

# Bantu Methodist Church of Southern Africa

## 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference held in the Ladysmith Circuit within the KwaZulu Natal District as from the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019 to the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019

### The Secretary's Report:

The Presiding Bishop of the Conference, Ex-Presiding Bishop, the Office of the Secretariat, Office of the Treasury, District Bishops, Connexional WPU President and your Office, Connexional LPU President and your Office, Connexional YMPU President and your Office, Connexional YWPU President and your Office, Connexional YPD President and your Office, Connexional MD President and your Office, Lady District Bishops, Superintendent Ministers, Lady Superintendents, Ministers and Ministers wives, Delegates and the house at large I greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

I take this opportunity to thank the Lord Almighty for being with us in the last 12 months since our last Conference at Umthatha within the Central Transkei District. It is sad that in the twelve months some of our members passed on. May their souls rest in peace.

We are seating here at Ladysmith at a time when we need a lot of prayers in our Country, there is a lot of gender based violence, rape cases, parents killing their children, etc. I would like all the male members present here to do pledge before the end of this Conference. Really what is happening should not be happening in our name as men.

#### **Reflecting on our previous projects:**

Since 2010 our Conference has been very good in coming up with ideas and resolutions for project that are to advance the Church, however we are having a problem when it comes to the implementation. We tried to implement some and then we tend not to give our 100%, as a result we are failing. The spirit that we had in 2010 is now fading. Some of the projects are as follows:

- a) **Volunteer Scheme** – The intention for the scheme that was established in 2011 through the initiative by the YPD was to help the Church in the building of the Head Office. The challenge is that very few members of our Church Volunteered. I would like to thank those members who are still contributing as Volunteers. Where are the other members of the Church?
- b) **Bereavement contribution** – The Conference took a resolution that if one of the Ministers or Minister's wife passes away the Conference has to contribute an amount of R 10,000.00 and Circuits were requested to contribute R 100.00 unfortunately this is not done by the our Circuits and Districts lately.
- c) **Envelopes** – We tried this project with the aim of raising funds to help our building projects, however this project failed. We had intentions of helping the Free State at Vredefort unfortunately the building is still not roofed.
- d) **Calendars** – We printed calendars with the aim of fund raising but also that effort failed. Some Circuits and Districts haven't deposited the money for the sales of Calendars.
- e) **Deed of Trust** – We have been talking about having the Deed of Trust for a long time but the Districts are not giving the Office the required information. I would like to urge the Districts to see to it that the buildings / property of the Church is evaluated and all the necessary information and documentation is handed to the Trust Committee or Office.
- f) **Membership** – We requested the Circuits and Districts to submit the member's details and those details were last submitted to the Office in 2014 and they have never been updated. Even the Roll books that were given to the Circuits but they are not brought back as was the initial instruction.

- g) **Head Office / Operation Book a Space** – This Conference resolved that we should build the Head Office, the sod turning service was held but there are no resources to build. I am saying this because this Conference said last year said the building should start. A four (4) roomed house has been started, foundation laid and some lines of the walls. The main thing is, what is the strategy of this Conference to continue and complete the building? If we are not coming up with the strategy then that building will just remain like that unfinished.
- h) **District Reports by the District Bishops** – In 2016 when our Central Fund contributions went down, the President of the time sent out messages to the Chairmen of Districts asking them to report on the state of their Districts. It is encouraging to see the increasing number of District Bishops who submitted their reports with the minutes. These reports will help us to tackle the challenges and problems early and in future I propose that they form part of the diary of the Conference.
- i) **Central Fund** – When this was introduced we all thought that we are see the promised land and initially the response was good. However, the contributions to the Fund are dropping drastically. You find that most Circuits contribute less than the amount that is to be paid to the Minister, as a result the Conference has to pay the difference. This is a challenge because the funds that are supposed to be dependent on the Central Fund are failing, purely because their portion or allocation is being used for the stipend. Some Circuits just don't contribute a cent to the Central Fund. What will happen if their Minister passes away? Will the Conference be under the obligation to pay the R 10,000.00 for the Funeral to the family of the Minister? That sounds inhuman but needs one to think about it. If the Circuit is not contributing towards Mnike (Central Fund) what happens when that Circuit needs building assistance? Right now we have a long list of Circuits and Districts that have requested assistance but the rate of Income is below the rate of expenditure and it would seem like the Conference is not playing its part while its because the Conference does not have the means. This is a very painful situation, I must say. In this Financial Year, there were months where we had to pay stipend to some Ministers and then send out the messages to some telling them to wait till the Circuits start contributing, is that fair MaBMC? It is understandable that our Country has a high rate of unemployment but how are the other Churches getting the contributions from the members? We need to have some introspection or else if we don't change rather stop Central Fund completely. Thanks to Auditing because it will pinpoint where the problem is.

How I wish that some of the issues reflected above are taken seriously. These are for the benefit of the Church as a whole. We shouldn't look at our own little space but look at a bigger picture. Please let us do the right thing for the sake of our Church.

#### **Church planting:**

To me our Church is not growing the way it is supposed to be growing instead our figures are declining. We need to do something. Izimvuselelo are no longer held and that is not only in our Church. We need to come up with a strategy for church planting and membership recruitment. On the 17<sup>th</sup> August 2019 I received an e-mail from Nkosinathi Mkololo asking for the Church in Bloemfontein. On the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019 I received another e-mail from Hlobisile Moletsane enquiring about our Church in Orlando East. I did not respond because what do I tell them? We don't have Societies there. Our Church does not have Societies in big Cities.

#### **The Issue of Discipline:**

This one is just a plea to the members of the Church, let us talk to each other if there is a problem and resolve it. It is not our culture as the Bantu Methodist Church of Southern Africa to lay charges against each other. However, this year alone I received not less than six (6) letters from different people laying charges or complaints etc. Please let us be disciplined and stop this, we are brothers and sisters in Christ so why all these squabbles.

#### **Church Registration:**

It is my pleasure to report that the Church has been registered with the Department of Social Development as an NPO. Our registration number is 209-574 NPO, we have collected the Certificate from the Department of Social Development. I have also sent a letter to the Department of Home Affairs to Register our Ministers as Marriage Officers. Now we need to register with SARS as a PBO.

**Conference dates:**

For the past few years our Conference dates have been aligned with the School holidays and I think this has been working in our favour as we can see the attendance has been increasing in the past years and the Constitution says that the Conference shall be held in October. However, this year and next year the holidays are in September, next year they will be from the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2020 to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020. I received a number of calls and complaints about the dates of our Conference especially since its has been the YWPU Connexional year. I know this affects the Constitution, I propose that we resolve to align our Conference with the School Holidays whether they are in October or September.

**Bishops who are not married:**

I would like to ask this Conference to come up with a formal method to assist the Bishops who are not married so that Districts don't battle when they need someone to chair the WPU and YWPU Conventions.

Lastly, I was glad to receive the invitation from the Secretary of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa to the formation of African Organisation of the Methodists, which was to be held in Kenya. Well, it came late so we were unable to honour the invite. The fact that we were invited meant a lot to me because it showed me that we are on the map amongst the Methodist family in the continent of Africa.

I wish this Conference success on all her deliberations.

Yours in Christ

Dr. Rev. M.M. Dladla

General Secretary of Conference