

The South Africa We Pray For!

A Call to Pray and Work for Sustained Hope in Humility and Faith

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes...” (Jeremiah 29: 11 – 14a)

Introduction

Earlier in 2015, the South African Council of Churches submitted a memorandum to the leadership of the governing party the African National Congress, expressing the views of the churches. Church leaders had also made a direct call for a National Summit on the State of the Nation. It is that call and the expressions of concern that initiated the process of engagement towards “The South Africa We shall Pray For”. The title of the prayer itself reflects hope. Our hope is a hope with no alternative, for we labour under the Imperative of Hope, as we explained to the ANC:

"As disciples of the Author of the Hope of the Resurrection after the pain of Good Friday, we are apostles of hope. We therefore have to engage towards the engendering of hope."

We invoked the timeless words of our former Director of Justice and Reconciliation, Dr Wolfram Kistner who said:

"No situation, however hopeless it may be, is interpreted correctly if we do not bear in mind that it lies within the scope of the unconditional love and forgiveness and of the new life that God extends to humanity through Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the awareness of the reality of Jesus in our time and in our situation makes us free to recognize and to confess our involvement in its injustices without submitting to despair and frustration. We may have the courage to face the challenges of the situation because it bears the footprints of Christ and the marks of his death and resurrection. We thus are invited to face our situation with hope because Jesus Christ has taken it seriously and because he wants to use us as his instruments to combat evil and injustice in our own lives and in the church as well as in the society to which we belong."

In that memorandum the SACC raised the dangers for the country, of the decline of public trust. We also mentioned a number of other concerns that add to the sense of despair if not attended to in a timely manner. This was a call to the ANC whose values of social justice had captured the imagination of the world, and we said:

"We come to share with you as leadership entrusted with the future of our people, what we perceive to be a serious crisis facing our land. We believe you have it within the organization that has been given the majority vote of mandate, to rise magnanimously to the challenge and act less defensively, but more decisively. We need you to acknowledge the crisis point that we are in, failing which we may go down a precipice out of which to reverse may be very hard to achieve".

"We wish to offer a contribution to the solutions, if we can together arrive at the appreciation of the challenges. We live in the hope that the foresight that has sustained the ANC throughout its history of struggle for the good society will not at his critical time fail you. That is our hope in raising these matters. This is our Imperative of Hope, and out of this we seek a dialogue and a partnership for the good of all, which we had hoped for in the days of our joint struggle."

Of the concerns we raised we said:

- We are hugely concerned about the un-abating levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment, especially of youth.
- Adding to that is the great and unhelpful dropout rate of school children between Grade 1 and 12, where a million start out and about 500 000 write matric, with less than 200 000 qualifying for university entrance, with even more distressing levels of cognitive development as measured in terms of literacy and numeracy levels.
- We are concerned about the impact of this on productivity and national human capital development. We recognize the effect of this in the unemployment rate of young people.
- We are distressed by the almost insoluble plague of extremely violent rape and even the domestic violence, marriage dissolution and social strife which may well be linked to rising household economic stress.
- We are alarmed by the degree to which we are still a traumatised nation, and how that plays itself out, including in the way we respond to any misdeed occasioned by foreigners. We may need a national conversation to speak about the pain we still carry, and its impact on our national psyche.
- We probably need to have a wider discussion about restoring the moral order with a basic set of values, and the determination of what becomes un-South African conduct.

The National Church Leaders Forum decided in this context, to "soak the country in prayer", and called for a church summit on the state of the nation. The Secretariat initiated a SEE-JUDGE-ACT process of investigation, theological reflection and action recommendations that enable the Churches through their leaders and representatives, to conclude on what actions they should encourage for their congregations in accompanying the nation towards *The South Africa We Pray For*. This entailed an analysis of the state of affairs on a number of socio-economic themes that impact on the everyday lives of South Africans. Some of them are echo of the concerns already mentioned above.

Research institutions were identified that could provide an overview of trends and analysis (this is the SEE aspect of the methodology). The institutions that assisted the SACC with research are the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), and the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The research was the SEE part of the process, opening our eyes to the reality status on each of the identified themes. Following the research we convened a 2 day workshop on the 11 – 12 November 2015 with social science experts to conclude the SEE, with theologians also present to apply their Gospel lenses, in the JUDGE part of the process? Their question was: What does the bible say in the light of what we now know to be our life reality? Together with social science practitioners/experts they applied their collective wisdom, engaging the research material, in order to provide a basket of recommendations in the form of actions that the churches can consider for practical congregation level action and prayer to heals the land and its people –

the ACT part of the process. This document gives the insights from that process, on the five chosen themes of: healing and reconciliation, poverty and inequality, family fabric, economic transformation, and anchoring democracy. It presents a number of possible ACT proposals, and the Central Committee will select those they wish to focus on and instruct for prayer and action.

At the dawn of our democracy we stood at a cross roads, we could begin a journey towards healing and reconciliation or continue on the path of perpetual war. In that hour our courage, wisdom and commitment to the country we dearly love served us well. We averted a civil war and became a witness of peace and reconciliation to the rest of the world.

The present injustices and social ills that engulf our land are a testament that in the past 21 years we have fallen short of the post-apartheid promise of a just, reconciled and equitable society, free of racial, tribal, xenophobic and gender prejudices, free of corruption and deprivation, and with enough food and shelter for every citizen; and for each child born to grow to their God given potential. Thus we have fallen short in our efforts to heal the wounds of the past and bring about lasting reconciliation – based on equity and restorative justice unto reconciliation peace.

We can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the deep and often unconscious wounds of our past which manifest in lawlessness, crime and public violence, gender-based violence, racism, fear, xenophobia and the like. The stability of our communities is threatened as the family fabric is disintegrating and in dire need of affirmation. In the face of enduring negative socio-economic legacies, the substance of healing and reconciliation has to transcend interpersonal relations and confront prevailing economic injustices and uphold our democracy on the foundations of freedom, transparency, and integrity that engenders public trust.

*"Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.
The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.
(God) saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede."
(Isaiah 59:15 - 16)*

Yet even so, the Church cannot be arrogant in its pronouncements, for the Church is part of the society that it critiques. But even more importantly, the Church, more than any other institution in society, is most conscious of the price that `god paid in `Christ, for the reconciliation of the world – a world full of the sinful human beings that we all are. In this regard we uphold the spirit of contriteness that was adopted by the Church at the Rustenburg Conference, saying:

“We know that without genuine repentance and practical restitution we cannot appropriate God's forgiveness and that without justice, true reconciliation is impossible. We also know that this process must begin with a contrite church.
... With a broken and contrite spirit we ask the forgiveness of God and of our fellow South Africans.”

This is our prayer today, as we seek to call the congregations of the faithful to prayer in humility.

What follows is a summary of the SEE findings, the JUDGE inspired by Scripture, leading to the ACT proposals that take account of existing Faith and Mission proposals of the SACC Program as in the 2014 Strategic Plan. That includes ongoing anti-xenophobia program and the war on poverty directive of the National Church Leaders Forum.

“...*The people who know their God shall stand firm and take action*”. (Daniel 11: 32b)

We seek to ensure that Church Action is informed by:

- Burning community concerns
- Credible research
- Rigorous spiritual and theological reflection

We believe in our time and context that the mission of the church is one where we affirm the values of:

- Dignity of the human person
- Respect
- Justice
- Compassion
- Solidarity and interrelatedness
- Participation and co-creation
- Sanctity of life
- Integrity of creation

Therefore at this time in this context of our land inspired by these values we believe that the core of our Faith and Mission is in advancing healing and reconciliation.

“Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known... Behold, I will bring ...health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security.” (Jeremiah 33:3,6).

The biblical imperative of healing is affirmed for South African Christians in the Preamble of The South African Constitution that says we adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic, so as to:

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person...

And the Preamble ends with a prayer for God’s blessing:

May God protect our people.
Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.
God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa.
Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika.

Against this background, the leaders of South African Churches are calling on their congregations to pursue the doing of the good that transforms society, that they may be the

blessing that Enoch Sontonga prayed for through the hymn invoked in this Preamble – Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrika. We are called to be the blessing that generations of South Africans have prayed for; and be the blessing that works and intercedes for the *Blessed South Africa We Pray For!*

3. Key imperatives for healing and reconciliation in South Africa – “All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation”. (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Reconciliation is often seen as simply referring to racial reconciliation – as in the reconciliation between blacks and whites. We advance a thicker and more holistic interpretation of reconciliation where:

- We have to deal with poverty and inequality in order to reconcile the lot of marginalized poor people with the fortunes of the country. We confess that we have been silent and with no coordinated action on this pain.
- We have to deal with economic transformation and identify the trade offs necessary to address the fundamentals that result in a reconciled economic dispensation. We confess that we have been silent on this and offered no transformative engagement on this dividing reality.
- We need to deal with the tattered family fabric, and come to terms with what may be radical demands on the Church and State, in order to nestle a reconciled existence for future generations. We confess that we have been blind to the seismic shifts in the makeup of family life in South Africa.
- We need to, in the face of corruption, maladministration and the decline of public trust, reconcile the disheartened, with the viability of democracy for the common good, through cultivating a democratic ethic, promoting transparency, accountability and openness to critical feedback by public representatives and officials; and thus nurture and anchor democracy. We confess our share of blame in the decline of our society, this we should confess and repent. The Church has contributed to the loss of public confidence in institutions, and commits to re-establish the SACC commitment to Critical Solidarity with the democratic government. And in the words of Alan Kirkland Soga, to be “Gainst the wrong that needs resistance; for the good that lacks assistance.”
- As a foundation for all, the Church needs to engage an aggressive ministry of healing and reconciliation, healing the past, towards a healthy South Africa, free of bitterness and fear. We confess that we have been silent on the woundedness of our society; as a result of our failure to act, social divisions have cemented.

Here are some key issues under each theme with action recommendations for the consideration of the churches through the Central Committee.

3.1 HEALING PAST TRAUMA

Reconciliation is best understood as a process and the healing of past wounds as relationships are restored, and addressing structural injustices is integral to its realisation. The healing has to take place across generations; the emergence of the decolonisation movement in 2015, led by young people on a Rhodes Must Fall campaign, bears witness to the reality of trans-

generational trauma. The wounds inflicted by our past are often unconscious and manifest in the fracture of the social fabric and the desolation that characterises our human relations.

The Church of South Africa has been silent on the aspect of woundedness of our society; the Church has been silent on the pains of society. South Africa finds itself engulfed by acts of racism, xenophobia, violence against women and children, violent crime and lawlessness, as well as many other social ills. In this context the church is called to a ministry of healing. Dialogue on healing, that does not merely deal with the manifestations of woundedness, but engages with the deep root causes, is more likely to have a lasting impact, and bring about a more reconciled and just society. The metaphor of a tree is useful to engage with the concept of healing and reconciliation.

The roots of a tree are the source and fountain that yields the fruit of the tree. A tree whose roots are unhealthy cannot bear good fruits. Thus the roots give the tree life.

The trunk of a tree functions as a conduit through which the nutrients from the roots are channelled in order to bear the desired fruit.

By extension, the day to day social ills experienced by South Africans which act as an obstacle to healing and reconciliation are the fruit/manifestations of the tree given life by the root causes of injustice. The trunk represents the structural component of the social system.

Therefore:

We daily experience Manifested Violence – The Fruit of the Tree: General violence, criminality, vandalism and lawlessness, racism, ethnic and racial mistrust and prejudice, xenophobia, gender-based violence, drug abuse, family breakdown, violence of structures/processes, etc.

This is fed by Structural Violence: - The Trunk of the Tree: Poverty, women disempowerment, apathy and silence, turning a blind eye, tolerance of ills, ‘innocence’, decision-making, inefficiency of the policing and justice system perpetuating impunity, corruption, etc.

That stems from the root causes of Cultural Violence – The Roots of the Tree: Ideologies, beliefs, values, patriarchy, inequality, religion, greed, traditions of family-community-society, imperialism. This is what Jesus calls the heart, which produces the evil systems and the fruit that defiles.

“Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? 20 And he said, ‘It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.’ (Mark 7: 18 – 23)

We experience and can point to the manifestations of the manifested violence that is sustained by the trunk of the structural violence, itself originating from the roots, “the heart”, the cultural violence that is the source and the roots of our social ills. People develop a woundedness that is the effect of the total “Tree System”, from roots to fruit. Patriarchy at the roots leads to the trunk of the tree with women disempowerment and ends up with the fruit of gender-based violence that we see as manifest. Likewise, inequality at the roots, leads to

poverty at the structural violence of the trunk, and can lead to lawlessness and criminality at the fruit level as a way of life survival.

There are many people that know very well that they are wounded by life experiences; there are yet many others that are not conscious of their woundedness, but just see life as just what it is, unfair and rough.

The ministry of the church is to “interrupt” the unconsciousness, the sleep-walking through life, “name” the root cause, make the unconscious to be conscious and make it known – for you cannot “unsee what you have seen”. In the manner of Christ, the Church is called to share in the woundedness, to assume the pain of the wounded. The church needs to deal with the roots and the trunk – cultural and structural violence, even as it does not ignore the immediate challenges of the manifested violence.

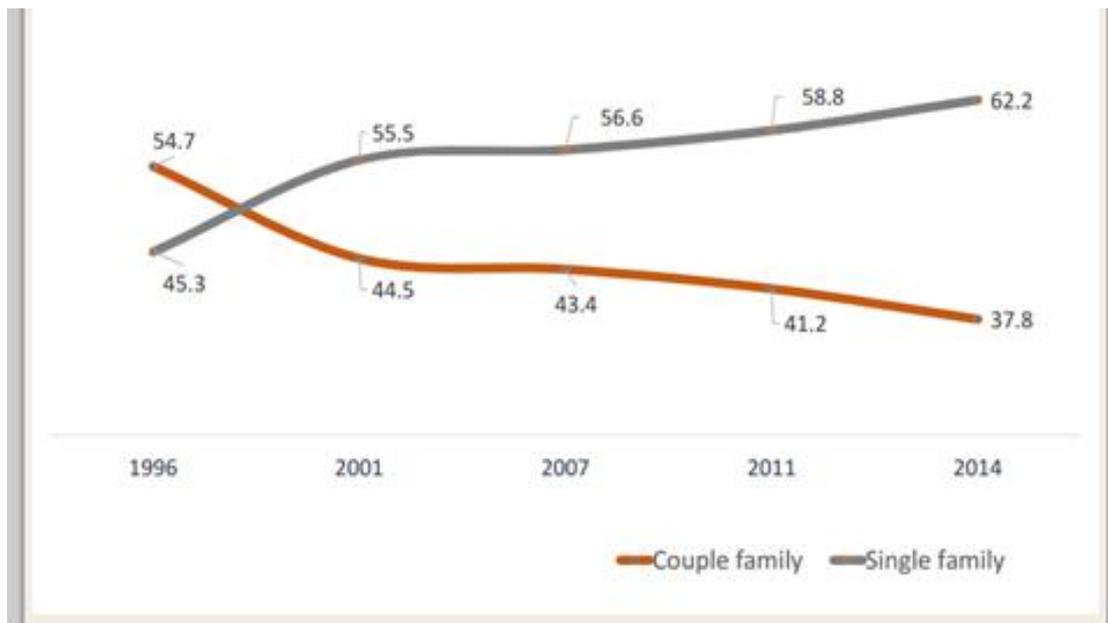
Our Ministry – What can be done?

- The church needs to move the congregation to take a road to open itself to the reality of woundedness – open up the vaults of their individual pain in circles of story sharing – unpacking the “fruits”, identifying “the trunk”, and naming “the roots” of their woundedness in the ideologies, the beliefs, the values that are “the heart” that Jesus talks about, the source of what defiles. This leads to healing through conscious seeking, rebuilding the shattered self/society, trust and recovery. Congregations can initiate these circles of conversation and telling the stories of our woundedness.
- Practical projects like bringing the shared stories exercise to between “opposites” – racial opposites, gender opposites, generational opposites, nationals and non-nationals; having them listen to each other, both in the same communities and reaching out across fields to the opposites. The example of healing and reconciliation between the former SADF conscripts that were white teenagers recruited to shoot black school kids in Soweto in 1976 is an example. More needs to be done for all “opposites” to break the silence and open eyes to each other's pain for healing. The work to be done in the themes of family fabric, poverty and inequality, economic transformation and anchoring democracy are all focused measures that contribute to healing and reconciliation, addressing the roots, the trunk and the fruits that are manifestation of the life challenges of South Africans.
- Genuinely bringing about reconciliation and healing is largely dependent on the church, its congregants and the society at large consciously challenging themselves to address the cultural causes of injustice - the root causes. Such an approach also serves to counter the “can't we just move on” narrative.
- The church should find practical tools for the healing work (be it to address cultural causes, structural processes and their manifestations) and a clear vision grounded in democratic principles needs to be set out.

3.2 AFFIRMING THE FAMILY LIFE

The family unit has evolved over the years and therefore what constitutes a family in the contemporary context is contested. The working definition offered by the SACC SEE Study defines a family as an institution constituted by blood relations, sexual relations or adoption. The migrant labour system has had a long lasting effect on the family fabric of most black communities. This is evident in the single headed households, without fathers. The SACC

SEE Study reveals that South Africa has the highest rate of children in the world, living without fathers. Furthermore, processes of modernisation and industrialisation have coincided with the decline in family size. Between the period 1996 and 2014, South Africa has experienced a drastic decline in couple-family households, while single parent households have risen in this period. Thus single-headed households are now the more common phenomenon in South Africa, compared to couple-headed households. This introduces a tension between the reality of the current family structure in South Africa and the ideal family structure promoted by the Church. The shocking revelation of the SACC SEE Study that by 2014, 62% of South African families were single parent families, and only 38% were couple families, poses a reality challenge to the Church that regards single parent families as anomalies.



The church should acknowledge the multiple family permutations that exist in South Africa. The biblical story of Mary, mother of Jesus, offers key insights and lessons in this regard – her teenage pregnancy, her widowhood, her suffering the gruesome death of her beloved son, and her becoming a dependent member of an extended family with John, the disciple of the Lord. These are different expressions of family, lived and experienced the Mother of God – Mary; and lived and experienced by many in our society today.

In navigating these complexities the church can intervene in the healing of family relations based on the theological concept of a triune God. The family relations should resemble the likeness of the Triune God, being in community and having relations of equality and united in love. The church ought to introspect through confession and repentance on its complicity in standing by as the family fabric has been fracturing over time.

Our Ministry – What can be done?

- Each church should have an audit of families. Congregations need to do an audit of the families in their own context this will ensure that interventions are relevant to the actual community. This can be done through the administering of questionnaires. The church will therefore be able to tailor interventions to local needs.
- There is the huge phenomenon of absent fathers. There may be a campaign to track missing fathers and restore them in the spirit of the prodigal son.

- Churches also need to look at ways of creating an environment where both the rich and poor are comfortable with simple weddings as many are unable to marry due to financial constraints. This requires serious engagement with the excesses of the lobola tradition for Africans, and the trend of expensive white weddings in exclusive venues.
- To bring healing to family life, the church should attend to “the roots” of patriarchy that lead to “the trunk” of men drifting away from the family nest and resulting in “the fruit” of male family abandonment and multi-partner relationships. The church should provide teaching on family that affirms the partnership of men and women in childrearing.
- Established businesses should assist in working with families to encourage the work and family balance. Furthermore, businesses should consider giving generous paternity leave to allow fathers to bond with their babies.
- The church should engage trade unions, and political parties to work for good family policies, and the politically active congregants can champion this cause within their political structure.
- The SACC should collaborate with trade unions and NGO’s in sharing resources towards common goals. Trade Unions should be encouraged to advocate for the work family balance.

3.3 POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

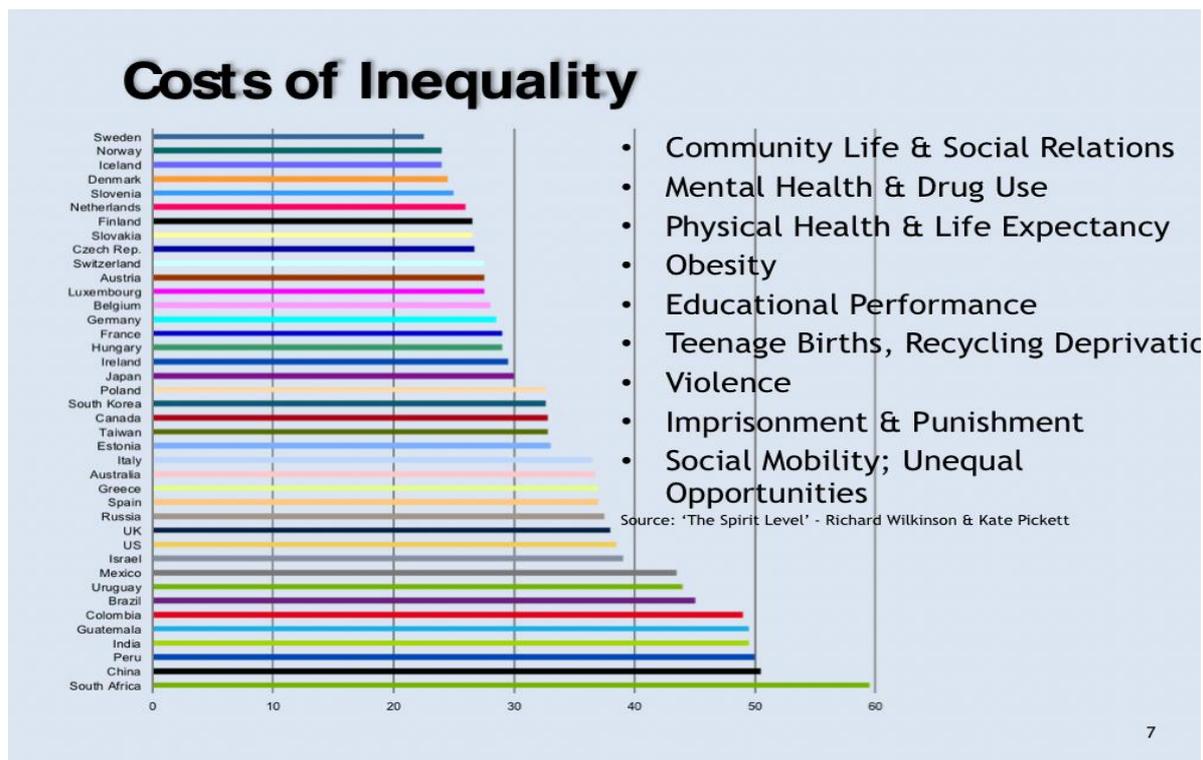
Reconciliation devoid of socioeconomic justice can only be but shallow, given the history of dispossession and material deprivation of the people. Lasting reconciliation requires redressing these historic injustices through inclusive and equitable economic development. South Africa is a society that continues to demonstrate this lack of economic transformation through such indicators of economic injustice as inequality, poverty, unemployment, an increasing wealth gap between rich and poor, environmental degradation; materialism, greed, and discrimination against women.

Even though some ground has been covered in reducing poverty levels through the provision of social grants and the roll out of free basic services, deep-rooted structural injustices that perpetuate poverty remain with us. Inequality and unemployment persists at worrying levels with glaring imbalances in the distribution of income and opportunity across race and gender.

Our young people face an uncertain future without adequate provision of quality education and requisite skills. The poor quality of service delivery undermines the human dignity of our people. Campaigns such as #feesmustfall seem to reflect the frustration of inequality that consigns poor people to a future of being “hewers of wood and drawers of water only”, as Dr Hendrick Verwoerd said of Africans in South Africa.

The church should act to contribute to poverty alleviation and reducing inequality. Inequality has a huge social and economic cost, as the graphic below shows. Of 40 countries on the costs of inequality, South Africa comes out worst. The list on the right side of the picture reflects the social effects of inequality that are factored in the costs of inequality. The following extract in the box below, from the Mail and Guardian newspaper report of October 31, 2014 says it all:

Oxfam this week released its report, *Even It Up: Time to End Extreme Inequality*. It starts with a case study from South Africa and compares a black woman born to a poor family in rural Limpopo to a white man born on the same day in a rich suburb of Cape Town. Using the United Nation's World Development Report, it said the woman was one and a half times more likely to die in the first year of her life. The man, statistically, would live 15 years longer. He would complete 12 years of schooling and probably go to university. She would be lucky to complete one year of schooling. Her children would be stuck in the same place. The report said the two richest South Africans had the same wealth as the bottom half of the population. Johan Rupert, chairperson and chief executive of Remgro and chairperson of Richemont, is worth R82.35-billion, and Nicky Oppenheimer, chairperson of De Beers is worth R72.6-billion. Jay Naidoo, who chairs the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, is quoted in the report as saying the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of very few has "deepened both ecological and economic crises". That was now the greatest threat to global peace and future survival that humanity faced, Naidoo said. "Inequality has led to an escalation of violence in every corner of our burning planet." This disparity is increasing. Oxfam said: "In South Africa, inequality is greater today than at the end of apartheid." The consequences of this were corrosive. "Extreme inequality corrupts politics, hinders economic growth and stifles social mobility. It fuels crime and even violent conflict. It squanders talent, thwarts potential and undermines the foundations of society." M&G: October 31, 2014



Inequality belongs to the root level of the healing diagnosis tree. It leads to poverty, which results in the underhanded survival sub-culture of poor people. In this regard the fact that most poor people are black, yields a consequential racial profiling of the fruits of inequality and poverty – the fruits of family break down, crime and violence. Healing and reconciliation requires dealing with poverty, but also addressing seriously the root material and opportunity

inequalities (say in health and education) that beget and sustain poverty. The graphic below tells the story of the racial and gendered nature of inequality and poverty, as well as the urban – rural split of inequality.

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY STATISTICS

Gini coefficient increased from 0.66 in 1993 to 0.70 in 2008.

2010/11: 20% of the population accounted for <5% of all expenditure, and wealthiest 20% for >61%.

Overall headcount poverty rate was 46%:

- 67% for Africans versus <1% for white people
- 47% for females versus 44% for males
- 56% for children <18 years
- 69% for rural versus 31% for urban.

With people aged 15-64 years equal to 66% of population and age-based dependency ratio of 52% SA looks as if it could benefit from the demographic dividend. But the high unemployment rate, especially for youth, prevents this.

The large 56% rate of children poverty is more concerning considering the growing number of child-headed households. The UNFPA situational analysis reports that “nearly 70 per cent of youth in South Africa are unemployed and the percentage of youth owned businesses remains low at 33 per cent”, and that “45.4 per cent of males and 55 per cent of females in the 15-24 year age group are unemployed”. In addition, “2 million young people aged between 19-24 years are neither employed nor in an educational institution”. (See extract of UNFPA Situational Analysis as Appendix A below)

Our Ministry – What can be done?

All these are factors which reconciliation must address for redress unto healing.

- Financial education is an important part of addressing poverty and inequality. It should include a focus on the psychic damage and oppressive impact of debt, and work on ways of productively overcoming debt.
- SACC currently has a Financial Literacy Program to help educate congregations and communities on household financial management even with limited resources. It is led by the SACC Gauteng and works in partnership with the other provincial councils. It already seeks to address the high costs of funerals, but should now include attention to the costs of weddings. The reconciliation diagnostic tree identifies as belonging to the roots, greed and the induced belief (that love for the deceased requires limitless spending on non-existent money), and this leads to the trunk level where funeral undertaker cartels are structured and coordinated throughout the chain of industry that support the burial of a deceased loved one, resulting in the fruits of a spending and debt pressure on poor families. Reconciliation and healing requires dealing with both the root and the trunk, in order to mitigate the effect of funeral costs at the fruit level.

- The church should intervene in the education sector to improve educational outcomes as a way of lifting the people out of poverty and addressing inequality. A direct intervention in this regard could include a Christian teachers’ summit to engage teachers in our congregations, to help in the drive to create a generation of pupils that will be able to succeed. Christian teachers need to be supported in order for them to help prevent that “the unprepared become hopelessly trapped and the weak and defenseless are destroyed” (Paulo Freire). Brazilian educator Paulo Freire says to his fellow teachers:

“We should devote ourselves humbly but perseveringly to our profession in all aspects: scientific formation, ethical rectitude, respect for others, coherence, a capacity to live with and learn from what is different, and an ability to relate to others without letting our ill-humour or antipathy get in the way of our balanced judgement of the facts”. (In *Pedagogy of Freedom, Ethics, and Civic Courage*, p.23)

Such a Freirean appeal to teachers in our churches will help the Church to help mobilize for a fighting chance to a better quality of life for the children of poor families and positively impact inequality. Jesus says:

“I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

- In addition, the church could consider combining the best skills available in current church schools, and create an electronic educational nutrient program that is made available to children in poor communities. These could be used in Youth Resource Centres established in churches in every locality, for school children to access after school for study and home work research support with volunteer minders and tutors; equipping youth and preparing them for the job market through the development of marketable skills, access to work opportunities/career information – all to enable kids and their future families to gain that asset that gives them a leg up to a future outside of the poverty trap.
- Further in poverty interventions, the March 2015 National Church Leaders Forum committed the churches to a ministry of eradicating poverty rolling out in 2015 and 2016, and the advancement of early childhood cognitive development education to address poverty and inequality long term. (See Appendix B below, with a brief outline of the existing SACC Strategic Approach to War on Poverty with a plus – including areas of nutrition and wellbeing.)
- The church has to address the challenge of food and nutrition for poor people. Consequences of malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies include the stunting of children’s growth and causing learning disabilities – impacting capacity for effective education, affecting the rest of a child’s life and its place in the economy and society.

3.4 TRANSFORMING UNEQUAL ECONOMIC POWER RELATIONS

The apartheid regime built an economy based on exclusion and racial segregation. The lingering legacies of these injustices remain with us. The economy at large remains predominantly in white ownership and there are still felt pains of economic exclusion, indignity and exploitation.

- Land redistribution has been slow;

- 60-65% of wealth remains in the hands of 10% of the population;
- Wealth transfer has been ineffective and BEE has not achieved its aims.
- There is evidence of capital flight, corruption and inefficiency; and
- The education system needs to be “fixed” for an improved throughput and greater productivity in the economy.
- Relations between business and labour are hostile.

Government policies to ensure economic transformation have been many and varied. Macro-economic policies and sectoral policies and including BB-EEE legislation introduced to transform unjust economic relations have not move the country at the pace and level of development desirable to confront exclusion. To contribute to greater economic justice in our country, social partners – that being labour, business and government have to build trust and work closer together. Yet the nature of relations between these stakeholders is hostile. There is evidence of corruption, collusion, and unholy alliances across the board, that undermine even the good intentions of transformation. Should the church not intervene radically in striving for peaceful economic transformation, we should not be surprised by the consequences of allowing the doors of violent transformation to take place.

In this regard, the authors of the SACC “SEE” Study on this theme pose a challenge:

“It is imperative for the church to speak against corruption in the implementation of economic policies and programmes, misappropriation of funds that should be utilised for the benefit of the poor. The church must also be steadfast in challenging the private sector in its unbridled pursuit of profits in a society characterised by increasing levels of poverty and inequality. The church must play its role as the moral conscience of society”.

Indeed, our aim should be to build a just and peaceful society, not merely maintain a society of false peace.

Our Ministry – What can be done?

Traditionally, much of the Church’s activity in the economic sphere has been on a charitable and welfare basis – supporting those economically depressed. Using the Tree Diagnostic Model for healing and reconciliation, we recognize that our charity work is essentially dealing with symptoms, the manifestations, the fruits, rather than the roots of the economic disorder, or the trunk – that which systemically sustains the effect of root cause, ensuring the fruit that we have to address through charity. Already in November 1990, the Rustenburg Conference called on the churches “to place on their agendas as a matter of urgency...the need to work towards a new economic order in which the needs of the poor can be adequately addressed”.

At this time our Healing and Reconciliation directive requires the Church to commit to take up the 1990 Rustenburg engagement towards a reconciled economic dispensation. On the one hand this will require the capacity of the nation to create platforms for serious engagement that includes sector representatives that can identify and work the necessary meeting points, sacrifices and trade offs for economic transformation. On the other hand there is much that the churches can do both at congregational/denominational level, and at SACC level, that can

be effective interventions at a broader structural level.

With that background the following proposals are made.

- A special SACC Task Team should be established to investigate the plausibility and possible models regarding the church's role in establishing economic instruments that operate directly at the level of families and communities, recognizing that families are economic entities, integrating this with the issues of economics of funerals and weddings, and the concerns of the Financial Literacy program.
- One such consideration that the Task Team would consider, is the plausibility of a bank, or bank-like model that would enable economic transformation, and insurance (mutual society). A model that might make sense in this regard is that of a co-operative bank, owned by the SACC's churches. Such a bank would use the churches' resources to liberate members from over indebtedness, allowing them to repay the church on sober terms and importantly give them the capacity to practice their tithing.
- Access to quality education is a significant instrument of economic empowerment. The Church can achieve much through education interventions, and can be an avenue for putting faith back into the economy. The church should draw from its own reservoir, teachers in the congregation, members' will to contribute, as well as the establishing of interventions and programs (i.e. aftercare programmes). *This point also emerges from the Poverty and Inequality Intervention recommendations.*
- Investigation into school capacitation should also be sought. The aim should be in providing safe spaces where learners can learn and complete their schoolwork productively. Additionally, it is recommended that interventions be looked into regarding teacher professional development, ensuring the quality deliverance of education. *Also addressed in the Poverty and Inequality theme.*
- Adult education was carried forward with the aim of alleviating the oppression of poverty, and developing mind-sets that would encourage active participation economically. In alleviating the cognitive tax of poverty, aligning with practical economic interventions, it is recommended that a branch of Adult Education be geared towards financial education, focussing on the psychic damage of oppression of debt and working on ways of productively overcoming debt. *This also relates to an added aspect to the current SACC Financial Literacy Education Program.*
- The Church's prophetic role in the economy might follow the example of Prophet Jeremiah (Chapter 32), whom God instructed to buy land as a symbol of hope in the future, despite that he himself was in prison, and Jerusalem was under siege of war!

"For this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land"! (Jeremiah 32: 15)

So too declares the Promise of South Africa, The South Africa We Pray For; the South Africa we shall work for in faith under grace!

3.5 ANCHORING DEMOCRACY

The SACC discussion document with the ANC, mentioned at the introduction to this document, which reflected the concerns of church leaders and their call for action on the State of the Nation, highlighted a number of issues that need attention, the first of which was the loss of public trust:

"We have lost the momentum towards national integration and the confidence our people have on those who govern them. The immediate consequence of this is the rise of community protests, people protesting against their movement and their government; and much disillusionment among many South Africans - black and white, urban and rural."

In this context the SACC "SEE" Study reviewed the state of democracy. There is something to be said about the responsibility of society for the democratic culture and democratic ethic in a country. The management of the State is duly mandated to a successful party at the polls. But citizens cannot end there and walk away. Unlike a plumber or electrician to whom you delegate totally and walk away when they come to unblock household drains and sewers, citizens cannot do that with the State. As one author makes the case, democracy is a shared liability, creating an ethical poser for citizens in a democracy: that by being necessary participants in the democratic processes and their institutions, citizens have something of a moral contractual arrangement with the State. Citizens, through their representatives, are co-creators of the levers of State and institutions; such as we "created" the Constitution of our Republic, and gave it our recognition and overwhelming support, hence it cannot be changed without a substantial percentage of our votes through Parliament. Citizens are happy beneficiaries of the largesse of State, such as we happily enjoy the social grants and all that the government provides – including the beautiful highways that we fight so much about!

But then also we are co-responsible for the mistakes of the State. We can't want the State sometimes and not at other times. In this context, Eric Beerbohm asks the question:

"When a government in a democracy acts in our name, are we as citizens, responsible for those acts? What if the government commits a moral crime?"

He answers himself and says:

"In so far as citizens select lawmakers and sponsor the State exercise of power that produces political injustice, they bear moral responsibility as accessories to injustice."

This is the reason why it is always hard to deal with the ignorance of a citizenry after the fact when government excesses have become publicly known – the question always is, who knew what about this? In this regard, Nelson Mandela said in 1996:

"Our experience had made us acutely aware of the possible dangers of a government that is neither transparent nor accountable. To this end our Constitution contains several mechanisms to ensure that government will not be part of the problem; but part of the solution. Public awareness and participation in maintaining efficiency in government within the context of human rights are vital to making a reality of democracy..."

Therefore, a society emerging from a ruthless apartheid government hostile towards its people, our commitment to nation building and reconciliation requires a political culture that upholds democratic values enshrined in our Constitution.

Reconciliation and nation building in this regard are likely to progress when citizens have confidence in public democratic institutions and its leadership. We can be proud that South Africa has a vibrant and functioning democracy, marked by a progressive Constitution, regular free and fair elections, in some instances we celebrate dutiful men and women of high integrity in the civil service that expose the scourge of corruption, and some local councillors that serve their constituents diligently.

However, the biggest challenge facing our democracy is the declining public trust in democratic institutions. The dearth of transparency, accountability, corruption, mismanagement are all factors that undermine public trust in institutions. The independence of Chapter 9 institutions, the principle of separation of powers, the freedom of the press, and the freedom of civil society has to be safeguarded. The restoration of public confidence in democratic institutions requires that we uphold and safeguard the independence of Chapter 9 institutions, the principle of separation of powers, the freedom of the press and civil society, and to give substance to citizenship. In the context of our country, the church has to speak truth to power as it always has, to make intercession for the State and people, and lead by example in upholding institutional integrity, maintain an honest presence in public affairs.

Our Ministry – What can be done?

- The country as a whole needs a comprehensive and ongoing democracy education program – perhaps better viewed as a general civic education that deals with all elements of the State and civic duty – including respect for the law and law enforcement agencies. This in the face of daily police killings! We have a duty to ensure the welfare of the State, hence we pray constantly for the government; as Prophet Jeremiah reminds us:

“Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7)

The Church uses the vision of the common good as anticipated in the just values of the coming reign of God, the moral vision of a “Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society”, and a codified set of virtues, values and obligations. This is the basis of the Church’s engagement in public affairs, which, for an organ of sinful persons, should be conducted in humility.

- There is a need for ongoing social research and a regular social analysis function to keep updating the SACC on critical dimensions of national life.
- The church should play a role in promoting responsible citizenry. This involves raising awareness but also offering guidelines for good practice. The work here should ideally be done at a local level, but the SACC may help to provide some resources material in this regard.
- In addition, churches have a special concern for the “whole people of God”, in a non-partisan manner. The church should therefore not seek to affiliate with political parties as this may undermine its honest pastoral engagement. However, the church should be able to make intelligent analyses in the reading of the “signs of the times”, and engage political players as is appropriate, in accordance with the circumstances. There is however a difference in engaging with the State, for the State is the place for all, as government is for all.
- At every election the SACC plays a role as part of the monitors. This should continue, and in fact enlarged. For the upcoming local government elections, the SACC should

use the current ward model applied with the War on Poverty, and involve ecumenical volunteers from all the churches of the election. For this to work we shall need to train a lot of ward level people.

- In moving forward, the spiritualities or theologies operative in parishes should be interrogated with the discernment that is necessary to take the church forward. The absence of which will otherwise give way to spiritualities of denialism and blame, failing to take responsibility for healing action.
- The process of renewal within the SACC has led to the termination of its Parliamentary Liaison Office. This has deprived the SACC of an office that can encourage research and training and can engage with the government and parliamentary committees at the highest level on a regular basis. On the longer term, the SACC should consider reopening this office in collaboration with similar institutions, including the SA Catholic Bishops' Parliamentary Liaison Office.

Conclusion

This is a call to have a coherent and united witness of the Christian Church in South Africa. This is to stay true to our organizational commitment “to lead common Christian action that works for moral witness in South Africa, addressing issues of social and economic justice, national reconciliation, the integrity of creation, eradication of poverty, and contributing towards the empowerment of all those who are spiritually, socially and economically marginalized. This we should do ceaselessly – in all seasons, as Prophet Isaiah says:

“I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem (South Africa); they will never be silent day or night.”

This requires us to operate on at least three understandings of prophetic ministry: The one model is the Elijah, who engages King Ahab over injustice against Naboth (1 Kings 21), or Nathan upon David's sin against Uriah (2 Samuel 11). The second model is that of Jeremiah's witness of hope in purchasing land in the despair of war (Jeremiah 32). The third is that of Daniel who absorbs the sin of his people in his confession (Daniel 9).

The commitment to *The South Africa We Pray For*, is a commitment to all three aspects of the prophetic tradition. The disposition of the Church in this regard is prayerful – seeking to “soak the country in prayer!” It certainly cannot be triumphalist or arrogant, but it has to be accompanied by a confessional and penitential dimension, in recognition of our own gross imperfections as individuals and institutions; and for being knowingly and unknowingly complicit in the injustices that pervert our land. Our prayer will precede, accompany and follow inspired action for transformation for the good of our society under God. For, the One who said “You are the salt of the earth” Matthew 5:13, also made the promise: “Behold I am with you till the end of the age!” (Matthew 28:20).

APPENDIX A

The UNFPA Youth Situational Analysis of South Africa

(<http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/southafrica/2013/04/22/6609/youth/>)

- Overall 42 per cent of young people are between the ages of 14 and 35 and the gender difference is not substantial. Over two thirds of the young population (69.3 per cent) reside in four provinces (EC, KZN, Gauteng and Limpopo). The living conditions of South African youth in certain aspects have improved since 2005. Improvements include access to formal housing, potable water, proper sanitation, electricity and communication platforms such as access to information and communication technologies. Young people in South Africa are highly technological with 88.1 per cent of those aged 15-34 living in dwellings with access to landline, cellular phone or internet access. Taking note of these improvements, South African youth still face significant challenges such as high unemployment rates, high HIV infection rates and an increase in youth headed households for the ages 15-24.
- In South Africa secondary school Gross Enrolment (GER) is high at over 90 per cent. However, 2 million young people aged between 19-24 years are neither employed nor in an educational institution. This is significant because completing secondary schooling is shown to have a protective effect against HIV, especially for young girls. In addition, men and women with tertiary education are significantly less likely to be HIV-positive than those without tertiary education. Unemployment has been named as one of the biggest problems in South Africa. 45.4 per cent of males and 55 per cent of females in the 15-24 year age group are unemployed.
- HIV prevalence is twice as high amongst young women as amongst young men between the ages of 15 and 24 years and females are four times more likely to have HIV than males of the same age. This age group has therefore been identified as a key population. On average, young women become HIV-positive about five years earlier than males. The 2009 HIV prevalence in the adult population (aged 15–49) was estimated to be 17.8 per cent. Young people in South Africa also encounter high levels of gender based violence. They also face barriers in accessing HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services due to limited decision-making power, lack of control over financial resources, restricted mobility, and care responsibilities.
- Teenage fertility is reported to be on the decline although these estimates are still high. Stats SA Community Survey (2007) reflects that teenage fertility has declined by 10 per cent between 1996 (78 per 1000); 2001 (65 per 1000) and (54 per 1000) in 2007. The South African Youth Context report released in 2011 asserts that 9.5 per cent male and 6 per cent female high school learners reported ever having had an abortion or a partner who had had an abortion. Only 48 per cent of these learners reported using legal health services.
- Reliable data on youth with disabilities remains a challenge. Based on the available data, persons with disabilities comprise 3 per cent of the population aged between 10 and 19. For the ages 20-29 and 30-39 this figure is 3.5 per cent and .419 per cent respectively.

Key Challenges:

- Decline in knowledge levels across all age groups, within the youth category only 30 per cent of male youth (aged 15-24 years) and 27 per cent of females of the same age

group could correctly identify ways to prevent sexual transmission of HIV and reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission.

- The most recent ANC sero surveillance record high rates of positivity in pregnant adolescents aged 15-19 (13.7 per cent nationally) and 9 per cent in adolescents aged 10-14.
- The South African Youth Context report (2011) shows that 10 per cent of female learners reported being forced to have sex; and reported slightly higher rates of being victims of partner violence and sexually-coercive behaviour than male learners (Youth Risk Behaviour Survey, 2008).
- Over 45 thousand female learners fell pregnant in 2009, with teenage pregnancy representing one of the leading causes of early school drop outs (after economic reasons). Despite the progressive legislation in SA allowing young women to return to school post-pregnancy, only around a third seem to actually re-enter the schooling system.
- Youth unemployment in South Africa is extremely high. Nearly 70 per cent of youth in South Africa are unemployed and the percentage of youth owned businesses remains low at 33 per cent.
- There is a need to strengthen the development of strategic information to effectively address educational and health developmental outcomes of young people living with disabilities including access to comprehensive sexual reproductive health services.

Key Opportunities:

- The enabling environment through national health and related policy guidelines to promote youth health and well-being. These are conducive and ensure young people have access to comprehensive affordable health services.
- Capitalise on young people's high access to social media platforms and scale up evidence-informed combination prevention efforts utilising social media platform to increase reach of out of school youth who are increasingly vulnerable to new infections.
- The implementation of the Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP) has created a collaborative platform between the education and health sectors to increase provision of accessible youth friendly health services directly and through linkages to appropriate community services.

APPENDIX B:

A Multi-faceted Basket of Ministries to Combat Poverty and its attendant Social Impacts

The War on Poverty by the churches is the coming together of churches in a given ward to, together address the ravages of poverty, focusing on a family ('family by family') and working with it (family) until they (the family) is taken out of or pulls out of poverty: Progressively meeting:

- **Immediate needs** (food, clothes, etc.);
- **basic needs** (schooling, health, water, electricity, housing, identity documents, grants, jobs, etc.);
- **identifying potential change agents within each family** and empowering them in terms of educational and/or skills development; and, assisting them to locate themselves where they can be involved in productive activity (entrepreneurial activity, business, employment, etc.) and thereby pull the family out of poverty.

The model is to work with a family until it pulls out of poverty. Partnership with Government draws on services already decided upon in terms of existing policies. Partnership with Business enables Business to apply their targeted resources more efficiently with tangible results. It also creates space for business to offer a variety of specialized skills and services such as internet access and communication drives.

SACC seeks to offer a multifaceted approach that builds on the model of the War on Poverty, but address other social ills with the infrastructure of ecumenically collaborating congregations in the ward. We would superimpose on the War on Poverty a package of program tools in various areas such as:

- Early childhood cognitive development, giving poor kids a head-start to deal with complexity and grasp mathematical and scientific principles for advanced intellectual development;
- Nutrition and food security;
- Comprehensive health and well-being,
- Financial literacy and income generation.
- Election monitoring, as well as an early warning system of community disenchantment over service delivery, and act to ensure a peaceful resolution of an emerging challenge.

These are to be grouped in four program clusters of: *Poverty Eradication, Democracy & Good Governance, Health & Wellbeing, and Peace and Reconciliation* which anchors the **Anti-xenophobia campaign**. "Excommunicating" Xenophobia literally

means driving the practice and its breeding mindset out of the mainly poor communities.

SACC uses the platform of composite life improvement combining all efforts in menu of place-based ministrations that address: War on Poverty; Peace, Reconciliation and Healing of Memories; Health and Wellbeing; together with Democracy and Good Governance programming that includes monitoring of elections and the organs of State: Legislature, Judiciary, Executive and Chapter 9 Institutions.

Thus to “excommunicate” xenophobia is a multidimensional effort that includes research on attitudes, practices, community experiences and community engagement in understanding and interpreting the same. It includes community mapping that can locate new-comers; be they from other countries or other RSA provinces, in the community asset portfolio.