



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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Dear Methodist Minister

Warm greetings to you from the Methodist Connexional Office.

On Tuesday 08 February 2022 we received a concerning letter from the Bishop of the Central District- Rev Faith Whitby. She informed us about a group of people under the “Operation Dudula” banner, who marched into the Tsietsi Mashinini Centre- in Jabavu, Soweto on Sunday 6 February. The centre houses a poor community including foreign national families. This group, aided by police, walked through every room and hall, including the manse demanding to know who lives where. They promised to return in 7 days’ time, leaving unimaginable emotional and psychological trauma on those who live there, especially the children.

Over the past two months or so, there has been a worrying re-emergence of acts of intimidation and violence against mainly black African “foreign- nationals” by some political parties, the police and groupings like “Operation Dudula”. No one is un- aware of the dire socio- economic conditions under which South Africans find themselves. We are cognisant of the high unemployment rate pegged at 34.9 %, with youth unemployment alone at a staggering 66.5%. Few would argue against the fact that this is a dangerously untenable situation. However, this precarious situation cannot be allowed to drive emotional arguments, blatant lies and othering by seeking to lay the burden of all our economic woes on the so called ‘foreigners’.

As the South African nation we will keep redirecting anger and hatred to the most vulnerable- until blame and responsibility are shifted and laid at the right door. The real issues in our country are: lack of ethical leadership; corruption, incompetence, thievery, greed, a lack of accountability and service delivery; a shrinking economy due not only to the Covid -19 pandemic but also to the long-term mismanagement of various key-sectors of our economy. The blaming of the most vulnerable in society is an old political tactic used to confuse and divide the marginalised- when there is no vision or will to deal with the challenges facing the nation. While the corruption continues and the rich are getting richer, the attention and energies of the poor gets diverted to fighting among themselves!

As Methodists, we are very concerned by the complicit and deafening silence around vigilante activism as well as the lack of action by law enforcement agencies when people are hounded and driven from their homes, labelled as ‘undesirable’ and subjected to undignified and humiliating treatment. Legal instruments exist in the Constitution which guides the treatment of immigrants in the country yet social anti-foreigner movements and political parties are allowed to take the law into their own hands and terrorise communities they believe are harbouring foreigners. This brazen lawlessness is unacceptable and renders all who live in this country unsafe!

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

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One of the values we live by as Christ followers is that all human beings are created in God's image. Having been so loved by God, we are to live by the law of love - love for God and for our neighbour. We are to do to others as we want others to do to us. The Word of God guides us on how we are to relate to one another:

"When a foreigner lives with you in your land, do not ill-treat him/her, the foreigner living with you must be treated as one of your native born." (Leviticus 19: 33- 34)

If we believe that in Christ, humanity was united and those who were "foreigners" were made God's chosen people" (Ephesians 2:12) we cannot be counted among those who participate or perpetuate xenophobia.

We therefore:

1. Condemn and stand against all the acts of intimidation, threat and violence directed to fellow Africans living in South Africa.
2. Call upon all Methodists to pray and work for the safety and wellbeing of all immigrants who live in fear- especially the residents at the Jabavu Community Centre.
3. As members of the Church of Christ, we are called to give hope to the hopeless, and side with the poor, marginalized and most vulnerable. We are reminded that as a church at this time we are called upon to Reimagine and Spread Scriptural Holiness through our subcontinent by Sustaining Hope and Healing. This includes being centres, harbingers and agents of hope and healing for all of God's people. Preach and teach our members the values we live by.
4. Engage ecumenically and participate with NGO's and people of good will in conversations and efforts that seek to assist, defend or embrace the most vulnerable in our communities irrespective of nationality. Let us desist from being hoodwinked into hating poor and vulnerable people but rather use our voices as active citizenry and Christ followers to pressure those who are governing the country to do what is right.

Wishing you all strength and courage as we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ for healing and transformation.

Yours sincerely



Rev Purity Malinga (Presiding Bishop)