

Church Leaders engage with the National Development Plan:

An opportunity to deal with the wounds and the healing of our country.

The National Church Leaders' Consultation gathering at Kempton Park from the 15 -16th October 2012 addressed many concerns and needs related to Religion and its input into addressing and making a difference in matters of Education, Public Health, Welfare, Economics and the implementation of the National Development Plan. Although we became deeply aware of the woundedness of our nation and the cry of our beloved country, we firmly believed that the unity of believers in SA can create an enormous opportunity and be a beacon of hope.

The Consultation was privileged to have the Minister of National Development and Planning, Mr. Trevor Manuel, address the meeting offering considerable reflection on the Plan and its implementation. He stressed the need for Church Leaders to not wait for government alone to address issues in our country but to take the initiative to encourage all citizens to become actively involved in the full realization of democracy.

At the meeting the Church Leaders agreed on the following:

1. We are a wounded nation facing poverty, distrust, racism and the breakdown of society which impacts negatively on the moral fiber of our country. For example, Marikana sent out a stern warning to us which show that this is a kairos moment requiring transformational leadership and action.
2. We commit as Church Leaders not only to exercise a prophetic and lamenting role in addressing the issues and struggles in South Africa but to get actively involved in making a difference in the lives of the poor, sick and suffering in our land today and to play a role in effecting healing, reconciliation and wholeness. In the same breath we call on government to more seriously recognize that Religious bodies are key partners in bringing about change in South Africa. In as much as we helped in dismantling apartheid we are called to play a vital role in the reconstruction of our beautiful land. We need integrated efforts of people, groups and institutions in making a difference. In this, Christian leaders readily avail and commit themselves to these initiatives.
3. We recognize the need for ecumenical cooperation and collaboration in addressing these giants and we appointed a group of people to take this conversation further and to bring concrete plans to the Consultation.
4. We are concerned about the state of education in South Africa and feel that Church Leaders need to assume a more proactive role in this area and not necessarily wait on government to take the lead. Consequently, a special Conference on Religion and Education will be held from 1-2 November 2012 in Bloemfontein chaired by Bishop Siwa and Prof. Jansen.
5. In addressing social issues, we believe that we not only need good economic policies but also social policies that will restore human dignity, moral fabric, work ethic and discipline in our country. We are seriously concerned that the National Lottery is seen as the major instrument in funding social development and welfare initiatives. What does this say about the low values and political priority we attach to social and welfare programmes?
6. We are concerned about racism on all levels in our society and believe that it must still be addressed by Politicians, Religious Leaders and the country as a whole.
7. We are concerned about the current political climate in our country and the escalating violence due to political intolerance, and call on the Mangaung Conference to take seriously the need for political stability and quality leadership.
8. We need to foster leadership which serves the needs of our people and the most vulnerable in our society. We commit ourselves to pray for all political parties and leaders in our country.
9. We call upon the people of South Africa to be constructive and responsible as agents of social change, rather than leave everything to government. We do so as servants of God who are called to exercise grace and truth.

The Conference concluded on a high note of practical suggestions and initiatives to address our current concerns, setting in place the necessary structures to ensure the continuity of our conversations and actions in our role to make a difference for the good of the people in our land.

Participating leaders

Archbishop Dr. Thabo Makgoba – Anglican Church of Southern Africa
Bishop Lunga ka Siboto – Ethiopian Episcopal Church
Rev. Motlalentwa Betha - Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
Archbishop Dr. Zandisile Magxwalisa – Jerusalem Church in South Africa
Prof. Jerry Pillay – Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa
Fr. Richard Menatsi – Catholic Church in South Africa
Pastor Dr. Butisi Yakobi – Assemblies of God South Africa
Bishop Ziphozihle Siwa – Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Rev. Vuyani Nyobole – Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Rev. Braam Hanekom – Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
Rev. Willie Van Der Merwe – Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
Dr. Kobus Gerber – Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
Rev. Hermy Damons – International Federation of Christian Churches
Canon Desmond Lambrechts – Anglican Church of Southern Africa
Rev. Vasco Da Gama Seleokane – African Enterprise
Rev. Moss Ntlha – The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa
Rev. Marlene Mahokoto – Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
Dr. Renier Koegelenberg – National Religious Association for Social Development
Dr. Welile Mazamisa – National Religious Association for Social Development
Mr. Miles Giljam – African Enterprise
Mr. Marcus Van Wyk – National Dialogue Initiative for Social Change