



# South African Council of Churches

Khotso House 62 Marshall Street Johannesburg

✉ P O Box 62098 Marshalltown 2107

Tel: +27 11 241 7800

Fax: +27 11 492 1448

[www.sacc.org.za](http://www.sacc.org.za)

Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011

## Central Committee Statement

The Central Committee of the SACC met at Lakeside Airport Lodge on 7-8 June 2011 under the theme: **Following the Way, standing for the Truth and seeking Life: SACC Reclaiming and Revitalising the Spirit of Christian Witness and Prophetic Ministry.**

The meeting took place in the time of Pentecost when Churches celebrate again the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are aware that Christ fulfilled his promise of not leaving us on our own, but that he would give us his Spirit so that we can fulfil his commandment to go to all nations to make people his disciples, to teach them and to baptise them. (Matt 28)

When the Holy Spirit was given to the church, ordinary people had the courage to speak of the great deeds of God. It was this same Spirit that gave courage to Christ's followers to witness about the Gospel when they were persecuted by religious and other authorities. It was through the Spirit that Stephen could die as the first martyr.

It was under the guidance of God's Spirit that the church could deal with internal problems, overcome the divisions of culture differences in the church, address theological challenges, and organise itself to serve the poor and the widows.

The SACC represents churches who all share this common heritage and see their role in South Africa to work for moral reconstruction, focussing on issues of justice, reconciliation, integrity of creation and the eradication of poverty and contributing towards the empowerment of all who are spiritually, socially and economically marginalised.

The SACC is aware that the meeting takes place after the local elections during which the people of South Africa indicated what some of their real needs are. The political agenda for the elections were to a great extent determined by the people who protested against the failure of government to deliver basic services or to do so with regard for human rights and the dignity of citizens.

The SACC has heard the cry of the people of South Africa for better service delivery and the end of corruption and self-enrichment by politicians and civil servants.

The SACC is thankful that we have recently had successful and free municipal elections.: We thank God for the work of the IEC and the generally responsible behaviour of the political parties. Many of us were involved in the signing of the Code of Conduct and in mediation panels. However we recognise that voting is not the only means to build democracy, and that even the process of voting must be strengthened by voter education and the upliftment of literacy in general.

We are saddened that the government used the Police to deal with angry protesters instead of listening to people. The death of Andries Thatane at the hands of those who must protect us signifies a sad day in our history. We also condemn the killing of political leaders in Mpumalanga. The SACC understands the frustration of people to whom many promises have been made in the past by political leaders. Pastors of the church hear and see every day how the lack of service delivery affects ordinary people. People are angered when those involved in corruption and mismanagement of valuable resources are not held accountable: must of the recent popular unrest reflect a desire to act, to resist and to bring about change. The lack of decisive action against corrupt politicians and civil servants and the ineffectiveness of the systems that must control corruption, is giving a message to people that not all are equal before the law as our Constitution declares: people at large are reacting.

The SACC is embarking on a process to assist people to understand more clearly the form, nature and impact of corruption. We confess that sometimes churches are not immune to corruption, and their members may be guilty of colluding with it. We are particularly concerned that the teaching of some so-called “prosperity churches” constitutes a corruption of the Gospel and a means of exploiting those they are called to protect. We need to instil in our people the values of integrity, honesty and accountability and proclaim these in the public arena, as well as making sure that church life models accountability and good governance.

On the other hand the SACC will seek ways of using the means and structures prescribed by the Constitution and the law to fight this deadly disease in the wider context of our society. This requires unmasking and confronting the systems that make possible the growth of corruption such as procurement procedures and cronyism. This not only refers to public life

but to the world of business and industry. Corruption arises not only from the way systems are manipulated but from the exploitative nature of the very systems themselves.

Our strategy may include mobilising our members to protest, engaging in dialogue with political leaders on all levels and supporting those in various civil society structures who speak out against corruption.

The SACC is deeply concerned about the apparently highhanded manner in which the highest authorities in the land behave, for example in pushing through the questionably constitutional Protection of Information Act, and in their treatment of Chapter 9 Institutions, and in the appointment and protection of certain public officials such as the Chief Justice, the National Police Commissioner, certain Cabinet Ministers and heads of investigative agencies. We echo the words of the President of the SACC, Bishop Jo Seoka, when he commented that the Arms Deal “is still a mystery to be solved.”

More widely, we are concerned about the situation in neighbouring countries, such as Botswana, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, whose economies and public life is deeply interwoven with ours. Our moral responsibility extends to the whole subcontinent.

Our commitment to protect the integrity of creation causes us to be deeply concerned for the success of the COP17 conference in Durban later this year.

In addressing these needs the SACC took time to reflect on the ways that the Church can more faithfully follow Christ, stand for the truth and seek life for all. For us this involves the historic work of the SACC in standing in solidarity with the poor, pursuing justice and speaking truth to power. We want as always, in Bishop Seoka’s words, “to make a difference for the common good.”

The SACC acknowledges that the church should always start at home before pointing fingers at the world. In the past few months the SACC has been busy with restructuring its offices, structures and finances and we are glad to report that member churches have taken responsibility for the SACC again. We will continue on national and regional levels to witness to Christ and his compassion.

The SACC would like to call all churches to follow the Way, stand for the Truth and seek Life and by doing so reclaim and revitalise the spirit of Christian witness and prophetic

ministry in this country. We can do it because Christ, the Head of the Church, has given us His Spirit to be with us and guide us every day. May the journey with Christ and his Church in the South African context always be a journey of hope.