

THE BLACK METHODIST CONSULTATION (BMC)

1. Historical Background

The BMC was formed through a meeting held in Bloemfontein by 13 black ministers (Revs Gaba, Mahlasela, Losaba, Skhakhane, Dabula, Hlahane, Phoswa, Mrwetyana, Tshabalala, Fikeni, Masombuka and Lekalakala as well as Baartman as convener) in September 1975. This meeting was convened to reflect on the shocking injustices that impacted on Black Ministers within our church. It was observed with shock and anger that the church which prophesised to be a Christian, one and undivided church was continuously treating black ministers in a degrading fashion.

In May 1976 a broader meeting of all black ministers was convened and the first executive was elected; Baartman - Chairperson; K.E.M. Mgojo - Secretary and Losaba - Treasurer.

The BMC was initially open to black ministers only. But it was not long before they realised that they could not influence change on their own, and so they invited lay decision makers such as circuit stewards, synod and conference members in 1978. It was in the early 80's that it became open to all.

The church, like most organisations, tends to be a microcosm of wider society.

The BMC was founded at the height of apartheid because the church was a mirror image of the apartheid society in which it laboured. The BMC then had to deal with issues that negatively affected the majority of the people called Methodists. Central to the objectives of the BMC were:

- Restoring the dignity of black people
- Leadership development and advancement
- Influencing the strategic direction of the church
- Mission focus
- Embracing the notion of diversity

In short, the BMC is rooted in transforming the MCSA.

2. Current Argument:

There is a school of thought that argues that black organisations like the BMC have no reason for existence in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Such an argument ignores the long-term apartheid damage experienced by our church even to this day.

The people who are against the BMC are bent on breaking down a closed door whilst at the same time have no wish to enter the many open doors within the church e.g. Manyano, YMG, LPA and even allowing their children to participate in the Wesley Guild etc.

3. The BMC's Contribution:

4.1 Restoring the dignity of black people:

Some of us have experienced the humiliation of our people in Geographic Circuit Quarterly Meetings and Synods. We have, in this area, lost the vast wisdom and experience of our parents. The BMC is partially successful in grooming a cadre of leaders who are capable of standing on the shoulders of these giants.

4.2 Leadership Development:

Leaders coming from the ranks of the BMC tend to have a balance of:

- Articulating a compelling vision
- Aligning all stakeholders behind the said vision
- Empowering all stakeholders to exercise their talents for missio Dei

These leaders tend to demonstrate several virtues, such as:

- Humility; and integrity
- Critical Consciousness and transformation

4.3 Influencing the Strategic Direction:

BMC members are people who feel that they have a contribution to make to the life of the church for the benefit of all God's people. It then becomes important to make sure that the church is relevant within the environment in which it labours.

3.4 Mission Focus:

Theologians seem to agree that God tends to send a person to someone in needs or in distress.

The Hebrew word "mal'achi" has two meanings, namely a messenger and an angel.

BMC members are encouraged to assume the role of messenger in the realm of missio Dei, especially as far as the leg that has to do with community service for the benefit of God's people - both the church and unchurched.

4.5 Embracing the notion of Diversity:

The BMC does not look at narrow structural divisions when involved in missio Dei. In fact, the BMC does not confine itself only to black talent and resources in its endeavour to bring the reign of God to the people.

All of God's people in general and the people called Methodists in particular are always in the BMC's radar screen.

4. Invitation for recognition:

The BMC invites the MCSA to recognise it as a movement within the church. Further, invite all who subscribe to the above rationale to come and journey with us as we engage in activities that are core to the transformation of our beloved church.

The BMC is ready to serve the church where its services, talents and skills are required. The membership of the BMC is found in all structures of the church.