

This Council of the SACC calls upon all its member churches to participate in the National Day of Prayer for the people of Crossroads which has been organised for Sunday July 30, 1978, under the auspices of the Ministers' Fraternal of Langa, Nyanga and Guguletu.

It suggests to all clergy that they should preach that day on the importance of family life.

The South African Council of Churches gives thanks to God for the life and work of the Rev Dr Ezekiel Mahabane, and will always treasure its long association with this great man of God who served the Council with devotion and distinction from its inception until his death earlier this year.

Ezekiel Mahabane was present at the historic meeting in Bloemfontein at which the Council was formed in 1936. In 1962, again in Bloemfontein, he presided over the National Conference at which the Council began to take its present shape as a Council of Churches instead of an association of missionary agencies. Dr Mahabane was the product of the missionary endeavour out of which the Council was born and he lived to become one of the wisest and most respected South African Church leaders.

His commitment to the ecumenical movement was complete and is summed up in a speech which he delivered to the Council in 1972.

"I have always been committed to Church union as a vision, now I believe it can become a reality".

As a member of the Council for 42 years, as its President and as its Honorary Life President he sought to make the vision a reality. He represented the South African Churches at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1971 and was for many years a highly respected member of the Central Committee of the WCC. He played a prominent part in the formation of the All Africa Conference of Churches and in World Methodism. Nearer home, he was President of the Witwatersrand Council of Churches and also its Honorary Life President at the time of his death.

Ezekiel Mahabane was a man of the people - ke motho wa batho. He loved them and they loved him. He was never afraid to defend their rights or speak out on their behalf. He was the Methodist Superintendent minister at Sharpeville and of Soweto during the dark and dreadful days of 1960 and 1976, manifesting the supreme courage, concern and compassion which were the hallmarks of his ministry. His love for God and man was deeper than his voice and there was assurance and certainty in those bottom bass tones. When "E E" had spoken, there was nothing more to say for God had endowed him with the gift of saying the right thing at the right time.

When the degree of Doctor of Law was conferred upon him by the University of the Witwatersrand, the citation read:

"By nature he is a man of peace, a man without fear; by training he is a man of negotiation and dialogue. In many difficult situations these qualities have been invoked in the cause of reconciliation between the races".

/Dr Mahabane's

RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE TENTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE SACC

6.

Overseas Investments and loans1. Whereas

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is concerned with the whole life of man, it therefore has a direct bearing on economic issues and investment policy.

2. And whereas

Foreign investments in and loans to the Republic of South Africa and economic organisations within it are made in conformity with the normal principles of business in the free enterprise system, namely to maximise profit by all legitimate means,

and foreign investors do not necessarily regard themselves as bound by Christian moral principles, nor by the political aspirations of people who consider themselves oppressed,

consequently they tend to operate within the framework established by the existing political power structure, and any adjustments to accommodate "humanitarian" concerns or pressures usually take place only within this framework. (i)

3. And whereas

This framework however modified from time to time, still derives from a doctrine and policy of racial separation which the Churches in the 1966 "Message to the People of South Africa" categorically condemned and rejected as a "false offer of salvation" as "depending on the maintenance of white supremacy, thus rooted in and dependent on a policy of sin".

4. And whereas

The economic system of the Republic is primarily based on a system of migratory labour, which denies blacks their basic human and family rights and turns them into foreigners and rightless labour units in the land of their birth (ii) and has for decades recruited and utilized the labour of surrounding Southern African territories without channelling back into them a proportionate share of the wealth generated (iii)

5. And whereas

In a situation of escalating conflict throughout Southern Africa, there is urgent worldwide consideration as to (a) how to bring to an end with the minimum of violence and suffering the South African system of institutionalised violence and the armed struggle, (border warfare, urban terrorism) which threaten to plunge the entire sub-continent into the horrors of racial and civil war, and

(b) how to facilitate orderly transition towards a just, sustainable and participatory society in South Africa; (iv)

/6. And whereas

6. And whereas

To an increasing extent South African blacks, while not denying the values of concessions, ameliorative measures and economic assistance to black projects (particularly in communications, leadership training and community development), reject reliance on palliatives and many even reject all further foreign investments and loans, and accepting the suffering that would ensue, reiterate their demand for justice and challenge all men of goodwill to join their peaceful struggle for liberation and full human rights in the land of their birth (v)

We, as the National Conference of the SACC

- a) Confess that we have tended to conform to the apartheid society instead of presenting a Christian alternative.
- b) are now compelled to consider and decide upon the moral issues involved in economic relationships between the developed and developing world and between the Republic of South Africa and its major financial partners in particular, especially in respect of foreign investment and loans.
- c) believe that foreign investment and loans have largely been used to support the prevailing patterns of power and privilege.
- d) urgently call on foreign countries and organisations, for the sake of justice to revise radically their investment policies and employment practices in regard to South Africa, in such a way as to benefit the total population of South Africa.
- e) commit ourselves to a more faithful stewardship, and a just sharing of the material resources and economic opportunities entrusted to us (vii).
- f) request member churches and observer churches of the Council to consider and support this resolution.

Footnotes:

- i) "The traditional or classical function of business is to maximise profits in a competitive market place"
- ii) a) F. Wilson: Migrant Labour in South Africa (SACC 1972) ch.8
b) "Oor die hele land het ons in die ekonomiese sin van die woord ons bestaan gebou op die teenwoordigheid van swart-mense en hul arbeid". P. Marais (LV Moorreesburg) Die Burger 25.4.1978.
- iii) F. Wilson idem pp. 1-5
F. Wilson "International Migration in Southern Africa" in International Migration Review, vol. 10, No. 1 Winter 1976 (pp 472-3)
- iv) Sprocas Economic Commission, Power Privilege and Poverty "Longterm goals" p. 9 ff.

/ v) In an interview

- v) In an interview with UPI shortly after his release from five months' detention Dr Motlana, former chairman of Soweto's Committee of Ten, "impatiently brushed aside the concessions (made by the South African government since the June 1976 township riots. 'I shall not believe the government is serious about making changes until the pass laws are removed' Argus 24.4.78.
- vi) Sprocas Economic Commission: Power Privilege and Poverty, p 60 ff.
- vii) Sprocas Church Commission: Apartheid and the Church pp. 74-6

INVESTMENTS : DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN : The Role of the South African Churches
We, the National Conference of the South African Council of Churches

Confess that we have tended to conform to the apartheid society instead of presenting Christian alternatives.

Believing that

- 1) We have a responsibility to contribute towards radical peaceful change in South Africa,
- 2) and that, in South Africa specifically, ethics and economics are inextricably intertwined in relation to the apartheid policy,
- A. We call upon all churches in South Africa to examine their investment policies, and especially the basis on which they invest in business organisations to establish what influences they can bring to bear on these organisations for:
 - i) improvement in business practices and in labour relations through negotiations with Black Trade Unions (whether officially recognised or not) and for equitable conditions and opportunities for all employees.
 - ii) extension of the right to family life for all workers (therefore the phasing out of the migratory labour system).
- B. We also call upon all business organisations operating within South Africa,
 - i) to ensure a just participation by all in the economic sphere in South Africa by recognising and negotiating with Black Labour Trade Unions, (whether officially recognised or not); as bargaining partners in the economic process.
 - ii) to implement a housing policy and to make representation to the relevant government departments to allow all employees to enjoy a stable family life in proximity to their work.
- C. We express our solidarity, both spiritually and materially with those businessmen, particularly with small companies, who take initiatives in this regard.

/We resolve that the

We resolve that the Justice and Reconciliation Division shall request and receive reports from churches and report on company practices in accordance with the codes of ethics and report thereon to the SACC Executive.

The SACC, through its National Conference, Executive and principal officers, from time to time speaks to the nation on behalf of the Church.

When it does so in obedience to the Word of God, particularly in respect of Object (X) of its Constitution:

"to promote the study of national and social problems affecting the Church and to bear faithful witness to Christian principles in matters relating to the welfare of all the people of our land, and to take such action and to make such representations as are in accord with Christian convictions and a desire to see in South Africa a social order consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ";

it believes it has the support and backing of the member churches.

In the long run this ministry of public Christian witness depends on close reciprocal relationships between the Council and its constituent members, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Therefore this Conference urges all concerned - church representatives and SACC staff - to give high and continuing priority to maintaining and strengthening this fellowship in the Spirit.

It is desirable that the SACC strengthen its ties with the denominations, through closer consultation, especially where business must be considered in advance. The SACC is concerned about its dependence on predominantly overseas support, and while appreciating this support, would prefer a closer identification financially by the South African churches with its aims and objects.

It is understood that many member churches will if necessary disregard the provisions of the Welfare Acts, where they conscientiously believe them to impinge upon the essential activities of the Church for the credible proclamation of the Gospel. Conference expects that member churches will support the SACC if it takes a similar stand. It is requested that member churches communicate the decision of this conference to the clergy and laity of their own churches.

The Council supports the prophetic ministry of its General Secretary and commends him in prayer to almighty God.

The National Conference of the South African Council of Churches calls on all churches in Southern Africa to give concrete expression to their unity in Christ by organising themselves into multi-racial units on the national, regional and local levels, and that clergy appointments should be made regardless of race.

/In the present situation of

In the present situation of unemployment this Conference calls upon all employers, including Government bodies, local authorities, businesses, churches and private individuals, to do all that they can to provide employment, even at some cost to themselves, and to avoid retrenchment wherever possible.

We, as members of the National Conference of the SACC wish to express with loving concern our solidarity and sympathy with Dr Beyers Naude and other Christians who are absent due to banning or detention.

We want to remind them that, although they are not allowed to be present with us here, we are united with them in the Spirit.

We wish to assure them of our persistent prayers for their speedy release as well as for their well-being and the well-being of their families.

"If one member of the body suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together".

1. Corinthians 12:26

A. Believing that the Church cannot remain passive in this time of crisis and that the present state of separation, division and suspicion can only escalate into bloody Civil War, this National Conference of the SACC supports the many calls which have been made by South Africans for the holding of a National Convention, where all the true leaders of our people can jointly plan for the future.

We believe that only by creating an opportunity for open and honest debate can the fears and hates which exist at present be explored and through God's grace be transformed into dynamic hope for a peaceful future.

Furthermore, believing that it is not sufficient to make merely verbal demands, we urge all Christians to put their faith and commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ before all racial, cultural and linguistic considerations and to prepare to suffer and to sacrifice in order to ensure that such a convention takes place.

B. The Conference requests the Division of Justice and Reconciliation to give most urgent attention to identifying ways in which Christians and member churches could strengthen, support and render effective the demand for a National Convention.

This Council of the SACC views with great concern the limitations placed upon the ministry of the churches to persons held under security legislation.

/We therefore direct the

We therefore direct the Executive of SACC to make representations to appropriate authorities with a view to ensuring that the churches may be able to exercise their ministry to detainees, and in particular that it may be possible for detainees to be visited by a clergyman, to possess a Bible and to receive the sacraments of their church.

We further direct the Executive of SACC to report the results of such representations to member churches by the end of 1978.

This Council abhors the news of the most recent death in detention of Lungile Tabalaza. We express our sympathy with, and our prayers for, relatives of the deceased detainee.

We demand the immediate abolition of Section 6 of the Terrorism Act and in the name of Justice we ask that all those detained have access to a fair trial in an open court of law. We thus uphold, unequivocally, that a person is innocent until proved guilty.

This Conference of the South African Council of Churches deplores the detention of two of its workers, Mr Rommel Roberts and Mr Tom Manthata.

We know them to be men of the highest principles and committed Christians.

In their work they are supported by the South African Council of Churches, which has the fullest confidence in their integrity and Christian motivation.

We regard the work which they have been doing as an essential part of the Churches' witness and ministry.

We therefore call upon the authorities to release Mr Roberts and Mr Manthata or to charge them in a court of law without delay.

This Council further calls upon the Executive of the SACC to pursue this matter with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Police and Justice as a matter of urgency.

This Conference of the SACC notes with concern that the civil authorities have declared their intention of demolishing the Emergency Camp at Crossroads in the Cape Peninsula, which provides accommodation for an estimated 3 000 families, comprising some 20 people.

Demolition of those homes would involve the disruption of the family life of these people, and the destruction of a settled and law abiding community.

In the name of Christian compassion we call upon the civil authorities to allow these people to stay where they are until they can be provided with adequate accommodation in the Western Cape within reasonable distance of their places of work.

/This Council of the SACC calls

Dr Mahabane's hair was white and his face was black, but his heart knew no colour. He served on the Executive Committee of the Institute of Race Relations for 31 years and became its president in 1976. He was uncompromising in his opposition to every form of injustice and discrimination but he was completely free from bitterness recognising in every person the authentic marks of a child of God.

"E E" began life as a herdboyc on the mountains of Lesotho and became a shepherd of God's people. He was Superintendent of the largest Methodist Church in the world, but like the illustrious founder of his Church, John Wesley, "the world was his parish". Dr Mahabane belonged to us all and we remember him with affection and gratitude as God's prophet and our father and friend.

Robala ka khotso, Ntate.