

SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

NATIONAL CONFERENCE, 1983 : RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED

1. EVANGELISM Member churches
SACC

The Conference of the SACC proposes to its member Churches that as a program of action, schools of evangelism are to be instituted in various regions for the need of the people to receive a thorough knowledge of the Bible, to learn how to handle scripture and to further a deep spirituality as a help in their situation.

The Division of Mission and Evangelism is requested to help the Churches in their Missionary endeavour by appointing a co-ordinator to do this work as funds become available. The Conference believes that the churches should make personnel and resources available before we asking overseas donors. However, as motivation for such a program of action in Mission and Evangelism is felt so strongly by the Conference, overseas donors may be asked to assist in this project.

2. PASTORAL CARE OF FAMILIES OF DETAINEES Member Churches

The National Conference of the SACC expresses its concern that many families of detainees are not receiving pastoral care and support from congregations, and it therefore resolves :

- 2.1. to call on all member churches to include regular prayers for detainees in their worship services;
- 2.2. to ensure pastoral care for all families of detainees, and
- 2.3. to observe the third Sunday in October each year as a National Day of Prayer for Detainees.

3. RELIGIOUS LIBERTY Government and
Member Churches

The National Conference of the SACC notes with alarm the increasing restrictions, particularly by Bantustan authorities, on religious liberty and the freedom of churches to practise their belief.

Conference cites the bannings of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and the SACC, in the Transkei; the restrictions on the Lutheran Bishop whose diocese includes Venda; the pressure on churches in Ciskei to cancel their own services on Good Friday in favour of the "National Service" at Ntaba kaNdoda, and the churches in KwaNdebele to appoint only Ndebeles as ministers.

- 3.1. Conference calls on the appropriate authorities to lift the bannings of the MCSA and SACC immediately.
- 3.2. Conference calls on all member churches ministering in these areas to make a united representation for the restrictions to be lifted.

4. UNREST

Government

The National Conference of the SACC is deeply aware of the continuing unrest that pertains in many areas of our country. This has once again been highlighted by the recent events that have arisen in Lamontville and Chesterville. The Conference believes that such unrest will escalate unless positive steps are taken to remove the laws pertaining to the implementation of the Government's evil apartheid policies.

Conference therefore calls upon the Government to defuse such dangerous situations by removing all discriminatory legislation from the statute books of this land.

5. EVICTIONS

Government

The Conference

- 5.1. expresses deep concern over the recent evictions of families particularly under the jurisdiction of the West Rand Administration Board and the Western Cape Administration Board and the ill-treatment and injustice meted out to the "squatters":-
- 5.2. places on record that there are no Christian and moral grounds for leaving these families homeless.
- 5.3. calls on the appropriate government authorities to stop the evictions of families without providing alternative accommodation.
- 5.4. calls further on the Ministers concerned to make adequate provision for housing in these areas as a matter of urgency so that normal family life can be enhanced.

6. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

S.A.C.C.
Member
Churches.

This National Conference, desirous of expressing its unity with Christians throughout the world, therefore RESOLVES :

- To mandate the Executive of the SACC to investigate the feasibility of inviting the World Council of Churches to hold its 7th Assembly or alternatively, one of its standing ecumenical meetings in Southern Africa.

7. DIVISION OF MISSION AND EVANGELISM

S.A.C.C.
Member Churches

The Conference of the SACC requests the Division of Mission and Evangelism to edit those papers submitted in connection with the Eloff-Commission which bring out theological insight. The Journal of Theology is requested to publish a special edition on these papers and to print additional copies which can be distributed to church executives and ministers of the different denominations. In an accompanying letter church leaders and ministers are to be asked to use these theological insights. Further with the help of such agencies as IMP (InterChurch Media Project) and JEC (Joint Education ~~and~~ and ~~the~~ the ~~person~~ person in

8. NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION S.A.C.C.

This Conference makes the following recommendations to the National Committee on Theological Education Consultation to be held on the 12th July 1983.

- 8.1. That the Churches re-examine their ministry which in some instances is elitist and to a large degree maintenance-orientated with a view to developing patterns of ministry which will be more varied and people-orientated.
- 8.2. That the programmes of theological education in our colleges and seminaries be restructured so as to train persons not merely as academic theologians but as ministers - the servants of the people of God in all their varied circumstances e.g. in relocation areas, homelands etc. Such training should also include lay ministers.
- 8.3. That the voice of those who are ministered to be heard in the policy-making bodies of our churches dealing with ministry and theological education.
- 8.4. That trainees for ministry be brought together from time to time and exposed to some of the exigencies of ministry in our South African situation during their period of training.

9. UNIVERSITY QUOTA BILL S.A.C.C.

This National Conference of the South African Council of Churches rejects the Quota Bill for Universities which seeks -

- a) to limit the freedom of Universities to establish their own criteria of admission and to impose racial categories;
- b) to restrict the number of black students from acquiring necessary skills and qualifications;
- c) to entrench further ethnicity in University education
- d) to enforce residential groups areas on campuses.

And therefore the National Conference resolves :

- 9.1. that the SACC convene a meeting of Church Leaders with principals and members of the Academic Freedom Committees of those Universities which have expressed opposition to the Bill.
- 9.2. to explore how Churches may co-operate in rejecting this Bill.

10. FORT HARE UNIVERSITY S.A.C.C.

The National Conference of the S.A.C.C. :

- 10.1. Records with appreciation the efforts of Church Leaders and the General Secretary of the SACC to mediate in the Fort Hare University dispute.
 - 10.2. Regrets the fact that the promises of re-admission or letters of commendation to other universities of the students choice
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10.3. Calls on the University authorities :

- 10.3.1. to re-admit to the university all students who were expelled in 1982 and to permit them to write examinations.
- 10.3.2. to issue letters of commendation to those students who wish to apply for admission to other universities.
- 10.3.3. to refrain from calling in police when university disputes or student grievances are at issue.

10.4. Requests the General Secretary to seek an interview with the Rector and Registrar to seek ways of meeting these requests.

11. WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER S.A.C.C.

The Conference, aware of the value of the Women's World Day of Prayer as an ecumenical venture

- 11.1. Expresses appreciation for the initiative taken by the Division of Home and Family Life to investigate the present procedures of the Women's World Day of Prayer;
- 11.2. Urges the Division to continue the investigation in order to encourage greater participation by churches in the National Committee of the Women's World Day of Prayer, for fuller representation of all the members of churches. To inform member churches and Regional Councils of their findings in order to educate women's groups of the aims and programmes of the movement.

12. YOUTH DESK S.A.C.C.
Churches

The Conference -

- 12.1. Commends the Secretariat of SACC for its initiative in creating a Youth Desk;
- 12.2. Acknowledges the relevance of Youth Work in the present state of affairs in South African history and believes that Christian youth play a meaningful role in shaping the future of our beloved country;
- 12.3. Notes with appreciation the work done and envisaged by the Youth Desk as reflected in the report before Conference; and
- 12.4. Encourages the further involvement and co-ordination of organised Youth Departments of the member churches of SACC.

13. UNEMPLOYMENT PROJECT S.A.C.C.

The Conference having received and noted the report on Unemployment Projects, expresses appreciation for the initiative undertaken in this direction and encourages study and guidance in the field of providing labour-intensive projects; alternative job creation; training for personnel for the tasks to be performed; and an alternative to the present economic system. The Conference further requests that the information gained by such studies should be shared with member churches in order to encourage greater church participation on grassroots level, especially in rural areas.

14. INTERCHURCH AID

S.A.C.C.

Conference noted with appreciation the valuable service rendered by this division, notes the resolutions contained in its report and mandated the ICA Executive to channel the resolutions to the relevant bodies.

15. MILITARISATION

In view of the content of the proposed resolution on Militarisation, the smallness of our numbers at the Conference when this resolution was considered, Conference proposes that this resolution be referred to the Department of Justice and Reconciliation for study action and report back to the next National Conference.

The resolution now referred is as follows:-

"Believing that this society is based on the heresy of apartheid, and that the war being waged by South Africa is in defence of an unjust system, this National Conference of the SACC :

- 15.1. Declares that this is an unjust war and that participation in such a war is not in keeping with the Christian faith;
- 15.2. Calls on the Churches to educate their members on the serious implications for Christians of participating in defence of an evil system;
- 15.3. Calls on the SACC to convene a consultation of the Churches on militarism with a view to setting up a programme to combat militarisation which will -
 - a) educate Christians at the grassroots level on the consequences of the increasing militarisation of South African society;
 - b) work out alternatives;
 - c) form and encourage support groups for those refusing to do military service;

- 15.4. Calls on Churches to withdraw all military Chaplains in South Africa and Namibia, in keeping with the resolution of the Namibia Council of Churches, and to seek alternative forms of pastoral care for those in the defence force;
- 15.5. Calls on Churches to seek forms of pastoral care for the Freedom Fighters;
- 15.6. Calls on Churches to send delegates to the conference on Conscientious Objection in July 1983."

16. S A C C. CONSTITUTION S.A.C.C.

The National Conference confirms the decision of the Executive meeting of the S.A.C.C. held on Monday 20th June 1983 to set up a committee to prepare a revision of the present Constitution of the SACC. It further requests that the committee presents a Report to the April 1984 Executive meeting.

17. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT S.A.C.C.

Since the welfare policy of the State is presently under review it has become urgent for the SACC to convene a Consultation on Community Development to clarify the development goals and modus operandi being pursued by communities and regions of the country. The Division of Development is requested to make a feasibility study before embarking on this consultation.

18. TASK FORCE REPORTS : CONFERENCE 1983 S.A.C.C.

Conference resolves to receive the reports of the Task Forces. It directs the General Secretariat to prepare the reports for publication and presentation to the Executive Committee, which shall decide upon the form and manner of their distribution to the Churches, for study and appropriate action.

19. HOME AND FAMILY LIFE S.A.C.C.

The National Conference resolves that

- 19.1 Regional Councils be encouraged to establish Home and Family Life Divisions in their Region.
- 19.2. Member churches be urged to support ecumenical consultation and action in the area of Home and Family Life matters;
- 19.3. Member churches and Regional Councils be encouraged to avail themselves of material and personnel resources available at SACC National Office;
- 19.4. Member churches and Regional Councils give attention not only to the problem of Home and Family Life but also maintaining healthy family life through marriage enrichment courses.

20. GREETINGS AND APPRECIATION

S.A.C.C.

The National Conference extends fraternal greetings to the Rt Rev Selby Taylor, our Life President, and assures him of our appreciation for his loyal support of the SACC and its witness.

The Conference expresses sincere appreciation to the Rev Joseph Wing for his continued active support of the Council and for his able leadership and willingness to serve, as was again demonstrated at this Conference.

The Conference extends its heartiest congratulations to Mr T S Potter, with whom the Council has a warm and much appreciated association, on his election as President of The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants.

The Conference conveys its warm regards to Mr Matt Stevenson, our Deputy General Secretary and wishes him a speedy and complete recovery from his illness.

The Conference wishes to express its congratulations to the Rt Rev Simeon Nkoane on his election as Suffragan Bishop of Johannesburg.

21. CHURCH AND APARTHEID

Churches

The National Conference of the SACC and its member Churches have repeatedly condemned the unjust political system in South Africa as a contradiction of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and has declared Apartheid a heresy.

Conference therefore, calls upon its member Churches to refrain from:

- a) renting church property to businesses and other commercial ventures that practise racial discrimination in their economic dealings with the oppressed people of our land;
- b) supporting or investing money in industrial, commercial and other institutions that are directly engaged in defending the present apartheid system in South Africa.

22. CHURCH AND APARTHEID

Member Churches

The National Conference of the SACC, having declared that Apartheid is a heresy, calls on its member churches to encourage their membership to evaluate their participation in bodies, agencies, organisations and institutions that constantly undergird the unjust political apartheid system, and to refrain from such participation wherever practical.

23. WORK ON THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA S.A.C.C.
CONSTITUTION BILL, PARTITIONING OF Member Churches
SOUTH AFRICA AND HOMELAND POLICY,
RELOCATION, AND RELATED ISSUES.

- 23.1. Conference, having declared its rejection of the Constitution Bill as a measure designed to deny a common and equal citizenship to all the people of this country in a single and undivided South Africa, requests the leaders of its member Churches to promote workshops and seminars. Conference further notes that these workshops and seminars will be arranged by Regional Councils in co-operation with the SACC Division of Justice and Reconciliation on the above topics for ministers and congregations. Conference further requests that member churches take care that their ministers attend the workshops for ministers and co-operate in the arrangement of workshops for congregations, and that church buildings be made available for this purpose.
- 23.2. Conference advises that member Churches make use of the working papers and study material of the Justice and Reconciliation Commission of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly on relocation issues and on the S.A. Constitution Bill, and that they strive for a joint approach on those issues.

24. MR SIPHIWO MTIMKHULU Government

The National Conference of the SACC expresses its deep concern over the Siphiso Mtimkhulu affair because:-

- a) No official investigation has been launched; nor
- b) has any satisfactory explanation been given for the mysterious disappearance of Mr Mtimkhulu after his release from detention suffering from a severe illness, and his institution of proceedings against the Minister of Law and Order.

Conference calls on the South African Government to appoint an independent Commission of Inquiry into the circumstances of Mr Mtimkhulu's detention and disappearance

25. DETAINEES Government

The National Conference of the SACC, having consistently expressed its rejection of detention without trial, notes with deep concern the extra-ordinarily long detention of Mr David Thobela, Mr Abel Dube and Mr Mordecai Tatsa under the Internal Security Act.

In calling for the immediate release of these three men, Conference also reiterates its demand for the release of all political detainees.

26. RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS Government

The National Conference of the SACC notes the deteriorating situation in South Africa and the growing political conflict that is plunging the country into a civil war.

Conference affirms its commitment to seek change by Christian persuasion and by peaceful means.

Conference therefore calls upon the Prime Minister of South Africa to release all political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia as a first step towards negotiating a peaceful solution to the conflict in Southern Africa.

27. INTENDED REMOVAL OF RESIDENTS Government
OF LANGA, GUGULETHU AND NYANGA.

The National Conference of the SACC views with deep concern the announcement made by the Minister of Cooperation and Development that the residents of Langa, Gugulethu and Nyanga are ultimately to be moved to a new area of residence.

Conference deplores the intended uprooting of the settled communities in these areas and calls on the Minister to reverse his decision.

Conference further calls for the immediate implementation of an adequate housing programme to meet the accommodation needs of all the people.

28. RIKHOTO APPEAL JUDGEMENT Government

The National Conference of the SACC notes with great joy the appeal Court's judgement upholding the Supreme Court's decision in the Rikhoto case.

It notes, however, with grave concern the declared intention of the Department of Co-operation and Development to circumvent the implications of this judgement by imposing the condition that housing be available for the families of those who qualify in terms of Section 10:1(b) of the Urban Areas Act (1945); before they join the breadwinner.

Conference therefore appeals to the Department to accept the ruling of the Appeal Court judgement and proceed to provide housing.

29. GENERAL UNREST AT UNIVERSITIES Government

The National Conference of the SACC noting the recurrent unrest at Turfloop and more recently at MEDUNSA appeals to the authorities :

- 1) to be more sensitive to the aspirations of the students;
- 2) to liaise more closely with the Student Representative Councils;
- 3) to refrain from arbitrary expulsions;

~~4) to refrain from calling the police at the slightest~~

30. JUNE 16TH REMEMBRANCE

Government
Member Churches

The National Conference of the SACC notes with grave concern that there is recurring unrest around June 16th each year and believes that this could be avoided if the authorities concerned would exercise sensitivity and self-control.

It is noted that such actions as road blocks, the humiliation of body searches and the visible presence of police near the venues of annual services of remembrance are provocative.

Conference having declared June 16th as a National Day of Prayer;

calls once again upon its member churches to observe this day as such;

and requests the authorities to accept that June 16th has become for the majority of the people of this country a National Day of Mourning.

31. EDUCATION

Government

This National Conference of the SACC appeals to the Government to change its ethnic system of education and to institute free and compulsory education for all children in our country.

32. PRETORIA AND BLOEMFONTEIN BOMB BLASTS

S.A.C.C.

The National Conference of the South African Council of Churches requests its Commission on Violence and Non-Violence to address itself to the problem of the spiralling violence as represented by the Pretoria Bomb-blast and the reprisals on Maseru and Matola.

33. NATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE

S.A.C.C.
Member Churches

This National Conference of the SACC welcomes Archbishop Hurley's call for a National Christian Conference to be held in 1986;

33.1. Recognises the need and urgency of such a Christian Conference;

33.2. Requests the General Secretary to call a meeting of Church Leaders to consider this idea and undertake preliminary planning.

34. HUMAN RIGHTS TASK FORCE

S.A.C.C.
Member Churches

Conference resolves that a SACC Task Force on Human Rights be established for which each of the SACC member and observer bodies appoints one delegate and that an administrative arrangement be made to share travel expenses between all delegates.

35. REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA CONSTITUTION BILL S.A.C.C.

- 35.1. Conference resolves that no submission be made by the SACC to the Select Parliamentary Committee on the Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill.
- 35.2. Conference resolves that the SACC write a letter to the Secretary of Parliament on the Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill giving reasons why it makes no submission.
- 35.3. Conference resolves that the SACC makes a public statement on the preamble on the Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill after it has been approved by the Praesidium.

36. WORKSHOP FOR DELEGATES FROM REGIONAL COUNCILS ON JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION ISSUES. S.A.C.C. Member Churches Regional Councils

- 36.1. Conference requests the SACC Division of Justice and Reconciliation to organise a workshop for the persons delegated by member Churches and Regional Councils to work on Justice and Reconciliation issues, with the following aims:-
- 36.1.1. to study and investigate the Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill;
- 36.1.2. the partitioning of South Africa and its Homeland Policy;
- 36.1.3. relocation of Black people and its implications;
- 36.1.3.1. to consider related issues;
- 36.1.3.2. to gather and to draw attention to resource material on these topics;
- 36.1.4. to consider and prepare workshops for ministers and for congregations to be arranged by Regional Councils and the SACC member bodies on a regional and local level on the above topics.

37. WORKSHOP FOR MINISTERS AND CONGREGATIONS ON SOUTH AFRICA CONSTITUTION BILL, HOMELAND POLICY, RELOCATION AND RELATED ISSUES. S.A.C.C. Member Churches Regional Councils

- 37.1. Conference requests the Regional Council of Churches to organise workshops and seminars for MINISTERS on the above topics in cooperation with the SACC Division of Justice and Reconciliation and to assist them particularly with regard to the following tasks:

how to grow in mutual trust to speak openly with one another on these topics;

how to counteract participation of ministers in government-created political institutions that uphold the apartheid system;

how to help people and communities to oppose relocation measures;

how to help people and communities who have been relocated;

how to understand the international character of the Church.

37.1. Conference requests Regional Councils of Churches to organise workshops for congregations on the above issues.

37.2. Conference advises that great care be devoted to a sound biblical-theological orientation of the workshops and at the same time careful consideration be given to the challenge and problems which ministers, congregations and communities at large face in their regional and their local contexts.

38. THANKS TO DONOR PARTNERS.

The National Conference of SACC records its sincerest thanks to its Donor-partners overseas for their continued support of the work and witness of the SACC and assures them that it appreciates their support and their generosity. The sharing enables the SACC to minister to the needs of those who suffer and so the Churches unity become visible and practical.

39. APPRECIATION TO PARTNER CHURCHES AND ELOFF COMMISSION

The National Conference of the SACC places on record its warm appreciation for the loyal support of its partner churches overseas displayed by their concern and prayers for the SACC and the presence and personal testimony of church leaders during the Eloff Commission hearings.