

BMC February Chairman's Remarks 2020

Stand Firm in Courage and Love

Introduction

- Greeting to all: PB's office, Synod District, BMC connexional leadership, Synod leaders and all present in this February meeting in the name of Christ our liberator.
- Welcome: to all present in this meeting especially those who come for the first to this meeting. A special word of welcome to our recently elected Connexional leadership under Rev. N Nomqolo
- We are grateful to the people of NFL for allowing us to meet in their wonderful province and the people
- We meet in dark skies in our life as people of the region and the church under the illuminating light of stars like Gabriel Setiloane

Times of searching

- “ Sometimes we veteran activists simply yearn for the good old days rather prepare ourselves to confront courageously a drastically transformed world that presents new, more complicated challenges. We invoke a time when masses of black people , Latinos, Native americans, along with white allies were on the move, determined to change the course off history. But instead of seeing past struggles as a source of inspiration impelling us to craft innovative approaches to contemporary problems, we frequently replace historical consciousness with a desperate nolstagia, allowing the past to be repository of present political desires. We allow the present to be held captive by the past” A Davies September 1994
- Historical consciousness “ would entail a recognition that our victories attained by freedom movements are never etched in stone.....glorious triumphs of mass struggle can later ricochet against us if we do not continually reconfigure the terms and transform the terrain of our struggle. The struggle must continue.....requires new theories and practices”

The BMC commitment

- Need to move from faces to Ethos
- Need to raise numbers to consciousness
- Strengthen the BMC in key levers of decision areas of the MCSA eg DEWCOM
- Strengthen and revive synod/districts as key centres of influence and impact.
- Reviving the theoretical thinking within the movement and the MCSA.
- Centering the issues of the marginalised in the life of the MCSA
- Holding power accountable within and outside of the church.
- Partnering with other organisation to develop a comprehensive black agenda

- Invest in collaboration and inroads in the youth movement

Reality check of the MCSA

- The missional direction of the church is not as clear as it can guide
- In a transitional stage which brings with it many opportunities and many possible pitfall.
- New leadership in some ways that brings new faces will it translate to a new ethos?
- Expansion of numbers in terms of Synods and thus administration and the CE
- A deepening distrust of institutions in the promotion and maintainance of institutional cohesion
- Deepening and sometimes spreading of conflicts and resultant hurt
- Crisis around stationing integrity and embrace.

- A church that is unable to unite itself around common justice positions so as to give a consistent and coherent public ministry beyond some press statements and some television interviews.
- A church that is flirting with the excesses of Pentecostalism which thrives on emotionalism, titillation, individualism that borders on narcissism and the minister the center of worship.
- Highly ecumenically disinterested church that lives under the arrogance of self-sufficiency that numbs it from the common struggles of the broader church and society at large.
- A church whose economics extracts from the poor as it feeds the life style of the middle class and not using its economic muscle to intervene for the sake of the poor.
- A church that is struggling to get itself out of the suffocating grip of the hegemony of patriarchy and homophobia.

Reality check of the BMC

- Improved attendance and sometimes steady attendance at Connexional Consultation
- Modest strength in some districts/Synods whilst others are wholly weak for BMC functions and have minimal impact in the broader church in the Synod and church at large.
- Unable to recruit and maintain persons who are in key decision making structures of the church at all level.
- Made some breakthroughs at organizational cooperation and inability to deepen those relationships beyond individual adulation to deep organizational relations.
- Inability to influence and center its agenda into the life of the MCSA – Distance between its resolution and the decisions of the church.

- Inability to recruit and invest in thought leadership so as to strengthen the BMC in shaping thinking and action – some of the quality of work in the standing committees does not reflect disciplined theoretical and current research.
- Total failure to impact in a coordinated and direct way the most recent conversation of the church around boundaries and new Synods. – failure to even prepare the BMC itself for life under these new reality.
- Very few signs of life at the local level of the church

Stand firm

- I have decided deliberately to take a unflattering critical stance because at the core of being courageous is the ability to be brutally honest with yourself so as to realise that which lies ahead. I'm very much alert of our successes but I trust those will speak for themselves in reports and committee reports.
- In the light of the above do we give up, do we lose our faith, do we abandon our courage do we give up on Love: that which is godly?

We need to learn these truths

- “This victory is not forever guaranteed”
- “ Beware of those leaders who eloquently rage against white supremacy but identify black gay men and lesbians as devil incarnate. Beware of those leaders who call upon us to protect our young black men but will beat their wives and abuse their children and will not support a women’s rights”
- “ a victim of racism can also be a perpetrator of sexism”
- “ affluent black people are more willing than ever before to write off their poor, oppressed sisters and brothers”

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- “ Why is it not obvious that that any successful effort to save black men is destined to fail if it relies on the subjugation of black women”
- Black elite present their biographies as individual triumph rather than community triumph
- “ a necessary step in winning greater freedom and greater justice is to imagine the world as we want it to be”
- “If we are to fashion ourselves today into agents of social change, we will have to do a lot of work, a lot of work on ourselves, a lot of work on each other, and we will have to try to make sense of what appears to be a really depressing world? AD April 2017

- “ it is a worship that encompasses all of life, so that every prayer for liberation, every act for the sake of dignity, every commitment in the struggle for human freedom, every protest against the sinful realities of this world becomes an offering to the living one for the sake of the kingdom” A boesak

Conclusion

- We can never give up, we will face the challenges we outlined above standing firm in faith with courage, strength and love because we know
- “ Gloom and despondency have never defeated adversity. Trying times need courage and resilience. Our strength as a people is not tested during the best of times. As we said before, we should never become despondent because the weather is bad nor should we turn triumphalist because the sun shines.those who complete the course will do so only because they do not, as fatigue set in, convince themselves that the road ahead is still too long, the incline too steep, the loneliness impossible to bear, and the prize itself of doubtful value” T Mbeki