of the reality that we are who we are because of a deep connection to each other. It is true love that connects us to the pain and the dehumanisation of the other. It is true love that pulls down the artificial boundaries between us based on the colour of our skin, the geography of our birth, the language we are born in, the class and status we attain by education and economic gain. It is true love that allows us to know, name and confront evil with unarmed truth and a commitment to transformation. It is true love that makes us confront the perpetrators of evil with righteous anger for their evil and still have the capacity to love them deeply. It is true love that calls on us to walk with the despised in compassion and solidarity as we place ourselves at the service of love for their healing and transformation. It is true love that makes us lose any sense of misguided neutrality in the presence of evil, and we choose sides and stand with the victims of evil against their victimisers. It is true love that refuses to give in to the worst of humanity and is always opening itself up to the beauty that always beckons us into a much whole existence.

The text we have read in the Gospel of Luke is one that is challenging our imagination of what a society of love and Justice can be. Jesus in the book of Luke, like in many other writings of the Gospel is most preoccupied with the kind of society that God wants to establish in the world. It is worth noting that the disciples, and thus the Church, are only as important as they

are instruments in the hands of God for the purpose of creating that society. The world is not created for the church. It is the church that is called into being for the sake of the world. At its best, the Church is meant to be the alternate community so as to critique whilst at the same time be the basis of something new and beautiful. The church therefore is meant to be the transformative loving presence of God in the world.

In the text, we meet Jesus in a conversation with a teacher of the law, perhaps a Pharisee. I have no intention of doing a detailed engagement with the text as I'm looking forward to the Bible studies that will be conducted during Consultation. Let me just note the following:

Firstly, the whole story is framed with the question of living in the Kingdom of God. Teacher, the expert of the law asks, "What must I do to inherit the kingdom of God?" It is important to realise that this implies finding a way to live where God's reign is complete and all encompassing. Where God is the Master and Lord. This question by implication is also talking of the God of the Kingdom. This God of the kingdom is for something, and by consequence, is against something. This creates the reality that there are opponents of the kingdom. John Sobrino in his book *Jesus the Liberator*, puts it succinctly and clearly when he writes:

***"The Kingdom is opposed by the anti-kingdom and the God of life is opposed by the divinities of death"*** (Sobrino 1991:183)

This question then has serious implications that are about life and the fundamental meaning of faith and worship of God. Jesus responds by asking "What does the law say?" "How do you read it?"

The response that comes from the teacher of the law, creates a twin existence for the purposes of God's reign; God and neighbour being bound by Love. This twin loving existence is the birth place and nurturing of all that we are to be in the company of God in his ultimate rule. Jesus answers; "Do this and you will live."

Luke skilfully problematizes the issue. He creates dissatisfaction not with the correctness or lack thereof of the answer but by the depth of the concept that is conjured up as the basis of living in the kingdom of God. You see if the answer is left at Love your neighbour as you love yourself, the traditional and well-established views of neighbourliness are left unchecked. The hegemonic power of neighbourliness defined by geography, family, clan, tribe, race, nation,



dare I add gender, class and sexual orientation are left unchallenged and remain powerful identities of the kingdom. When Luke places the following words in the mouth of the teacher “Who is my neighbour?” Then the mind of the reader runs to a screeching halt. Should that not be obvious? I thought I knew who my neighbour is and who I must love? In the raising of the question the assumed is shaken, the known truth is put into doubt and the established definitions are stretched to breaking point. And this forces the reader to go with Jesus to the root of what it means to be a neighbour and thus what is the cornerstone of being a society under the reign of God. This becomes the fertile ground of re-imaging.

Jesus invites the law expert, thus the reader, into a situation of lived and vulnerable relationality. A place where love and justice, neighbourliness will be challenged in day to day experiences.

Jesus invites us into the dangerous and life-threatening road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Anyone who knows the road does not expect an easy road both by its geography but also by its length and meanderings that made those who used it easy prey to the robbers. Jesus then reminds the law expert, of not only the vulnerability of the man but his victimhood. When the robbers are finished with the man he is stripped of his clothes, beaten up and left half dead. That is what the definition of love must encounter on the Jericho Road, a man stripped of his clothes, a man beaten up, and a man left half dead. Can our notion of love, justice and neighbourliness, thus divine living, remain the same after meeting this man who is naked because he is stripped of his clothes, this man who is wounded and bruised because he is beaten up and this man who is holding on to life because he is left half dead. The question of love, justice and neighbourliness are not raised for the robbers but those who will now encounter the man in this naked, wounded and half dead state. They must answer who is my neighbour who I must love so as an expression of the kingdom of God.

Then Jesus provides us with the responses seemingly without judgement but a piercing critique that unmask certain layers of coldness and perhaps indifference. The priest, the one who offers sacrifices to God on behalf of the people, the one who stands in the gap between God and people for life affirming reconciliation: “when he saw the man he passed by on the other side”. Jesus does not seem to comment on the choice of the priest yet a close reading will tell you that the choice itself is a critique, the one who is supposed to stand before God and man chooses to walk on the other side, away from the naked, wounded and half dead

man. Please let us take note that the priest saw the man. Then the Levite – The one who is chosen and blessed because they are loyal to the covenant whose law was just summarised by the law expert as loving God and neighbour. He also sees the man who is stripped naked, beaten and left for dead and also decides to walk on the other side.

In their choice of walking away on the other side after seeing, indicates, without comment from Jesus, how they understood love and neighbourliness.

Let me also add that perhaps the critique of the priest and the Levite is deeper than the individuality represented by that particular priest or Levite. The temple itself is being criticized. Its obsession with its internal life, rules, ritual and ceremonies has blinded it to the real calls for love and neighbourliness in the dangerous and vulnerable road of Jericho that leaves Gods people stripped naked, beaten up and left for dead. In their choices, they did not make a choice of neutrality, they actually changed direction. As they rushed to the Temple to worship they did not rush to worship the God of life, they worshipped an indifferent deity whose neutrality is a worship of the divinities of death; those forces and divinities that Sobrino, in the same book, identifies as; ***“idols... determined by their capacity to generate death...” (1991:183).***

These divinities of death produce historical victims. The choice is ours as to where we stand.

Jesus then brings in the story the Good Samaritan. Let us remember that neither the identity of the robbers nor the victim is known. All we know is that a man was attacked by robbers. I mention this so that we can appreciate the breaking down of any stereo type on the idea of neighbour, thus the basis of living in the reign of God.

The Samaritan is a complex character in the imagination of Israel. There is no guessing that in the Jewish imagination, the expectations of help and goodness from the Samaritans is low if it exists at all. So, the Samaritan is also on the same road as the robbers, the victim of the robbers, the priest and the Levite. Like the Priest and the Levite, he enters the scene after the event yet with the consequences of the event evident to see. Like the Levite and the Priest, he came to the place where the stripped, wounded man was left for dead. Then Jesus uses a connecting emotion, which was absent in the Levite and the Priest, ***“he took pity on him”***. This immediately sets the Samaritan apart from the Priest and the Levite. There is something about the condition of the victim that moves within the soul, the heart, the personality of the

Samaritan. There is a human connection that is awoken in the Samaritan that crosses whatever boundaries that are known, whether by birth, nurture or history. Somehow in that moment every divide dissolved into insignificance except the deep humanity of the one who is victimised in the presence of the Samaritan. Love overwhelms the Samaritan.

Love compels the Samaritan to stop and do something. He went to the man who is naked, wounded and left to die. Closing the distance, creating proximity that leads to solidarity that gives birth to love in action, what writers call orthopraxis. He then went down to bandage the wounds of the man having cleaned them up and begun the journey of their healing through pouring of oil and wine. He put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him. Next day took two denarii and said to innkeeper “take care of him, when I come back I will repay you whatever more you spend.”

The choice of the Samaritan is a choice for life. It is a repudiation of death. It is the affirmation of the God of life. It is a repudiation of the divinities that generate death. It is an affirmation of love and repudiation not of only hate but of indifference, because indifference allows death to flourish. It is an affirmation of compassion and solidarity and a repudiation of individualism and self-centred living. It is an affirmation of human connectedness that transcends boundaries, and a repudiation of narrow identities determined by tribe, race, gender, sexual orientation and class. In other words, it’s the affirmation of the reign of God, the reign of life.

It is my belief that our salvation as humanity and the creation of a new society lies in our connection with those who are victims of the robbers in our modern-day Jericho roads, those who lie on the road stripped naked, beaten and left to die. We can talk as much as we can about Love and Justice as a cornerstone of the new society, we can develop all the strategies and ideologies but if they do not take us to the road from Jerusalem to Jericho where the naked, the wounded and those who are left to die are, we can never discover who we are at our best, and how we cannot reconstruct ourselves as a society.

## **6. The Naked, Wounded and Left for Dead**

In our connexion those who are wounded by the Robbers on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, those that are naked, wounded and left for dead are:

- Those left out by the dominant systems of the world which produces obscene wealth where the top 1 % in our nations control close to 70% of the total wealth whilst many of our people live in excruciating poverty. The last statistics that I got to look at gave an indication of almost 35% of households living below the R321.00 per month per person. More than 7 Million of our people are living in dehumanising poverty. As indicated CEOs are being paid salaries that are 500 times that of the workers. Mining towns become ghost towns after the mining companies have extracted the minerals and the social devastation is beyond words. This is compounded by an education system that is becoming more commodified and leaves more than 60% of young people unskilled, and ill equipped for economic life-giving activity. Indeed, poverty leaves our People on our present-day Jerusalem to Jericho road naked, beaten and left to death.
- Abused women and children. The scourge of violence and abuse against women in our society has reached pandemic proportion which includes the rise in the number of reported femicide. This violence against women and children leave them naked, wounded and left for dead in our present-day Jerusalem to Jericho road.
- The LGBTI community who experience exclusion and violence; especially through the scourge of corrective rape.

With all of the above it is my belief we must all struggle and advocate for the re-imagination of our society. This re-imagining must take seriously the shortcomings of our past as Former Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke reminds us in his book *My Own Liberator* where he writes: “When the constitution was negotiated, the negotiators skirted around the need for social change. The negotiators did not stare in the eye the historical structural inequality in the economy.” (Moseneke 2016:352).

It is not a society that finds its birth in the air-conditioned, sanitised existence and comfortable living of the rich and powerful but it’s a society that is born in the naked, wounded and left for dead people of our nation who are found in rural villages, shanty towns, *emijondolo* or *Mikhukhus*, in the dilapidated buildings of our inner cities, in the brothels and our city centres where modern slavery and human trafficking is rife.

If we are to re-imagine a new society; we must be willing to be disrupted by the cries of the naked, delayed by the sight of the wounded and our resources must be directed towards those who are left for dead. In our nations, these cries and wounds are refusing to be silent any longer. Out bursts of service delivery protests, labour unrest and our annual ritual of Fees Must Fall are mere symptoms of a deeper structurally collapsing society. In this re-imagined society, the priorities are not towards the needs of the powerful but those who are naked, beaten and left for dead.

This society must also deal honestly with the fact that the robbers are no more lurking around in the street from Jerusalem to Jericho but actually are the ones who now own the keys to the palaces and public purse of Jerusalem. They are robbers who own the Sherriff in town, who owns the assembly of the people, who has access to the treasure of the people and is working hard to own the Judges. Their robbery is at a large scale and their victims are countless. Those that they leave naked, wounded and left to die are too many to count.

Yet those who believe in a re-imagined society where the naked are not left alone, where the wounded are not left unattended and those who are left to die are nursed back to life must never lose the courage to stop, clothe, wash the wounds and nurse people back to life because when they do that they point to the best of who we should be and give birth to our renewal.

The MCSA must then find its missional task in this concrete reality. We must accept that we will never be measured for the purposes of the Reign of God on the basis of how many members did we confirm, how many YMG, WM, YWM, WG have we robbed. Nor will we be measured by how many magnificent buildings we built to the honour of God. Nor will we be measured by how many retreats, spirituality programs we will be holding. We will be measured by who we are when we meet on the Jericho road those who are naked, wounded and left for dead.

The question is; what does the encounter on our present Jericho road do to our worship, structure, Laws and Disciplines, resources and polity. In other words, we are not asked a question of strategy we are asked a question of Identity

We must accept and celebrate the MCSA holding its second Mission Congress last year November under the theme: Igniting Mission. We take this as an indication of the Church's

commitment to finding answers to who we must be in the times we live in. This we understand in the broader context of the MCSA's Mission statement of spreading the Gospel of Christ for Healing and Transformation, and the Vision Statement of "A Christ Healed Africa for the Healing of Nations." This has been sharpened by the theme that the Presiding Bishop has called us to be a Transforming Discipleship Movement shaped for mission. These are important steps in understanding who we are.

The MCSA has to do its work in an ecumenical spirit under the guidance of our vanguard ecumenical movement the SACC. We are encouraged by the public prophetic role that the SACC is playing during this dark moment in our national life. The work done by the unburdening panel, that unmask the rot in our public institutions that are producing a shadow state and the redirection of the purpose of state to private interests of certain families, is not only a statement of moral repugnancy but a call for South Africans to stand up.

We further note with appreciation the recent resolutions that the council has taken in particular the ones that reminds us that any state needs morally legitimacy to govern and this current government has lost that legitimacy. This creates a crisis of trust in governance. The Council calls for all South Africans to Gather in a Values convention in order to rediscover and redirect our national dream.

All the work is done under the campaign called the South Africa we pray for. We are encouraged to engage the campaign as much as we can.

## **7. The Historic Mission of the BMC**

The BMC is a formation within a church that needs to confront these issues. As we argued before, numbers are no more our struggle in the MCSA. The Church has a lot of black faces in high place. Our current struggle as a BMC is for the soul of the MCSA – its ethos, character and culture.

In light of the reality that the majority of those who are naked, wounded and left for dead are Black, the BMC has a particular responsibility to help the MCSA to focus on those who are naked, wounded and left for dead. We do this because we believe in a God of life active in history.

There are many things that I believe this Consultation can come up with as possible things we can canvass for within the life of the MCSA – such as the following:

1. Those of us who are in the DEWCOM work need to find a way to place before the DEWCOM the serious theological task of developing a theology of the Kingdom of life under a God of life in the context death and the idols of death. This theology has to give emphases to the economics of life as against the economics of death. This theology must have pastoral consequences that the MCSA must take seriously. This kind of theology needs to move beyond orthodoxy and enter into authentic practise of life, thus orthopraxis. DEWCOM cannot be allowed to pursue classical theological interests and doctrines that have no impact on the current lived realities of our people. The Doctrine of baptism has to move beyond the questions of adult or infant baptism, full immersion or not, into questions of what does it mean to be accepted into a community where “There is no Jew or gentile, free or slave, male or female”, a community of life in a context of death and victimisation. The same must be said of our salvation doctrine. It must answer what is it that we are saved for and into. What are we saved from? What is sin and how does it manifest itself in the reality of robbers that generate victims and death? How does that reflect in personal sin and structural sin?

2. Linked to this theological work we need to place on the agenda of DEWCOM the development of a theology of citizenship and public service; a theology of accountability, worship of God-one that is contrary to the worship of Idols.

3. The BMC must master the courage to challenge the MCSA to live in a permanent state of self-examination especially with the internal economic relations that exist within the church. We must ask the question as to who are the primary beneficiaries of our church economics’ system. If the majority of our people are poor and working class, in the context where the ministry of the ordained is becoming more middle class, the question is whether they benefit from the monies and the economy that they continue to sustain by the sacrifices they make. We have to ask the question of whether the economic muscle of the MCSA, which apparently is in the billions, is marshalled in society to the benefit of those who are naked, beaten up and left to die in the streets of our society? This question must include the hundreds of thousands of Rands that flow through the Black Church through organisations like Young Men’s Guild, the Black Methodist Consultation, the Women’s Manyano, the Young

Women's Manyano, the Local Preachers, the Wesley Guild, and others. Linked to this work is the development of a stewardship model that is life giving.

4. It is my belief that the BMC must be in the forefront of re-imagining a church structure that is not dominated by power games and political interests but one that is designed not for Sunday worship services, pre-occupied with rules and laws but one designed for a church that is agile and wide in vision. This must be a structure that must remember that a Leaders' Meeting, a Quarterly Meeting and other such platforms are not where ministry happens. These platforms exist to enable and resource mission. It must be a structure that releases the Priest, Levite and the baptised to be present in the streets and not only see the naked, the wounded and those who are left to die but to stop, wash them and put bandage on them, and commit resources to their continued care. It's a church therefore, that does not live in the Church building but from the building, renewed and inspired. It becomes the church of the street, doing *uHlaselo* not simply to bring heathens to church, but to confront the gods of death with the God of life. This must include a serious attempt to understand the Book of Order, not simply as tool to be used against each other but understand its liberative spirit to help us re-imagine a structure we need for our time.

5. The BMC must show a serious interest in the Christian Education of our people. We are in a serious battle for values, the soul of our nations are at stake. We must ask questions on what is taught in Sunday School, Confirmation Classes and our organisations in general. Are they taught values of Ubuntu - solidarity, openness, peaceful existence, love etc?

6. The last thing I would like to ask this BMC to consider is the possibility of encouraging a resolution through the structures of our church to find new ways of being church and forming organisations for mission rather than organisations for our own self service that simply have charity desks. For example, this might be a resolution that calls on the church to get as much as possible a list of all the medical practitioners in the midst of the church and ask the church to work towards a Connexional Convention of all medical practitioners within the next three years with the intention of firstly creating a framework of Christian ethical behaviour accompanied by spiritual support in the church. Second, to challenge them to become the ones who look after the naked, the wounded and those who are left to die? They must be the ones who meet the blind and through the power of Christ mixed with their



training say to the blind you can see. Through them the lepers must meet the healing Jesus. This can be replicated in other sectors of our society.

As part of our heritage, the BMC needs to prepare for the 50 years celebration of the statement of our church of being “One and Undivided.” The BMC in my view, needs to put aside people who will lead our reflection so that we can make a meaningful contribution to the general Church’s reflections on the journey. As Black people, we have been at the receiving end of the contradictory experience of that statement. We need to help the church to reflect honestly as to where we are and cajole the church to confront with courage and vision the existing parts of our life that continue to thrive with division.

### **Conclusion**

It goes without saying that an uninspired Church will blunt its ability to impact a society that is drowning in a deep moral and spiritual death. The Black Church cannot take its historical responsibility if it is plagued by power games and narrow politics that inevitably lead to persistent and endemic conflicts that sucks at the energy and creativity of our people.

The society that God wants to give birth to awaits us all in the midst of chaos. God calls us all to stand counted amongst those who were faithful to their calling. We dare not to betray our historical calling. We dare not betray the dreams and aspirations of God’s people and we dare not fail the God of renewal. In the streets of our cities and towns where the naked, the beaten are left for dead; let the BMC be counted amongst those who by their actions proclaim the coming of a society, even on the Jericho road, where Love and Justice defy all forms of death because the God of life is here. God bless us all I thank you.