

**43<sup>rd</sup> Black Methodist Consultation**  
**Memorial Lecture to honour Rev. Abel E Hendricks**  
**“A rich legacy of breaching the gap between the seminary, sanctuary**  
**and the street with hope and dignity.”**  
**Cape Town, South Africa**  
**14 July 2018**

“Nations and people are largely stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies, if they tell themselves that stories that face their own truths, they free their histories for future flowerings.”

Ben Okri

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Executive officers, and members of the Black Methodist Consultation,  
Bishop of the Cape of Good of District,  
The Hendricks family members,  
Distinguished guest,  
Sisters and brothers in Christ

I invoke the words of St Paul, warmly greeting you; “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”. (1Cor1:3)

It is with a deep sense of challenge and responsibility that I share in the Black History Project to honour stalwards of the Methodist Movement. Thank you for keeping the memory of Rev ZR Mahabane, Prof Mungaliso Robert Sobukwe. Rev Dr Stanley Mmutlanyane Mogoba, Rev Dr TSN Gqubule, Rev JC Mvusi and now Rev Abel E Hendricks alive by writing them back into the history of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA).

Chinua Achebe, the prolific Nigerian writer is correct that “until the lion tells his side of the story, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” It is important for us to articulate our stories of Black achievement, struggle, pride, and pain, otherwise, it will always be told by the dominant groups in society. Abel was always proud to remind that the Rev. William Threlfall, Rev. Jacob Links (the first indigenous minister of the MCSA) and Evangelist Johannes Jager were the first martyrs of the faith in Southern Africa and therefore we need to “serve without counting the cost to be considered followers of Jesus in the company of the Wesleys”. Cheeseman (1910:126) and Fredericks (2017:3—38) give a detailed account of these valiant sons of Methodism.

Abel is one of South Africa’s great sons. We give thanks to God that many clergy and laity have been privileged to journey alongside him. Many were deeply shaped by his work, witness, and his prophetic voice continue to prompt many in their struggle for justice. He had a unique gift and calling to help others identify God’s gifting in their lives. His impish smile, sardonic laughter, effervescent personality and insanely quick wit could disarm the most virulent detractor. He was a courageous torchbearer who gave creative leadership and kept the flame of hope burning through the darkest days of the apartheid struggle. He was a fountain of wisdom, a confidante and ally in times of need who kept things together when the Transkei schism was brewing, apartheid activist like Steve Biko was murdered and clergy like Theo Kotze and Brian Brown banned. Abel inspired the “restless and impatient” 1976 generation. He became the lodestar for many as they navigated their way in church and society.

Any attempt to write about Abel’s contribution to the MCSA must include his dogged resistance to racism. The best way to understand Abel’s protests is to look at how other churches and their leaders stood up to racism. This is illuminated especially as we examine the response of different churches towards the World Council of Churches and the Program to Combat Racism. Abel endured criticism from within the MCSA as well as from right wing Christian groups like, The Defence League of Southern Africa who supported the government’s apartheid policies.

While people like Beyers Naude, Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesak stood out as role models in the struggle against apartheid, Abel can be considered the 'quiet sanctuary prophet'. He could have easily used his role as President and District Chairman of the MCSA to make visitations to Mandela as a pretext for media coverage, and join Tutu and Boesak on public platforms, but he saw the local church as the most significant arena for disciple making and social change. He was fully committed to rebuilding the lives for people, most who were forcefully removed from their ancestral homes at the foot of Table Mountain and other place on the Cape Peninsula and relocated to a Sandy wasteland called the Cape Flats by the notorious Group Areas Act of 1950. Abel firmly believed that the church could not acquiece in the face of discrimination, widespread unemployment, bad housing and job reservation. He choose to express his faith in solidarity with the poorest of the poor. He went against the grain and suffered for his convictions.

It is difficult to speak about Abel without mention of Freda who was essential to his perseverance, courage, and accomplishments. Their relationship had integrity and modelled "team ministry". Freda's ministry to children and emphasis on primary health care and Abel's dynamic preaching and unique blend of pastoral care that shared the tears, struggles, failures and successes, shattered dreams and resurgent hopes of people made them a very dynamic team. They breached the gap between the seminary, sanctuary, and the dusty streets of the Cape Flats. I am proud to have been under the tutelage of this couple and consider myself a graduate of, "the university of the streets."

I am very conscious that what is shared here today will not do justice to the immeasurable stature of a person like Abel. I only offer a glimpse into his life - only God knows the full extent of his labours. I trust that this memorial lecture will allow us to drink from the calabash of collective wisdom, awaken our memory and rekindle our spirits to add to the rich tapestry of Abel and Freda's legacy. I will briefly recall:

- **Abel and Freda's journey to the Cape Flats**
- **Abel and Freda as advocates for human dignity and justice.**
- **Abel a Globally acknowledge Peace Agent.**

Abel Edward Hendricks' life is a fascinating story of poverty, humiliation, standing firm against injustice and transforming the lives of people around him.

Abel was born in Potchefstroom on 13 March 1931. At the age of 13 he made a commitment to Christ. After his schooling Abel worked in a Potchefstroom shoe factory and then his own general dealer store. He answered the call to ministry in 1956 and served as a probation minister in Pretoria and Goodwood. He studied at Lovedale Bible College, later to become the Federal Theological Seminary. During this period Abel met Miss Freda Adams and they were married on 17 December 1960. The marriage was blessed with two children Heloise and Andrew.

Abel's childhood experiences in Potchefstroom left an indelible mark on his life and provided the metaphors, the cultural touchstones and the prism through which he viewed the world. He was not as a passive observer to oppression rather his life was shaped on the anvil of the apartheid struggle.

While stationed in the Buitenkant Circuit (196-65) Abel was called to pioneer Methodist work on the Cape Flats where people were forcefully relocated by the apartheid government.

Abel adopted a mission strategy that took context seriously. In Wesley's dictum for mission, Abel held together a holiness that knew no distinction from "social holiness." He personified what it meant to be an unwavering follower of Jesus in the Wesleyan tradition by translating his deep spirituality into action. Put simply, he was a pragmatist and so the early years on the Cape Flats were spent winning the trust of the people. His car became his office and he conducted services in homes where "kitchen tables" became the "Lord Table" as they shared in the sacrament of Holy Communion. He established congregations by reaching out to people who were bereaved and burying their loved ones with compassion and dignity. After a weekend of violence on the Flats, we would find him going through the local

newspaper to establish who was hospitalized or bereaved so that he could offer pastoral care. He introduced a “street shepherds” programme, a six weeks lay leaders programme where people went to knock on doors and gathered information of each household. Abel equipped his team in literacy, communication, first aid, hospital visitation and preaching. He contextualized the Wesleyan Class Meetings and demanded gospel-based accountability from everyone who worked with him.

In 1969 Abel and Freda spent a year in the United States, they came back more committed to empower women, young people, the elderly and children. The first pre-school was launched in Bonteheuwel. Freda was a pioneer in Early Childhood Development. By 1990 she headed a consortium of pre-schools in Methodist, Lutheran and Moravian churches stretching across every township on the Cape Flats. They organized “rainbow clubs” where children of the community could play in a safe environment, hear a Bible story and receive refreshments. A great emphasis was placed on “youth ministry” and many “youth workers” discovered their vocation in the ordained ministry. There were many “festivals” and celebrations which helped people acquire skills and discover their potential.

The blood of both the settler community and indigenous people coursed through his veins and in many instances helped him to be a bridge builder, reconciler and peacemaker. Addressing the 8<sup>th</sup> Connexional Youth Conference at Modderpoort in 1985, Hendricks referred to himself as, “a bridge over which black and white can walk to find each other”. He further reminded the youth that there could be no peace until it was “soaked with justice.” (Dimension January 1985)

Abel had ink in his veins and wrote extensively. It is a pity that nobody has cared to collect all his letters, sermons, poetry and prose. Allow me to take the liberty of sharing one of his poems that has good rhyme, maintains unity, integrity and balance. It is simply entitled, “**Bonteheuwel**”.

What is this place like? It bounces with the letter “B” and built on 747 acres of sandy soil on the Cape Flats.

There are babble and bad baffling beggars around every corner ready to barter and to break you

.  
Babies are crying and Benjamin looks down into the big brown eyes of Betty, tenderly caressing her bony cheeks, then starts singing in a deep full, rich baritone voice "Blessed assurance Jesus is mine".

Bonteheuwel is a place of some narrow road, surrounded by bushes where backward hearts beat, and wrongly directed brains work overtime. Where the hands that tickle the banjo., also brandish a knife and belong to the same gang of bandits; it's a place of battles, burdens and burglars.

Yet look around you and see people walking with Bibles, Smiling, beaming, blushing brides, walking out of their homes with brown painted doors. And in the blooming garden, butterflies are seen, and buzzing bees heard. The bride looks up and behold her beauty of the clear blue sky, and feels the breeze of the world kissing her brown shining face.

Many feel here we belong – this is our home and behave. Here freshly baked bread is broken, meals enjoyed and Christ thanked for blessings He bestows, in all his crosses are borne, bereavement experienced and friends betrayed.

Bonteheuwel is a baffling situation, where bazaars are held, boys playing with broken bicycles – broken pieces of bottles lie scattered in Bitterblaar Street, where blood stains the narrow cement road, later brothers stand and weep, round a cheap brown coffin.

Where some youngers adopt a barbaric pattern of behaviour – and some bitter against all –whose eyes tell you, beware! And continue to blunder.

In a backyard sits an elderly couple basking in the sun, while the "south Easter" blows papers against the fence, with bowed heads in deep meditation.

Others enter as benefactors and bring joy to broken spirits and bruised minds, making the heart beat faster, for the gifts they bestowed.

With rapt attention the people listen as the Preachers says: “Blessed are the pure in heart...” as they bow their heads he pronounces the benediction, and points them to the Beyond. Bonteheuwel you’re “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.”

Abel E. Hendricks

### **Abel and Freda as advocates for human dignity and justice.**

Abel’s commitment to his wife and marriage modelled a partnership in ministry. One particular example might be the food program they began in Kalksteefontein. In an interview for the World Methodist First Friday Letter.

<http://firstfridayletter.worldmethodistcouncil.org/2012/09/freda-hendricks-visits-the-world-methodist-council/> she described the beginnings of the program:

“There was an accident further up the road and we were in a long queue of cars. From outside I heard voices. The voices were coming from the inside of a garbage dump. My husband and I left our car and we walked over to see what was going on. We discovered a group of children playing and foraging. Some were looking for things for their homes, others were looking for food.”

“After my husband was ordained, he resigned from his settlement so that he could move to an area to help people who had been forced to move to the Cape Flats in South Africa.”

“In the beginning there was no place to hold church, so we held it in people’s homes.”

The economic disparity and desperate poverty of the Apartheid-era South Africa galvanized both Freda and her husband. It led Abel in the fight against Apartheid and for Freda it served as a calling to help the children of South Africa.

The husband and wife started with nothing but a mission to help others but together, they built a sanctuary for people on the fringes of an already marginalized society.

In a recent book, **God Is Not Fair, Thank God!: Biblical Paradox in the Life and Worship of the Parish**, George Thompson memorializes this project of the couple:

Through the years, they have been able to expand that program, and invite Christians in North America to assist in order that many thousands may be fed. Tears have been transformed into tangible hope. (*Thompson, 2014, p. Sec. 13*)

A major focus of Abel and Freda's minister was on equipping young people for leadership. Besides the many pre-schools initiated by the couple, they ministered at the training institutions in the area; the Nico Malan Nurses College the Bishop Lavis Police Training Academy and Sallie Davies Teachers Training School and in this way influenced whole generations of young people who now hold important positions of leadership in church and society. The Mission was home for many young activists who were attracted by the couple's warm hearts, magnetism and the fact that they bore upon their heads and hands the invisible consecration to the ideal of duty and honour which ennobled young people to make their hostile environment a more humane place.

In the 1970's and 80's many ministries for sustainable livelihood and enhancing dignity were spawned on the Cape Flats. There was the Community Action for receptive Enablers, a community based advice office, a medical doctor, George Drapper and Shelly Rhodes a social worker was part of the ministry team. Abel convinced Dr Grant Bebee to offer dental services and there was an active team that did primary health care and offered services to geriatrics and those "shut-in" their homes. The Cape Flats Methodist Mission initiated many service projects that we later taken over by the City Council.

### **Abel a Globally acknowledge Peace Agent**

Of many that could have been selected, John De Gruchy quotes Abel Hendricks in his book, **The Church Struggle in South Africa**, to epitomize the call for the church to resist passivity and the status quo, and to join the struggle for Black liberation:

South Africa stands on the threshold of war and peace. The last three months have seen the outpouring of years of Black frustration, suppression and anger that has



burst into manifestations, of protests, strikes, and peaceful marches, but also violence, death and destruction. The White status quo has in turn allowed their fear, confusion and ignorance of Black suffering and aspirations to manifest itself in violence, brutality and the detention of those crying out for liberation...Time is running out and the Church of God must raise her voice for justice so that there may be peace. If we fail here, we will not only be disobeying the call of the Lord, to cry aloud and lift up our voices like a trumpet in declaring to our people their transgression (Isaiah 58:1), but we will be judged by history to be simply irrelevant.”(De Gruchy, 1986, p. 170 citing ecunews)

At the Methodist Conference in 1975 President

1977 President

The 1977 Conference was held in the wake of the country-wide student uprising, the death of Steve Biko in detention (12 September) and the banning of major Black organisations. Headlines in Dimension, November 1977, read; “The calm exterior of the Conference 1977 was a deceptive one. More peaceful by far than that of 1976 and with remarkable consensus in most debates, the decisions taken in Benoni packed a considerable punch both in the social and domestic sphere’ Much of what transpired at the Conference can be attributed to Abel’s leadership style. His induction address set the tone for Conference:

“We meet at a time when men’s (sic) hearts fail them for fear and where one who is called to be the Chief Pastor of a church such as ours bears a heavy responsibility to speak plainly and clearly of the things of God’.

(Dimension, November 1977)

The Conference dealt “plainly and clearly” with contentious issues like; the call for the resignation of the Minister of Justice for his complicity in the death of Steve Biko, the call to withdraw from military chaplaincies and the issue of the sale of historical Methodist Institutions. There were also twenty resolutions apposing government policy.

Abel chartered stormy waters during his second Presidential term. Besides South Africa being caught in a vortex of violence, he had to deal with Bantustan politics in the form of the Transkei schism. Maxwell Lungu in his work; ***The 1978 Methodist Schism in Transkei: A Missional Analysis***, (UNISA, 1995) narrates Abel's response to the banning of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (26 May 1978) and the formation of the Methodist Church in Transkei (2 June 1978) in detail.

In 1978 Abel was part of the planning team for the South African Christian Leadership Assembly (SACLA) in 1979 where more than 6,000 Christians gathered in one of the largest ecumenical gathering in the country.

At the Fourteenth World Methodist Conference in Honolulu, 1981 Abel became the first third recipient of the World Methodist Peace Prize.

<http://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=wmcpconceedings> This award is given to an individual in recognition for outstanding courage, creativity and consistency in peacemaking. The first award was presented to Miss Saidie Patterson in Belfast, Ireland; two years later, in another part of the world there was a ceremony in Cairo, Egypt, at which President Anwar Sadat received the second Peace Award. Subsequent awardees include: Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the U.S.S. R. (1990), Stanley Mogoba, Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations (1998), Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, who resisted the disappearance of over 10,000 persons (1999), Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa, (2000), Boris Trajkovski, President of Macedonia, who averted civil war during the Kosovo crisis (2002) and Millard Fuller founded Habitat for Humanity International (2004)

In his acceptance speech Abel focussed on the "ongoing care for people," especially the most downtrodden and marginalized, the renewal of the earth and hope as the engine that powers our actions towards liberation.

Along with Nico Smith, Beyers Naudè, Wolfram Kistner, Charles Villa Vicencio, Pro John De Gruchy, Caesar Molebatsi, Margaret Nash and many others, Abel Hendricks was a signatory to the Kairos Document. The 1985 Kairos Document's assertions continue to be relevant. The Kairos Document made clear the need for

siding with the oppressed to transform church activities and the apartheid government. It was a powerful tool of resistance, and theologically revolutionary.

The Kairos Document in summary, addressed the bankruptcy and inadequacy of state theology and church theology; advanced “prophetic theology” as urgently required; privileged the oppressed; ejected tyrannical State authority’s legitimacy to govern; named as a moral duty the duty to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation; advocated for mass civil disobedience; and refused to condemn the use of physically violence as a resistance tactic.

On 28 March 1985 Abel was amongst a group of church and youth leaders who were arrested in a marched called by Allan Boesak in support of the release of Nelson Mandela. They were detained at Polmoor prison. Stories abound of how Abel cared for many of the young people during his incarceration that will be saved for another occasion.

Andrew’s passing, letter from Mandela

Later years at Norwood

Death

## **Conclusion**

Given Abel’s vision leadership and the important role that he played in the history of the MCSA and the struggle for justice in the face of unbridled apartheid oppression, there is a paucity of archival material, academic research and publication on the work and witness of Abel and Freda. After all, Abel was President of the MCSA on two occasions but more importantly he has touched the lives of many gathered here. His legacy cannot be ignored and therefore I appeal to you to share your stories of this amazing couple.

It is also painful to acknowledge that despite the dawning of democracy, many people on the Cape Flats have not tasted the fruits of liberation. The area and the community still bear the brutal scars of the legacy of apartheid, they are heirs of their painful history and they and their children still face the challenges of their damaged past. I am convinced that Abel's message of "authentic hope" that empower lives and change pernicious systems of injustice is more important now than ever. Unfortunately, many of the clergy who succeeded Abel and Freda on the Cape Flats have little institutional memory of the struggle against the apartheid and rather than nurturing Abel's vision for the Cape Flats, they focused on his shortcomings and missed opportunities. They killed the dream before it could be fully incubated. In acknowledging his flaws, Abel's greatness and humility shines brightly. It is a virtue sorely missing from contemporary leaders.

In Abel's restless and courageous pursuit of justice, no issues were sacrosanct. He was not afraid to address the issue of class, poverty and race head on. The MCSA despite claiming to be "one and undivided" in 1958, was complicit in following apartheid policies in its administration. Until 1977 stipends were still paid on racial basis. Our theological training was only integrated by an act of defiance in 1979 while Abel called for one place of theological training early in 1977 (Dimension November 1977). Unless we learn to talk about economic inequality that is ethnically based and racially informed, like a poisonous mushroom it will continue to grow in the dark.

Friends, as followers of Jesus in the company of the Wesley's, the greatest gift that we can bestow upon this and the future generations is to be harbingers and repositories of hope as we wrestle with the challenges of our time to build a more human and prosperous society.

Long live the spirit of Abel and Freda's prophetic imagination and relentless hope. They sought justice, loved mercy and walked humbly before God!

Long live!

Thank you for your attention.

## Appendix 1

Full Speech:

### ONE HOPE

By Dr. Abel Hendricks

Dr. Hendricks, twice-elected President of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, received the 1980 "World Methodist Peace Award" during the Fourteenth World Methodist Conference.

I am most grateful to so many most capable, distinguished and brilliant speakers and scholars that already in such a masterly way elaborated, explained, unfolded, gave fresh, new and very challenging and thought-provoking insights on the theme of Hope. Hope is the hallmark of the Christian faith. Wherein lies hope? We live and work hopefully because we are not alone, if we were, there would be no hope.

The event of Pentecost and the overwhelming evidence that the Holy Spirit can and does transform man inspiring him to go forward. Yet if we look back and we draw inspiration from the past we are bound to recognise, that results depend on our willingness to co-operate with God. What does this mean? Simply that we are striving to follow the example of Jesus Christ, if our minds are open to God's influences we will have eyes to see the world as Christ sees it, we will see problems as He sees it, and by the grace of God we shall have both the desire and the will to solve them.

Hope opens our eyes to Christ's glorious all-embracing plan for our world. Our hope lies in the reawakening of the Church's mission to exercise an ongoing care for people. Whenever there is a national calamity ♦ floods, earthquakes, etc., ♦ Christians are usually to the fore giving what help they can, yet when the disaster of hopelessness strikes, many Christians are totally paralyzed, forgetting that the Christian God is the God of the exodus and of the resurrection. Therefore, it is an awakening to its life as a community of trust in mission that grows out of being a community in full obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord. He is not only the Eternal Presence embodying all the ingredients of hope, but He is God in front, the God with a future which is His essential nature, upon whom we wait and follow with active hope.

There must always remain for the Christian the mystical unknown, the intervention of God that cannot be explained ♦ the contradiction must remain ♦ because only

then, and then only Christian hope emerges not merely as a theological or philosophical debate, but finds itself translated into the daily actions and lives of men and women who struggle with the forces of evil. This spirit in mankind announces and exerts an influence in our hopeless situation the eternal promises of God, that the believer holds on to, that the cynic brushes aside: For the believer it is not Utopian, it is not clinging to a straw, it is not seeking an escape route, it is not closing one's eyes to reality, it is not telling people tomorrow will be better. It is hope wrapped in Christian love, directed towards mankind who is standing naked [101] in the rain crying out to be wrapped in hope. For this to happen we need a community of hope, therefore, the Church as the Body of Christ must surely be this community of hope. This is hope directed to those in our world who live in the twilight zones, the non-existent, the worthless, the lonely, the unemployed, the discriminated, the oppressed, the man forsaken masses.

It is in such situations that God introduces an Incarnational hope that brings a new vitality, exuberance and faith. It says that God is in control there is an Eternal plan ♦ that God's history, will replace man's history, that this God who shapes the destiny of nations is the God who holds out forever Christian hope to enable the blind to see, the deaf to hear. So that mankind in their struggles, in their hopes and fears may continue to believe that there is a God who cares ♦ because "Righteousness exalts a nation" this is the foundation upon which Christians build their symbols of hope.

In situations like these if the Church is bold enough with devastating honesty to face the challenge of our day and generation then "the kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever, and ever". All social life and all politics whether nations want to admit it or not is under the providence of a just God. We know only too well that Christianity did not begin from a vantage point of the comfortably well off. Christ's first appeal woke the hearts and minds of the outcasts, his love-hope appeal found entrance firstly not in the hearts of the Priests and Pharisees on the contrary. His love bulldozed an entrance into the lives of people who always lived in the shadow of a simple faith that waited for the shadow to pass so that the sun of hope will shine, forever.

Therefore the Church can never betray her Lord. She must remain a sign of the Kingdom, a symbol of hope, a light set on a hill, it dare never allow any other forces to rob her of her calling, task, and mission, never must she ever dare to become an

escape route. There is a dying process demanded here, otherwise the poor, dispersed and oppressed will turn away from the Church and work out their own liberation with Christ while the Church merely keeps the machinery moving. Hope is Incarnational joy ♦ "My heart praises the Lord, my soul is glad because God is my Saviour" (Lk. 1:46). But hope is also suffering nerve wrecking pain ♦ soul crushing loneliness. Does Mary the mother of Jesus remember when she stood at the foot of the cross the words of long ago? O how could she forget? "Can a woman's tender care cease towards the child she bore". Yes as she stood there embracing His feet the haunting words hammered in her soul "And sorrow, like a sharp sword, will break your own heart" (Lk. 2:35). Thus hope lives in the midst of happiness and sorrow just because through that hope there comes into view a feature for all the wretched, dying, and dead. This means that he who has no hope no longer really lives. Hell is hope-lessness! "The cross ♦ and ♦ resurrection of Christ reveals the power of God who fulfils his pro mises beyond all expectations, who contradicts the present by initiating the new." This event becomes the central promise and basis of hope for this world.

The Christ event "sets the stage for history, on which there emerges the possibility of the engulfing of all things in nothingness and the new creation", he does not fulfil all promises but itself becomes a promise." "The Kingdom of God", the New Testament symbol for the content of Christian hope, is a double barrelled notion. It is used to denote both future and present reality. It is the future of God coming amongst His people so retaining the apocalyptic orientation." ♦ Moltmann. Hope is the question and exclamation mark of the Christian faith, believing that God works constantly in history; He raises up prophets; He gathers people to Himself.

Therefore it is sunrise and dawn! Hope is Light and Sound ♦ to enable the blind to see, and the deaf to hear. The believer does not stand in the clear light of day but in the twilight of a new dawn where day and night, past and future still combat each other. "But it is also in our midst ♦ at times identified with Jesus Himself at other times signifying the concrete community of believers. Christian hope must retain this tension, neither [102] demythologizing Jewish apocalyptic to such an extent that new events in salvation history are impossible, nor stressing eschatology to such an extent that the present movements in culture, whether in science, art or politics are totally rejected. "Christian hope which is an expectation for the future involves faith which is entry into communal history through the shading of past

memories; and it involves love ♦ the acceptance and the response to men and women as they are now without sacrificing them for some abstract ideal" Richard Shaull Christian Faith and Scandal in a Technocratic World.

Colin Winter ♦ Bishop in Exile Namibia tells the following story to illustrate what hope means for this man.

"A Christian pastor was taken for questioning in Namibia by the Special Branch. Thrown into a cell for no obvious reason, he was deprived of his freedom. He felt an inner violence towards God. Frightened at the prospect of torture or prolonged arrest, he flung away from him a Bible which had been given him as his sole reading material. His anger blazed against God who had tolerated the daily suffering of the oppressed Namibian people for over one hundred years. He did not wish to read the Bible, let alone pray. After a while in the loneliness of the prison cell, he felt a prolonged calm. He felt no more fear, no more anger. Calmly he walked over to where he had flung the Bible, opened its pages and felt a peace such as he had never experienced in his life before. Later that day he told a confused police interrogator he was ready to die and that they could kill him immediately if they wished to. They had no longer any power over him. Within a week they released him. As he left he challenged his tormentors, 'I haven't finished with you yet', he told a startled captain of police, 'so you can't release me. I have a responsibility to God for your soul'. The breaking process had been met, conquered and a new man emerged. This is not a single once-and-for-all event, but a process that will have to be dealt with day in, day out as that pastor struggles each day with the evils of an apartheid regime. What was the gospel for him at that moment? I suppose he would say it was that which enabled him to conquer his fear."

Hope as Christian hope knows that its expectation will indeed arrive at a place some day, since reality is in the hands of God who assures us that "I will never leave you neither will I forsake you" ♦ If you go through the deep waters I will hold your hand ♦ When you pass through the fire I will be at your side". From these promises, hope receives patience and the freedom to make life new here and now "Behold I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5) and in doing so change the world. Therefore from all over the world there goes up a cry from the hearts of the God's little people crying out with the prophet Habakkuk who broods hotly over the apparent dumbness of God in the face of oppression and tyranny "O Lord how



much longer shall I cry and Thou will not hear?" Hope is calling men and women of goodwill for a new commitment to join the ongoing struggle against attacks of common good, against racism and degradation, against the total attempt to fragment man's intellectual and spiritual life.

"Racial discrimination is but one form of evil which characterizes our times ♦ the presence of ideological hate within the world which denies the possibility in principle of the unity of man with man." Herbert Warren Richardson. "The centre of the problem in South Africa is racial discrimination ♦ apartheid. Whatever attitudes we hold and whatever legislation is put forward at the core, at the centre of it all we are a society motivated by colour consciousness and fear and this may well have parallels in other parts of the world. We still have to learn that "perfect love casts out all fear". Discrimination binds and blinds its victims and we cease to see human beings as God's own creation but as members of a certain racial group. One shudders at the thought what the vengeance that God must have for such a nation. Any indignity and any humiliadon we impose on anybody simply because of the colour of his skin, is an affront and assault on God Himself.

"Today's racism," according to Andre Bieler, "constitutes a source of violence capable of unleashing the greatest disorder. It removes all meaning from human rights and it is an imminent menace to world peace." [103] "Racism is a flagrant travesty of the work that Christ has undertaken in the world for the development of individuals and of mankind in general. It is a denial of the original unity of mankind predicted in the universal work of redemption which Christ came to carry out in order to restore in all men without distinction the marred image of God." Apartheid is today's version of slavery, all those who try and modify it must be warned like slavery the only action that must be taken is to abolish it! It is cancer that eventually will destroy those who practice it. Apartheid is sin, a titanic rebellion against God and destroying people created in God's image. Realistically, we must encourage every effort of solution in seeing clearly that racism can easily triumph and that only afterward will we be horrified to wonder how a nation could have let itself be led into allowing conflict and hatred to win over the powers of love and reconciliation. Some of us must document the tragedy so that at least we will not lie to history, and we must go on acting as though we had a chance, because we believe that God is on the throne. He did not abdicate ♦ His word still demands "Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!" (Mk. 1:15)

This is why it is the Church's responsibility to proclaim that, faced with these inequalities, injustices and aberrations, the peoples of the earth must repent and change their mentality and behaviour. The Church's calling is to work for the establishment of a worldwide society and to call men and nations to repentance. To be complacent in the face of the world's need is to be guilty of practical heresy.

The sin of neglect has its origin in the absence of hope.

The embracing of "One Hope" for all mankind, I sadly find more often in people and groups outside the Church it saddens me, because I owe all I am to the Church. I very often hear not in God language these folk articulate very deep thoughts about God, ♦ they express holiness, justice and caring in a way that very often makes some Christians look and feel "shop soiled ♦ second hand". Are situations such as these, becoming living symbols of hope? Are these the real pilgrims of hope, that we as fellow travellers fail to see as such? Perhaps we see them as tourist attractions instead of the very judgment of God on us? Therefore in a number of ways people are attempting to be more explicit about their faith. I believe that these people are discovering God's Word for our times. However radical some people find such views. I find that these people are drawing attention to the fundamental human questions involved, not looking for solutions elsewhere but very often demonstrating it through their reckless commitment to Christ and people, their deep yearning after justice and holiness for all those who want to claim it.

On the South African scene the price such people pay of all races is intimidation ♦ harassment, imprisonment without the furnishing of reasons and family very often not knowing where their loved ones are. Others are banned, placed under house arrest ♦ and yet churches in general are full ♦ lots of people will tell you they are filled with the Holy Spirit ♦ South Africa sold more Bibles than even the U.S.A.! And my people ♦ the voteless and voiceless ♦ come and they say to me, "Abel, what do you say of these things ♦ can such people claim to be Christians?" I pause, my heart bleeds ♦ my spirit is torn, there is excruciating pain in my body, my mind boggles. I speak and say, "I see that there on a lonely hill in the hearts of such people Christ is crucified again and again. A young black girl stands up and says, "Father, forgive them they know what they are doing." Yes, she replies I know I did! Is it perhaps that such people have come to grips fully with what Dietrich Bonhoeffer termed "When Christ calls a man He bids him come and die." When oh when will humankind learn. When Oh when will we not only hear but put

into practice the great commandment (Mk. 12:30-31.) How can we continue to profess our faith and loyalty to God, while at the same time and in the same breath we show such acts of extreme cruelty, not in line with people who are Christians, by daily locking up thousands of people in jails ❖ not because they are [104] criminals ❖ but simply because they possess the moral courage, the intellectual honesty ❖ the depth of compassion, the love for God and their fellowman ❖ not to tolerate the "status quo", wherever it may exist in the world. Perhaps this happens because of the absence of a strong, dynamic and caring community. Such people are embracing one hope for me when they protest against all forms of injustice ❖ while many people are sitting idly by, while thousands of men and women in terms of some country's "massive security laws", simply rot away in jail. How in the name of a Christ of compassion ❖ can we face God ❖ when we see children throughout the world dying from malnutrition? While others wallow in luxury and, in fact die from luxury? It seems to me that to give a firm affirmation to Christian hope does not lie in paying lip service to the process of change, but by being engaged in genuine efforts to establish a world society based on Christian hope, a society where the colour of a man's skin will no longer be the deciding factor; a society in which suspicion and fear do not play an important part in the hearts of man if and when they have to make decisions.

Yes, peace with God means opposition to the world, for the promised future is like a thorn in the flesh of our present situation, then we would, in one way or another, have reconciled ourselves to it. It is however, precisely the hope that God has given us through the resurrection of Christ that makes it impossible for us to be satisfied with the present: Hope keeps us dissatisfied until the day when all God's promises will be fulfilled. This hope makes the church a continual "agitation" in any community that wants to retain the character of a "permanent city". Peter in his letters on hope reminds us "Be ready at all times to explain (to give an account the hope you have in you". (Peter 3.15)

However one sees hope being celebrated on the Cape Flats where I work in events like celebrating Palm Sunday ❖ with the ringing assurance that they must walk this road to Calvary, however they are not dismayed, neither are they discouraged, principalities and powers cannot destroy them, here are persons who passionately believe that the vibrations of hope will be heard all around the globe

◆ that they are a new people reborn in hope that rests on Christ, therefore they are destined for liberty ◆ heralding the joyous assurance of the Resurrection! Christian hope is the hope of resurrection, it is the protest of righteousness against sin, of life against death, of glory against suffering, of peace against disruption of this world. The promise of God arouses hope in Christians. That is why the New Testament says "Christ in you the hope of glory" or, rather "the glorious hope". (Col. 1:27) Christian hope is God's activity and presence in the world. Again this hope, is specific ◆ it is based on the presence and activity of God in Christ. God who sustains and perfects His creatures, and also demonstrated His work in Christ and His cross, is the ground of Christian hope. Christ is the ground for optimism in human achievement, guided and promoted by divine grace it can in the long run be brought to good effect. Thus Christian hope is a dynamic concept. "For it was by hope that we were saved; but if we see what we hope for, then it is not really hope. For who hopes for something he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." (Romans 8:24-25)

Christian hope is eschatological, in the sense that it looks forward to the consummation of the divine work in creation and reconciliation ◆ this does not imply that it is an escapist route ◆ not an offer of "pie in the sky" ◆ Christian hope has to do with the present ◆ where we are now ◆ in this world ◆ and the final consummation depends to a large extent how we cooperate with God's work now. While it is right to emphasize God and His work as the ground of Christian hope ◆ we need equally to recognize that in the Christian life there is need for man's obedient responses. Christian hope is an outgrowth of Christian faith. Hope produces assurance, the latter stimulates discipleship, but faith is the mother-factor. Faith can withstand various disappointments ◆ thus hope remains alive ◆ Abraham is a good example (Gen. 12:1-7) requiring patience ◆ waiting for God's promises. [105] Christian hope is God's offer to man. It is the hope of the resurrection. Christian hope is a struggle for righteousness against sin; life against death; glory against suffering; peace against disruption. To those on the way to death ◆ Christian hope is the promise of eternal life. Life is transitory yet a blessed resurrection is promised. Life is misery yet hope for blessedness. It sees hunger and thirst yet super abundance of good is promised. It is Christian hope that makes life worthwhile. No matter how hard we try to ignore it ◆ God sets it before us. The

only answer to death is the hope God sets before us ♦ The hope of eternal life. Loved ones are buried, but God promises resurrection ♦ absent from this earth yet God promises that they are with Him. Earthly death fades away in the presence of eternal life. This is the hope God sets before us as we move towards death.

How vividly I still remember an incident of nearly thirty years ago. Travelling miles on a bicycle to go and officiate at a funeral on a farm ♦ a three year old baby died ♦ after a short service we walked to the far corner of the farm, the mother, four elderly women, myself with a wooden coffin on a bicycle ♦ we arrived and the grave was too small. I took the pick ♦ the mother took the spade, with tears flowing down her cheeks, the African sun pouring out its fury. I saw hope as a woman digging the grave to bury her child. Have I learnt without hope, faith lapses into "little faith" (Ma. 16: 18) and eventually into dead faith. This faith that leads us onto the path of true life, but it is hope and hope alone, that keeps us on that path. Christian hope was an anchor. Our anchor is in the eternal, grounded in God and in the power of His Risen Son. Christian hope hinges on a person ♦ Jesus Christ, because He was raised and lives for ever (1 Peter 1:5) Jesus is our High Priest ♦ the forerunner, securing our hope. Jesus' death was a sacrifice for our sins ♦ opening the way to forgiveness and the Kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Christian hope must be claimed. It is set before all men ♦ men need to forsake all and surrender to Christ. Christ is the only refuge for sinful men and world. To live without Christ is to live without hope. Surrendering to Christ allows Jesus to enter our lives as Lord. Conversion is a matter which affects the entire society. God's ultimate purpose is not simply new hearts, nor even simply new people, but a new earth, an entire new humanity and society. God intends to make something of this visible not only in the Church but also in the world. Conversion means a change in direction ♦ a change in life, working to bring about another kind of society ♦ based on love, peace, joy, sisterhood, justice and righteousness. The new birth, that is repentance and conversion, entails a repudiation of all forms of human degradation on the level of individuals, politics, economics and society, and the decisions to act that now flow in a different direction. It implies a certain break with conceptual traditions and the habits of one's surroundings, a critical attitude toward local conformity be it social or political. In a word, death to oneself, a new life, in both the individual responding to his calling and the community of believers on the

path of sanctification, implies a new social and political behaviour. Christians who live by faith are forever torn anew from the limited and perverted life of the "old man" and from their natural sociological environment in order to put on the "new person". And this ongoing conversion is always expressed in concrete terms by a real change of attitude toward human relations, in politics and society. There is no conversion to God that does not lead one to consider his neighbour in a new light. The new life comes by breaking racial, national and religious barriers, and all others that divide humanity, to liberate man for community existence. The life of the Church, when it is directed by the renewing action of the Holy Spirit, is therefore made manifest in a continual renewal of all human relationships. In it the "new person" that makes his Kingdom manifest here below.

This life in the Church includes, [106] then, both a renewal of individual relationships between Christians within the community and the participation of this community and each of its members in the greater combat Christ is waging on the outside for the renewal of society and the world.

Hope is the fanning of God's Eternal Wind "The wind blows wherever it wishes. . ." (John 3) . The breeze that God allows to blow. Over those who are burnt and scorched in the heat of the day. This Jesus is with us as the Spirit who blows where he wills and transports us to new shores. The Spirit is the Spirit of God adventure, of liberation, conversion, the Spirit who enables us to cooperate in the Kingdom. Hope is God's lifeboat to the Church society and world so that she may not sink in the waters of silence or indifference. A Church with a clear vision of her purpose, of her destination as she remains faithful to her Lord. Hope for me as a Black South African is my complete faith in the integrity of the poor, out of their eyes and from their lips I often see and hear that the source of all hope will continue to fill us with joy and peace. Here exists a strange paradox ❖ who looks for the first of hope amongst the poor? Yet it is there ❖ rooted in reality, born out of despair. Hope is wrestling with despair and emerging as "more than conquerors through Him that loved us". (Romans 8:37). Hope is saying to mankind you cannot live without God. Hope is making an appointment with God and with the future that is wrapped up in the past and unveiling itself in the present ❖ faith secures it ❖ love believes in it, hope demonstrates it.