



THE UNITING  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
IN SOUTHERN  
AFRICA

24<sup>th</sup> November 2022

## STATEMENT OF THE UPCSA ON THE ESCALATION OF THE INCIDENTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND FEMICIDE

Luke 10:25-37

25 Just then a religious scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”

26 He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”

27 He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbour as well as you do yourself.”

28 “Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live.”

29 Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbour’?”

30-32 Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way, he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

33-35 “A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’

36 “What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbour to the man attacked by robbers?”

37 “The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar responded.

Jesus said, “Go and do the same.”

The UPCSA, again, joins the international and ecumenical community in observing the 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence on women and children. At the end of the 2021 event, we had wished that there would be no need for it this year, as we thought the people would adopt positive attitude towards each other. Alas! Another year, another November, another 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence on women and children, when is it going to stop? When will we have a just world, country, society, and/or church? When will we believe that “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it”, where all will live in harmony without fear? When will we have a world where God’s creation is not tampered with or abused? When will we have a church that does not “play church” and boast of having confessions while it does not present itself as a confessing church? How long are we prepared to run webinars, seminars, workshop, etc. talking as broken records with no action at all? How long are we going to ignore the instruction and the responsibility given to each one of us by Jesus to “Go and do the same”.

Sadly, in the year 2022, the reported incidents and cases of GBV increased exponentially, with some of the cases happening in the church communities; and the UPCSAs have not been spared. It is sad that, in many of the cases, the alleged perpetrators are part of the leadership of the church, including elders and ministers. The UPCSAs Gender Desk has grappled with issues of GBV and questions from the complainants, including the following:

- For how long is UPCSAs prepared to accommodate robbers?
- How long is it prepared to be an accomplice to rape, abuse and human rights violations?
- Is the UPCSAs willingly prepared to be a mode of transportation for mothers and sisters transporting them to hospitals?
- Is the UPCSAs not supposed to be the anointed church where all are welcome regardless of their sexual orientation, tribe, race, and Gender?
- When will the UPCSAs deal decisively with abusers, rapists, robbers, and those who systematically strip others of their human rights?

The parable of a Samaritan that helped a victim of a robbery on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho should serve as a great awakening to the UPCSAs. This was a road that was full of violence and oppression. People were stripped of their God-given human rights and dignity. Some of those who were supposed to help were so conceited that they could not even get closer to SEE the victim, let alone render help. But there was also a person from Samaria, who came to be known as a good Samaritan, following their good actions – a person to be emulated.

If the questions asked by the complainants are anything to go by, the UPCSAs are seriously challenged to do introspection. Hence, a call is being made for the UPCSAs to ensure that the leaders desist from being gatekeepers of the repressive systems and practices. The UPCSAs must be “a church that Jesus prayed for”, “a Spirit-driven church”, where everyone strives to “live their legacy” as they are “Going back to the basics”. That translates into a call for structural reforms and transformation, as the UPCSAs emulate the good Samaritan. Martin Luther King Jr said:

On the one hand, we are called to play the good Samaritan on life's roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho Road must be transformed, so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway. Genuine compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice that produces beggars, needs restructuring.

The UPCSAs cannot afford to continue ‘kicking the can down the road’ because it is more concerned about its liturgies and doctrines than about the plight of women and children, about its image than the plight of those who are also created in the image of God – women and children. The UPCSAs must move with God, stand where God stands, and sit where God sits, showing care and concern about those who are violated,

abused, and those who are left to die, speaking prophetically, and acting drastically against criminals and abusers.

The Gender Desk of the UPCSA has approached the leadership of the denomination, saying that it is enough with taking people to hospitals, asking the UPCSA to deal with those robbing others of the love of God, human dignity, and human rights. The Gender Desk listed the following as critical areas that the UPCSA needs to attend to, in its dealings with the robbers: The UPCSA

- ❖ needs to appoint skilled people to investigate the real reasons we have people who are abusing others, instead of dealing with the symptoms. Such people should, after analyses of the data, advise the UPCSA about the findings;
- ❖ revisits those doctrines and laws that discriminate against other people, and General Assembly decisions that strip people of their human rights and dignity;
- ❖ needs to instruct all its councils: Session, Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly to investigate, analyse and find solutions to assist all those who are victims of the robbers and to deal decisively with the perpetrators;
- ❖ needs to promote the conducting of empowerment sessions, with an emphasis on educating the vulnerable to be independent financially and otherwise; and
- ❖ prioritises and funds the work and advocacy of the Gender Desk.

Jesus said to the scribe, “Go and do the same.” The UPCSA leadership entreats all to go and do the same.

We close with the words of Martin Luther King Jr

We are all on Jericho roads. Our part in the ‘restructuring’ should be as integral to our Christian life as going to church on Sunday. But sometimes getting involved makes our neat Christian church communities complicated and messy – so it feels easier not to. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a story that challenges our non-involvement.

A church that is idle is a dangerous church. Idling is sinful, let the UPCSA get involved, get its hands dirty, and let it be seen as being a church of God

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