

**The Methodist Church of Southern Africa
Cape of Good Hope District
25 to 29 May 2016**

Under the theme "A transforming discipleship movement - shaped for mission" the 187th Annual Synod of the Cape of Good Hope District of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa gathered in Namaqualand on the occasion of the bi-centenary celebrations of Methodist witness here.

References to the beginning of the work of God in Namaqualand reminded synod that our business is to be in mission, aware of the real danger of becoming an institutional body that has only its own self-interest at heart. We heard the call to heed the signs and the danger of becoming a dying church.

Synod heard the consistent challenge to re-discover our humanity and be a people who align with God's mission in the world.

The Presiding Bishop, and the Bishop, in their addresses, challenged us to rediscover our identity and align with God's mission to the world that all may live fully human as children of God. Our Bishop, Rev Michel Hansrod, asked if we were John Wesley's greatest nightmare, "A dead sect". A son of Namaqualand, Rev John Stewe, invited the Synod, and the whole church, to allow God's Spirit to be our guide.

We heard of the sacrifices made by so many, for the sake of mission, especially in the Namaqualand community. Eleven cyclists rode from Nuwerus to Springbok, a distance of 200 kms, and raised funds for the Synod Legacy Fund for mission and ministry in Namaqualand. Synod remembered the many who had, sacrificially, given of themselves and their resources to share in God's mission over the last 200 years. A very special sacrificial offering was a gift of R 4000 collected by pensioners from the Eastern Cape, sharing from their meagre resources with others. Together the people called Methodist have raised R 250 000 for the Legacy Fund enabling mission to continue in Namaqualand.

Synod acknowledged the sinfulness of the exclusion of women from the ministry of Word and Sacrament for so many years and gave thanks for those who sacrificed a great deal to help us discover that God's mission includes all. We celebrated the 40th anniversary of the ordination of women in our church. A powerfully bible study by Rev Nomsa Nomqolo challenged us to acknowledge the continued discrimination against women in our churches, and repent. We recognised that, to be shaped for mission, we must ask whom we continue to exclude from the ministry.

We were again reminded that to engage in God's mission we need to care for the wounded (charity) **and** engage those who do the wounding (justice).

Synod celebrated the acceptance of four young people who are seeking to candidate for the ministry of Word and sacrament. We gave thanks to God for the continuation of God's mission through the acceptance to proceed to ordination, for three probationer ministers.

We were privileged to have the Presiding Bishop, Rev Ziphozihle Siwa, in our midst on the occasion of his re-election. We celebrated too with the re-election of Rev Yvette Moses as Vice-chairperson of our District.

Synod acknowledged that too often our processes are more bureaucratic than discerning and this was evident even during synod business. We expressed the need to find ways to be more discerning in all our church life in order to be more shaped for mission.

Leliefontein Methodist Mission was the venue for the bi-centenary celebration and we gave thanks to God for the many who obediently served God and served the call to mission.

As we prepared to return home we remembered the words heard during synod: The church does not have a mission; God has a mission for the church. We leave to discern how we can serve God's mission in the world.