

The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

Church Development & Planning

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TO: Participants in the May CDP Conference:

Dear Friends,

This note to you is long overdue. I had intended to write to you shortly after the Conference in Pretoria, but one thing led to another and I only find myself now, 2 months later, putting some thoughts to paper.

Firstly, I want to thank you for taking the time to join with me and other brothers and sisters in the UPCSA to talk, listen, share, learn, discuss and get to grips with the reality of Church Growth in the denomination. Thank you for your enthusiastic and honest participation. I found it refreshing to speak so candidly with you on vital matters pertaining to the life and ministry of each of our congregations and the UPCSA in general. Although we had discussed a number of important matters, quite a few of you mentioned how you had especially valued the time we spent on the Acts 2 bible study and the reflection on what we each love about the Church.

Secondly, I want to take this opportunity to remind you of a few things.

- i) It is clear to all of us that there has to be a return to some basic principles in doing and being Church. Notable amongst these is improving the biblical literacy of our congregations as well as offering effective and meaningful training to our leaders – whether Minister or Elders or others – so that we can all be clear about the purpose of the Church and our place in it.
- ii) We need to create forums in which members of our Presbyteries are able to share and learn about Church Growth and so get our leaders ‘Thinking Church Growth’. You will recall that you were given a booklet containing 14 chapters that you can use in your Presbytery’s Church Growth Forum. Please do all you can to get the CDF established in your Presbytery.
- iii) We recognised that we have a serious challenge facing the UPCSA regarding sustainability in ministry into the future. If we only use our current model of ministry, i.e. full time ordained Ministers of Word and Sacraments we are going to land up with fewer ministers and fewer ‘viable’ congregations. We have to look to other avenues at our disposal, such as CDE’s and Stated Supply to meet the needs of congregations, and then also look to recognise and encourage what God is already doing in many congregations where lay people are being raised up to serve in various

ministerial leadership positions. Here I refer to the proposed Order of Lay/Supportive Ministries where the intention is to train and recognise individuals who can serve as evangelists, pastoral workers, worship leaders, youth pastors, preachers etc. Please begin talking about this at your Presbyteries and amongst your colleagues. It is not the answer to all our 'problems', but it is a step in the right direction.

- iv) Don't forget to visit our committee's website: www.upcsa-cdp.org.za to be reminded of the work of the committee and more importantly to have a look at the various resources available to you on the website. You are also invited to submit resources to the committee that can then be placed on the website. If you have something you would like to share with others, please send me the information.

- v) We also hope to have up and running soon our partnering of congregations and projects where there can be a more meaningful sharing of resources between congregations.

Ultimately, the hope of the committee and myself was to create a space in which we could be empowered with ideas and information so that we could all be stimulated to seek ways to encourage growth and relevance in the life and work of the Church. We all recognise that there are very serious problems in the UPCSA, but at the same time also recognise that there are great opportunities to bring life and hope as we serve and love as Christ did.

May God bless you in your ministry and may you be an instrument of change, hope and grace in your Presbytery.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CHRIS". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "C" and a horizontal line extending to the right.

The Rev Christopher Judelsohn
Convener