

## **ZIMBABWE METHODIST 46<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE**

**4-6 AUGUST 2023**

### **Friday 4 August**

-a colourful procession led by Presiding Bishop G T Mawire was an official indication of commencement of conference.

-General secretary- Revd Mujinga moved the Resolution for the constituting Conference as per Deed of the Church Order Section 12 & 26 and the Conference declaration by Presiding Bishop

-English Theological Reflection – By an outgoing Bishop

-Preliminary Business and administration matters- confirming conference members  
Conference delegates replacements  
Dispensation for absenteeism  
Appointment of officers  
Official greetings to Conference  
Conference ground rules

Encouragement of orderliness during conference.

Introductions and welcome to all

After lunch the conference separated into two separate sessions; the lay session and the ministerial session.

I attended the ministerial session which was full of hard talk on disciplinary and other sensitive issues of ministry

### **Reflection**

The commencement of the conference was embedded with joy and worship. It was a very positive environment despite the economic hardship the church is facing.

The message from the outgoing Bishop was powerful encouraging for the church to continue to stand firm on solid ground despite difficulties and challenges. An encouragement for preparedness for the worst-case scenarios politically and economically. The message was on Kingdom Builders encouraging the church to stand firm on its mission of building the Kingdom. Building solid buildings which will not be shaken by storms “The Storm Mindset” – Matthew 8:23-27.

The ministerial session highlighted a huge exodus of ministers for greener pastures to various conferences of the world. A worst scenario of a minister living the circuit abruptly to follow his wife who got a job in the UK. Sheep left without a shepherd!!

The atmosphere and environment in ministry seem unbearable for ministers and their families

This was a lengthy session and challenging for ministers and for myself as an observer and a visitor

### **Saturday 6 August**

Saturday commenced with a Shona Theological Reflection by a Revd.

-Followed by presentation of ministerial candidates by the Presiding Bishop and the ordinands taking their oaths of ministry.

-There were tributes and thanksgiving for the outgoing officers- General Secretary, Rev Mujinga, District Bishop Ncube and District lay presidents

-The Mission Director -Revd J Paradza led the session by calling out the names, followed by words of gratitude by the Bishop

The better part of the day was more on reports from various committees based on strategic planning of the church 2024-2028 anchored on the **four strategic pillars**

1. Improving church growth
2. Enhancing MCZ Social Responsibility
3. Resourcing the Church for Sustainability
4. Strengthening the church for effective Delivery

The church like our own church here in Britain is not exonerated from decline. The church is experiencing declining in membership and this was also echoed by the Presiding Bishop of Methodist Church in Southern South Africa Purity Malinga.

-Later in the evening there were elections and confirmations for various conference positions including General Secretary

The Presiding Bishop Revd GT Mawire was confirmed back into office to complete his five-year term

Revd. Moliffe was elected the General Secretary of the conference after Revd Mujinga being elected into office as General Secretary of Africa Methodist Council

For the first time the conference elected a female Bishop into office which was huge breakthrough for female ministers and the church.

The church appreciated the British Conference support and encouraged partnership to share and learn together.

## Sunday 6 August

This was commenced by a procession led by Presiding Bishop Revd GT Mawire, district bishops and ordinands.

-Ordination of 7 ordinands

-Presiding Bishop for Methodist Church in Southern Africa Purity Malinga delivered a powerful charge to the ordinands

-It was a joyous day celebrating with ordinands and stationing of ministers

## Overall Reflection

The lay president was concerned about the 2.8% decline in membership. The Presiding Bishop of South Africa shared the same sentiments.

I realised that we share the same experience with the Zimbabwe Church – decline and shortage of ministers.

The situation in Zimbabwe is worsened by unfavourable political and economic conditions. Ministers are leaving for greener pastures such as the UK and other countries.

As a conference are we helping our fellow church by opening doors to welcome ministers from such conferences as Zimbabwe? Or there are other ways we can help to stabilise the church in a less providing environment

Are we being Kingdom builders?

It feels like a double-edged sword for our conference.

There was an acknowledgement that there is an influx of members moving out of Zimbabwe seeking greener pastures in other countries such as the UK,

Wonder as a church if we can we take advantage and welcome the new members into our churches

Wonder if we need a special approach or appointment of people to work in this area as this could be a lifeline of our church in Britain?

Lack of finances a huge stumbling block for the church. The church has a **four-pillar strategic 2024-2028** plan but requires resources including finances to achieve the plan. There was mention that grants have been reduced but church should encourage partnership in sharing and learning from each other.

Despite financial challenges the church encouraged self-reliance and dependence on God. The church highly discouraged begging and dependency syndrome and be self-sustaining.

There was an encouragement to attract young people. That resonates with our situation. The church is in need of younger people for restoration and revival. We are in the same predicament as a church. We have an age gap in our church. Maybe we can learn and share with the Zimbabwe Conference.

I was struck by how the Presiding Bishop Rev G T Mawire discouraged negative use of social media to undermine the church, other individuals and how bullying via social media.

Safeguarding was a major topic at the conference and how the church is actively encouraging safeguarding of vulnerable adults, children and all to be safe in the church environment, community and society at large.

The church highlighted post-covid challenges which are affecting face to face church activities. There was concern that church attendances have been seriously affected after Covid. Some people are still reluctant to attend services and this could be said with our local churches here.

The church encouraged members to consider eco-friendly lifestyle. I realised the church is very much active, alert and aware of the climate change issues by bringing awareness to its members.

I realised that theological reflections were done in different languages as an acknowledgement of the linguistic diversity of the conference.

Over and above all, the church demonstrated a God-centred approach.

By Revd Mary Sachikonye