

DR KHOZA MGOJO

BLACK METHODIST CONSULTATION

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PORT EDWARD HOLIDAY RESORT

Programme Director

Members of the Mgojo family

Chairperson of the Black Methodist Consultation

Leadership of the Methodist Church

Distinguished audience, ladies and gentlemen.

1. THESIS 1 – INTRODUCTION

I am deeply humbled and honoured by the invitation to address you and be part of this prestigious lecture when we commemorate a patriot, a theologian, scholar, teacher, freedom fighter, preacher, husband and father. I am grateful to the family. I am here to honour them and honour their late mother, Stella, whom I knew very well. I would like to thank Dr Khoza Mgojo's children for all the love and support you were to him, a nest for him from the winds, floods, and tsunamis of this world. We are commemorating a patriot, a theologian, scholar, teacher, freedom fighter, a preacher, and above all, a caring pastor who devoted his love and energy to supporting aged.

In church he was a struggle hero, the one who lived the values of the Gospel and whose life prayer was important. He was an anchor that held together diverse characters.

2. THESIS 2

This is my third invitation to the Black Methodist Consultation as a guest speaker. Thank you for affirming me. I am proud of the Black Methodist Consultation. I have seen you grow and expand. The inclusion of women as active participants has really warmed my heart.

Thank you for sustaining this tradition of the annual convocation of Black Methodist Consultation, a heritage from one of your founding pioneers, Rev Ernest Bartman. The convocation provides a safe space for deep encounter, exploration and dialogue to find new ways to move forward. We have a moral obligation to record our history. Quoting Professor Z.K. Matthews when he was addressing the 44th National Conference of the African National Congress (ANC) in December 1955, “we must place on record for the benefit of our readers, especially the rising generation, something of the rich heritage or endeavour by their forefathers which they might emulate or from which they might draw inspiration”. He went on to say, “I believe it is difficult if not impossible to inspire people who know little or nothing of what transpired before them. Such people are apt to imagine that everything in the world started when they were born and will end when they pass out of existence” (*Imvo Zabantsundu*, June 3, 1961).

We are told that “today theologians draw on the riches of African spirituality, culture and tradition to highlight the contributions which African Christians can bring to the world in the 21st century”.

There have been writings before on African religious leaders. An example is “F.Z.S Peregrino’s portraits of New African religious leaders in his newspaper South African Spectator in the 1900s and Pixley ka Isaka Seme’s portraits of New African lawyers and political leaders in *Tsala ea*

Batho in the 1910s were fragile constructions, while H.I.E. Dhlomo's portraits of Zulu circumscribed".

No doubt his library and all his documents, which include his thesis, papers he has written, sermons, minutes, and so on, are well preserved at your homes.

In church Dr Mgojo was a struggle hero, one who lived the values of the gospel, and in whose life prayer he was an anchor that held together one's diverse characters, and in worship he found his being as a child of God.

3. THESIS 3 - WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE THIS CHAIR

It is my hope that these lectures will lead us to think together and inspire each other and achieve more of what we could once only dream about. Maybe the idea of an establishment of the KHOZA MGOJO CHAIR at one of our universities or seminaries is a possibility, if it has not been done already. In April 2019, I participated in a launch of the University of South Africa in Partnership with Luthuli Museum. "The lecture explores the complex relationship between politics, ethics, language, culture, knowledge and Artificial Intelligence in the Fourth Industrial Revolution".

"The tension also lies at the core of what it means to be human. This is a never-ending task in the pursuit of socio-economic justice and freedom that the Albert Luthuli Research Chair challenges us to undertake under the banner of the University of South Africa as an "African University shaping futures in the service of humanity".

There are issues and challenges that are surfacing in the world today. They are issues that demand interdisciplinary approach and research because the prophetic voice of the Church in South Africa and in the world will always be needed, today and in the years to come.

It has nothing to do with what is really the magical idea of “foretelling the future”. It is about bearing witness and speaking truth and is only about the future in the sense of alerting us and warning us of the consequences of our actions. Prophecy recalls us to the word of God, to morality, to justice and righteousness, in an often unjust and dishonourable work.

Dr Mgojo, and millions of others have left us with a legacy of faith, struggling for justice, combating racism, what Dr Allan Boesak refers to as “church activism”.

Allan Boesak says the “church activism we are speaking of is not the institutional church, but what Martin Luther King Jr called the church within the church, a true ecclesia and the hope of the world”, driven by a radical gospel of justice, hope and liberation.

4. THESIS 4 – CAPTURING THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Historians who write and reflect on revolutionary changes in societies that take place within a generation have a term for this phenomenon. They call it the “privileged moments of history” (see Arment Maltell on *Southern Europe and South Africa*). I consider Dr Khoza Mgojo and many of his generation, including myself, to be one of those who lived privileged moments of history. Dr Mgojo and some people in this room are also the privileged people of this country for participating in the transformation of this country and your church. I remember as a student at Lovedale in the early fifties, Reverend Mokitimi coming from Healdtown as a visiting preacher. The joy, pride and excitement. We called him “Bomber”! Just to listen to a black leader preaching. The entire leadership of the missionary churches and institutions was ‘white male’. We were yearning to hear the voice of our own, preaching.

Throughout the 20th century South Africa became a global theatre of the anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggle, generally symbolised and became a workshop of combating racism hence the unprecedented number of four Nobel Peace Prize Laureates, Luthuli, Tutu, Mandela, and De Klerk, Luthuli being first. We were a global experimental laboratory for struggle and justice, a pioneer in a homegrown political settlement, and our Truth and Reconciliation Project.

5. THESIS 5 – INFLUENCES IN MGOJO’S LIFE

The Reverend Dr Khoza Elliot Mgojo was born in April 1932 in Ixopo, KwaZulu Natal. He was an intellectual, but his words and his life forever simple. Like all of us of that generation, he grew up in a rural community and remained rooted in his rural upbringing. He had lived and studied abroad. He was equally comfortable among rural and urban circuits. We thank God for all that he did, and today celebrate and honour him and share lessons from his generation. I hope that this presentation will use leadership attributes of Dr Mgojo as a beacon and guide in our quest for solutions and leadership models to tackle challenges of our time.

I met Dr Mgojo in Durban, Natal in 1958. I was then working as a Social Worker for the World Affiliated Young Women Christian Association. He was part of a team of ministers that were engaged by the Methodist Church in and around, working under the able and competent leadership of Reverend Enos Sikhakhane who was the Superintendent. We had lived through apartheid from 1948, but privileged to have gone to boarding schools and acquired professions. We were also privileged to have gone to church schools and acquired values that gave us a firm foundation. It

was a time of repression and resistance, Defiance Campaign, the drafting of the Freedom Charter, and the 1959 potato boycott.

6. THESIS 6 - WOMEN

I am proudest about my lifelong passion for rights of women, especially the work of advancing the activism of women in church and society, particularly at all levels of decision-making. I am passionate about the visibility of women, which is there with Manyano women, but I am referring to the quality of their interventions and contributions to advancing the cause of women. It will be of interest to you to know that the Methodist Women of the United States of America were major funders of the Women's Department of the World Council of Churches. Mrs Rose Catchings donated generously to the programme of our struggle.

I pause to congratulate the Methodist Church of Southern Africa for appointing the first woman Presiding Bishop, Reverend Purity Malinga. She is our pride and joy in this nation. Dr Mgojo was one of the supporters of Bishop Purity when she was first made a Bishop in Natal, for the record! The Methodist Church also supported my appointment as a General Secretary of the SACC. This meant the changing of the SACC Constitution which had stated that only ordained persons should hold this office.

I never had an opportunity to meet Dr Mgojo's mother, but his mother was very central in his life. At times of excitement and joy, he would complement himself with his common, "unyana ka MaDlamini". When agitated he would also say, "Ndifung' uMaDlamini" (I swear by my mother). This is a common Nguni culture of affirming your mother, but also

of affirming those positive traits from your mother. On many occasions I would greet him in the same way!!

Sometimes mothers are not recognised. There are no ways of honouring them, but they are there against all odds and adversities, carrying the families, communities and societies at large on their broken backs.

I appreciate the awareness and sensitivity that I observe on gender and racism issues. Under Apartheid black women were subjected to racism and sexism. In the book entitled, *“Contesting Post-Racialism: Conflicted Churches in the United States and South Africa”*, by Smith, Ackah, Reddie, Tshaka (2015), Anne Marie Mingo says in her essay on *“They must Have a Different God Than our God”*.

“Both before and after the emergence of black liberation-oriented theological constructions in the mid-1960s, few black women were given access to the hallowed halls of academia or to prominent pulpits, yet many women worked out a lived theology of justice and freedom based on their experience of injustice in their encounters with white Christians”. I define a lived theology as an understanding of God obtained through everyday experiences with God. As a result of personal revelations of God, which are disclosed in the mundane, a lived theology addresses concrete and practical aspects rather than distant theories, shaping ethical ways of engaging the world” (p. 113).

It is his mother, I believe, who shaped his ethical ways of engaging in the world. No doubt she was also a woman of faith, coping with racism and patriarchy. Our mothers were considered to be inferior and nameless but nurtured leadership, under extreme difficulties of all forms of humiliation.

When we shared stories of our backgrounds and growing up, he would relate in our conversations on women and poverty his discomfort of rural women, who used the corners of their handkerchiefs as purses for their small coins they were giving to the church offerings.

7. THESIS 7 - METHODIST CHURCH INCUBATION

The Methodist Church followed its tradition of training their pastors and sending them to different circuits under the supervision of the Superintendents. These circuits exposed Dr Mgojo to both rural and urban congregations that included Ecibeni in Marubeni Circuit, in Libode under the leadership of Reverend Douglas Ntshinga; in Clarkebury, under the leadership of Reverend F. de Waal Mahlasela. He was then sent to an Evangelist School in Ncambedlana, under the leadership of Reverend Socikwa, where he excelled in his studies of the New Testament. After that he went to Colana. He was then sent to John Wesley College to go and teach.

He became the Chairman of the District of Natal West. He was the first black person to hold this position. He performed very well in spite of the earlier doubts by some members of the church who were not familiar with black leadership in the church.

Dr Mgojo, together with others, played a very important role in the transformation of the Methodist Church as it related in particular to the affirmation of black leadership as well as the appointment in 1982 of Reverend Stanley Mogoba as the General Secretary of the Methodist Church, replacing Reverend Cyril Wilkins. I was very delighted to receive reports of the recognition of the black leadership in the Methodist Church.

One of the most important contributions made by the Black Methodist Consultation at the time was to influence the delegates to appoint again a Black Presiding Chairman.

One of the greatest challenges Dr Mgojo faced as a leader was the breakaway, in 1978, of the Methodist Church. The leadership of the Transkei government wanted the Methodist Church in the Transkei to be

independent of the United Methodist Church and break any links with them.

Dr Mgojo tried to convince the Methodist Church leadership in the Transkei to remain. The persuasion was on biblical, theological, and historical reasons. The team that had been negotiating found itself exposed to violence and hostility from their fellow Methodist members.

Ten years later, in 1988, they re-united. Hundreds of Methodists from many parts of the circuits gathered to a service of reconciliation. The people of God had been yearning for this day to come. Dr Mgojo was the preacher at this service. “Ningazilahli izikhwenkane zo Bawo wenu”!

8. THESIS 8 - INFLUENCES IN HIS LIFE

No doubt Dr Mgojo was like many of his generation, an admirer of Chief Albert Luthuli, who said, “For myself, I am in Congress precisely because I am Christian”. He must have listened to Luthuli’s popular teachings where he said, “The road to freedom is via the Cross”.

In this era also was the prophetic witness of Father Trevor Huddleston. His popular book entitled, “*Not for Your Comfort*”, caught the imagination of all those who were involved in the struggle.

There were also remarkable leaders of the time, such as Dr John Dube, Reverend James Calata, Pixley ka Isaka Seme, Charlotte Maxeke, amongst others, who were vocal and were activists against oppression, injustices and apartheid.

Dr Mgojo was fortunate to have an international exposure for his studies. He studied in the United States of America at the University of Chicago, and at Harvard at a time of transformative encounters in the USA.

The USA and South Africa are the two countries in the world that are considered to be “leading purveyors of racial hierarchy”, even in the churches of both countries, hence the black theologians are writing and researching what they refer to as “Religion and Race” (*2019 Conference in Nairobi by Hekima Institute*).

Chicago became what was then called “black ghetto”. This is a city that Martin Luther King Junior chose to focus on when he turned attention to racial injustices. Even today, it is a city that suffers from problems that are the legacy of white racism. For Dr Mgojo, a South African student, living in Chicago was an eye-opener to the struggles of black people in other parts of the world and in particular in the United States because of its history of slavery.

I am sure those of you who have been to seminaries have heard of Dr James Forman. He was referred to as a black militant leader who interrupted Sunday morning at New York at Riverside Church. He presented what got to be known as a Black Manifesto.

Then there was new learnings on the reparations which was demanding that churches must increase their role in development and move toward social justice.

The best of all was the exposure to the Black Church Activism and multiculturalism. He was exposed to the struggles of a free, democratic society, struggling with the church on issues of class, race and gender and also to the concept of liberation theology.

One of our own, Reverend James Lawson, pastor of the Centenary United Church, Memphis was said to be the most articulate living advocate of non-violent, social change. He was the Chairman of the Black Methodist of Church Renewal and organised a sit-in in the 1960s.

9. THESIS 9 - DR MGOJO THE ECUMENIST

Dr Mgojo's energy on ecumenism came from his Methodist roots which was his incubator. The Methodist Church has a long history in its existence in bilateral dialogues with other denominations. It is no surprise that it supported the World Council of Churches' 1st Assembly in 1948. The Methodists were led by John R. Mott and C Bromley. Today there are 31 national Methodist churches who are members of the WCC and two of the five general secretaries were Methodist, Philip Poter and Amelio Castor (*Dictionary of the Ecumenical*).

The Methodist Church had been very active in the SACC prior to the phase when Dr Mgojo took over the leadership in the 1990s as its President. The Methodist Church continues to give leadership to the SACC even at these difficult times. Bishop Siwa has been in the leadership. As a reminder to all of us, the statement of the National Convention of South Africa has made a call to the people of South Africa.

It was the SACC Unburdening Report, together with the revealing work conducted by the investigative journalists, academics, and the Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse. It was the SACC Convention that raised the challenge of State Capture and sought to persuade South Africans to focus on State Capture (See National Convention of South Africa September 2017 – September 2018).

Dr Mgojo was one of the leaders of a number of protests organised by the SACC, and one of the biggest protests was the "The Standing for the Truth Campaign". Church leaders, pastors, and the lay leadership protested against the government of South Africa. Prior to this, meetings had been

held with the government of the day. Different church leaders organised these protests in their provinces.

He was a lecturer and later a principal of the Federal Theological Seminary in Pietermaritzburg. Under Apartheid this Seminary had been expelled from Alice. It is a great pity that this ecumenical venture did not succeed.

Dr Mgojo was committed to give support to refugees who had sought asylum in South Africa but also kept contact with many South Africans in exile. His ecumenism was based on the conviction of unity of the church but also the unity of humankind. He was asked to go to Botswana for a burial of South Africans who were exiles in that country and had been murdered by the Apartheid government. He was also called to bless the graves of Apartheid victims in Mozambique. He exercised his ministry to all those who were in desperate situations.

One of the projects he supported in South Africa was the ministry for the aged.

One of the most important commissions that Dr Mgojo was asked to serve in was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He had been specifically asked by the President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela to join the commission. Mr Mandela felt that “the Methodist Church in South Africa had a very large membership and would be able to reach many families through the church”. He also trusted Dr Mgojo’s stature as a church leader who had participated in the liberation struggle.

10. THESIS 10 – COURAGE TO STAND FOR ONE’S CONVICTION

Dr Mgojo was greatly concerned about the influence of the Communist Party to the African National Congress (ANC). This was at a time of debates on alliances with the ANC. He extended an invitation to members of the Communist Party to join a conversation and dialogue on their relationship with the ANC. The delegation arrived, led by Mr Joe Slovo, “a stalwart of the Communist Party of South Africa from the 1940s, a lawyer by profession, and one of the most able supporters to the ANC from 1950s and was noted as a defence counsel in political cases (Volume 4 from Protests). He was accompanied by Mr John Nkadimeng, a trade unionist and a treason trialist.

There was not much of a dialogue in the beginning. Dr Mgojo stated from the onset that the church leaders were concerned about the influence of the Communist Party. He went on to say the churches do not want a totalitarian system of government in which a single authoritarian party controls the state. Communists are anti-religion. Many church leaders are supporters of the ANC. He also reminded them that Luthuli, Mandela, and Tambo are Christians.

His hard-hitting speech was followed with a dialogue. Mr Slovo reminded Dr Mgojo that the South African Communist Party in Latin America had many members who were Christians, some of which were priests, and pastors. He said here in South Africa too we have Christians who are Communists. His scholarly and historical arguments during this dialogue were impressive. At the end of it all, there were many areas of agreement and respect.

Dr Mgojo was a man of principle and courage. One of the strategies of the ANC in their fight for liberation was the bombing of targeted buildings. Though he supported the ANC, he did not agree with their strategy of targeting buildings which could result in casualties. The decision taken by the Executive was that a delegation should be sent to the African Union Conference that was meeting in Addis Ababa. The delegation would convey a message verbally to the ANC delegates. I was sent and accompanied by Mr Saki Macozoma, Director of the SACC Communication. This message was well received and we were assured that the concern of the churches would be considered.

Dr Mgojo was one of the most respected ecumenists who also served on the panel of the religious leaders of Electoral Justice. In 1998, together with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Reverend Frank Chikane, and Mrs Virginia Gcabashe, Dr Mgojo was an Eminent Guest of the Vatican.

During that phase of the struggle, his colleagues in the Methodist Church were also actively involved in a number of activities. One of the most important activity was the signing of the Peace Accord by government and political organisations and the Rustenburg Agreement with government.

After the bombing of Khotso House, the head offices of the SACC in 1988, the Central Methodist Church, under the leadership of Rev Peter Storey, accommodated the SACC at its premises at no cost.

Dr Stanley Mokgoba's leadership in chairing a special committee that had been established for mediation with residents of Thokoza, the hostel dwellers, Inkatha Freedom Party representatives, and the ANC for peace in one of the volatile situations led to a temporal lull.

Reverend Mvume Dandala undertook one of the most challenging and dangerous forms of ministry in the hostels of the East Rand. He was a

mediator in these hostels where there were daily killings of hostel dwellers from their different factions. This was a long-drawn and demanding project, and after many lives had been lost, the war ended.

The Methodist Church provided leadership, support and vision to the ecumenical movement during this time in South Africa.

11. THESIS 11 – DR MGOJO RECOGNISED

Dr Mgojo received numerous awards. In addition to two honorary doctorates, his accolades include Honorarium Rings by the Chancellor of the University of Fort Hare, which he received with Former President Nelson Mandela, Professor Ephraim Mokgokong, Nkosi Mangosuthu Buthelezi, Robert Sobukwe, Govan Mbeki, and Archbishop Tutu.

He was also named as the Ugu District Best Achiever for 1994 and 2004. Dr Mgojo was also the chairperson of Uvongo Development Centre and he also served as a chancellor for Mangosuthu University of Technology. His many roles distinguish him as one of the most dedicated community workers who brought the church into full service to people.

Dr Mgojo, like many of our leaders who were part of the struggle and transformation have left a legacy for us and the challenge for us is, how we carry the baton for ourselves and the future generations and how we uphold the values that are relevant to every society, and every generation, at all times. These include the fear of God, respect, humility, Ubuntu, work ethic, as well as ethical and moral leadership.

We will forever be uniquely blessed that we were a generation that had to be both witnesses and midwives of our democracy at the establishment phase of our society. We give thanks to God for having a religious man who had deep conviction for social justice which was informed by his faith.

His engagements with communities were value driven. The bonds that Dr Mgojo created through the hundreds of students he taught at seminaries remain steadfast and enduring. We hope that his legacies will be preserved.

12. THESIS 12 – PICKING UP THE BATON?

Many of us who are here are encouraged to pick up the baton and continue with the dream and vision he had. There are many changes that have taken place in our country in these twenty-five years and we must give thanks to God for the end of Apartheid. Our democracy is at cross-roads. We live in a society where abuse of women and children, violent crime and drug abuse, poor education, service delivery protests, poverty, and unemployment have caused a lot of crisis in our nation. But I want to amplify the point that it will not take government alone to solve most of these challenges. Communities and leaders in church and society must play their part in rekindling the society that we are part of.

I am going to remind ourselves of some instances in this country where the church has spoken out prophetically.

The people of South Africa know that the church gathers us for prayer and preaching. We should turn the searchlight on ourselves and ask which one amongst us can throw the first stone? Dr Mgojo would have done so as he had participated in a number of activities and protests.

I would like to recommend that the truth and reconciliation should continue as a programme of churches in partnership with other organisations including the government. Because of our history of racism and deprivation for many, many years the process of reconciliation will demand many years.

The church needs to do something about poverty, and gender inequality. We must understand that we are implicated in these issues ourselves as members of the church. We need to also interrogate our own position in society.

Dr Mgojo kept to the tradition of our Christian forebears. He provided services for the aged. I congratulate those of you who have continued the tradition of services to the community.

South Africa is a great nation with a great potential, and the world expects more from South Africa than where we are. It is the rekindling of our activism informed by profound values and exemplary leadership of icons such as Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, Charlotte Maxeke, Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Griffiths and Victoria Mxenge, Mgojo and many others. This is God's plan for South Africa, and indeed, African renaissance. We can infuse the African philosophy of Ubuntu in reconscientizing the society and mobilising it for self-reliance and development. This will not only bring us closer to our goals of emancipation and social justice, but will also have a redemptive effect on our dignity and sense of self-worth. In this audience and in our communities, there are many Mgojos of our historical moment. It is our collective and individual responsibility to create conditions for such leaders to flourish and be change agents.

Lizalis' idinga lakho by Tiyo Soga

Lizalis' idinga lakho,	Fullfil your promise,
Thixo, nKosi yenyano!	God, Lord of Truth;
Zonk' iintlanga, zonk' izizwe,	Let all the nations of the world
Ma zizuze usindiso	Receive salvation

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