

DIE APOSTOLIESE GELOOF SENDING VAN SUID-AFRIKA THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Maranatapark/Maranatha Park, Wesselslaan/Ave 2, Lyndhurst Tvl 2192 Posbus/P.O. Box 890197, Lyndhurs 2108
Tel: (0 11) 786.8550 Faks Nr/Fax No. (011) 887-1182

4 August 1997

The Chairperson of the Human Rights Violation Committee
Truth and Reconciliation
P O Box 1158
JOHANNESBURG
2000

Dear Commissioners

1. PREAMBLE:

The Executive Council of the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa after careful deliberation and self-examination, has decided that this church should, in a spirit of conciliation and reconciliation, make this submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The AFM is divided into 17 regions and the Executive Council comprises the chairmen of those regions as well as the office-bearers and departmental heads of the church.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW:

The AFM was founded almost 90 years ago by American missionaries. It started as a multiracial, multilingual, pentecostal church reaching out to all sectors of the South African community.

But soon the winds of ideological issues led to the sorry state of the church perforce splitting up, into Coloured, Black, White and Indian factions.

Interaction, however, endured between the various factions. And, by the grace of God, all four divisions prospered.

This continued until the advent of the Eighties which gave birth to and stirrings within the AFM family to once more become united. Seasons of deep divide, bitter argument, heavy debate and **/pp 1-2/** intense soulsearching were the order of the day.

But God, grand architect of His church, finally let His will prevail and at Easter 1996 the Apostolic Faith Mission once more was one church.

In a moving unity ceremony at Centurion Park, newly elected president of the restored church Dr Isak Burger, on behalf of the old White church, sought on behalf of the Whites forgiveness from the former Coloured, Indian and Black churches, while the then newly elected Vice-President of the AFM, Pastor Frank

Chikane, accepted Dr Burger's pleas and on behalf of the churches of colour apologised for possible hurt caused by those churches.

Since that day, AFM unity has truly flourished and the church has been greatly blessed.

But it would be dishonest to deny that there still are pockets of racial discontent in some areas. We are working at that and have no doubt that God in his great providential nature will also turn the thinking those still entrapped by their past.

3. POLITICAL OVERVIEW

To a large extent all South Africans were prisoners of political and ideological bedevilments.

If you were an Afrikaner in the Forties, Fifties and Sixties, you were taught certain so-called truths by your elders that left indelible marks on your thought processes. Few Afrikaners were exposed to views beyond their own.

Even the Press and Radio certainly did not tell the whole story.

Eventually, one became so engrossed and beset by your environment that you truly believed in the ideology of the day.

Black movements were painted as communist and because of separation you could not test it and had to accept that opposition to Government policy, was communist-inspired and aimed at the downfall of Christianity.

The Coloured community probably had the worst deal of all. They were crushed between Black and White, looked down on by the Whites, the Black people certainly did not hold them dear.

People of Asian origin, especially in places like Natal, were regarded Black and White as financial opportunists, while in the Free State were not even allowed after dark. /pp2-3/

The Black people were seen as labour fountains that had to be kept in place to help create prosperity for the bosses.

This may be oversimplifying the issue. But all we are trying to say is, is that we all looked at each other as objects rather than members of the human race.

For that we all have to seek God's forgiveness and pray that such inhumanity would never again touch the shores of this great land.

4. THE AFM AND THE SYSTEM

Within our church, as explained earlier, we have sought and by great mercy have been granted reconciliation. But that is not the end the road.

For *we* realise that many of our members have been deeply hurt by those who propped up the previous government.

And, we know of cases, where brethren within the AFM caused great affliction to fellow members of the AFM.

We are today trying as hard as we can to bring about healing and reconciliation in our own tanks. We are not only trying to help and assist the physically injured and spiritually hurt to overcome and forgive their tormentors, but we are also trying to help those who were used as tools of a system to come to grips with their past.

We uphold the principle that forgiveness and reparation are interlinked. But that is within the AFM.

What the AFM cannot deny is that thousands of its members were employed in the structures of the former government. Many of our members held top positions in the former Government organisations.

The Police alone employed tens of thousands of our people, Black, Coloured, White and Indian.

All our white young men were called up for military duty.

We do not know how many committed evil deeds - and probably will/ never know.

What we say in our defence is that those who had transgressed, never were encouraged by the AFM to do so.

But physical harm caused is only a side of the saga. /pp 3-4/

What we have to admit is that many of our members worked in structures where they may never have foreseen the misery and hardship caused by the executors of the policies they helped to formulate.

In short, we have to admit that the AFM, like all other churches, operated within a system that today stands condemned.

5. WHY THIS PAPER?

Many of us had sought answers during those dark days. But bear in mind that many a time we asked for an explanation, that explanation was given us by fellow Christians, even members of the AFM. And, accepted those answers.

A plethora of laws made it impossible for the ordinary man to delve any deeper.

We are today deeply hurt as we become aware of the injustices of the past as they are being brought to light by your own Commission, by our courts and the media.

We are baffled, stunned and confused.

In the AFM there is not a section that did not in some way assist the old system to flourish and there is not a section that did not harm fellow believers.

As the past is uncovered we hear of Indian, White, Coloureds and Blacks that committed excesses, be it as members of the forces or out of sheer frustration with the order of the day. For many of us, living a comfort zone of privilege, it was also convenient to ignore the cries of our fellow believers.

What we would like to state unequivocally today is that the AFM failed in its duty to question the system more, especially in the light of its continual preaching from the pulpit the message of love, charity, hope, justice and peace.

We missed the boat in the sense that we were blinded to so many evils.

For that we need to sincerely apologise to all those out there who suffered.

We can never get to each of them ourselves. We are thankful for a forum through which we can express our sorrow.

We also owe it to them to plead with each member of the AFM to search himself/herself and to put right personally anything that has to be put right. /pp4-5/

We owe it to them to become more faithful watchdogs of what is happening in this country and to ensure our past history is never repeated and that future generations never be allowed to forget our past and perhaps stand accused of even worse transgressions than we had committed.

In conclusion, we would like to reach out to those whom we can assist to overcome the hurt of the past. The AFM's doors will never be closed, to them.

I S BURGER
PRESIDENT