

6th September 2019

TO THE UPCS FAMILY

ON FEMICIDE (KILLING OF WOMEN), KILLING OF CHILDREN AND XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The Glory has departed from Israel" – because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father in law and her husband. She said, "The Glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured." (1 Samuel 4: 21-22 NIV)

The post 1994 South Africa nation was founded on promises of a better life for all and it was dubbed a "Rainbow Nation". It was a promise of situation that is characterised by Micah as follows:

They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid, for the Lord Almighty has spoken. (Micah 4: 3b-4)

Today, we lament the departure of glory from South Africa. This is a call to action and prayer against the increasing rate of the killing of women and the killing of children. This has gone too far, unabated. While we call on the government to tighten control on this, we also have a responsibility as a society and as church to work for a just social order. We have called for the establishment of gender desks at each congregation and Presbytery. The gender desk would focus, *inter alia*, on:

- ✓ Educating men to respect women and to be responsible for a free and just social order.
- ✓ Empowering women to be able to act against abuse, which, in many instances, ends up in the killing of women.

The heart and soul of the society are bruised. Our children, young sons and daughters, sisters, wives, aunts, mothers and grandmothers need to live in a safe and secure environment where "no one will make them afraid".

We have also witnessed the increase in the spate of xenophobic related violence, which has cost so many lives. This is against the noble African philosophy of Ubuntu. As I write this message, I am in New Zealand, attending a meeting of the General Secretaries of the 32 member churches of the Council for World Mission (CWM). South Africa is under the spotlight for this heinous crime against humanity. I carry the shame and guilt, for the glory has departed from South Africa. We used to be appreciated and admired in these and related meetings as the people that made the impossible happen. The Rainbow Nation was our glory. Many people from other nations wanted to come to South Africa to experience and enjoy the relative peace and stability.

We call for the South African government and the governments of African nations to work together to find a solution to this growing phenomenon. Let them address this as a matter of urgency.

Let us, as society and as church, advocate for a peaceful and stable environment. We cannot continue like this. Some of the perpetrators of the atrocious acts are known to some of us. Let us change the narrative from the departure of glory to the restoration of glory - that was beheld at the birth of the baby Jesus, where a great company of heavenly host with the angel praised God and said, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace on those whom his favour rests" (Luke 2: 14 NIV). When Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms, he praised God and said, "... For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel" (Luke 2: 30-32 NIV). That glory can still be beheld. Let the UPCSA soldiers of God work for an environment where all nations experience and behold the glory, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour. Let us continue to pray and work hard for life affirming societies and churches.

Flowing from this, it is requested that, next Sunday, the services should not be business as usual. The soldiers of the cross have to rise and march on to the battle. In every service, liturgies should take into consideration that we have sinned against God and against humanity. We need to intercede on behalf of our brothers and sisters who suffer from the violence. From every pulpit of the UPCSA, there should flow a river of life as in Ezekiel 47.

I thank the Presbyterians who sent messages through the emails and social media, condemning the senseless killings of women and of brothers and sisters through xenophobic violence. The Church in Society Committee of the General Assembly has also made a strong call that a statement of this nature should be issued. Many people are affected and concerned. Let us make our concerns practical through action, no matter how small and insignificant. By so doing, we will make a huge difference.

THE GLORY WILL BE RESTORED.

Yours in Christ.



The Rev Lungile Mpetsheni
GENERAL SECRETARY