

THE METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Christian Citizenship Department

P O Box 27615 Bertsham 2013

LINK

JUNE 1988

Volume II: Number 3

Emergency Convocation of Churches in South Africa



Church Leaders Propose
"STANDING FOR THE TRUTH"



The largest gathering of South African church leaders in 20 years was held in Johannesburg on 30 and 31 May in order to outline a plan of effective non-violent direct action to force the South African government to abandon apartheid and negotiate a new dispensation for a non-racial, democratic South Africa.

The idea of a Convocation of Churches was conceived at the last regular meeting of South African Council of Churches (SACC) Church Leaders in early February. These leaders noted the deepening crisis in South Africa by reviewing the deterioration of the national situation since the government's scuttling of the peace initiative of the Commonwealth Eminent Person's Group in early 1986. They also recognised that the efforts of church delegations to the government over that period had met with complete intransigence and had resulted in depression, frustration, and often a sense of having been insulted by the State President on the part of Church leaders.

In his opening address to the Convocation, Frank Chikane, SACC General Secretary, noted that the situation in the country has worsened since that early February meeting. He said that the government had made it clear that it would not even allow non-violent action, or even talk about non-violent action, by those calling for fundamental changes in the apartheid system. The basis of the conflict which has developed between church and state in South Africa "...is not the church defying or confronting the state, but the state defying the Gospel and being in conflict with its demands for society," Chikane said in a recent statement.

The Convocation did its analysis and planning in many small working groups, each of which dealt with a different aspect of the crisis. A model for an on-going national campaign of non-violent direct action by the churches was adopted. The campaign, "Standing For the Truth," will focus on the release of detainees and political prisoners. (More details on page 2.)

Standing For the Truth

The 30 and 31 May 1988 Emergency Convocation of Churches agreed upon a programme of action and a proposed model for its "Standing For the Truth" campaign to bring fundamental change in South Africa. The Convocation committed the participants, first of all, to a programme of effective non-violent action.

The Convocation also adopted an on-going campaign which will focus on the release of all detainees and political prisoners. This campaign will be directed by a national committee as well as by regional and local campaign committees. The national committee will consist of twelve persons, three each from four different groupings: the Convocation, the Church Leaders Meeting, the SACC, and the S.A. Catholic Bishops Conference. The Convocation elected Father S. Mkatshwa, Ms. E. Mashinini, and the Rev. L. Louw.

The Convocation also called for the churches' support for the June 6, 7, 8 National Days of Protest announced by COSATU and NACTU. It was noted that protest during those days could take many non-violent forms and that Christians should be challenged to think creatively about their involvement.

Church Leaders attending the Convocation were requested to issue their own statement of support and encouragement for the proposals.

A basic principle of the campaign is the development of close working relationships between the campaign committees and the churches. The various campaign committees will establish a communications network with church leaders, church organizations, documentation centres and international groups.

There was disappointment among some participants that the size and limited time of the gathering did not allow more extensive participation by church representatives. Much vital work still is required in securing whole-hearted cooperation in the campaign from the churches, particularly at grassroot levels.



CAMPAIGN TARGETS

The "Standing For the Truth" Campaign will focus on certain dates during the year as markers for non-violent

direct action and protest. What follows are some of the suggestions which came from the Emergency Convocation of Churches. Suggestions will be screened and developed by the various campaign committees.

12 June through 17 July:

- Focus on detainees and political prisoners in Sunday worship in local congregations.
- Gifts (flowers, et.al.) to be taken weekly from local congregations to detainees. Gifts to be left even if refused by authorities. Prayers by groups at prisons where detainees are held.
- Organized letter-writing to detainees and to authorities.

12 June: Major services with focus on detainees to mark the repositioning of the State of Emergency.

17 July: (N. Mandela's 70th birthday on 18th): Major services for the release of political prisoners.

Vigil of tolling bells at churches every hour on the hour for ten minutes.

After 18 July: Mass prayer services outside prisons by local congregations, and joint, ecumenical worship actions at prisons.

October: Actions to demonstrate the unacceptable nature of the government's local elections and related "reforms."

December:

- 10th: Actions to focus on freedom of information.
- 16th: Actions to focus on freedom of assembly and the liberation movements.



She Speaks With Wisdom

It was a woman who bore within herself the eternal Word of God made flesh in Jesus Christ. It was a group of women who noted the place where Jesus was buried after his crucifixion, and those same women who were the first witnesses to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. It is women who are mentioned in the Bible as supplying their own means for the support of Jesus and his disciples (Luke 8:1-3). Women were always honored and treated with kindness by Jesus during his earthly ministry, and women are frequently noted as among his faithful followers.

And yet today, despite significant movement in many first world countries in recognizing, at least in principle, the equality of women and their important and widening contributions to society, women around the world continue to experience inequality of opportunity and the injustice of the traditionally imposed second place in family, social, economic, and political settings.

Women play a pivotal role in their families and in the economies of their countries. Yet, women throughout the world are disproportionately represented among the poor, the hungry, the illiterate, the homeless, the unemployed and the underemployed. They remain a small minority at the centres of political power.



Women do almost all the world's domestic work which, together with their work outside of the home, means most women work a double day. Women produce almost half the world's food but own little land.

"Sisters, we must support all of your oppressed sisters the world over. And as women, we must shout together we shall be free, indeed we shall be free"
Sally Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

The number of women-headed households is rapidly increasing. Death, migration, divorce and abandonment are wrenching marriages apart.

Malnutrition affects one in four people and makes them vulnerable to disease. The most vulnerable are the elderly, children, and young mothers.

Women produce 40 percent of the world's food supply--up to 80 percent of Africa's. Despite the key role women play in Third World economies, they have been largely bypassed in development strategies.

The effects of oppression and war on women are devastating. Women are deprived of employment, decent housing, land and sufficient food for themselves and their families.

The majority of the world's women are working for equality, development and peace in their villages and countries. They are seeking ways through grassroots movements to accomplish change.

As concerned Christians who are aligned with women struggling for self-development we are called to hear their needs from their lips and to be advocates for appropriate responses to their needs.

THE ECUMENICAL WOMEN'S DECADE (1988-1998), declared by the World Council of Churches as a decade for growth and development for women within the churches, calls for our support and encouragement for women to strengthen and organize themselves. For more information contact . . .

The Ecumenical Women's Decade
P.O. Box 200, Dobsonville 1865



ON VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE

The quotations on this page are taken from **CRISIS NEWS**, No. 21, published by the Western Province Council of Churches. You may subscribe to **CRISIS NEWS** by writing to the W.P.C.C., 41 Salt River Road, Cape Town.

"There are some forms of violence in which Christians may not participate and which churches condemn. There are violent causes--the conquest of one people by another, the deliberate oppression of one class or race by another--which offend divine justice. There are violent means of struggle--torture in all forms, the holding of innocent non-combatants for example--which destroy the soul of the perpetrator as surely as the life and health of the victim."

From a statement commended by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (1973)

"...to love as we are meant to love also means that we have an obligation to work for justice and to strive to put a stop to evil-doing. Christian pacifists cannot merely sit back wringing their hands and refuse to participate in violent action. Christian pacifism cannot mean inactivity and withdrawal. It has to mean committed and sacrificial action to build a just and righteous society, to prevent violence wherever possible and to intervene in violent confrontations. It has to mean showing a better way of resolving conflicts.

"The church in South Africa has on the whole failed to do these things."

Sheena Duncan, Black Sash and SAOC Vice-president

"You take non-violent warfare somewhere in the world, and people go at it through strikes or boycotts for a two-week period. At the end of two weeks, if five people get killed, the reaction is, 'I told you it wouldn't work.'"

"But if you take armed struggle--where you feel as though you are defending yourself because you have these conventional weapons--and you fight in the streets for two weeks, at the end of the two weeks 20 000 are dead. Nobody says: 'I told you it wouldn't work.' They say, 'That's a war.'"

Joan Baez, American folksinger

Contrary to the contention of the government media, the **LUSAKA STATEMENT** is not a statement on violence. It is the result of a meeting in May 1988 in Lusaka which brought together representatives of anti-apartheid groups from South Africa, Namibia, and other parts of the world--Christian people--to talk about the churches' search for justice and peace in Southern Africa. The relevant passages from the **LUSAKA STATEMENT** read as follows:

"It is our belief that civil authority is instituted of God to do good, and that under the biblical imperative all people are obliged to do justice and show special care for the oppressed and the poor. It is this understanding that leaves us with no alternative but to conclude that the South African regime and its colonial domination of Namibia is illegitimate."

"We affirm the unquestionable right of the people of Namibia and South Africa to secure justice and peace through the liberation movements. While remaining committed to peaceful change we recognise that the nature of the South African regime which wages war against its own inhabitants and neighbours compels the movements to the use of force along with other means to end oppression. We call upon the churches and international community to seek ways to give this affirmation practical effect in the struggle for liberation in the region and to strengthen their contacts with the liberation movements."



TROUBLING LEGISLATION

There are two bills currently being considered in the South African Parliament which are particularly troubling for those seeking just legislation and political freedom in South Africa. For more information than is provided in the brief comment below contact the Connexional CCD.



THE LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL

While this bill (LRAB) does increase unions' access to the court and declare race, sex and religious discrimination in employment an "unfair labour practice" if it is implemented in an "unfair manner," it also limits the rights of trade union members in many crucial areas.

The LRAB . . .

- makes it illegal to hold a strike for the "same or similar" thing within 12 months of a strike over that issue.
- allows employers to sue unions for loss of production caused by illegal or wildcat strikes. The union must prove it did not authorize such a strike.
- does not allow sympathy strikes. Employers can move production from a plant being struck to another plant and by-pass the strike.
- increases an employer's right to retrench a person--no longer must employers follow the "last in, first out" principle.
- allows employers to recognize and negotiate with minority unions, undermining the principle that unions with more than 50% of the work force may speak for the entire plant.
- gives the Manpower Minister the right to nominate anyone of his choice to the industrial court; such nominees no longer would need to be experts in labour law.

THE ORDERLY INTERNAL POLITICS BILL

The intention of this bill is to tighten existing controls on foreign funding for political groups. It would allow the Minister of Justice to declare a person or organization "restricted" if he believes he or it endangers public safety or is being used to channel money from abroad for that purpose.

The prohibition of the use of foreign funds applies to individuals as well as to organizations, and applies to those who "oppose any political aim or object" as well as to those who "further, propagate or pursue" them. The Church does not propagate or pursue political aims or objects. It propagates and pursues the biblical imperatives of justice and peace, but in doing so in South Africa it does and must oppose all the political aims and objects of the apartheid government.

In effect, the government could restrict even the money coming to the MCSA from its overseas partners within the Methodist communion, and in that way control the social ministry of the church.

The penalty for contravening the bill's prohibition is a fine of R20 000 or a fine of twice the amount of the money involved or 10 years imprisonment, or both.

The bill would jeopardise the aid programmes of foreign governments and agencies, such as the European Economic Community, which have supported anti-apartheid groups and activities inside the country.

Amid massive foreign pressure, the government seems to be backing down on the harsher measures of this bill, but other legislation to effect similar controls is likely.

Reform?

Did you know....

According to the HUMAN RIGHTS UPDATE compiled by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at Wits U.:

- An estimated 5 000 people were detained between 11 June 1987 and April 1988.

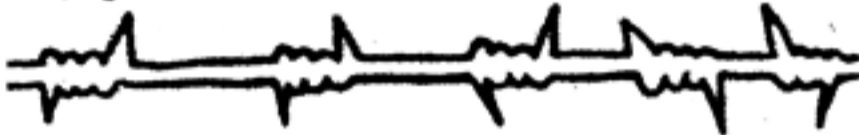
- The number of names of Emergency detainees tabled in parliament—those detained for 30 days or longer—exceeded 2 800. The minister of Law and Order has refused to name those held for less than 30 days.

- About 1 000 have been in detention for the full 11 months of the current State of Emergency or longer.

- About 2 500 people are currently in detention, over 2 000 of them under the Emergency regulations.

- 1 338 children aged 17 or younger were detained in 1987—290 of them were aged 15 or younger.

Children known to be in detention in the Transvaal by ages: 14 years - 1; 15 years - 16; 16 years - 32; 17 years - 40.



EDUCATION

(From SAIRR Social & Economic Update, Fourth Quarter, 1987)

+ Examination results: The white pass rate in the four provinces for 1987 matric exams varied between 92 and 95%. The African pass rate was 56%. The pass rate in Soweto was only 33%. Indian pass rate was 93%; "coloured", 68%.

University exemption: white - 40% to 49%; Indian - 37%; coloured - 18%; African - 16%.

+ Teacher/pupil ratios, revised for 1987 because earlier figures included administrative and service staff in teacher numbers: whites 1:16; Indians 1:21; "coloured" 1:25; African 1:41.

+ Admission to DET schools: According to Dr. Viljoen 506 pupils in the Orange Vaal and 535 in the Orange Free State regions were refused admission in 1987. At Botshabelo 5 200 pupils did not obtain admission.

EDUCATION (continued)

+ In 1986 only 10,3% of TEACHERS IN DET SCHOOLS had a 3-year teaching diploma. Those with at least a senior certificate totalled 41,7%, while 48% had not completed their matric. In 1987 those without a senior certificate totalled 46,4%. (The STAR, 24-02-88)

+ SPENDING INCREASES in rands per pupil for education for the various race groups was reported as follows by The WEEKLY MAIL, 11-03-88:

Group	1971-72	1976-77	1986-87
African	25	49	395
White	461	654	2746
Coloured	94	158	1330
Indian	124	220	1952

+ "The educational attainment of the labour force gives a more accurate indication of the return on educational investment because it assesses the effective supply of human resources available for economic growth. . . ."

"In 1985 25% of the African labour force and 12% of the coloured force had no education at all; 43% of Africans and 39% of coloureds had incomplete primary education. The corresponding figures for whites were 0,5% and 1%." (The WEEKLY MAIL, 11-03-88)



HEALTH

(From SAIRR Social & Economic Update, Fourth Quarter, 1987)

+ The average AFRICAN LIFE EXPECTANCY is 50-55 years in S.A.; the World Health Organisation regards a life expectancy of 60 as a minimum sign of adequate health provision.

According to statistics compiled at the U. of Cape Town African life expectancy in the rural areas is 44 years, compared with 57 years in the cities.

Life expectancy for other races is: white women 74; white men 66; Indian women 69; Indian men 62; coloured women 62; coloured men 54.

+ R45/day/patient is spent at Baragwanath (Soweto); R209/day/patient is spent at Jo'burg Hosp.

BOOKS

BLACK MATRICULATION RESULTS: A MECHANISM OF SOCIAL CONTROL by E. N. Mathonsi. Skotaville: Johannesburg 1988. 86 pp., paper.

This book investigates the trends in African matric results from 1953 to 1983. It provides evidence to confirm suspicions long expressed by individuals and organizations that DET matric results are manipulated to ensure inferior educational standards and credentials for the African community. Unfortunately the author too easily generalizes and argues for some conclusions which are not entirely supported by the facts he presents. However, the book is strong in its presentation of detailed facts, important documents, and alleged malpractice in exam marking.

AN AGENDA FOR BLACK THEOLOGY: HERMENEUTICS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE by Bonganjalo Goba. Skotaville: Johannesburg 1988.

The language is simple and the concepts clearly articulated in this excellently argued treatise on the need for the church to become accountable to the black community in service of liberation. Goba suggests that due to its theological captivity to white church structures the church as a whole is irrelevant to the current struggle in S.A. Because of the banning of progressive organisations it is not unreasonable for the people to look to the church to provide platforms for political expression. He calls for the masses of people to demand that the church commit itself to black goals in seeking change.

APPETITE FOR POWER: BUTHELEZI'S INKATHA AND THE POLITICS OF LOYAL RESISTANCE by G. Mare and G. Hamilton. Raven Press: Johannesburg. 261 pp., paper.

A soothing indictment of Inkatha and an important book which critically examines the man and his movement with clear arguments and abundant detail.



STRANGER THAN FICTION

"Former commissioner of police, Johan Coetzee, told the Cape Town Supreme Court that several factors, including financial ones such as the cost of teargas canisters (R28), could have held police back from acting against "witdoske" vigilantes in

the NYC squatter camp during its destruction in June 1986.

"In an unrelated announcement, SADF chief of staff for finance, Vice-Admiral Bert Bekker, said the Angolan conflict was not placing any extra burden on the taxpayer." (The WEEKLY MAIL, Vol. 4, No. 18)

NO COMMENT: When P.W. Botha addressed a parade in Pretoria to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the police he called on the public and the media not to belittle the South African Police. The SAP was not perfect, he said.

Early in May on one day the MOUTSE COMMUNITY was still deciding how to celebrate the recent Appeal Court ruling overturning its incorporation into KwaNdebele. The next day Minister of Constitutional Development Heunis announced he would introduce new legislation during the current session of parliament to reincorporate Moutse into that northern Transvaal "homeland."

In the 1985-86 financial year the JOHANNESBURG HOSPITAL (white) received R97 million and had total admissions of less than 30 000. In the same year BARAGWANATH HOSPITAL (black) received R94,7 million for 120 000 admissions. Johannesburg had less than 500 000 outpatients while Bara had more than 1,3 million.

UPDATE

Ubulungisa means "justice." The Ubulungisa Programme has two priorities: (1) to hear what the Bible has to say about Scriptural Justice, and (2) to motivate and equip people to move out into church and society in order to practice that Scriptural Justice in the world around them.

There are now 22 trained Facilitators for the Ubulungisa Programme around the country. These Facilitators are available to local groups in Methodist societies and circuits to provide assistance in organisation, contextual Bible study, social analysis, group process, and identifying resources. If you or your group would like to meet with a Facilitator, contact your District CCD Secretary.

Facilitators are trained to help groups to help themselves. Facilitators are a resource for local groups who want to work for Scriptural Justice in Southern Africa. At this time the number of Facilitators by District is as follows: Cape of Good Hope - 5; Grahamstown - 3; Kimberly and Bloemfontein - 2; Natal Coastal District - 3; Natal West - 2; Northern Transvaal - 1; Southeastern Transvaal - 3; Southwestern Transvaal - 3. Another group of Facilitators will be trained in late September 1988.

For more information about forming an Ubulungisa Group, or for a more complete description of the Ubulungisa Programme and how it can serve you and your community, contact the Connexional Christian Citizenship Department, P. O. Box 32957, Braamfontein 2017.



Cut out and post to The CCD, P. O. Box 32957, BRAAMPONTJEN 2017
(Fill in the appropriate blanks below.)

___ Please regularly send me ___ copies of the LINK for my church.

___ Please place my name on your mailing list.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Code _____

CAN YOU HELP? If you, your society or circuit are able to support this effort of the CCD, it will be greatly appreciated. Financial help is needed if LINK is to continue on a regular basis.

The Christian Citizenship Department publishes LINK bi-monthly except for December-January. You will find LINK in your post in early February, April, June, August, and October. 2000 copies of this issue will be distributed.

PLEASE NOTE: The material contained in this publication does not necessarily express the views of the Methodist Church or of the Christian Citizenship Department. It is offered as information that may be helpful in the ministry of Christian citizens and as a focus for their daily prayers. Any material in the CCD LINK may be reproduced for local use; please note the source.



With Christ in the Modern World

This publication of the Christian Citizenship Department seeks regularly to LINK Methodists in Southern Africa, laypersons and clergy, with

- the context within which they are called to be Christian citizens
- resources for use in their ministry as Christian citizens
- opportunities for ministry as Christian citizens
- support and encouragement for their ministry as Christian citizens