



THE UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE
SECRETARIAT, P.O. BOX 31083, BRAAMFONTEIN, 2017

CONGREGATIONAL CENTRE,
75 DE KORTE STREET,
BRAAMFONTEIN, JOHANNESBURG, 2001
TELEPHONE 724-2361

11th October, 1977.

PASTORAL LETTER:

As Congregationalists,
we affirm the liberty of the individual conscience;
we refuse to align ourselves with any particular
political party or policy;
hence we are able to include within our ranks people from
all political systems and of all political affiliation.

Yet we believe that the Church may never be politically aloof
from any situation, or refrain from expressing its understanding
of God's will concerning any policy.

Nor do we believe that the Church's ministry may be denied to
any one, irrespective of that person's circumstances or actions.

1. CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION:

Subscribing to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, we
affirm the sanctity of freedom of choice and will. Consequently,
we deplore the fact that within the South African legislation no
provision is made for the individual's right conscientiously to
object to compulsory military service.

This does not imply that we believe military service to be un-
christian, or that we should not pray for or offer pastoral care
to people in the armed services. We are enjoined in Scripture
to 'pray for all men' and 'to take care of the whole flock of God'.
This the Church must continually endeavour to do.

But we recognise that there are Christians who regard war as
contrary to the teaching of our Lord. Many of them find it
difficult to identify with military action. Those who object to
war on the grounds of Christian or moral principle, should be
entitled to fulfil their obligation to society in areas of national
service outside the armed forces.

2. CHAPLAINCY:

In our armed forces there are both those who have joined voluntarily
and those who have been conscripted against their will and con-
science, both those who oppose government policies and those who
support them. Yet the Church's ministry must extend to all of
them.

.... 2/

2. CHAPLAINCY: (Cont.)

The area of conflict is not, however, limited to the operational areas. The conflict has assumed the dimension of a civil war, where every city, town, and village is the front line. Here are many who, for conscience's sake, find themselves opposed to and in conflict with the State's practices and policies. Consequently, many are arrested, detained, banned or restricted. The Church must minister to them as well.

The Church must, therefore, ensure that those on both sides of the operational front lines, and those inside and outside the prisons receive the ministry of Christ.

We call upon every minister and member of our constituency to ensure that this ministry is not denied to anyone.

We call upon the Ministerial Committee of each Regional Council to note the concern for pastoral care already expressed by Assembly, and to ensure that this is exercised within its bounds.

We call on the Executive Committee to ensure that this ministry is exercised to all families of detainees, to former political prisoners, to those still detained, and to those engaged on either side in the armed struggle; and to ensure also that those parts of our Church in neighbouring states (Botswana, Rhodesia, Mocambique and Namibia) engage in this co-operative effort by ministering to refugees and all people in the armed forces operating within their borders.

We call upon the governments of the countries in which the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa operates, to ensure that the Christian Church is afforded every opportunity to minister in every way to every one.

Seeing that at present the Church's right of access is denied in respect of those politically detained, we call upon the South African government to cease from preventing the Church from fully exercising its ministry of caring for all in Christ's name.

3. LIVING IN THE OVERLAP:

We recognise that our present situation gives rise to anomalies, where there are divergent opinions and practices. Some, for instance, accept the government-sponsored bodies, such as the Coloured Representative Council, the Coloured Management Committees, the Homelands Policies and the Urban Bantu Councils - others reject them. In these circumstances polarization is easy, adding to the dimensions of conflict.

Re-affirming the liberty of the individual conscience, we call upon all our people to guard against allowing political convictions to become the overriding considerations in their relationship with other people. Because our love for Jesus Christ, and our loyalty to him are all-embracing, we must live in love for and loyalty to all our brothers and sisters in him, no matter the political or other differences among us. This is the unity of concern and care to which, in his name, we call all our people.

We call upon the governments of the countries in which the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa operates, to ensure that the Christian Church is afforded every opportunity to minister in every way to every one.3/

Seeing that at present the Church's right of access is denied

- 3 -

3. LIVING IN THE OVERLAP: (Cont.)

'Do your best to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives by means of the peace that binds you together. There is one body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called you. There is ~~one~~ Lord, one faith, one baptism; there is one God and Father of all mankind, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all.' (Eph. 4:3-6).

Bernard Spong
CHAIRMAN

B.K. Dlodla
RETIRING CHAIRMAN

Joseph Wing
SECRETARY.

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.