

### THE PEACE CHURCH PROPOSAL

The Synod of the South Western Transvaal District is grateful to God for the challenge to the Church through the Peace Church deliberations and that whilst it was at first an emotional issue we are now able to reflect on what God is saying to His Church.

Through resolutions and debate we were made aware of the diversity of opinions some of which were:-

- people being confronted with the challenge of non violence for the first time.
- that the idea could possibly weaken the struggle for liberation.
- that the desire for peace did not necessarily exclude the use of violence or a commitment to non violence.
- that the issue was divisive.
- that some people were prepared to commit themselves to costly non violent action immediately.

In the struggle of our people it is quite clear that they are not ready to commit themselves to becoming a Peace Church but the inherent call to obedience in peacemaking led to the request that more time for study prayer and debate be given.

We were moved to confess that we had failed in our attitude to and the practice of peace and that we had not heeded God's call to be peacemakers. We committed ourselves to a search for a deeper understanding of the implications of non violent action and peacemaking. We recognised that the road to peace passes through the gates of justice. We confess that we have failed to search deeply enough for justice and peace.

We were at one that there were a number of issues on which Conference could declare itself and these are contained in the resolution.

There was a call for the creation of an Order of Peacemakers through which members would help us to understand the meaning of peacemaking and non violence through study and example.

Recognising the need for education and growth we agreed to stage a training weekend and suggest similar weekends throughout the Connexion.

Taking account of our journey on this matter this Synod resolves:-

1. That it is not ready to make a commitment to a Peace Church but requests the opportunity to continue to study and pray about and debate the issue.

2. We commend to our members The Order of Fellowship of Peacemakers as set out in paragraph 29.9.101 Minutes of Conference 1987 as a vehicle through which they can express their commitment to justice and peace.

3. That the Methodist Church declare -

- (a) That we should be a peacemaking agent of justice and reconciliation.
- (b) That we should educate our people in the ways of justice and peacemaking.
- (c) That we should stand against violence of every type.
- (d) That service or not in the armed forces be a matter of personal Christian conscience.

4. That Synod recognising that the quest for peace involves a deep commitment to seeking justice, and to this end calls for the dissemination of study material on justice, peace and reconciliation.

5. To call upon each Circuit Quarterly Meeting in the District to hold itself responsible to work for justice peace and reconciliation and at each Quarterly Meeting to put the question -

"What has been done in the last quarter and what is planned for the next quarter to promote peace and reconciliation in our Circuit."

*- from the Synod of the South Western Transvaal  
District, 11th June 1988*

" PEACE CHURCH "

At a Quarterly meeting held on 23rd April, 1988, the Roodepoort Circuit totally rejected the 'peace church' proposal.

The following resolution was drawn up, to be taken to Synod in June :

RESOLUTION :

The Quarterly Meeting of the Roodepoort Circuit receives for the purpose of discussion the study document and proposals re the "Peace Church" concept.

The Quarterly Meeting, however, understanding the need and the attempt by the Church to be faithful to God in the present situation of increasing violence, destruction and hatred in our land, believes that the Resolution is inadequate for the following reasons :

- (a) it fails to take cognisance of what the church is already believed to be, an instrument of peace, and the extent to which some of our people are already engaged as peace-makers in our land;
- (b) it seeks to legislate peace when it is only by grace that the Church itself can operate as a peace maker;
- (c) it fails to take account of where our people are and in its attempt to legislate on matters of conscience, can only be divisive;
- (d) in the implications of the proposals, it does not take account of the practical ramifications as it will affect all our people at the present time;

The Quarterly Meeting of the Roodepoort Circuit held on 23rd April, 1988 at Dobsonville, rejects the proposals concerning the Methodist Church of Southern Africa declaring itself a Peace Church as defined in the study document, but that in obedience to the teaching of Christ :

1. Become more aware of the needs and takes more positive steps to :
  - a. educate our people in the ways of peace-making and reconciliation,
  - b. foster relationships which will prevent violence and forge harmony,
  - c. stress the Methodist emphasis of perfect love toward God and neighbour.
2. We continue to take our stand against all evil, injustice, immorality and oppression which destroys the purposes of God and the dignity of people.

In conclusion :

1. The Quarterly Meeting believes that war and any other efforts employed to bring about change by violent means will always be abhorrent but the New Testament clearly outlines that while we are part of this world there will be the need to confront evil and preserve order in Society.
2. In any country security forces have a task to fulfil for only as there is a degree of order can the Gospel be proclaimed and peace and harmony be striven for. That maintaining of order, however, must always take account of the dignity of all men in the sight of God.
3. The Quarterly Meeting affirms the role of the Church as Peace-Maker in the power of holy love.
4. Rejects any attempt to align the Church as a quasi political party being used by groups or individuals for their own ends.
5. Calls upon the Conference to note that it is becoming increasingly more difficult for the Church to continue her work at the local level against the seemingly insensitive, ill-informed and biased view that this kind of Resolution presents to our people.  
At a time when the Church at local level is seeking desperately to unite its people under the banner of Christ, working through many difficult issues, Resolutions of this nature foster division and bitterness among our people and mistrust between the members and leadership of the Church.

\*\*\*\*\*

METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE RANDFONTEIN CHURCH COUNCIL ON THURSDAY 21 APRIL 1988  
REGARDING THE PEACE CHURCH CONCEPT

---

We acknowledge that South Africa is in a violent period of its history, both in terms of revolutionary violence and oppressive violence. Within this context the Church is called into the role of peacemaker and reconciler. We admit that we as a Church have failed both those in authority and the people of our land by not providing them with adequate and effective scriptural guidance, such that the violence being experienced could either have been avoided or minimised.

In this regard we acknowledge with shame, that we as a Church, have failed in the roles of both spreading the message of the Gospel and of being peacemakers. In so doing we have sinned by allowing ourselves to be compromised by those of all political beliefs who would seek expedient solutions to this country's problems.

While we declare ourselves opposed to violence, we believe that The Rule of Law, based on Christian concepts of love and compassion, needs to be upheld so that order may be maintained.

We recognise that without such order the climate to establish a system which is more righteous and just, and which can embody the principle of equality of all people, cannot be achieved.

As those in authority profess to support Christianity we would appeal to them in the name of Christ to change the Laws of the country more rapidly so that it may more fully embody Biblical and Christian concepts.

Those responsible for violence are urged to exercise restraint and to refrain from acts that are causing bodily pain and suffering. We encourage our members to work actively in the role of peacemakers and reconcilers so that all the people of our land may be able to renounce both revolutionary and repressive violence, and in so doing pledge our support to all who seek the path of non violence.

We believe, however, that we should not alienate ourselves from those who differ from us, lest such alienation, should prevent the intercommunication so vital for reconciliation. We must minister to all, thus continuing our stance of "Think and let Think."

We must seek and encourage the use of non violent strategies to bring about change and to improve relations with and between all people.

We recommend that a thorough study be urgently initiated so that ways and means of bringing about a society that is free from violence and more just can be found and implemented.