



The Methodist Church of Southern Africa

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8 November 2021

MCSA Delegation Visit the Kingdom of Eswatini

"We are all important parts of the body of Christ and when one part suffers the whole body suffers with it!"

These were some of the words spoken by Bishop Purity Malinga, the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) during a pastoral and solidarity visit to the Kingdom of Eswatini from 27-29 October 2021. Eswatini has been engulfed in violent protests and unrest since June 2021 with demands for democratic and political reforms.

The bishop and her delegation that comprised of the General Secretary, Rev Michel Hansrod, the Mission Unit Director, Rev Musi Losaba, the Director of Ecumenical Affairs, Rev Mike Vorster, the Director of Communications, Ms Bongie Moyo-Bango, the Youth and Children's Ministry Coordinator, Rev Simphiwe Mthembu, the Justice and Service Coordinator, Ms Nancy Herron, Rev Dr Vusi Vilakati; the acting Bishop of the HESWA Synod, Rev Sondlile Nkwanyana and the HESWA Mission Desk Coordinator, Deacon Quinton DeBeer were in the country to listen, accompany and pray with the people of the Kingdom of eSwatini.

During the short visit the delegation listened to Methodist clergy and lay leadership, engaged with the Swaziland Council of Churches, met some victims of the ongoing violence protests, had an audience with the Prime Minister, His Excellency, Mr Cleopas Dlamini and listened to a variety of civil society stakeholders. Each of these stakeholders shared a common dream for peace, stability, prosperity for all, freedom and meaningful dialogue.

Bishop Malinga repeated the MCSA's support for the council's call for dialogue, reconciliation and the peaceful settlement of different positions, without compromising their witness as agents of the Gospel of Christ.

"We are here to reiterate, in person, that the MCSA aligns herself and supports the call by the Eswatini Council of Churches for meaningful engagement and dialogue. The most vulnerable in the country are suffering during this dissension and the resolution of this conflict must be made a priority to avoid further, unnecessary loss of life, violence and destruction," Malinga said.

At a service of Solidarity, Hope and Spiritual Accompaniment held at St Pauls Methodist in Mbabane, Bishop Malinga said:

A Christ-healed Africa for the Healing of Nations

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“We (the church) are called in every situation to be prophets of Gods justice; we stand- not to take sides with anyone but Gods justice, Gods healing and Gods transformation. As a church we stand for justice and transformation; as church we stand for peace. We are against violence. We condemn all forms of violence because violence does not build nor bring peace in a country. We amplify our call for dialogue - dialogue where all stakeholders will sit around a table to listen to each other and find each other.”

Bishop Malinga also expressed their grave concern for the safety of children in the Kingdom.

“The suggestion that school children are being used as pawns in the protests grieves the church, especially within this backdrop of Covid -19 when the children last year had limited, to no education because of the lockdown. Child protection and children’s rights must be upheld at all costs and psychosocial support provided to alleviate their trauma. The children’s future is at stake and more needs to be done to protect them and preserve their heritage.”

Although appreciative of the announcement that His Majesty King Mswati III and government are willing to dialogue, the delegation expressed their disquiet at the proposed timing of the said dialogue – sometime between March and April next year- during their meeting with the Prime Minister.

“We are anxious about the timing of the dialogue. If it must happen next year, we appeal that the interim time be used to collaborate, develop a framework and provide clarity of the process to be followed to all stakeholders. It is our hope as the church that the intended dialogue should be inclusive and uphold the integrity of all voices, including minority voices,” Malinga said.

In light of the number of lives lost and the many that were injured, the delegation highlighted to the Prime Minister the dire need for a government-led process of healing and reconciliation. Such healing would include psycho- social and spiritual interventions. The MCSA, working alongside the Eswatini Council of Churches, would be available to offer her support to the healing process as well as mediate where possible.

Bishop Malinga called for a cessation of violence and the restoration of all state apparatus as organs meant to serve, protect and advance the development of all the citizens of Eswatini.

“We are grateful to the Methodists of eSwatini, both clergy and lay and all ecumenical partners including the eSwatini Council of Churches and the many civil groups whose interest is the peace and development of eSwatini. We urge them to continue to work together to this end”

The MCSA continues to thrive to uphold her vision of “*A Christ Healed Africa for the healing of nations*” as we reimagine healing and transformation and restore the hope only found in Christ. The Kingdom of Eswatini is part of the Highveld and Eswatini Synod (HESWA) within the MCSA.

Bishop Malinga assured the people and government of eSwatini of the MCSA’s prayerful support.

For more information contact

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