

**UNITY NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN
THE BANTU PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
AND
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SOUTHERN
AFRICA
(1959 - 1971)**

by

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I declare that this dissertation is my own work. It has not been submitted in this or in a similar form for a degree in any University.

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.....17 day of May 94.....

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INTRODUCTION

Talk about church unity evokes differing responses, with people responding both positively and negatively. These responses stem from memories of the past, realities of the present, and expectations of the future. Many believe that history is opening a door to a new ecclesiastical era. A door of opportunity, an opportunity to address the divisions that exist within the Church of Jesus Christ. But are churches prepared to forget their divided past, strive to find new expressions of fellowship, of witness, of communion with one another as the new South Africa promises to open the political door a little wider?

In the attempt to wrestle with the unity negotiations between the Bantu Presbyterian Church (renamed Reformed Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1979) and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, this paper will look at opportunities that were missed. South African history, bitter as it has been, provided the churches with possibilities to work towards unity. But these were not grasped. The Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa confess the same faith with no doctrinal differences. One would have hoped that it would have been less problematic to bring them together than two denominations from different confessional backgrounds. But the history of colonisation and of African resistance to it has largely shaped attitudes against proposals for a united church. European missionaries were seen by many Africans as identical with the colonial powers, and the gospel was regarded as a weapon to disarm them.

In a brief historical discussion of missionary expansion I will trace the origins of the two churches, the Bantu Presbyterian Church with a history of African control, and, in fact a near total absence of whites, and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa which has always been white dominated. This will highlight the historical reasons that led to conservative attitudes grounded in racial prejudice, the main stumbling block for organic unity. Anyone who is aware of the level of race relations in South Africa since 1948 cannot avoid asking questions on how the two churches even came to dream of such a union between white and African Christians.

In this thesis it will be argued that the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches contributed much to challenging these two churches to talk about unity. Through their participation in conferences and programmes of

the ecumenical movement, problems resulting from a divided witness became more glaring. The need to address these problems became an urgent matter. The clear witness of the World Council of Churches, its uncompromising challenge to social, economic, and political structures of injustice shaped the agenda for the General Assemblies of both the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa.

African and white fears of a united church brought the work of those who served on the Unity Negotiating Committee, begun around 1959, to halt in 1971. These fears on both sides played a pivotal role in deciding the shape unity negotiations took. Can people really forget their past experience, especially when the present does not look any different? Can people enter into a union hopeful that change will be realized thereafter? Such fears were a result of a number of differences between the African and white population, with the government aggravating the situation through its unjust policies.

An attempt to address the problem of memories of the past as giving rise to fears of the future will be made. Mindful of the limitations of personal experience, one can nevertheless say "I understand why people were, and could still be fearful". The question is whether there is any hope, in the church or outside, to help develop confidence that a United Church would be to the advantage of both white and African Christians.

That there were differences does not mean there was nothing in common. Theologians involved in the negotiations undoubtedly understood the Christological as well as Ecclesiological comperatives in relation to Church Unity. They usually agreed about them. But we need to ask why an African church like the Bantu Presbyterian Church found it difficult to unite with a white church inspite of the gospel demands. Hopefully the concluding chapter will provide another way forward to a further attempt at union, despite the fear of a second failure. We must try even if we fail, and fail, and fail....

Divisions that exist within the Church of Jesus Christ are a hindrance to effective witness. Unity is an integral part of the gospel itself. If the gospel is an invitation to human beings to believe in and be united with Christ who is Son of God and Son of humanity, then all those so believing in and united to him, have by necessity, to be united with each other also. The Christian eschatological hope is for the consummation and recapitulation of all things in

Christ, thus forming a unity of the universe in him. The ultimate purpose of all witness is a union in Christ. What are the practical implications of this for the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa?

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CHAPTER 1

A REFLECTION ON MISSIONARY EXPANSION

It has been argued, many a time, that Christianity was brought to South Africa wrapped up in Western Culture. That missionaries attempted, consciously or unconsciously, to westernize converts cannot be doubted. Any talk about Church Unity tends to take memories of the past very seriously. As an introduction to the work of the Unity Negotiations Committee, to help bring about a union between the Bantu Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, I shall attempt to reflect on the activities of some of the missionaries that brought Christianity to our shores.

The story of the missionary movement records countless missionaries who were resented because they brought with them an alien and uncongenial culture (Wilson 1969:267-8). Africans were a religious people with their own religion, this cannot be contested. The imposition of western religion and culture, caused African converts a great disservice as they found themselves caught between two religions and two social systems. An acceptance of Christian teaching implied a radical change in the manner of life of the converts. Christianity is indeed a way of life but it must take seriously those it seeks to serve and attempt to build on values or value systems that cannot be done away with. Family relationships and the political structures of the African were radically challenged by a number of condemnations. As James Kiernan observes; "Christian expansion went hand in hand with the steady deterioration of the power of the chiefs and the disintegration of other indigenous institutions " (Prozesky 1990:19).

The critics of the Protestant missions, both African and white, argue that missionaries were the tools of imperialism who furthered white rule, fastened the yoke, and sapped the will to resist. They argue that the real function of missionaries was to further the capitalist system: that they

established a demand for clothing, tools, furniture, and other goods; they encouraged employment for wages; they fostered the growth of an acquisitive society.

The missionaries found themselves trapped within a colonial-capitalist ideal which left them indifferent to the African world view. They "became part of the process which destroyed African political power in the region" (Villa-Vicencio 1988:61). The role of the chiefs, which was central to the socioeconomic as well as the political structuring of the African Society slowly diminished after the cattle killings of 1857. Their territories were divided into magisterial districts with many sons of the missionaries involved in government affairs as native commissioners, magistrates and other officials.

J C Warner, a Government agent stationed among the Thembu, wrote in 1856:

"The political and religious governments of the Kaffir tribes are so intimately connected that the one cannot be overturned without the other, - they must stand or fall together. As so many untoward events have happened in our intercourse with these people, and so many clashing interests now exist; and as the Kaffir tribes have now become so thoroughly imbued with hatred to the 'white man' and appear so resolutely determined on his destruction, or to lose their political existence in the struggle, and above all as they have resolutely and so perseveringly refused to give to the Gospel even an attentive hearing, it seems to me that the sword must first break them up as tribes and destroy their political existence; after which when thus set free from the shackles by which they are bound, civilization and Christianity will no doubt make rapid progress among them." (Wilson 1969:264).

While many missionaries did not raise a finger against imperialist governments or show any respect for the customs and traditions of the indigenous people, there were some who made themselves bitterly unpopular to the colonial powers by their battle to establish African legal rights. They did so for the sake of what they believed were the demands of the Christian gospel. It would therefore not be true that all African people were forced to accept Christianity through the barrel of a gun. Some were impressed by the work of missionaries who chose to fight alongside them.

The historical origins of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa can be traced to the arrival of the British force at the Cape in 1806, which consisted of the 93rd Highland Regiment or the Sutherland Fencibles also known as the Presbyterian Regiment. They organised their own worship, bible study and prayer meetings until the arrival of Rev. George Thom of the London Missionary Society in 1812. He was on his way to India but changed his mind preferring to serve them. He established the first congregation in South Africa serving both Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Thom understood his task as rendering service to this group rather than reaching out to the natives. He condemned inter-marriage with Hottentots. His congregation thus remained purely white. In 1814 the 93rd Regiment was removed from Cape Town. The congregation could not maintain Thom as there were only 27 people left. He severed his connection with the Society in order to accept the pastorate of the Dutch Reformed Church of Caledon (Du Plessis 1911:139).

Scottish missionary work throws much light on the simultaneous existence of two Presbyterian Churches in South Africa. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1796, condemned the idea of a pre-occupation with propagating the gospel 'abroad' amongst barbarous and heathen nations while there remained, at home, some without religious knowledge. In spite of an Assembly resolution against engaging in missionary work, the Glasgow Missionary Society was formed that same year as a non-official alternative for those in whose hearts burned the flame of missionary enthusiasm. The Board of this Society began work in India, China, Africa and elsewhere. In 1820 they directed their attention to South Africa. On South African soil work began at Lovedale, on the Eastern frontier, with John Bennie and John Ross laying the foundations. From time to time these missionaries and those who joined them in the field suffered severely as their work was seen as embracing the intentions of the colonial government. There were periods of storm and stress. During the Frontier War of 1834-35 the missionaries found themselves and their position in great danger (Du Plessis 1911:185).

In 1824 the Settler Presbyterians decided to leave the congregation which Thom had founded and establish a purely Presbyterian one. St

Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Cape Town, was completed in 1829, and The Rev. John Adamson from Scotland became the first minister. As Elfriede Strassberger points out, he laid the foundations for the Presbyterian cause (Strassberger 1971:79).

Meanwhile, the Church of Scotland experienced its great disruption of 1843. The Free Church of Scotland was formed, and later, in 1847 the United Presbyterian Church was also established. Scottish missionaries were already 20 years on South African soil by this time. They were given liberty of choice as to which church they wanted to adhere to. From then on the divided church maintained and expanded the work begun, as two churches, the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church, working side by side. Each developed its own missions in the Ciskei and the Transkei. Later the Free Church sent missionaries to Natal where the Mission Council and the Presbytery of Natal were founded. Those who formed the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland missions started work around the area to be known as the United Presbyterian Presbytery of Kaffraria. This Presbytery included several white congregations such as Alice, King Williams' Town, and East London.

As a result of the Disruption, a Free Church was established in Cape Town in 1844. This Church worked hand in glove among the white population with the Presbyterian Mission Church, which had been in existence since 1838. Meanwhile, work at St Andrew's Presbyterian expanded to Beaufort West, Victoria West, Touwsriver, Matjiesfontein and elsewhere. These were to be constituted a Presbytery in 1893.

There was much hostility between the white government and the Africans at this time. The 'War of the axe' of 1846 put the missionaries under great stress with Lovedale at the centre sometimes used as a military camp. Whenever war broke out mission stations were not spared. Evangelism and colonialization were regarded as two sides of the same coin. The chiefs were resentful of the missionary interference with their christianized subjects. Majeke observes that "in assessing the forces that brought the downfall of the maXhosa, there is no doubt that a most important factor was the breach made in the Xhosa ranks by the

missionaries" (Majeke 1952:75). Converts were loyal to the missionaries and this loyalty helped in disarming the Africans in the wars against colonial expansion. The 1850 'War of uMlanjeni' resulted in the total destruction of all European villages in the Tyume valley. The War of Ngcayecibi (1877-78) was the last military expression of African resistance on the Eastern frontier and marked a turning point in African response to colonial rule.

The Africans were now a conquered people. Many still clung to African ways, resenting both colonialism and the Christian religion. But others adopted the ways of the conquerors as this seemed the only way out. The mission stations offered an initiation into the white man's world. School attendance meant church attendance and sometimes baptism and church membership. The successful ones became a class distinct from the uneducated, but they were subordinate to European missionaries and their families.

Missionaries of other denominations were no better than the Scottish missionaries. There is enough evidence that few allowed Africans to take any leadership position in ecclesiastical matters. The Thembu Church, founded in 1884 by Nehemiah Tile, was a reaction to white control. Tile, was a Wesleyan evangelist, whose distinct leadership skills rendered him an enemy of his European brothers in Christ. He emerged as a spokesman for the Thembu in 1883, demanding the removal of magistrates and a restoration of traditional leadership. He raised his voice against white political and ecclesiastical control.

A native assistant in his church, Tile did most of the work but was refused ordination in order to keep him in perpetual subordination. He could not celebrate marriages or administer the sacraments. Like most African assistants who qualified for ordination, he received a lower salary and had a lower status than the white missionaries, although some were less experienced than he was. He had an awakening sense of responsibility to fight the discriminatory practices that undermined Africans. Tile was accused by the Methodist missionaries of indulging in politics. (Saayman 1991:65) He was handed over by his white brothers to be arrested, but the Attorney General declared his arrest illegal. This

event points to the nature of Settler-African Christian relations at the time. The common attitude was that an African could never stand on his own. This paternalistic tendency was prevalent amongst all denominations. The African was always the child to be nurtured and made to work, and the white person got the credit.

In 1897 the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (predominantly white) was formed (South African Outlook, November, 1973:2). This was a coming together of the Presbytery of Adelaide, chiefly composed from 1820 Settlers formed in 1888, the Presbytery of Natal which had been established in 1844, and the Presbytery of the Transvaal of 1890, and other Presbyterian churches. The missionaries of the United Presbyterian Church entered the new church. Those of the Free Church, after a consideration of the implications of such a union, refused to be a part. They considered it not in the interests of African mission work or advantageous to its development¹. On the whole they favoured a self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating African Church. Though their sincerity on this is a debatable question. Their practical involvement with African ministers seems to contradict what they claimed to stand for.

The attitude of the missionaries within the Free church was discriminatory towards the Africans. Many African Christian leaders reacted by refusing to be put in subordinate positions within the courts of the church. They demanded that they be treated as equals. The secession of Pambani Mzimba in 1897 was due to the failure of the Free Church to recognize his leadership abilities. His leadership secured him a large African following and led to the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Africa.

In 1900 the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland, combined and formed the United Free Church of Scotland. This meant that the newly formed church had a mission in South Africa in two sections. One was an integral part of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and the other was distinct with a large degree of self government. The question of incorporating the Free Church missions into the existing

1 South African Outlook November 1973:2

Presbyterian Church of South Africa became an issue for discussion. A decision for or against could not be taken by the mother church but only by the missionaries and the Africans. Dr James Stewart, who attended the Foreign Mission Committee Meeting in Edinburgh in 1904, called upon those who wanted the Free Church Mission to unite with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, to think again.⁽²⁾ He requested the conference to bear in mind that there is a world of human thought, action and feeling, and of social relations amongst Africans that had to be considered. He warned that unless a credible Christian witness made changes in real life, any imposed union would not have any appreciable effect.

Addressing the Committee, Dr James Stewart further warned that those who have lived abroad and really knew the relations of African and Settler should reflect on their own experience as to the probability of this mixed Church proving either a harmonious or vigorous one. If the native element asserted itself, there would be a collision of views due to differences of education, or race, and various other causes. If it did not assert itself, it would be merely an appendage to the wealthier white section - abject, inert, and lifeless and without any of the spirit necessary for its right vocation, the extension of missionary work as soon as it has reached the position of self support.

While approving the ideal of one multi-racial church, the United Free Church did not compel the Free Church of Scotland Missions to enter the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (The South African Outlook February 1, 1958 :21). However talks between the Free Church missions and those of the United Presbyterian Church who had become part of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa began. A committee was set up to look into the possibilities of a union of Presbyterian Missions in South Africa. The objective was to form a Native church that would be self-governing. Involved were the Presbyteries of Kaffraria and Mankazana (of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa), the Synod of Kaffraria and the Presbytery of Natal (of the United Free Church of Scotland).

(2) Note: See Dr J. Stewart's address to the Foreign Mission Committee, 1904, quoted in The Bantu Presbyterian Church Of South Africa : A Brief Historical Sketch (Lovedale n.d)

In 1920 deputies from the Foreign Mission Committee visited South Africa. As a result of that visit, the policy of favouring a multi-racial church was reversed.⁽¹⁾ The deputies, the Rev. Frank Ashcroft and Mr Andrew Houston, stated in their findings that it was evident that union among the missionaries could not be secured without a previous union of the two ecclesiastical organisations into which the congregations of the Free Church and United Presbyterian Church had been formed previous to the union of 1900 at home. They represented two ideals, for each of which a good deal could be said. The Synod of Kaffraria, representing the Free Church, stood for an independent Native Church, controlling its own affairs, and ultimately free of white control. The Presbytery of Kaffraria stood for a South African Presbyterian Church, in which African and white congregations should have their place under a General Assembly.

The latter ideal had hitherto been preferred by the mother Church, which, in 1901 and 1909 approved of the Churches in South Africa joining the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. The deputies felt that the question was not one which the home Church should settle upon any a priori principle, but one for practical settlement in the field. It seemed to them that union with the General Assembly had not brought much advantage to the Presbytery of Kaffraria. During their visit to the General Assembly they became convinced that it was not a suitable supreme court for African matters. The differences of language and social conditions were too considerable, and they sympathized with the irritation of the Native ministers who were there at the consideration of business wholly connected with the colonial church (The South African Outlook February 1, 1958 :21). An authoritative supreme court of their own was needed, aware of the real needs of the Native church, and in which the Native ministers and elders would have a real voice.

On the other hand, the continued separation from the Synod was working incalculable harm. The area covered by the two churches was

(1) Note: See report on the visit of deputies from the Foreign Mission Committee, 1920, quoted in The Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa : A Brief Historical Sketch (Lovedale n.d)

homogeneous and had to be under one ecclesiastical organisation. A united church was required which was strong enough to undertake the evangelization of the whole area, and for this purpose the whole region required to be broken up into suitable districts for Presbyterian and congregational work. One practice and procedure was needed for the practical administration of the various agencies: and all this was impossible while they were separate. The deputies accordingly urged a union upon equal terms of the two bodies even if it involved the sacrifice on the part of the former United Presbyterians of an ideal with which they had themselves a good deal of sympathy. The tie with the General Assembly did not have to be completely broken by such a step. It would probably become a federal instead of an organic one.

The deputies were glad to find that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa sympathized with these views, and they were encouraged when the Assembly passed the following resolution unanimously:

"This Assembly in view of the strong desire of the United Free Church of Scotland, as expressed in the address just delivered by the Rev F Ashcroft, to have the congregations connected with their Missions in Kaffraria and the Transkei united under one ecclesiastical authority, agrees to give the Presbyteries of Kaffraria and Mankazana full power to decide on the question of union with the Synod of Kaffraria,...Leaving for future consideration the relationship to be established between the enlarged body thus formed and this Presbyterian Church of South Africa" (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1920:30)

Strengthened by the action of the Assembly, the deputies met the Synod and Presbytery in conference at Blythswood on 20 October 1920 and urged them to take definite steps to unite, leaving the question of the tie with the Assembly to be dealt with later.

It became manifest in the Blythswood conference that union was desired by the whole Synod and by the Native ministers and elders of the Presbytery of Kaffraria, forming a large majority of the body. But some of the older members of the Presbytery were unwilling to abandon an ideal to which they had clung for many years, with the approval of the home church. For a time it looked as if a minority would refuse to join

the proposed union, but in the end Christian kindness prevailed. A unanimous resolution to unite was passed, the former United Presbyterians stipulating that the home Church shall indicate its willingness that they should lay aside as at present impracticable the ideal of one church for African and white Presbyterians in South Africa, and approve of a union of the two organisations to form a self-governing Native Church. The deputies urged that this should be done.

Steps necessary to effect a union were taken. A Commission was set up. It recommended, at Lovedale in 1921, that the name of the united body be the United Presbyterian Church of South Africa. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa requested that the name be changed "so as to make clear that the new church was for the Native peoples." (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1922:34). Questions of creed and formulae, formation of presbyteries of the new church and financial arrangements and properties did not create any barrier to this union.

During the 1921 General Assembly the Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was instructed not to discontinue grants to Missionaries in the Presbytery of Mankazana. However, the Committee retained the right to revise and alter these grants from time to time. The Finance Committee was instructed to inquire into the tenure of any properties in Mission areas that belonged to the proposed new church and have titles put in order (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1921:29).

All parties involved agreed that when union was effected between the synod of Kaffraria, the Presbytery of Natal, the Presbyteries of Kaffraria and that of Mankazana, the Presbyterian Church of South Africa should enter into a federal relationship with the body thus formed. It would send six delegates to the meeting of its Supreme Court, who would be associate members, and that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa should welcome, on the same terms, six delegates from the new church (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1922:34).

After resolving issues that may have become a stumbling block for union, the 4th of July 1923 was set as the date for uniting the Presbyterian Missions. This was the crown of a long cherished hope and victorious end to the struggle by some of the Free Church of Scotland brethren for an independent African church in South Africa, controlling its own affairs and becoming ultimately free of white control.

What is about to be established is a new thing in South African church life, and will be looked upon with keen interest by a large number of people representing many differing interests and many shades of opinion. We believe the new church is creating widespread interest among the Natives themselves. It will be the earnest desire of every well wisher of the South African Native peoples that the new church from its inception, and right through its history, may have the blessing of God resting upon it (The South African Outlook: June 1, 1923:128).

In the presence of a large number and representative company of Europeans and Natives, the first General Assembly of the Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa (now known as the Bantu Presbyterian Church in South Africa) was constituted on the evening of Wednesday, 4th, July, 1923. It was noted that the name chosen for the new Church was not racial nor exclusive, anymore than the "Scotch Church" is confined to Scots or the Anglican Church to the English. The Bantu Presbyterian church claimed to be a true Church of Christ, with no barriers of colour or race, though from the circumstances of its place and service its membership will be preponderantly of people of the Bantu race (The South African Outlook August 1, 1923:175). The founders of the Bantu Presbyterian Church acknowledged the need for a church in which the indigenous people would take an active part both in worship and in administration. A church which the African people would feel was their own as against the white dominated ones where Africans filled subordinate roles. The general opinion at the conclusion of the meetings was that the event had surpassed all expectations. The Bantu Presbyterian Church became the most notable experiment in the South African missionary enterprise. The church was to be self sustaining.

It was no secret that this new development was regarded by some - among them both experienced missionaries and laymen with an intimate

and sympathetic knowledge of the natives - with grave misgivings. It was noted that:

"It rests with the Bantu Church to prove these fears groundless. If ministers and members alike will be workers rather than talkers, humble-minded, intent not on what they can get for themselves, but on what they can give for others, living up to the Christian standard of morality, we have no fear." (The South African Outlook August 1, 1923:169)

The Rev. William Stuart of Burnshill, first Moderator of this church acknowledged that missionaries had been unable to believe in the fitness of the native for certain callings. He further noted that "there are gifts around us waiting to be encouraged by a fuller measure of confidence" (The Presbyterian Churchman, August, 1923). Several Europeans remained within the church but their number was yearly smaller with African ministers and officials doing remarkably well.

The establishment of the Bantu Presbyterian Church was an unforgettable event to many Africans who witnessed it. It was given wide coverage in *Imvo*, a newspaper which represented African opinion. The coming together of four Presbyteries to form the Bantu Presbyterian Church was understood as a wedding. "Umtshato we Africa" (the wedding of Africa). The Presbyteries involved called for "a burial of the divided past" (*Imvo ZaBantsundu* July 24, 1923). Fraternal delegates from various denominations in South Africa were in attendance.

A number of Paramount Chiefs were also in attendance. They were afforded the opportunity to address the General Assembly. Hopes for a brighter future were high. The occasion offered many the opportunity to reflect on African experience. Tears were shed. A proposal from the Presbyterian Church of South Africa delegation, that there be a federal relationship between the two churches was rejected in favour of 'just a relationship'. *Imvo* observes that the word federal meant a number of things to different people (*Imvo ZaBantsundu* August 7, 1923). It never occurred to members of this new church, that to have "Just a relationship with the PCSA would in future discredit the witness of both churches. At the time, due to their experience of race relations, they thought it to the advantage of their members to refuse having any

officially recognised link between the two churches. Later on a new look at relationships was to be a must.

It must be noted that the formation of the BPC did not mean much to a large number of those outside the Christian faith. They wanted freedom in its totality and not only as far as ecclesiastical matters were concerned. Chief Zibi in his article published by *Imvo* three years later put this forcefully when he observed that "the foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, the Christians have shelters but we helpless sinners have no place" (*Imvo ZaBantsundu* July 3, 1926).

CHAPTER 2

ECUMENISM - A CHALLENGE TO THE FAMILIAR

Twentieth century Christianity has been characterised by the quest for church unity. The Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 marked the beginning of a concern by the world church to confront divisive issues of doctrine, polity and practice in the life and work of the churches. This resulted in the formation of a number of ecumenical councils leading to the Constituent Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948 in Amsterdam. The Faith and Order Commission, which was to become one of the main agencies of the WCC, was given the task to proclaim the essential oneness of the Church of Christ and to keep prominently before the World Council and the churches the obligation to manifest that unity and its urgency for the work of evangelism. It was to study questions of faith, order and worship with the relevant social, cultural, political, racial and other factors in their bearing on the unity of the church.

The ecumenical movement, with its focus on a credible witness of the world church affected most member churches on an increasing scale. What it attempted to do was to challenge the churches in their particular situations to live out a life consistent with the witness of scripture.

The first assembly of the WCC wrestled with the meaning of Christianity for world disorder. That same year South Africa witnessed the victory of the National Party led by DF Malan, who had been a minister of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk. His gift to the world was a new word and policy "apartheid". He argued that race groups should be kept apart, and be allowed to develop thus. Measures to consolidate whites geographically, economically and politically were intensified. The National party ideologues turned to Afrikaner theologians for a scriptural and theological justification for their racist policies which they readily obtained, to the dismay of other Christians including some NGK theologians and ministers. Afrikaner churches thus provided a theological base upon which separate development could flourish. The

Christ of the Afrikaners stood for division rather than unity, a blow to those committed to church unity. In 1948 the Die Kerbode stated that "As a church, we have always worked purposefully for the separation of the races. In this regard apartheid can rightfully be called a church policy". (de Gruchy & Villa-Vicencio 1985:59).

There were some NGK theologians who like Professor Ben Marais argued that apartheid could not be presented as a biblical obligation although practical considerations may necessitate its implementation (Marais 1952: 150). This points to the fact that there were mixed feelings within the NGK on how the church should handle the race issue. But the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, in practice as well as theologically, supported Apartheid.

The National Party committed itself to "preserving and safeguarding the white race" (Bunting 1964:114). Black South Africans were divided into ethnically defined groups. This resulted in the most brutal and costly programme of forced removal of Africans into areas zoned for them. Race relations deteriorated in all walks of life. The identification of apartheid with Christianity, as within the NGK deepened the conflict. The attitude of the NGK was seen by some Africans as representing the general opinion of white Christians. Was unity between an African church and a white church possible?

The World Council of Churches on various occasions, urged member churches to eliminate racist practices in their own ranks, to recognize their involvement in racial tensions in the world, and to denounce the violation of human rights through discrimination on grounds of race, colour and culture. Thus the policy of apartheid became a central issue. At almost every meeting of the Central Committee from the sixties until the present a debate was held on the appropriate action to be taken. But the declarations made by WCC officers made little impression on white opinion or political policy makers in South Africa.

In 1950 the Central Committee of the WCC's proposal to send a multi-racial delegation to South Africa was rejected by the NGK, preferring a visit by W A Visser't Hooft, the General Secretary. During this visit he

observed that the integration of 'Bantu' society was the critical problem. Regarding the witness of the English-speaking churches he noted the discrepancy between the multi-racial principle these churches advocated, and the realities of church life. Church life was characterized by white domination. In 1960 a secretariat on Racial and Ethnic Relations was set up within the Department on Church and Society of the WCC. This development was to intensify the struggle against apartheid.

The same year at Sharpeville an African crowd, including women and children stood before armed police protesting against the pass laws. Sixty seven were killed, many of them shot in the back as they fled from the scene (Balia 1989:16). The news spread world wide. The crisis led to the Cottesloe Consultation, a conference convened by the South African member churches of the WCC, with a multi-racial delegation. While differing opinions were shared during the conference, the majority of delegates, including those of the NGK, accepted the final statement which rejected unjust discrimination, argued for African people's right to own land as well as for equal work opportunities and education. Cottesloe stated unambiguously that no one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any church on the grounds of colour or race. The spiritual unity among all who are in Christ must find visible expression in acts of common worship and witness, and in fellowship and consultation on matters of common concern. (Strassberger 1971:356 ff).

Through pressure from Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoed, the synods of the NGK rejected the report and submitted to government pressure. This led to the break between the NGK and the WCC in 1961. This withdrawal was, in the words of Ans J van der Bent, "a reminder for Christians in the ecumenical movement of the difficulty in resolving the race problem." (Ans J van der Bent 1980:2).

The Nationalist response to the African agitation following Sharpeville was even more repressive than previously. African leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Mangaliso Sobukwe and many others were jailed for life. Some left the country for fear of their lives. Organisations were banned making legitimate organisation against the government impossible. Some Africans hoped that churches, the English speaking

churches in particular, would speak out much louder against the system. Sadly that did not happen sufficiently.

The Presbyterian Church of South Africa, like most English-speaking churches, was not radical in condemning the racist policies of the South African Government. The Church and Nation Committee which was supposed to keep the church informed on social, economic and political issues directed its energies towards problems of the abuse of liquor, gambling and family life as is reflected in the Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. The struggle of the oppressed was given very little attention especially before 1960. The church was reluctant to make statements on race relations for fear of division as they could not speak with one voice. Some confined the church's social witness to charitable works, a commitment to 'supplying people with eggs rather than giving them the hens'. They feared any involvement in the ambiguities of politics. There were those who attempted to raise their voices against injustice. But their commitment was more of words than action.

What was the Presbyterian Church of South Africa's response to Sharpeville? The 1960 Assembly statement on race relations begins with the claim "that every man is of unique value to God... differences of colour, race, class or cultural background are irrelevant to Christianity in any fundamental sense." (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1960:117). The Presbyterian Church of South Africa acknowledged the diversity of humanity which involves varieties in colour, race, custom and language together with marked differences in ability, cultural development and standard of living. But this posed a contradiction in their anthropology. They criticised the Bantu Education Act, the Group Areas Act, the Job Reservation Act, and others, but noted that "It is not doubted that much of the 'apartheid' legislation is a sincere attempt to solve problems and to create a reasonable way of life." (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1960:120). They noted the disquiet which had been a marked feature of inter-racial tension but blamed it primarily on how the laws of the land were being enforced, as well as the attitude of those whose task it was to enforce them. The Presbyterian

Church of South Africa undoubtedly had a double agenda during this period. White Christians in general were accused of callousness by some African Christians.

The 1966 WCC sponsored Geneva conference on Church and Society was unique in the history of the impact of the ecumenical movement in this country. It was charged with advising the churches and the WCC on its ministry in a world undergoing revolutionary social change. Racial discrimination was recognised by the participants as one of the greatest immediate dangers to humanity, based not only on fear and resentment but also upon economic self-interest. It was noted that since many whites in Africa refused to accept Africans as brothers and sisters, Africans often failed to accept whites on the same terms. (World Conference on Church and Society Report 1967:136)

Christians and churches were called upon to multiply efforts to ease tensions between local citizens and strangers in their midst, to encourage the legitimate aspirations of suppressed majorities and minorities, and to "support all practicable measures aimed at changing any political and economic order which reflects the denial of political rights or economic opportunity, segregation, discrimination, or other suppression". (Ibid, p 137). The message and the challenge of this Conference was brought home by the Rev Beyers Naude and Christian Council of South Africa secretary, Bishop Bill Burnett. Regional consultations throughout South Africa were organised thus setting the agenda for theological debate and social action within the WCC member churches that would confront the churches with the demand to live out the Christian faith.

A strong prophetic voice also came from the Uppsala Assembly of 1968.

"We heard the cry of those who long for peace: of the hungry and exploited who demand bread and justice; of the victims of discrimination who claim human dignity; and of the increasing millions who seek for the meaning of life. God hears these cries and judges us. He also speaks the liberating word. We hear him say - "I go before you". Now that Christ carries away your sinful past, the Spirit frees you to live for others. Anticipate my kingdom in my joyful worship and daring acts. The Lord says "I make all this new."(Goodall 1972:5).

The WCC sought solidarity with the refugees of war, victims of natural disasters and racial conflict. It stood with the poor and the oppressed African masses of South Africa. This constant call to make the church visibly active in every place, becoming the voice for those who have no voice, and a home where every one will be at home, did not escape the attention of the church in South Africa. It made disunity within ecclesiastical life a glaring fact. Churches felt the need for closer working relationships. Those who had already begun unity talks were to press even harder for the ideal of a united church.

Uppsala observed that racism is linked with economic and political exploitation. The Assembly urged that the churches be actively concerned for the economic and political well being of exploited groups so that their statements and actions may be relevant. In order that the victims of racism may regain a sense of their own worth and be enabled to determine their own future, the churches were requested to make economic and educational resources available to the underprivileged groups for their development to full participation in the social and economic life of their communities. They should also withdraw from institutions that perpetuate racism. A call was made that churches must work for change of those political processes which prevent the victims of racism from participating fully in the civic and governmental structures of their countries. As most Christians suffered discrimination within church structures, churches were urged to eradicate all forms of racism from their own life. The WCC fought all forms of racial exploitation especially through the much publicised work of the Programme to Combat Racism. Thus throughout the seventies the WCC tried to help its member churches towards greater understanding, deeper commitment and more courageous action in the struggle for racial justice. It provided many opportunities for contact, consultation and dialogue with the leaders of the oppressed (Goodall 1968:5ff).

The Programme to Combat Racism must be seen in relation to the World Council of Churches' commitment to the search for church union. Increasingly during the 1970's, the Commission on Faith and Order, whose task it was to promote union, recognized that the search for union and the struggle against racism were inter-connected. This was not

always recognized in church union negotiations in South Africa or elsewhere though it was noted by the Church Unity Commission in South Africa at the beginning of the seventies (Paton 1975:60 ff).

The ecumenical movement thus raised hopes of providing the church with tools to overcome the divisions both ecclesiastically and racially. But sadly the good work done did not reach those for whom it was intended, at grassroots level. Discussions remained within the leadership, and how the leadership responded to this challenge depended on their attitudes to the ecumenical movement. Some, however, took the work seriously. The hopes of a rapid end to division served as an incentive to work harder. The Presbyterian Church of South Africa like most English speaking churches committed itself to a search for church unity, not only with other Presbyterians but also with other denominations such as the Methodists, Congregationalists and the Church of the Province of South Africa. Most Africans saw little importance however, in a commitment to a search for ecclesiastical unity. They were concerned that the church's energies be mobilised for social action and the liberation of the oppressed before any talk about church unity. The feeling was that it would be unwise to go into an ecclesial union in chains as it would deprive them of a full participation in the life and work of a united church.

CHAPTER 3

BLACK AND WHITE FEARS OF A UNITED CHURCH

As we have seen, the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of South Africa were closely related historically. However, the majority of the Bantu Presbyterian Church's membership of 40 000, in 1959, was rural with its stronghold in the Transkei, Ciskei and Natal. Many of these members had never had any real physical contact with whites with the exception of the missionaries whose attitude was sometimes resented. The Presbyterian Church of South Africa with a membership of 50,000 was dominant in urban areas. There was a comity agreement between the two churches after the formation of the Bantu Presbyterian Church that their missionary work should not overlap. The Bantu Presbyterian Church would not develop in the cities. Members in urban areas would be cared for by Presbyterian Church of South Africa ministers. Likewise the Presbyterian Church of South Africa agreed not to reach out into the rural areas where the Bantu Presbyterian Church would be responsible for all missionary work.

A large number of members of the Bantu Presbyterian Church in urban areas expressed their disapproval of the arrangement. The result was that ministers of the Bantu Presbyterian Church followed them and established congregations side by side with African congregations of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. Serious pastoral problems became evident - especially as regards the exercise of discipline. Members of the Bantu Presbyterian Church refusing to be disciplined would leave the Bantu Presbyterian Church and join the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and vice versa. It had become a scandal to many that the two churches existed side by side, often finding themselves in unwitting competition.

There were other problems. A minister of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa in Pietersburg wrote, in 1959, to the Rev Donald Robertson, minister in Stellenbosch and convenor of the African Mission's Committee :

"Last year I had occasion to make enquiries about sites we had applied for at five preaching stations. The Native Commissioner advised in writing that we had been granted sites. It subsequently transpired the sites had been granted to the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Department of Native Affairs admitted that it was not aware that there was a Bantu Presbyterian Church as well as a Presbyterian Church of South Africa. At one place where the Bantu Presbyterian Church maintained they had a site, it was discovered that the site was in the name of the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. (Unpublished letter to the Rev Donald Robertson 9 July 1959 in the custody of Rev Rob Robertson).

At Boshega (Northern Transvaal) a congregation of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa which was rebuilding its church discovered that the very building was on a site owned by the Bantu Presbyterian Church.

People were alarmed at the confusing situation that was a result of the existence of two Presbyterian Churches. A union was not only desirable to many, but absolutely essential. In 1959 a minister of the Bantu Presbyterian Church in Dundee had thirty five preaching stations while his colleague in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa had one and he wrote "I called Rev Zulu yesterday to put myself a little more in his picture... it occurred to me to suggest that I might occasionally visit his stations as opportunity allowed (i.e. on Sundays, going with him to a service). This would mean being absent from my own morning service."(unpublished letter 22 July 1959 in the custody of Rev Rob Robertson). This minister of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was convinced that if there was to be a serious move towards a union his session would not object to him requesting leave of absence once or twice a quarter to work with congregations of the Bantu Presbyterian Church. Thus in spite of the unhealthy relationship between the two churches there were some who were committed to a closer relationship in order to overcome serious practical problems in the life and work of the church.

In 1956 and 1957 proposals for co-operation and unity were put forward by committees which proved unacceptable to both General Assemblies. The Bantu Presbyterian Church proposed that the African section of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa be integrated with the Bantu Presbyterian Church. This meant that the African section of the

Presbyterian Church of South Africa would be directly under the General Assembly of the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was not willing to have her African section absorbed by the Bantu Presbyterian Church. The African Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa proposed a union of the two churches on the basis of the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and particularly its chapter on Missions. This implied that the Bantu Presbyterian Church could become part of the missionary work of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa as the chapter on Missions was the Settler's churches' attempt to reach out to the indigenous people. One way or the other both these proposals implied the absorption of one church by the other, and the fear of absorption was great (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1956, 1957 and Proceedings of the Bantu Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1957).

In 1958 a Committee of the Bantu Presbyterian Church in co-operation with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa under the chairmanship of the Rev DWM Matheson, General Secretary of the Bantu Presbyterian Church, engaged in talks with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa Committee led by the Rev Donald Robertson. These talks, which lasted for twelve years, can be divided into two stages. The first stage was characterised by enthusiasm, zeal and commitment to the ideal of a united church especially on the part of those negotiating it. The second stage was when most players had lost any hope that the two churches would ever unite. We shall see how the committee wrestled with the problem of African and white fears of a united church.

THE FIRST STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS

African congregations of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa not in full status were, around 1957, under the oversight of the AMC (African Mission's Committee) which was distinct from the Church Extension and Aid Committee responsible for the appointments of ministers in other congregations. The Bantu Presbyterian Church detested the Presbyterian Church of South Africa's "Chapter of Missions." The idea of leaving

African work under a Committee, with separate rules for its development, gave the impression that African work was not taken as seriously as the European work. In an unpublished letter from the Rev Donald S Robertson, minister in Stellenbosch and convenor of the AMC, to the General Secretary of the Bantu Presbyterian Church, the Rev Dougald Matheson, it was stated that the Presbyterian Church of South Africa "would only be prepared to discuss union with the Bantu Presbyterian Church if the Bantu Presbyterian Church accepts the Presbyterian Church of South Africa's Book of Order and especially the "Chapter on Missions." There were about twenty African ministers and about a dozen evangelists whose placement was in the hands of Donald Robertson and his committee under the policy of the Chapter on Missions (Rev R Robertson, personal communication May 1993).

Unity negotiations were also in the hands of the African Mission's Committee. During the 1958 Bulawayo Assembly the African Mission's Committee presented a report that the terms for discussing union had been conveyed to the Bantu Presbyterian Church. It was further reported that the Bantu Presbyterian Church failed to turn up at a meeting which had been arranged. The committee pointed out that there was lack of commitment to the ideal of union on the part of the Bantu Presbyterian Church and wondered if there was any point in going on with the talks.

There were members of both the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and the Bantu Presbyterian Church who were not happy that union negotiations were left to a committee like the African Mission's Committee. Did such an arrangement not undermine the Bantu Presbyterian Church? Forcing the Chapter on Missions on the Bantu Presbyterian Church which was in itself questioned within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was sure to derail any unity talks. It was an unacceptable Chapter because it reduced African congregations to a status below others, and by implication reduced the Bantu Presbyterian Church to a mission. A proposal was made that union negotiations should no longer be handled by the African Mission's Committee, that a special committee be appointed. This received the approval of the General Assembly of the PCSA. It was noted that the

Bantu Presbyterian Church was not to be regarded as a mission. Unity talks were between two churches on an equal footing.

Several objections to union were raised within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. These were, among others:

- 1) Fears that a union would place a great strain upon the resources and organisation of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. These fears were not justified because the Bantu Presbyterian Church was more self-supporting than the African Missions of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa.
- 2) A fear of Africans gaining the ascendancy in a United Church, a problem that was country wide. It was noted, by those who did not fear African majority, that within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa Africans never voted as a block either during assembly or Presbytery meetings where they outnumbered whites. They voted as the case merited.

There were many who felt nothing would be achieved by a union. Some expressed the opinion that the formation of the Bantu Presbyterian Church had been a mistake. The United Free Church of Scotland Missions should have been united with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa on the terms of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa from the beginning.

A joint committee with Rev DS Robertson as convenor, and the Revs PG Gordon, SP Ledigo, SA Mabelle, RJD Robertson and R Orr as members was appointed in accordance with deliverance 6 of the African Mission's Committee's report of 1958 which reads as follows:

"The Assembly directs that negotiations for union with the Bantu Presbyterian Church be entrusted to Assembly's representatives on the Joint Committee, that these representatives meet the representatives of the Bantu Presbyterian Church with a view to discussing the basis of such union and report to the next assembly."

The Bantu Presbyterian Church Assembly took place in East London two weeks after the Bulawayo Presbyterian Church of South Africa Assembly. The Reverends WD Campbell and RJD Robertson represented the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. Robertson saw this as an opportunity to put things right. He wanted union negotiations back on

track. He explained that the letter to Dougald Matheson was sent without the approval of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. He further reported what he thought was a major development, namely that negotiations were no longer in the hands of the AMC but a joint committee. The Bantu Presbyterian Church responded by appointing the Revs. D Matheson as convenor with TP Finca, WPT Ndibongo, M Molaba and JY Hliso as members that would negotiate on behalf of the Bantu Presbyterian Church. A deliverance that "the committee be instructed to prepare a reply to the minimal terms of the Union presented by the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and present them to a joint meeting with the P.C.S.A Committee" was adopted (Proceedings of the Bantu Presbyterian Church 1958:35). This marks the beginning of unity talks which were to last for more than a decade.

The first meeting was held in the offices of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, Saambou building, Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, on Friday 8 May 1959 under the chairmanship of the Rev PG Gordon of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. The meeting was constituted with a prayer by the Rev D Matheson of the Bantu Presbyterian Church. But as RJD Robertson recalls, the meeting started off on a rather depressing note. Attention was first given to points of friction. Much misunderstanding arose about the manner in which each church had dealt with members leaving their church and joining the other. Some cases discussed concerned congregations at Sydney Road in Durban and at Southhill in the Transvaal. After discussion on this issue the question of union was introduced. At this stage the committee wrestled with the question of how to unite presbyteries and the nature of union. The Bantu Presbyterian Church wanted a union on a federal basis, with separate congregations, presbyteries and synods but with one general assembly. As far as the Bantu Presbyterian Church was concerned such an arrangement would guarantee that every elder of the church was able to take part in the government of the church through its courts. However, the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was not happy about such a union. They felt that a separation of this kind would weaken and impoverish the life of both the African and European congregations. They feared that the African work of the Presbyterian Church of South

Africa would be absorbed by the Bantu Presbyterian Church, while retaining only a weak link at the top (Assembly). The Bantu Presbyterian Church representatives feared that any closer union would put them in inferior positions with their elders taking a back seat in presbytery meetings. Would their contribution remain effective in mixed presbyteries? In particular, would the Europeans put up with the translations which were meant to help these elders take part effectively?

The Rev RJD Robertson presented a scheme for the amalgamation and re-delimitation of the presbyteries of the two churches, which he felt would address the questions raised. (See Appendix I). Those present agreed that it would largely meet the problem of translation. The joint committee also agreed to recommend to both churches that this plan be used as an experiment for a period of five years during which time the two assemblies of the uniting churches would meet separately. It was hoped that during this experimental period, difficulties facing union would be identified and addressed. The committee hoped that other inherent problems such as :

- (i) The adjustment of the beneficiary funds
- (ii) The differences in the calling and stipends of ministers.
- (iii) The appointments of Commissioners to Assembly would be overcome with thoughtfulness and goodwill and through further discussions and negotiations.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa assembly which met in East London in September 1959, heard the proposals of the Johannesburg Joint-Committee of May, presented by its convenor the Rev DS Robertson. The Assembly approved, as a first step towards union with the Bantu Presbyterian Church, the re-delimitation of presbyterial boundaries as set out in Appendix I. It was further agreed to remit this deliverance to the Judicial Advisory Committee, and the presbyteries of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. The Assembly further enjoined "all its congregations to work with congregations of the Bantu Presbyterian Church within these bounds for a period of five years, funds and financial obligations remaining as they are at present but all new work being undertaken together" (unpublished minutes of the joint committee). The General Assembly further welcomed, in principle, union with the Bantu Presbyterian Church, and approved as a basis for further

discussion the scheme of union outlined in the Joint Committee report. It also appointed and instructed a Commission on Union to negotiate a complete plan of union and report to Assembly. The General Assembly authorised the commission to act on its behalf in respect of any matter which could arise during negotiations remitting any further proposals to presbyteries for consideration.

In contrast the 1959 Bantu Presbyterian Church Assembly did not discuss the proposals of the Joint Committee "due to lack of time". This reflects the bitter truth that the proposed union was not a priority for the Bantu Presbyterian Church. The report was sent down to presbyteries which were requested to look into it and report to the 1960 General Assembly.

The second of a series of meetings on unity was held at St George's Church, East London, on March 31, 1960. The Bantu Presbyterian Church was represented by the Rt Rev WPT Ndibongo, Revs TP Finca, BM Molaba, JA Anderson, DWM Matheson, General Secretary and Mr LL Mjamba. The Presbyterian Church of South Africa representation was composed of the Rt Rev HH Munro and the Revs D McRae, M Manxoyi, MJ Lund, and RJD Robertson. The meeting took place under the shadow of Sharpeville with the country in a state of emergency. RJD Robertson recalls that everyone at the meeting was tense. Hundreds of suspected trouble makers were being taken into detention. The Rt Rev HH Munro opened the discussions with a statement on the political situation. "We are afraid of one another, as the whole country is afraid and suspicious." (unpublished minutes of the Joint Committee, 1960 in the custody of Rev Rob Robertson).

This meeting having reconsidered the proposals of the Joint Committee of May 1959, and having frankly faced the problems involved, unanimously agreed that the recommendation of a five year trial period of union at presbytery level with separate Assemblies be replaced by a recommendation of a union of the two Assemblies at the same time as the amalgamation and re-delimitation of Presbyteries in the manner already placed before the two churches in 1959.

The reasons for this change were:

- 1) Union at presbytery level could not be achieved without re-adjustment of presbyteries by one of the churches, and probably, by both.
- 2) Apart from the fact that such a union would radically affect representation in assembly, it was questionable if either church could put up with the amount of dislocation involved in a division of presbyteries for an arrangement with no guarantee of permanency beyond five years.
- 3) Presbyteries would have to keep duplicate records for presentation to separate Assemblies.
- 4) There would be a vast increase in routine business to cope with matters relating to two sets of Assembly Committees and in all such matters a considerable number of presbyters would have little knowledge of, or interest in, the questions under discussion.
- 5) Meetings would almost inevitably degenerate into joint sessions of two separate presbyteries listening to each other's business.
- 6) Adequate handling of many matters would become impossible where one church happened to have small representation in a joint presbytery.
- 7) Any division of opinion resulting in dissent and complaint to Assembly would produce chaotic results. If such complaint was made to either assembly and the complainant found favour, would that decision be accepted by those owing allegiance to another Assembly? If made to both, what happens when decisions conflict?

Such considerations led the Commission to believe that the five year trial proposal would be unworkable. In fact, the opinion was that it would cause such confusion and dissension as to guarantee that no union would ever take place. Thus it was unanimously agreed to present to the Assemblies of both churches a resolution for complete union both at Assembly and Presbytery level.

It was further agreed that a commission composed of an equal number of representatives of the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa be appointed at the time of union to review the progress and constitution of the united church after the first three years of its formation. It was also resolved to recommend to both Assemblies that prior to union of the two churches definite agreements would be required on:

- 1) Representation of presbyteries on the United Assembly and the possible creation of synods.
- 2) Book of Order and Law, Practice and Procedure.
- 3) Relationships with the Mission Council of the Church of Scotland.
- 4) Name for the united church
- 5) Charges/congregations
- 6) Reconstitution of assembly and presbytery committees.
- 7) Standardisation of stipends.
- 8) Amalgamation of funds, in particular the pension funds.
- 9) Training of ministers and evangelists.
- 10) Organisations of the churches.
- 11) Service Books.
- 12) Adjustments of congregational boundaries in overlapping areas.
- 13) Joint moderators in Presbyteries and Assembly.
- 14) The credal basis of the united church was added to the list.

A sub-committee composed of the Revs TP Finca, WPT Ndibongo, D McRae and RJD Robertson with any other member of the Joint Committee able to attend, was appointed to facilitate the future work of the Joint Committee. This Committee was expected to give further consideration to the problems involved in union and to "take such action as seems appropriate to increase understanding and contact between the two churches on as wide a level as possible." The Revs TP Finca and RJD Robertson were requested to keep the two sections of the Joint Committee informed about the progress of the sub-committee.

A meeting of the subcommittee was convened in Umtata at the offices of the Bantu Presbyterian Church, on the June 16, 1960. Revs WPT Ndibongo, and D McRae were unable to attend. Rev TP Finca, DWM Matheson, WMJ Lund, M Manxayi and RJD Robertson were present. The list of topics approved for a detailed examination during the East London meeting were introduced and discussed as follows:

1. REPRESENTATION OF PRESBYTERIES ON THE UNITED ASSEMBLY AND THE POSSIBLE CREATION OF SYNODS

The normative practice within the Bantu Presbyterian Church was that all ministers and one elder from each congregation were commissioned to

Assembly with expenses paid by each congregation sending a minister and an elder. In the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa each presbytery commissioned a number of persons equal to the number of charges in the presbytery in such proportion that there was an equal number of ministers and elders sent from each presbytery. Expenses were paid from assembly funds which were raised by assessing each congregation according to its income. A united church would have 190 charges. The sub-committee felt that there would have to be a reduction in representation. The creation of Synods was deemed necessary in order to lessen the work of the General Assembly, but this committee felt unable to suggest Synodical bounds.

On the question of the official language for the conduct of the church business in presbytery and assembly, it was agreed to recommend that each presbytery have the option to use the predominant language with interpretation of all proceedings where necessary. In the Assembly of a united church the use of the English language was recommended with commissioners retaining the right to address Assembly in their mother tongue and be interpreted.

2. BOOK OF ORDER.

Each church possessed a Book of Order, now called "manuals". It was agreed that a new Book of Order would be required in a united church. However, since the two books that were used did not radically differ, union could take place even before a new Book of Order was produced. It was recommended that a study of the divergences and how they may be harmonised be given to a committee of those familiar with Church Law from both churches.

3. RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MISSION COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Much land and property used by the Bantu Presbyterian Church was still in the name of the Church of Scotland - controlled by its Mission Council in South Africa. The Church of Scotland was pursuing a policy of gradual transfer of property to the Bantu Presbyterian Church. This was complicated by the fact that certain titles could not be held by Africans

under South African Law, where land was in white areas. The Bantu Presbyterian Church expressed hopes that the Mission Council would be replaced by a Joint Council composed of seven representatives of the Bantu Presbyterian Church and seven persons representing the Foreign Mission's Committee of the Church of Scotland. The joint committee was to operate for an interim period until full transfer of all Church of Scotland functions and properties had been made to the Bantu Presbyterian Church. Should a union take place, the sub-committee felt that a fresh agreement between the united church and the Church of Scotland would be required as regards:-

- (1) Property
- (2) Missionary personnel
- (3) Funds

The Presbyterian Church of South Africa representation felt their church would, as union talks proceeded, seek parallel conversations with the Mission Council and with accredited representatives of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission's Committee in order to ascertain their precise intentions and views on the proposed union.

4. NAME OF THE UNITED CHURCH

The question of the name of the united church was not regarded as an urgent issue at this meeting.

5. STATUS OF CHARGES

The practice in both churches was almost identical. Both churches had congregations with full status. Congregations under this category could send representatives to presbytery meetings and they had the right to call a minister of their choice to serve them. Both churches had charges without a right of call but with presbytery representation. These were, in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, referred to as church extension charges. Both churches had preaching stations, or out-stations as they were known in the Bantu Presbyterian Church, which were either under full charges or charges without a right of call. It was agreed that prior to union the status of all congregations in each church must be clearly

defined, and that congregations should have the same status in the united church as they possessed in their own church at the time of union.

6. RECONSTITUTION OF ASSEMBLY AND PRESBYTERY COMMITTEES

The two churches had committees, exercising practically identical functions on Education for the Ministry, Finance, Pension Funds, Judicial Procedure or Law, Practice And Procedure, Life And Work, Nominations or Selection, Statistics, Sunday School and Youth, Church Extension, Church and Nation, Bills and Business or Boards of Trustees. The Bantu Presbyterian Church had no Church and Nation Committee but part of its work was covered by the Temperance Committee. The work covered by a committee of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa on Church Extension (European and African) was in the Bantu Presbyterian Church dealt with by Church Extension, Evangelists and Appointments. There were committees such as Public Worship and Aids to Devotion as well as the Publications Committee in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa whose work was done by one committee in the Bantu Presbyterian Church. There were committees in each church with no exact parallel in the other such as the Chaplains, Coloured and Indian Missions' Hostel, Children's Home, and "The Leader" - the monthly magazine - in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, with the Bible School and Relations with the Mission Council, in the Bantu Presbyterian Church.

There were committees which existed only in one church although they could have existed in both. In the Presbyterian Church of South Africa there were committees on the Admission to the Ministry and Ecumenical Relations. In the Bantu Presbyterian Church it was the Young Men's Christian Guild. There appeared to be no major difficulty in working towards the amalgamation and reconstruction of Assembly Committees though the timing and method had to be worked out. The Bantu Presbyterian Church had no committees at presbytery level, all business was done by presbytery in full session. It was most unlikely that the united church would function efficiently without presbytery committees.

7. STIPENDS

In the Presbyterian Church of South Africa stipends for African ministers, African evangelists and European ministers differed as was the case with African ministers, African evangelists and European missionaries in the Bantu Presbyterian Church. In the Presbyterian Church of South Africa African ministers were receiving a basic stipend of £15 per month plus cost of living allowance of £7.14.8. per annum. African evangelists received a basic stipend of £10 per month. The cost of living allowance is not recorded. European ministers earned a basic stipend of £50 per month plus an annual cost of living allowance of £14.14.8. In the Bantu Presbyterian Church African ministers in rural areas were paid £20 per month while those in urban areas received £25. The argument for the difference in stipends was that ministers in rural areas had land which provided an extra income. There was no fixed salary for evangelists. Their stipends varied from congregation to congregation. Ministers of both the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of South Africa were provided with free accommodation and this also applied to evangelists.

During discussion on stipends different attitudes emerged. The Bantu Presbyterian Church generally felt that congregations should not be "spoon-fed" with grants towards stipends even if this meant keeping a low level of minimum stipend (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1960:91). The Presbyterian Church of South Africa accepted the policy that a living wage should be paid to the clergy whether or not grants are required to meet it. It was noted that equality of stipends should be a target to be attained by a fixed time after union, rather than a standard enforced at the time of union.

The payment of European missionaries proved difficult to equate with that of European clergy in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa because of various allowances and such perquisites as overseas furlough. It was, however, agreed that the aim must be to achieve an equal standard of living, a subject which had to be negotiated with the Church of Scotland. The stipends of the missionaries were challenged in

the light of the European Ministers within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. The feeling was that their stipends should bear a reasonable relationship to the stipends of European ministers in the united church.

8. AMALGAMATION OF CAPITAL FUNDS

The sub-committee agreed to refer this to the Business and Finance Committee of the respective churches for consideration.

9. TRAINING OF MINISTERS AND EVANGELISTS

Both churches had the same standard for ministerial training. The Bantu Presbyterian Church had no fixed qualification for admitting evangelists for training while the Presbyterian Church of South Africa required a Junior Certificate for a three year training course of which six months per annum was academic and the other six practical. Although the latter was recommended it became clear that personnel in both churches would have to be accepted with their educational standards at the time of union.

10. ORGANIZATIONS OF THE CHURCH

The Bantu Presbyterian Church had few organizations. These were the Women's Christian Association, the Girl's Association, the Young Men's Christian Guild and the Boy's Brigade. The African section of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa had three; The Women's Association, The Girl's Auxiliary and the Presbyterian Young Men's Association. The European section had the former two including the Youth Fellowship and the Boy's Brigade. The organizations that the two churches had were identical both in name and character and the amalgamation would not present serious difficulty. The constitutions of the organizations were basically in agreement but had to be harmonized.

11. SERVICE BOOKS

The Bantu Presbyterian Church used "Inkonzo Zamabandla", an adaptation of earlier Church of Scotland manuals. Within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa the Service Book and Ordinal which was at the time revised and out of print, was used. It was proposed to recommend that representatives of the Bantu Presbyterian Church join the Committee of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa on Public Worship and Aids to Devotion in compiling a Joint Service Book.

12. RE-ADJUSTMENTS OF SMALLER CONGREGATIONS IN OVERLAPPING AREAS

As far as the committee was concerned this matter did not require finalisation before a union but could be left to the discretion of the presbyteries of the united church.

13. JOINT MODERATORS IN PRESBYTERIES AND ASSEMBLY

The Executive Commission of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa had done some work on this in May 1960. They presented their proposal to the Bantu Presbyterian Church representatives which was a recommendation that where more than four African ministers are members of a presbytery, that presbytery shall elect an African and a European as Joint Moderator, who would be responsible for social and legal duties, from which at that time, Africans were debarred.

"The African moderator shall have primary responsibility in relation to African congregations and in presbytery the two moderators shall preside at alternative sessions of presbytery. Wherever possible the Joint Moderator who is not presiding shall sit on the right hand of the presiding moderator. In presbyteries where the conditions for the election of a joint moderator do not pertain, it is nonetheless permissible for these presbyteries to avail themselves of these provisions from time to time." (Unpublished notes of the sub-committee).

The Rev WMJ Lund indicated that this was to be viewed as an interim measure until such time when the African members of presbyteries had come to play an equal part with Europeans in the conduct of presbytery affairs in accordance with the Law of the Land. It was particularly noted

that in a united church, on the basis of the re-delimitation of presbyteries suggested in previous meetings, there would be cases of a European congregation being the only European charge in an otherwise African Presbytery, as would be the case with Umtata, Kokstad and perhaps Pietersburg. It was suggested that the sub-committee would have to give particular attention to the moderatorship within such presbyteries. Nothing at this stage was said about Moderators of the General Assembly.

14. CREDAL BASIS

It was suggested that a sub-committee of competent persons from both churches should work on the credal statement to be adopted by a united church and to report thereon.

These discussions undoubtedly made a fresh start on what appeared to be a more candid and fruitful basis than had been the case for many years. The 1960 Assemblies of both churches accepted the above recommendations of the sub-committee and re-affirmed their desire for union. They both affirmed that such union should be achieved in the shortest time possible (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1960:48). The five year experimental period was abandoned. The Assemblies adopted the deliverances and instructed the committee to proceed with the negotiations (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Bantu Presbyterian Church 1960:22)

This led to a further meeting of the Joint Committee on the 1st of March 1961 at St. George's Church in East London where the Rt Rev RB Mitchell (moderator), JP Whyte, JJR Jolobe, WMJ Lund, D McRae, M Manxoyi, H H Munro and RJD Robertson represented the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. The Bantu Presbyterian Church was represented by the Rt Rev JA Anderson (moderator), DV Sikutshwa, TP Finca, JY Hliso and WPT Ndibongo. Attention was given to a deliverance from the Bantu Presbyterian Church Assembly that "the assembly empower the committee to proceed with negotiations towards full union on the basic principle of the equal status of all ministers, elders and members within

the united church." (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Bantu Presbyterian Church 1960:22).

The Bantu Presbyterian Church undoubtedly feared that all the property of a united church would be solely in white hands. It was asked, therefore, whether equal status would be given to Africans in respect of signing legal documents and those related to church property. It was generally agreed that the constitution of the new body would be drawn up in such a way that it "comprised of African and European and if necessary Coloured and Indian members each with power to sign on behalf of the church. An African to sign for property in an African area, a European in an European area and so on (unpublished minutes of the Joint Committee of the 1st March 1961 in the custody of Rev. Rob Robertson). The Committee further noted that it would be desirable to retain the Board of Trustees of the Bantu Presbyterian Church in the united church to administer property held by the Bantu Presbyterian Church. Such an arrangement would hopefully be for an interim period. The committee re-affirmed the Bantu Presbyterian Church's resolution of the 1960 Assembly on equality of status as regards the ministry, eldership and membership of the church. It also affirmed that equal training for ministers should be the aim of the united church, whenever the means could be found. The desire that all be trained together was expressed.

The meeting pursued issues that were dealt with during the Umtata meeting of May 1960. It was pointed out that to permit the use of the mother tongue, allowing translations at Assembly must be regarded as an interim compromise suggestion. The Bantu Presbyterian Church would be asked to forego the practice of having all proceedings translated. This meant that in a united church only those elders who had the command of the English language would be suitable to represent congregations.

A resolution of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, 1960 that the Assembly approves in principle the creation of synods in a united church (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa 1960:92) was endorsed by the Bantu Presbyterian Church representation. It was agreed that a sub-committee be appointed to go

into this matter commencing with a draft constitution of synods. Rev HH Munro was appointed convenor with JJR Jolobe, Rev TL Clarke of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and Revs JY Hliso and JS Summers of the Bantu Presbyterian Church. On the question of producing a new Book of Order for a united church a sub-committee in the persons of Rev DV Sikutshwa, WPT Ndibongo and JA Anderson of the Bantu Presbyterian Church and RJD Robertson and D McRae (convenor) of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was appointed.

It was reported that the Church of Scotland indicated to the Bantu Presbyterian Church that it favoured the move towards union with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. At this stage the support of the Church of Scotland was seen as critically important. It was important to know what assistance the Foreign Mission's Committee of the Church of Scotland would give to a united church in respect of missionary personnel and funds. Questions were raised on the amalgamation of Assembly committees and the relative powers of the Executive Commission of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and the Business Committee of the Bantu Presbyterian Church. A committee was appointed to propose amalgamation and define the functions of Assembly Committees in a united church. Rev JP White was appointed convenor with Rev SP Lediga, of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, also appointed were Revs JA Anderson and BM Molaba of the Bantu Presbyterian Church.

The subject of stipends was introduced. It became clear that another sub-committee would have to be appointed to look into it and Rev TP Finca (convenor), JL Zwane of the Bantu Presbyterian Church, CW Cook, AV Bottoman and RB Donaldson of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa were appointed. The sub-committees were given five months to report at a meeting scheduled for August 2, 1961.

During this meeting, which took place at St George's Church, East London, Rev HH Munro presented his report on Synods which, after considering the clauses of the draft constitution seriatum and making amendments, was adopted as it appears in Appendix 2 agreeing that it

represented, to the mind of the meeting, a satisfactory constitution of synods for a united church

During the first four years of negotiation, then, a lot of spade work was done. There was a great deal of achievement and agreement on a number of points. This stage was characterized by a high level of enthusiasm when those in the negotiating team saw the possibilities of a union. However, while general issues could be dealt with relatively easily, once the question of specific and detailed concerns were considered the process of negotiation became more difficult. This marks the transition to the second stage.

THE SECOND STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS

As intimated, negotiations developed relatively smoothly while basic and general issues were on the agenda. The second stage, however, required dealing with specific issues which were far more difficult to handle. These issues raised various practical and emotional problems which had hitherto been kept to one side. But they could not be ignored indefinitely. The first of these had to do with church finances. Money posed a serious problem to the process of uniting. The Bantu Presbyterian Church was a church of the poor. There were those, in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, who thought that the only reason that would make Africans agree to a union was to better their financial position. They demanded that if there be any reason for a union their members should be informed of the financial liabilities they might assume, which looked like a refusal to share what they had with poor Africans (The Leader, March 1963 Article by DC Bruce). Any unity would render the united church poorer.

Problems pertained particularly to the level of African ministers stipends and the resources of various pension funds. Stipends of African ministers in 1962, were R50 per month, plus manse, without any other allowance with the exception of a few who were serving congregations that could afford it. Ministers in rural areas were getting R10 less as farm lands (glebes) helped them with additional income. African

ministers in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa were more or less in the same position as Bantu Presbyterian Church ministers except that they enjoyed some allowances. The minimum stipend for white ministers in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was R100 per month, plus manse, plus car and petrol allowance. In addition, scales of service allowances including children at university were in operation. Very few African ministers got any such allowances in the Bantu Presbyterian Church at the time. Indeed a large capital fund would have had to be injected into the Bantu Presbyterian Church to make it possible to maintain equal benefits for all in a united church. European evangelists received R48 per month and cost of living allowance as well as seniority allowance.

A sub-committee report of 1962 on stipends was less apologetic in stating that stipends in a united church would not be equal. It was clearly put that stipends were paid from money received from church members whose contributions differed due to "the difference in standard of living" between white and African members. It was further spelt out that differences in stipends could not be wiped out as it existed even between white congregations. The sub-committee proposed that in principle, it be the responsibility of each congregation to increase the salary of the minister. The main concern of the sub-committee shifted from the equalisation of all stipends to an equalisation of minimum stipends for all African ministers in a united church.

In 1963 a controversial proposal was made that there be no differentiation of stipend between ministers in urban and rural areas and that any lands (glebes) possessed by congregations and previously used by ministers be administered by Boards of Management or their equivalents for their own revenue. We need not go into details regarding the implications of such a proposal as well as the suspicions it raised among ministers of the Bantu Presbyterian Church who were largely in rural areas. Suffice it to say that had such a proposal become an Assembly resolution a large majority of ministers within the Bantu Presbyterian Church would have found themselves much poorer than before.

There was no real solution to the problem of stipends except a very vague proposal that there should be no increase in white minimum stipends without a proportionately greater increase in those for African ministers. We need to note that this would never have put the African minister in any equal position with white ministers, taking into account that white congregations were financially far better off.

Both churches had pension funds. In the Bantu Presbyterian Church the pension fund covered African ministers and their widows but not evangelists who were covered in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. Ministers contributed R10 per annum and each congregation R2. There was one pension rate of R40 for all who joined the fund under fifty years of age. Under that age a lump sum determined by the General Assembly was required. European missionaries received pensions from the Church of Scotland.

In the Presbyterian Church of South Africa rates per annum were as follows: white ministers R48, white evangelists R36, African ministers R24 and African evangelists R12. It was agreed that in a united church Scottish missionaries would be exempted from participation in the pension scheme. The aim was to have a uniform system of contributions and reimbursements in the united church. This proved to be a difficult issue taking into account the disparate contributions made by individuals to their own church's pension funds. The actuaries of the funds, Messrs Mcphail and Fraser were approached to consider the amalgamation by the two pension funds and indicate the actual amount which would be required as capital increase to the Bantu Presbyterian Church to make the proposed scheme possible.

By June 1963 the actuaries had responded stating that if funds were amalgamated a huge amount would have to be paid in to put ministers of the Bantu Presbyterian Church at the same level as workers within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. In 1968 this amount was about R86,000. The actuaries advised, however, that an amalgamation could take place without the addition of any extra capital provided that members of the Bantu Presbyterian Church fund have credited to them, at the time of union, only such remuneration as their fund could supply.

Each minister was to receive in proportion to what he had paid in. Only new ordinands would come in under conditions similar to those that prevailed in the Presbyterian Ministers' Pension Fund, and Widows' and Orphans' Fund, of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. This represented the mind of both churches as is reflected in the 1970 Basis of Union. Was this the only way out of the problem?

The status of the evangelists remained somewhat ambiguous. There were two categories of evangelists in both churches, trained and untrained. The Bantu Presbyterian Church employed both the trained and the untrained evangelists, who were helpers, with a small wage determined by the congregations they served. As mentioned, evangelists did not come under the pension scheme of the church. In the Presbyterian Church of South Africa only trained evangelists were employed.

The objective was to have all evangelists trained in a united church. A junior certificate was to be the entrance qualification for such training. It was, however, noted that special cases of "older persons with rich experience of life" could be considered as their experience would compensate for the lack of academic qualifications. In view of a shortage of ministers it was agreed that presbyteries would be allowed to pursue their own plans regarding the employment of evangelists and whether they should be ordained to exercise greater ministry. This is where conflicting opinions on the status of evangelists emerged. There were undoubtedly fears of evangelists taking over duties that were set aside for the ministers, hence the decision that all evangelists should work under the direct supervision of ministers and sessions.

There were also a number of white ordained evangelists in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. The Bantu Presbyterian Church and the African ministers of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa were opposed to any ordination of evangelists. It is worth noting that, in both churches, a lot of extension work was done by evangelists who proved to be better at it than ministers. This undoubtedly was one of the most important aspects of the church's mission, for which the church had to use its most gifted workers. Due to a lack of consensus, discussions on

this issue were suspended until Union after which, it was agreed, the Extension Committee of the Assembly of the united church would formulate a policy to be followed.

The Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was accepted as more detailed than the Manual of Law, Practice and Procedure of the Bantu Presbyterian Church. What was required was to make certain amendments to the Book of Order. There was a surprisingly large area of agreement and after the necessary amendments were made the book would be known as the Manual of Law, Practice and Procedure of the United Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa. In the Book of Order the status of adherents posed problems. The Bantu Presbyterian Church and the African ministers of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa did not recognize adherents. Both recognized only members in full communion. Adherents could not take baptismal vows - as was the case with the white section of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. Clear guidance was required on what status they would have in a united church.

There were legal difficulties regarding property and registrations. This was not unique to the Negotiating Committee, being a problem which confronted most churches operating within the Republic of South Africa. How can a church composed of various races hold property under laws which required, in the case of each registration, an affidavit stating to which racial group the church belonged? In a letter to Mr Robertson, the Rt Rev WPT Ndibongo of the Bantu Presbyterian Church had written in 1960 that "there is something that burdens my soul and thoughts and that is the question of the Laws of the Land that appear determined to keep the two sections apart." (Unpublished letter 15 July 1960 in the custody of Rev. Rob Robertson). The Group Areas Act of 1966 specified areas of the country in which only members of a specified racial group may own or occupy land. The Act had been part and parcel of the process whereby the occupation and ownership of land had been racially segregated. It was a criminal offense for another race group to occupy or acquire land in an area set aside for occupation by another. How would transfer of property from the uniting churches to the united church take place? It was partly due to the Group Areas Act mentioned above

that the Church of Scotland⁽¹⁾ continued to keep a greater part of the properties used by the Bantu Presbyterian Church under its name. Large institutions and hospitals were involved in addition to innumerable church sites and buildings. The Church of Scotland stated its willingness to arrange a transfer of properties in the event of a union taking place. The Bantu Presbyterian Church at this time wanted these properties under its name before any union took place but it was noted title deeds could not be given to Africans.

A brief history of the discussion on properties highlights the seriousness of the problem of apartheid laws. In 1961, because of the complexity of the matter, it was agreed that legal advice be sought. The task was given to the Rev JP Whyte, Clerk of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. In 1963, Mr Whyte reported that there was still no solution to the problem of how an Assembly with an African majority could legally hold property in white areas. The Negotiating Committee agreed to report to the Assemblies of the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of South Africa "that in view of the Group Areas Act and the formation of self-governing African territories, it appears that the General Assembly of a united church may have to appoint European trustees to sign for properties in European areas and African trustees in African areas" (unpublished minutes of the Negotiating Committee of June 1963, Johannesburg).

In 1964 Mr Whyte reported that the legal advisors considered it impossible to operate with members of different races on signing documents simply to suit the racial groupings under which various properties might fall. An agreement by the Assemblies to request the Government to modify some of the provisions of the Group Areas Act as applied to church properties was reached. There is not any record of the Government's response to that request. Legal advice was to be sought on the proposed request. On the 10th April 1967, Mr RS Welsh of Bell, Dewar and Hall wrote to the Negotiating Committee, "In my opinion there is no way in which the church could adapt itself to the legislation without

(1) Note: The Church of Scotland and the Free Church united in 1929, though there was a continuing Free Church.

impairing, and indeed destroying its own multi-racial character. The church would have to disintegrate into several separate associations each of which would consist predominantly of members belonging to one racial group" (unpublished letter 1967 in the custody of Rev Rob Robertson). He supported the advice of Mr A G Douglas, another lawyer, that the constitution be altered to have property registered in the name of individual congregations.

The negotiating committee agreed to seek the opinion of other churches such as the Church of the Province and the United Congregational Church on the effect of the Group Areas Act regarding the registration of properties. Both churches were multi-racial and had some experience of how to handle such issues. When acquiring immovable property in an African or Coloured or Indian group area, the Church of the Province applied under the Group Areas Act, for the necessary permit, which was always granted. For the first time, after the consolidation of the Group Areas Act No 36 of 1966, which came into force on 26 October 1966, the legal registrar of the Church of the Province was required to appear before the Group Areas Board as a follow up to an application he had submitted. A number of people feared that things would not be as they had been.

The proposed United Presbyterian Church was to have a majority of Africans in its membership. No one could tell what the Government's policy would be. A representative of the Department of Community Development who was interviewed expressed doubts that the United Presbyterian Church would be granted permission to own property in a white area. He went on to say that he understood that the Government would require churches to transfer property into ownership by members of the group for the area in which the property was situated. The Registrar of deeds in Cape Town, who was also interviewed was unable to suggest any course other than that given by Mr Welsh. The only course to avoid transfer would be to constitute the united church in all other respects but to leave immovable property without transfer.

The United Congregational Church in South Africa (UCCSA) was founded in 1967 when the Congregational Union of South Africa (a multi-racial

church), the London Missionary Society Churches (African) and the Bantu Congregational Church, united. In the Congregational Union of South Africa (CUSA) vestings were of two types:

- i) property held in the name of the local church with local trustees. This arrangement remained unchanged after the union;
- ii) Property held in the name of the Congregational Union of SA with official trustees of the CUSA. Any transfer of this property would have been very costly. On the recommendation of legal experts a holding trust was set up whereby the Congregational Union of South Africa continued in an attenuated form as a property holding body. The trustees were the official trustees of the United Congregational Church who would act in accordance with the decisions of the Assembly of the UCCSA. This was reported a happy arrangement with a constitution of the attenuated CUSA.

In the case of the London Missionary Society, all freehold properties were held in the name of the London Missionary Society Corporation with headquarters in London, a property holding trust for congregational churches in many parts of the world. This arrangement remained with the trust giving full power of attorney in respect of them to the UCCSA.

In the Bantu Congregational Church, vestings were of two types:-

- i) Property held in the name of the American Board Mission (later known as the United Church Board for World Ministries). These properties continued to be so vested with the Board giving full power of attorney in respect of them to the UCCSA;
- ii) Properties held in the name of the Bantu Congregational Church. A Bantu Congregational Church Trust was set up on the same basis as in ii) above (on the CUSA properties).

Regarding the acquisition of new sites and properties in European and Coloured areas and the Bantu Homelands where property could be purchased, the UCCSA Assembly agreed that all such land and property

be acquired in the name of the local churches on condition that the local churches had, or inserted the following clause in their constitutions:

"In the event of the church being dissolved, the assets of the church, after all liabilities have been met, shall vest in the UCCSA"

The proposal that the property of the United Church should be vested in the name of different groups found its way into the Draft Basis of Union but was rejected by the Bantu Presbyterian Church which requested that a scheme be worked out whereby the property be vested in the united church as a whole. The Bantu Presbyterian Church stated that only after this had been done would it be able to send the Draft Basis of Union down to its Presbyteries and Sessions for consideration and amendments. The Rev JS Summers, principal of St Columba's College, and a missionary in the Bantu Presbyterian Church, fearing that such a resolution by the Bantu Presbyterian Church Assembly would disappoint the Negotiating Committee, wrote to RJD Robertson, secretary of the Committee, that the resolution may under God have its value. He warned that "there is desperate need to have this issue of property thoroughly worked out. I suppose the answer is that it is impossible, but it may bring to the understanding of some of the whites in this land that deep sense of grievance that remains with the Africans. It's not that property is the Be-all of existence, but it is an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual truth, and if its not handled thoroughly then that is an outward sign of not joining together". (unpublished letter to RJD Robertson 3 October 1964 in his custody).

Thus the question on the registration of properties threatened to derail the negotiations between the years 1964 to 1966. There were differing opinions within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa on the Bantu Presbyterian Church's attitude to the registration of properties. Some understood the argument as an attempt to make the white members of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa feel as Africans felt about the laws of the land. Indeed white Christians needed to feel African frustration. It was time for the Presbyterian Church of South Africa as a white majority church, to have a closer look at the evils of apartheid which stood in the way of a desirable union. Some thought the Bantu

Presbyterian Church was suffering from an inferiority complex which made them cling to the property issue so as to keep the white church standing on the door step. Some felt that the Bantu Presbyterian Church was simply wasting time for reasons known to its leadership.

In a statement to the Senior Clerk of the Bantu Presbyterian Church, Mr NC Bernard, Secretary for African and Jamaica Missions wrote "I do not think that the Church of Scotland Trust would be ready to transfer its property at the present moment to a church in South Africa, to a united church, unless it was assured that the union had the complete backing of not only the Assemblies, but of all presbyteries of the Bantu Presbyterian Church." He further pointed out that they had no desire of holding on to properties "but I think you know it is most secure, in the present circumstances in South Africa, if it is vested with us and not with the Bantu Presbyterian Church" (unpublished statement from the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland). There was never any solution to the problem of the registration of properties. The Bantu Presbyterian Church's objection was noted as genuine but the proposal was not what the committee would have liked to see done, it was all they could do as a last alternative to get property registered.

The Negotiating Committee proved quite competent in handling matters referred to it for discussion. Members of the committee were aware of the fears of those who opposed any attempt to unite the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and the Bantu Presbyterian Church as these fears continued to be expressed during Assembly debates. But how informed the ordinary members of both churches were about the issues that were at stake remains a difficult question to answer. Indications point to the bitter truth that discussions and developments did not filter through to congregations. They remained largely at Assembly level with few Presbyteries taking the proposed union seriously.

Within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa there were ministers who felt that union proposals and discussions should remain at the level of Presbyteries and Assembly, and not the Sessions. This group was convinced that Sessions would reject any such proposals just as the NGK synods rejected the Cottesloe resolutions. They perceived the sessions

of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa as largely conservative. Their hopes were in those who had received theological as well as biblical training, who would have a "spiritual" attitude to race relations. They felt that these would see the significance of a union. It could be argued though that if they had any different attitude from the Sessions it may have been largely due to their physical contact with Africans at Presbytery as well as Assembly level rather than a theological and biblical training. Such an exposure the Sessions did not have. They nevertheless did not insist that Sessions should not be kept informed about developments and the implications of a union. But in their opinion the Assembly and Presbyteries would go into a union and take the Sessions (the whole church) with them.

The Bantu Presbyterian Church had a different attitude which became evident during the 1965 Assembly. They favoured getting congregations and Presbyteries agreeing first. The feeling was that a Union at the top when the ground had not been prepared was just looking for trouble later. Indeed practical possibilities for contact and collaboration were greater at congregational and presbyterial level.

There were some commissioners within the Presbyterian Church of South Africa who shared this opinion while some waited for the inauguration of a union before tackling the implications of a union at the level of congregations. Unfortunately both churches did not do much to ensure a working relationship at grass roots level. The church lives primarily at the level of the parish, not at the level of Presbytery or Assembly. That is the level where knowledge of one another and fellowship could have been nurtured and deepened.

THE LAST STAGE

Between the years 1964 and 1971 attempts were made to finalize negotiations. Some members of both churches had lost hope of a United Church. The draft basis of Union had been before these two churches since 1962. No agreement had been reached. Some members of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa were vocal against a united church.

The 'Presbyterian Leader' kept members of the negotiating committee informed regarding the aspirations of some. There were those who saw the idea of a united church as causing irritation and misgiving among members. They felt it was as vital and important to individual members as was the question of a Republic of South Africa, when, because the whole structure of the country's constitution was about to be changed, the matter had to be decided not by parliament but by a referendum.

"Despite anything that the Union Negotiating Committee may say, this vital matter of union with a church of different background, different language, different attitude; definitely on a different wave-length and involving as it certainly does, a radical change in the constitution of our Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, a matter of such deep concern to each individual member, that justice and fair play demand that it cannot ~~and should not~~ be decided only by Presbyteries and Assembly - with whom we gladly co-operate on all normal organisational and administrative matters - it should be decided only with the assent of members of every congregation." (The Leader May 1970)

It was undoubtedly a view of people who did not know much about the two churches. Whilst it is true that the constitution may have needed some revision this would not have implied much change. In accordance with the constitution of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa all Presbyteries were consulted. The Presbyterian Church of South Africa Assembly submitted to demands and went further. It asked sessions and congregations to be consulted. In 1970 the draft basis of Union was circulated to Presbyteries, sessions and congregations for comment and amendment. The Negotiating Committee was requested to compile a report for the 1970 General Assembly after which presbyteries, sessions and congregations would be required to decide for or against union.

An overwhelming vote in favour of union was taken in Cape Town by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa in 1970. One hundred and thirty delegates voted for union. Three voted against the resolution and fifteen abstained. An amendment put to the Assembly by a delegate from the Transvaal asking for a federal scheme as adopted by the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk was defeated. The convenor of the Union Negotiations Committee, the Rev HH Munro warned that it was better to leave the way open for congregations to secede if they were not interested in a united church and to let them go with the blessing of

the church but "1970 is not the time for the forming of small independent churches" (The Leader October 1970). He wanted Union. The process had taken longer than they had hoped as the negotiating team. There were times when they thought they were almost there. He was frustrated.

The next step was to put the decision to unite before all Presbyteries for acceptance. May 1971 was proposed as the deadline for responses.

The 1970 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa met just after the World Council of Churches decided, through the Programme to Combat Racism meeting at Arnoldshain, to fund the ANC, PAC, SWAPO, and similar organisations in Africa. A week prior to this Assembly, Prime Minister John Vorster called for the withdrawal of South African churches from the World Council. In a sharp reply the Presbyterian Church of South Africa Assembly reminded the Prime Minister that her only Lord and Master is Jesus Christ and it would not serve other masters. The Assembly protested what it described as Mr Vorster's attempt to coerce the church not only to dissent from the World Council in the instance of the funds for anti-racist movements but also to break entirely with the World Council for political reasons. This was not only a snub to the Government's policy of racial separation but also the opening of continuing ecclesial protest. The Presbyterian Church Assembly also endorsed a theological statement highly critical of the ideology of apartheid which emanated from the churches.

Taking both decisions into account, the one for a united church and the other against a withdrawal from the World Council, a member of the Presbyterian Church wrote in the Leader "I feel that, at last, the church is showing concretely that it does not support discrimination on racial, religious, cultural or social grounds... we are called to repentance, to achieve reconciliation and love between all men." (The Leader October, 1970). The Presbyterian Church of South Africa agreed to unite with the Bantu Presbyterian Church. The response of Presbyteries was as follows:

Presbytery of Cape Town approved with 31 votes to 2.
 Presbytery of King William's Town disapproved with 14 votes to 9.
 Presbytery of Mashonaland approved with votes not stated.
 Presbytery of Matabeleland disapproved with votes not stated.
 Presbytery of Natal approved with one vote against.
 Presbytery of the Orange River approved votes not stated.
 The PCSA waited anxiously for a word from the BPC Assembly.

On the Bantu Presbyterian Church team there were prominent players such as the Rev TP Finca, WPT Ndibongo, BM Molaba and JY Hliso with the latter leading the opposition. There were churchmen who felt that there would be no union of the two Presbyterian churches as long as JY Hliso was still in the Bantu Presbyterian Church. Some had argued that it was an inferiority complex that haunted the Bantu Presbyterian Church and kept them away from a Union. A younger man who joined the negotiating team by the name of the Rev GT Vika dismissed the argument as unfounded. In an interview he pointed out that in the Union Negotiations Committee the Bantu Presbyterian Church had giants who feared nobody. It may be true to say that time was not opportune. The laws of the land largely shaped the attitude of White Christians. African ministers as well as Christians had learnt not to trust their White brothers and sisters.

The Bantu Presbyterian Church was hesitant on Unity, more so between the years 1965 and 1971. In 1965 there had been considerable change in the personnel of the Bantu Presbyterian Church Committee. Only Molaba remained. Finca, Ndibongo, and Hliso were off. BM Molobo was pro-union. The appointment of the Rev GT Vika as General Secretary of the Bantu Presbyterian Church in 1969 added to those in favour of union. In 1970 at Dundee he presented his report as convenor of the Presbyterian Negotiations Committee after which thirty-five votes to twelve accepted the Basis of Union. The General Assembly agreed to send the Final Basis of Union to presbyteries for approval. The committee was requested to prepare a report for 1971. The Rev JY Hliso entered his dissent. In 1971 at Lovedale, the Rev GT Vika reported that four out of seven presbyteries voted in favour of union. Two presbyteries were still waiting on sessions and congregations. The

Committee on Presbyterian Negotiations moved that the Basis of Union be approved. A certain section of the delegates wanted the matter deferred for a year. A vote was taken on the motion of the negotiating team with fifty-two votes in favour of a Union and thirty five against. This thirty five was not against Union in principle. They felt the issue still needed more time.

Whilst this could have been the required mandate to take the Church into a Union, The General Assembly of the BPC felt it imperative to consult further. It referred the matter to the Business Committee which advised that a commission be appointed to go round the congregations of the Bantu Presbyterian Church and seek their opinion on the question of union. The Rev GT Vika was appointed to do this task with the clerk of the presbyteries to be visited.

From July 1971 to July 1972 the General Secretary of the Bantu Presbyterian Church accompanied by Presbytery clerks in their respective areas visited all congregations of the church. Many congregations expressed their ignorance of the negotiations for union. Those who admitted having once been told about it remarked that it had not occurred to them that the matter had reached such an advanced stage as members of the commission explained.

Voting for or against was determined or largely influenced by the attitude of the resident minister and sometimes the Session. There were a few exceptions where the minister would vote in favour and the congregation against. This exercise could be seen as not Presbyterian but it became evident that Presbyteries had not consulted congregations within their boundaries on the proposed Union. The exercised helped Presbyteries with a clear response.

Three Presbyteries out of seven voted in favour of union. Four against. Those who voted against argued that they did so among other things because:-

1. The policy of the present government in this country, that of Separate Development weighs heavily on the minds of our people against the union of our church with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa which is predominantly white at the moment. In addition to government policy the attitude of whites in the country towards Africans also makes things unclear when union is considered. There is a general suspicion that since whenever a white person meets a African person, the white one always assumes the position of superiority. This behavior may continue in the United Church. In the Transkei in particular, one is always reminded that the Government has passed in to the hands of African people therefore uniting with whites is to reverse the trend of events. Some people have stated that at present there is discrimination in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa on race lines and have asked what guarantee there is that this will not continue after union.

The attitude of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa congregation in Umtata which voted against Union and their Kokstad congregation which has asked that they be included in the Natal Presbytery shows that the white people still despise Africans.

2. The legal implications on the question of property is still not clear. The fear is that everything registered in the name of the new church may eventually turn out to be controlled by the white group. (Report of the Commission on the Presbyterian Union Negotiations, Bantu Presbyterian Church Assembly, 1972).

This report was presented to the Bantu Presbyterian Church General Assembly at Gillespie (Transkei). The Rev BM Molaba moved that "in view of the fact that the Bantu Presbyterian Church has over ten years been discussing the question of union and has committed herself to it and is expected to give a final decision, I move that the church goes into union now." After he had been seconded the motion was put to vote and lost by thirty-four to fifty-six votes. Assembly agreed with seventy-two to nineteen votes to re-affirm its desire to seek union, "but feels unable to enter Union at present in view of failure to reach unanimity after the commission's report. Assembly resolves to continue negotiations for Union and that contacts with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa be made at congregation level." (Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Bantu Presbyterian Church 1972). This meant that the initiative would be left to individual congregations and indirectly to individual ministers. In some areas this had been happening even prior to unity talks.

Church union failed. The Bantu Presbyterian Church was unable to muster enough support from the Presbyteries for the plan of union. In fact it is fair to say not enough had been done to prepare people at grass roots level for the proposed Union. Some of the elders and younger ministers of the Bantu Presbyterian Church were in favour but many of the older ministers, who were largely in leadership positions as ex-moderators of the General Assembly, moderators or clerks of presbyteries and mostly members of the Business Committee, felt that their church was not ready.

CHAPTER 4

THE WAY FORWARD

For more than eight years now there have been consultations to find a way back to the drawing board and map out the way forward. Suggestions have been put before both churches by members of the Ecumenical Relations Committees of the two churches. The committees believe that the present situation is clearly unsatisfactory. Prejudice and distrust characterize relationships. Guidelines need to be drawn up to help churches build relationships primarily at the local level between ministers and lay persons. This thesis is an attempt to facilitate the process. Four theses will be discussed as a way forward. These are:

1) **BUILDING ON WHAT WAS ACHIEVED.**

The team that was involved in the Unity Negotiations between 1959 and 1971 undoubtedly paved the way. We have looked through the minutes of the negotiating team, proceedings of the General Assemblies of both the Bantu Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. We have found letters and telegrams to members of the team which have thrown much light on the attitude of those involved in negotiations towards one another, and the manner in which unity talks were handled by the Assemblies of the two churches. Whoever assumes responsibility for Union Negotiations should look into the records of the Unity Negotiation's Committee and build upon the foundations this Committee laid.

Appendix I provides a clue as to how these churches could have begun to work as a team at regional levels. That unity talks came to a deadlock does not mean that all work done should be thrown away. The two churches cannot afford to abandon everything. Had the scheme for the re-allocation of Presbyteries of the churches been adopted and implemented, without any union of Assemblies, the two churches would have been forced to find each other as they shared one another's burdens in practical regional concerns.

The churches are more for a talk shop than getting things done. It is easy to make proposals than to have them implemented. During a discussion on the subject of the working together of Christians of different race groups, a friend remarked that it is useless to make proposals at our General Assemblies because these proposals never get implemented. He suggested that the best approach is to request permission to do something and this guarantees that it is done.

The fear of failure has become so great that too often we refuse to move even one step forward in case we do not succeed. The "what if it doesn't work?" question paralyses many of us. That fear becomes a problem to the church which supposedly lives by faith. It is human, though, to be comfortable with the familiar. Before we wrestle with how possible it is to unify work tested regionally without any strings attached by the General Assemblies, we need to ask if these courts are really able to address an issue of such magnitude without relying on those whose everyday experience demands that churches speak with one voice. To encourage, enable and equip Christians within region one, as reflected in Appendix 1, to do all they can to affirm their oneness, would undoubtedly yield better results.

The Church has a history of turning a deaf ear to the cries of those to whom she owes her very existence.

Whilst the Presbyterian Church of South Africa was ready for a union it is also clear that in principle the Bantu Presbyterian Church was not against it. For them unity talks were first and foremost to be located within the context of the struggle against apartheid, introducing to the church's agenda what was to them a priority. It is in this context that the tension between universality and particularity becomes evident. Church unity is an ideal for which we can all struggle, but it cannot be discussed in isolation from the experience of those involved. The relationship between church unity and the African experience in this country demands that we do our best to facilitate further talks. This cannot be successfully done as long as churches are still pre-occupied with their own preservation. Having failed to unite, a formal link

recognized by both churches which would help persuade ministers as well as lay persons into some joint action on issues that affect members at regional level, must be established. Such a link could only be recognised as existing for allowing regions to develop, thus creating space for Christians to engage in promoting understanding between race groups that have been, for so long, kept apart by the brutal enforcement of South Africa's racist laws.

The Inter-denominational African Minister's Association of Southern Africa, for example, is an officially recognized association by both churches, which has brought together African ministers from different confessional backgrounds at regional level in the attempt to witness together. It works. The same could be said of minister's fraternal and the regional councils of the South African Council of Churches. We must create space in which everyone is free to make contributions for a united church. We minister to victims of apartheid, both White and African. The future of the White child in this country is tied up to that of the Black child. The same could be said of the future of the White Christian and the Black Christian. The church must begin to work as the nursery of a just, non-sexist, non-racial democratic community.

Both churches have women in the leadership as deacons, elders and ministers. However, this is not enough as there are very few women in our presbyteries and Assembly meetings. The brokenness of our society demands the attention of all concerned people of God who are under obligation to fulfil the healing and therapeutic function of the church.

If Appendix I* had found acceptance in the two Churches, functions and duties of Presbyteries could have been determined by the various Presbyteries as they sought to promote a credible witness within their various communities. Congregations would have had the opportunity of finding one another, reflect on past experiences, discuss what should be as practical ministry dictates. An official link of this nature is essential but under such an arrangement Presbyteries should not be expected to present reports to the Assemblies of the two churches. All work and

* note: Appendix I is part of the documents on Unity Negotiations.

activities undertaken by the Presbyteries as in Appendix I could rather be supervised by a standing Committee on Unity negotiations.

The Committee envisaged that there would be twelve Presbyteries in a united church. Each Presbytery would then appoint at least three people, preferably two lay persons and a minister, to form a standing negotiating team of thirty six members. A dozen more would be added to this number for what they could contribute to facilitate the work of the team. This committee would attempt to enable, equip and encourage Presbyteries to engage in more critical analytical thinking on issues of common concern on the ground. The closer the churches come together as believing and worshiping communities in shared Christian faith, hope and love, the more liberated they become from their traditionally divisive, ethnic, cultural and political affiliations. Guidelines to promote inter-Church relations must be drawn. In cases where the work of the two churches overlap, with both congregations with a minister relations could be improved by:

- 1) Holding united services especially during Holy Week, at Easter, Pentecost, etc.; there is a tendency to assume that joint services wouldn't work. These services could be held on special occasions to start with. Most ministers are so used to being congratulated after services that they fear attempting anything that is likely to fail. This residual fear of what would happen, for example, should a white congregation decide not to have an Easter service of their own, join a black congregation, or vice versa, must be addressed. It is unbelievable but an effort must be made. Churches need the courage to take the initiative in the attempt to bring race groups together. United Services offer people the opportunity to widen their horizons thus getting to know others better.
- 2) Attendance at funerals in each others' churches; This presupposes that a relationship would exist between the churches as a result of congregations meeting occasionally. People would attend a funeral of a person belonging to a family or a group known to them.
- 3) Pulpit exchanges; Some black Christians would refuse to listen to a white preacher, the same could be said of white Christians. We are products of a polarised society. The pulpit exchanges would hopefully strengthen reciprocal relationships between churches. It must not be a one way traffic type of relationship.
- 4) Assistance by ministers who have Marriage Licences to those who do not;

- 5) Combined Women's Association meetings and weekend gatherings;
- 6) Support of local Women's World Day of Prayer services;
- 7) Support of local Sunday School services, outings, etc.;
- 8) United youth meetings, rallies, etc.;
- 9) Support of local ministers' fraternals and / or regular meetings between local Presbyterian Church of South Africa And Reformed Prebyterian Church of Southern Africa ministers for mutual support, planning, etc.;
- 10) Join training sessions for elders / deacons / treasures / youth leaders / Sunday School teachers, especially where advantage can be taken of resource person, training manuals, etc., provided these are acceptable to both sides.;
- 11) Participation in bilateral or ecumenical evangelistic outreach in local area;
- 12) Participation in bilateral or ecumenical service projects in a local area;
- 13) Combined meetings of small groups for Bible Study / fellowship / teaching of another's languages, etc.;
- 14) Joint responses to crises in the local community, e.g. re housing, population removals, education, etc.;
- 15) Co-operation, especially of ministers, in ongoing problem areas requiring reconciliation or mediation.

This would be much better than creating a link at the top hoping that congregations would accept Assembly decisions without question. The two churches must allow growth from below which in fact is already taking place unnoticed and without the blessing of the two churches.

The re-allocation of presbyteries would only be for ecumenical work. To think that nothing is possible outside our presently known parameters, the session, presbytery and Assembly, is just a blatant refusal to attempt anything practical. It is a clinging to the past, the known, the familiar. The re-allocation would mean that there is a recognised formation which

is responsible not to any Assembly as such, but to the people the churches seek to serve, the majority of whom are unaware of our pyramidal way of deciding how best to respond to their suffering.

Appendix II* seems to be what the two churches would naturally grow into had the work of the Negotiating Committee been taken seriously. The idea of synods as outlined would create another wider forum than just Presbyteries. Aiming at doing work nationally it would be extended but kept within regions. Synods would help Presbyteries which otherwise remain the same even if Appendix I is implemented. Presbyteries such as Transkei, Umtata and East Griqualand for example would not experience much change unless the proposal on page 8 of Appendix II is taken seriously. There are changes ~~that would~~ need the attention of the negotiating team in the light of how Presbyteries cope with their responsibilities. Synods would be shaped and formed by Presbyteries and not by the General Assembly as proposed in section 1:2. In fact Synods could work if they grew out of the demands for common witness on the part of Presbyteries. Questions regarding constitution, meetings and procedure as well as bounds would be best reviewed and reshaped under the guidance of the negotiating team. It would be wise to make even this link as unofficial as possible in terms of reports to both Assemblies until such time that the churches are ready for union.

Much work has already been done although very little has reached grassroots level. We need to build on what the negotiating team produced. It is regretful that only a few members of both churches are aware of the enormous work that has already been done. Even those in the ecumenical relations committees of the two churches are not fully informed. A clear understanding of the facts would certainly pave the way forward. We cannot just let things die, we have an obligation to keep on.

* note: Appendix II is part of documents on Unity Negotiations

2) RECOGNISING AND OVERCOMING PAST MISTAKES.

It is important to recognise the failures and errors of the past, do what we can to put them right and try to find ways to avoid repeating them. For far too long the white Christians in South Africa turned a blind eye to the suffering of the black masses. There was not any concreteness in their condemnation of apartheid. Africans wanted to hear white Christians speak. The failure of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa to be visibly on the side of the oppressed influenced hard-liners in the Bantu Presbyterian Church such as the Rev J.Y. Hliso to reject any proposed church unity in a segregated society as doomed to fail. They viewed any idea of church union of black and white Christians as utopian. It is fair to say that they wanted a union and they prayed for its realization but "not yet". Only when the two churches could unite as equals would church union be justified. The church's inability to listen to those she seeks to serve is evident as we look through the records of the Negotiation's Committee. Those who, from time to time, raised their voices against union were ignored with the hope that they would understand once a united church was established. Decisions must be made with the people, not for them. Issues that posed a threat to union included attitudes that would derail any such attempt. These must be addressed. Lay persons were not involved in unity negotiations. More than a dozen committees were formed with a noticeable absence of elders or lay persons.

Some ministers took advantage of this failure to consult the grass roots. In an unpublished letter to the Rev H.H. Munro, Rob Robertson wrote "The late Clem Woods once said there would be no union as long as Mr Hliso is in the Bantu Presbyterian Church"(Unpublished letter of June 26,1971 in the custody of Rev Rob Robertson). It is common knowledge that the Rev J.Y Hliso was against union. He led the opposition. Rev. Hliso was one of the very few ministers of the Bantu Presbyterian Church whose whole ministry was in urban areas. He served congregations such as Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, and Cape Town (Tiyo Soga Memorial). There is no doubt that he knew better than most ministers in the Bantu Presbyterian Church about race relations, of White and African relationships as prescribed by the laws of the land. He was an authority

in this regard. He was moderator of the General Assembly of the Bantu Presbyterian Church for the years 1965, 1970 and 1971, the only minister to have been three times moderator.

The Rev J.Y. Hliso knew that he had a case against the union. The Bantu Presbyterian Church had, like the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, failed to consult with the whole membership on union. It is reported that at the 1971 General Assembly the Rev G.T. Vika spoke for nearly two hours in favour of union, uninterrupted. The Rev J.Y Hliso left the moderatorial chair and announced that if the Assembly voted to unite he would stay out (unpublished letter of April 2, 1971 in the custody of Rev Rob Robertson).

The Assembly decision to delay voting on the issue was due to fears that he was capable of taking a few ignorant congregations with him. Had congregations been consulted such fears would not have been entertained. It would be sad if there are people who feel union would be an act of betrayal of J.Y Hliso and the like. We must overcome the prejudices we have inherited and try to weigh arguments for and against union in the balance. We must commit ourselves to not only preaching and teaching but above all to drawing Christians together. Christian unity is a sign of hope for a broken and divided world. Both churches must concern themselves with the communal rooting of unity talks in human history and experience. Human history and experience cannot be fully grasped viewed independently of the incarnation, God stepping into human history and thus changing its course. There is much theological debate at grass roots level that goes on unnoticed and without the necessary guidance.

It is not easy to have to tell the truth. Most black ministers in the Reformed Prebyterian Church of Southern Africa who were already in the ministry between the years 1959 and 1973, are, in fact, happy that a union did not take place. It has become evident, though, that this attitude springs out of a resentment against apartheid and the reluctance of white Christians to stand with blacks against oppression. As the Rev EFC Mashava noted some white Christians only knew a black person as a gardener or a maid and never as a fellow Christian. Most black ministers

who resisted union are those who have prejudice as well as suspicion regarding the proposed union. Their argument is too often based on a glaring inability to work together now. The black community has been brought up to believe that whites have no respect for anything that blacks have to say; Theirs' is to listen and never to argue. The black person has been conditioned to always be on the receiving end. To hope that this kind of attitude would change without pain, and overnight would be to underestimate the extent of harm caused by the church's complacency regarding the apartheid laws of this land. Those who have to teach, at any tertiary level, students who are products of the Bantu education system, are aware of the limitations that system of education has imposed on the black section of our population. The fear of being taken less seriously, in a united church, is still prevalent among some black ministers. It will disappear without great effort by both churches. The need to concretely affirm our oneness is greater than ever before.

God has set before Christians in this country an open door, the door of opportunity to show compassion, to love, and to affirm the dignity of all. This must be in practical terms as suggested above.

It is strange to note that the white Christians who were partly responsible for instilling fear, and attempting to make blacks believe that they were second class citizens, invest very little in terms of their time, energy and money in an attempt to undo the harm. There are, of course, isolated cases where white churches are committed in attempting to redress the imbalance. There are community centres, creches where working mothers leave their children, literacy classes, and training centres where people are helped with skills to better their lives. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa and the Presbyterian Church Of South Africa could be involved in joint community development programmes where people would come to understand and know each other as they work shoulder to shoulder.

Would it be unfair or too much to extend the probation period of those who want to serve our communities as ordained ministers? Taking the extent of work that these churches are confronted with in the attempt to re-build relationships, the possibility should be considered of every white

candidate working in a black Reformed Prebyterian Church of Southern Africa congregation, and black candidates in white Presbyterian Church of South Africa congregations for at least two years before ordination. What is it that the Reformed Prebyterian Church of Southern Africa or the Presbyterian Church of South Africa cannot offer to probationers which can be offered by one particular denomination to justify any argument against this kind of arrangement?

Much has been said about stipends as well as the language problem. Blacks have been compelled by socio-economic as well as political reasons to learn more than one language and this has turned out to be a great advantage. Probationers in the Reformed Prebyterian Church of Southern Africa are not encouraged to serve in their home presbyteries, in fact they are appointed to other areas in the country and a great number can now speak languages that they had to learn in a year. Most ministers in this country would rather learn Greek, Hebrew, German, Latin or French than waste time on any of the local African languages. This results in a preference of professional blacks who have a command of the official languages against millions who due to no fault of their own could not see the door of a classroom. Love should compel us to learn more about our neighbours. Regions are best suited to fight for the introduction of African languages in schools.

The financial position of the two churches regarding stipends has gone from bad to worse. The minimum stipend in the Reformed Prebyterian Church of Southern Africa now is R800 while it is R1300 in the Presbyterian Church of South Africa per month. The argument that the only reason why the Bantu Presbyterian Church is willing to merge with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa so that it can get its debts paid [The Leader Jan, 1962:5] would still arise. It must be crystal clear that the Reformed Prebyterian Church of Southern Africa is a poor church, of the poor and it has no reason to be apologetic about that. It is this experience of life in poverty that the Reformed Prebyterian Church of Southern Africa must share with the Presbyterian Church of South Africa. With the South African economy in ruins, communities that have been affluent will definitely need to learn survival mechanisms from those

whose very survival has been based on a willingness to share even the basics.

There are levels at which this kind of learning could take place. The organizations of both churches such as the Young Men's Christian Guild, the Women's Christian Association, the Youth Fellowship and the Sunday School could be organized in such a way that they play an informative role, serve as antennae on public opinion regarding union. Lay persons are in the leadership in these organizations. One would hope that such leadership would be encouraged to wrestle with the scandal of our divided witness. The multi-racial nature of Presbyteries as proposed in Appendix I would have to be taken very seriously. It must be noted that these organizations have for good or ill provided many lay persons with a sense of identity. Uniforms, traditional music and freedom of worship create a sense of oneness among worshippers. Anyone who is not like them is not and cannot be one of them. These are issues that could be dealt with by a keen listener.

A critical review of and a reflection on what both churches could discard or build on would only be possible if programmes and activities are in operation within an officially established link as proposed. It is when people begin to engage in some activity that the negotiating team would be able to assess the possibility of long term working relationships. We must guard against unrealistic hopes that we could take congregations into union without having exposed them to what the demands and consequences of agreeing to unite would be. Resumption of talks should have the creation of an official link where lay persons would take part in discussions as a priority, a forum where people can engage in activities that would inform the negotiating team whether unity is possible. Refresher courses for ministers, retreats and seminars for everyone could help build relationships. Physical contact must be encouraged where people will be helped to discover their true identity as a people of God. Committees of the General Assembly in both Churches must be appointed with great wisdom. We must have the right person in the right committee.

During an interview Rev. Rob Robertson (personal communication, may 1993) remarked that it was evident in the process of negotiations that some members had other concerns that were more important than Unity talks. He recalled an observation by the Rev. Munro that if any one wants anything done he/she must not request the Assembly to do it because it will never get that. One should rather request permission from the Assembly to do it. In the Bantu Presbyterian Church team only two representatives were keen on Union, Rev. JT Vika and Rev. BM Mobaba. The Rev. W.P.T Ndibongo knew that a Union would not make much difference within the Umtata Presbytery in which he was a minister. This kind of attitude can lead to complacency with ministers and congregations thinking that Union or no Union, it does not matter. Unity talks were frustrated by those who had no time for meetings. A team of committed persons who are heart and soul in Unity talks is needed.

Criticism is not always acceptable. But without any free play of criticism the truth which in Christian terms is to set humanity free is obscured and evaded. Hard questions were avoided by the Negotiating Committee. Some members of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa feared that Union with the Bantu Presbyterian Church would render the united Church poor. Realistically this would be inevitable should a Union take place. But the question of salaries and pensions in particular would need the most urgent attention of the Negotiating team as it has been effectively misrepresented by those anti- Union. Advice from churches such as the United Congregational Church would be of help. A way of dialogue is needed, which will require commitment to a Union. The process must start with a critical analysis of where we've been and a recognition of the work already done.

3) RECOGNIZING THE CHRISTOLOGICAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH AS DEMANDING UNITY.

Obedience on the part of the church is crucial for a credible witness. An observation has already been made about the unfortunate history of ecclesial disobedience in this country. Both the Reformed Presbyterian and the Presbyterian Church of South Africa know what God requires. To move from the sphere of Assembly deliberations to that of action seems an insurmountable task. Now is the time to break with what has

kept churches apart. What we experience in everyday life should compel us to put our house in order by joining hands.

The church consists of those who are partakers of Christ and of the blessings of salvation that are in Him. Through the operation of the Holy Spirit, Christ unites believers with Himself, endows them with true faith and constitutes the church as His body. Paul describes the church as the body of Christ because of its union with Christ. He uses the body figure to describe the interdependence of Christians as members of Christ and of each other. The Holy Spirit creates a holy fellowship in the bond of love. The church possesses the Spirit whose gifts equip and enable the church to discover what it means to belong to the body through worship and witness.

The church is a functional organism. All members are priests. It is in each and every member that the mind and purpose of God for the world became incarnate. The church becomes a sign of God's Kingdom in the world. Rightly understood the church is the earthly historical form of Christ's existence. This incarnational understanding of the church implies that she must be visible in human experience as it is dictated by socio-economic and political issues. Christ is head of the Church. Through His word He reigns. The unity of the church is essential in shaping the life and the work of the church in response to the call to serve. Whilst it could be argued that the unity of the church is primarily of an internal and spiritual character, this inner unity must seek and acquire outward expression in the profession and conduct of believers.

As Christ continues to confront the world through His word the church should always be ready for fresh obedience, a discovery and an establishment of a new order on the basis of new instruction. The church must be seen as a witness to God in action, "its existence is hermeutical, it interprets the gospel in the world." (de Gruchy 1991:208). The unity of believers, irrespective of race or gender or class could have posed a serious threat to the regime. For more than four centuries now division among the believers in this country has rendered the witness of the church weak. Fidelity to the proclamation of what God has and is doing in and through Christ is central to the witness of the church as it

enables it to be the true church, the community of Christ in the world, truly ingrafted in him. No church in its right mind could undermine its divine calling and forge alliances with the state. The church is called to speak out whenever the dignity of the individual is being assaulted. The church is rooted in the work and person of Christ. It is fundamental that this Christness be conspicuous.

Christians must testify by faith as well as obedience to what the gospel demands. One's socio-political context is indispensable for hearing the true calling of the church. Wilmore and Cone mention that the church's vocation is always bound up with the liberation of the oppressed (Wilmore and Cone 1972:364 ff). Indeed, a church which does not show much interest in what happens to worshippers outside the walls of a church building is destined to wither. Church unity was made obligatory since God's stepping into human history in the person of Christ and breaking all barriers which kept us human beings apart. Unity is an indispensable characteristic of the church of Christ. It is an accomplished reality for those who are obedient to Jesus Christ. Church unity presupposes a conversion that those who seek it are indeed a people of God and that they do so in obedience to the gospel demand that we be one. It is a gift of God which is an inherent part of the gospel that tells us we cannot be reconciled to God without being reconciled to one another. Church unity is an outward and structural manifestation of an inner unity in Christ.

This understanding of church unity prompts societies in need of direction and purpose in the event of a crisis to look to the church to provide it. Confronted by the evils of colonization and apartheid, black ecclesiastical protest has been a result of the failure of the white churches to fulfil their divinely given function. Africans wanted to hear the churches speak, to see them in action. The reluctance to stand with the people in their suffering and need was viewed as clear refusal to witness against injustice. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin observes that when Christians are engaged in the task of missionary obedience they are in the situation in which the church is truly the church, and in that situation the disunity which is easily taken for granted among churches becomes literally intolerable because it is felt to contradict the whole nature of apostolic

mission at its heart (Newbigin 1953: 151). God wills unity. The continued attempts to revive talks about it bears testimony to our desire to bend our wills to Gods will. However difficult it may be to forget the past, however we may justify the beginnings of disunion, we lament its continuance. We must labour in patience and faith to rebuild broken walls.

A call to unity must therefore involve a call to repentance. This Christian call to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation, which applies to the churches in their frequently hostile divisions, must be answered by all Christians. Only when God has drawn us closer to Godself shall we truly be united to one another and our task will not be to consummate our endeavor but to register God's achievement. Christ must be the starting point. From the unity of Christ we seek to understand the unity of the church on earth, and from the unity of Christ and His body we seek a means of realizing that unity in the actual state of our divisions. There is common ground. Both churches, the Presbyterian Church of South Africa and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa, would not seek union if they did not already possess it. It is because we are one in allegiance to one Lord that we seek and hope for a way of manifesting that unity in our witness to Him before the world.

4) EXPRESSING CHURCH UNITY THROUGH WORSHIP AS A CONTRIBUTION TO BUILDING A NON-RACIAL SOUTH AFRICA.

The social order as well as the political order within which the church exists may be an obstacle in living out the faith. Apartheid laws were undoubtedly incompatible with the nature of the church of Christ. In conforming to the standards of the South African regime the church has been unfaithful to its calling. As Bonhoeffer observed, the church existing within boundaries is no true church. The true church comes into being on the boundaries (de Gruchy 1988:148 ff). In South Africa the church in her divisions mirrors, confirms and exacerbates the divisions of society. The changing face of South Africa poses a challenge to all of us. It demands a new understanding of who we are and compels us to produce a theology which would express that understanding adequately, a theology which will help us bridge the gulf between white and black so

that at the end of the day we count all memories of a divided past but dung that we may gain Christ.

Theology must, however, be expressed in this life and worship of the people of God. Thus in reflecting our Church Unity and Christian witness for a just non-racial society, we need to consider the critical role of the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. Here is a vital link between ecclesiology and transformative mission. We therefore conclude with some reflections on this theme.

The sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, rightly understood are events where the church proclaims publicly union in Christ. All those who seek baptism are baptised into the body of Christ and this becomes a sign of human solidarity made possible in Christ. As de Gruchy argues "a true understanding of baptism not only undermines apartheid in the church, it should also undermine apartheid in society and all other forms of oppression.." (de Gruchy 1991:216). Baptism imposes certain demands, upon the baptised, whose social and political implications may not always be tolerated by the state (Moltmann 1977:226 ff). In Baptism the resurrection of the baptised to the Lord is in and through the community. In the celebration of baptism the community enters into the death and resurrection encounters Christ knew. There is community openness, willingness to make place, to give service, to love, which involves movement of surrender, and which signifies and participates in Jesus' openness in love and service unto death.

Such an understanding of Baptism has important inter-church and social implications. Encountering Christ as it transcends the merely ecclesial cannot be thought of in denominational or divisive terms. Baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ is Baptism into the great church which is the one Christ, the one body of Christ. All the churches are called to recognize and to celebrate this. This poses a challenge to whatever may, in history and politics, divide communities which are united in faith and in Christ. It carries empowerment. To carry on the practice of Baptism while ignoring the implications and challenges would certainly promote a sense of futility. To cease the practice would be to lose the challenge and empowerment which the sacrament of Baptism

offers to Christians. Baptism is one of the few resources available to us as we seek to transcend traditional, cultural as well as ethnic divisions which have proved murderous.

Whilst the celebration of the Lord's Supper should be the sacrament of Christian community transcending all human barriers, it can also be understood as a political reference to a fair distribution of resources. The fellowship at the Lord's Table involves fellowship with one another, and in the framework of that fellowship a wrestling with current problems and what God requires of this community begins. The Lord's Supper cannot be celebrated in the separation from our surroundings. It is a public and open meal of fellowship for the peace and the righteousness of God in the world (Moltmann 1977 :244). The unity which is both God's will and gift to the church is made visible as all, in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour, are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding one faith, preaching the one gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all.

We need a liturgy that will leave those partaking in a service of Baptism and the Lord's Supper with no doubt as to what God requires of them, stepping out of the old life of racism into the new life where all are in His image. These sacraments must be understood as God's act of liberating believers from the power of racism, bitterness and resentment to creative service for God. Churches must see these sacraments as pointing away from themselves and their own happening in the direction of Christ (Moltmann 1977:239). They must be a sign of the dawn of hope in our fragmented society, indeed, a contradiction of the Sacramental separation which contributed to the ideology of apartheid. (de Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, 1983:10f)

In the light of this, the negotiating team for union would have to produce a service book that would help draw the churches together in a way which also related to social justice. Services such as those for Baptism, Lord's Supper, Confirmations, Ordinations of elders, deacons and ministers, funerals should convey the centrality and urgency of the call to

union. Setting aside one Sunday per annum, for prayer for church unity is not adequate. Every Sunday and every act of worship must bring to the attention of congregation the centrality of the call to unite through prayer, praise and witness.

Congregations around us present us with a challenge. There are sincere Christians who want to break away from segregated churches. A White Christian who chooses to be a member of an African congregation poses the greatest challenge to all who still maintain that white and black have nothing to appreciate in joint worship. A new spirituality of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist society must naturally be born out of free participation of people of colour in the worship of the Triune God. Church life must reflect the concrete realities of our society or risk remaining an abstraction. There is common ground. We must undertake a theological contemplation of the ecclesial implications of a new democratic South Africa and this concerns all denominations. Disunity which becomes a glaring fact on a Sunday morning, when neighbors who for the whole week enjoy the company of each other, but go separate ways to worship God, is the scandal of the Christian witness. Things must change. We must try even if we fail and fail...

APPENDIX 1

Suggested scheme for the re-allocation of Presbyteries in the Bantu Presbyterian Church and Presbyterian Church of South Africa:

PRESBYTERIES		COMPOSITION		CHARGES OR STATIONS				LANGUAGE		
NO	NAME	PC OF SA	B P C	P	C	S	A	BPC	TOTAL	
				E	A	C & I				
1	Cape Western	Cape Presbytery	Cape Town & Worcester	12	1	1		2	16	English
2	Cape Eastern	P E Presbytery	Remainder of Cape Midlands & WP + Adelaide	8	4	1		5	18	English
3	Border	King Presbytery less Umtata	Ciskei Presbytery less Adelaide	8	2	1		9	20	Xhosa & E
4	Transkei	-	Transkei Pres.	-	-	-		14	14	Xhosa & E
5	Umtata	Umtata	Umtata Pres.	1	-	-		7	8	Xhosa & E
6	E Griqualand	Kokstad	E Griqualand & Matatiele Pres.	1	-	-		10	11	Xhosa & E
7	Natal South	Howick & Southwards	Impendle, Impolweni & Southwards	10	1	1		6	18	English
8	Natal North	Ladysmith & Northwards	Jokweni Estcourt & Northwards	4	-	-		7	11	Zulu & E
9	Orange River	O R Presbytery	-	6	7	-		-	13	English
10	Transvaal S	Tvl Presbytery less Pietersburg & Far North	Rustenburg East Rand & Western	24	10	-		3	37	English
11	Transvaal N	Pietersburg & Far North	Remainder of Tvl Presbytery	1	2	-		7	10	Sotho & E
12	Rhodesia	Rhodesia Presbytery	-	7	3	-		-	10	English
			TOTALS	82	30	4		70	186	

Note: Possible division of Transvaal South into South East (Johannesbur, Vereeniging, and West Rand) and South West (Pretoria and East Rand)

* E = EUROPEAN
 A = AFRICAN
 C & I = COLOURED & INDIAN

APPENDIX II

THE SYNOD

SECTION 1 - CONSTITUTION

1. The Synod is the court of the Church immediately superior to the Presbytery.
2. A Synod is formed by the General Assembly, which fixes its name and specifies the Presbyteries, not being less than three, which are to come within its province.
3. The General Assembly fixes the time and place of the first meeting of a Synod, and appoints a Minister within its bounds to constitute such meeting.
4. The members of a Synod are:-
 - (1) All persons, both Minister and Elders, who are on the rolls of the several Presbyteries within its bounds, and
 - (2) such Ministers and Elders, as may have been duly appointed and commissioned as members by contiguous Synods.
5. The General Assembly may add to a Synod any Ministers or Elders, or both, from other Synods as assessors for specified purposes, and for such purposes and for the term of their appointment such assessors have all rights and privileges of members of such Synod.
6. The commission from a Kirk Session, which constitutes an Elder a member of Presbytery, also constitutes him a member of Synod during the period for which his commission is valid, but no Elder may take his seat in Synod, unless the Clerk of Presbytery has certified to the Clerk of Synod that his name has been placed on the Roll of Presbytery, or his commission in proper form, showing that he has been duly elected to represent the Kirk Session on the Presbytery and on the Synod, has been produced to and sustained by the Synod. A commission must therefore show that the Elder has been elected to represent the Kirk Session both on the Presbytery and on the Synod.
7. It is the duty of clerks of Presbyteries to send to the clerk of their Synod, not later than three months after the close of the last preceding meeting of the General Assembly, a list of the names and addresses of Elders, whose commissions have been received and sustained by their respective Presbyteries; and to advise the clerk of their Synod without delay of any changes in the personnel of representative Elders, which may subsequently occur. A synod may call for the production of the commission of any Elder, if it sees cause.

8. A Synod may receive and sustain the commission of a representative Elder from a Kirk Session, or of a member from a contiguous Synod, at any of its meetings, whether such meeting be ordinary, or adjourned, or in hunc effectum, or pro re nata.
9. A synod is entitled to appoint not more than one Minister and one Elder as members to each of its contiguous Synods. Such members must be Ministers and Elders within the bounds of the Synod approving them; they must be furnished by their Synod with commissions in due form, which upon being presented to and sustained by the Synod to which they are commissioned, constitute them members of such Synod for the period to which their commissions extend; and they must report their diligence on the commissions to their own Synod.
10. A Synod may associate with itself in its deliberations, pro tempore, any Minister or Elder of the Church, who may be present at its meeting, and any Minister or Elder so associated may speak, but may not vote, on any question before the court.
11. At its first constituted meeting, and thereafter at its first ordinary meeting after the last previous meeting of the General Assembly, the first business of a Synod must be (a) to examine and adjust its roll of members, and then, (b) to induct from among its members a Moderator to preside over its meetings and to discharge such other duties as may be assigned to him either by these rules or by the Synod.

The duties of the moderator are, to constitute and conclude each meeting with prayer; to preserve the order; to take the vote; to announce decisions; to instruct the parties at the bar; to administer rebukes and admonitions; to call on members to state their views, or to discharge any function which may have been assigned to them; to see that business done has been duly recorded; to sign the minutes; and in general to speak and act officially in the name of the Synod according as it authorises.

12. At the ordinary meeting of Synod next before General Assembly, there shall be appointed a Moderator Designate of Synod for the ensuing year.
13. A member of Synod is not ineligible for election as Moderator merely on the grounds that he has already occupied that office.
14. During his term of office the Synod may appoint its Moderator to visit various charges within its bounds with a view to giving them advice and/or stimulating their interest in the life and work of the Church. He must report his diligence in that regard to Synod.
15. A Synod shall appoint one or more clerks, one of whom shall be Senior clerk, to take its minutes, to keep its records, and to perform such other duties as it may assign.
16. A Synod is entitled to assess the congregations within its bounds for the funds necessary for it to carry out its duties, such assessment to be based on annual income of the congregation.

17. A Synod appoints a treasurer to take charge of its funds and to report to it thereon when required, and one or more auditors to audit such funds and report thereon.

SECTION 11 - FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES

18. A Synod cannot legislate, but it can handle, order, and redress all things omitted or done amiss in the courts below it, which come regularly before it, that is to say, which are brought up by such courts or by parties, or which appear in Presbytery records.
19. Subject to the provisions of the preceding paragraph, a Synod has authority to deal with the following matters:-

(1) The general supervision and promotion of the life and work of the Church within its bounds.

(2) The supervision of Presbytery records, but this power to supervise does not entitle a Synod to re-open any matter which has become final or to require the production of any other papers for examination in that connection; it does, however, entitle the Synod to censure the proceedings recorded.

(3) The visitation of congregations by Presbyteries:

It is the duty of the Presbytery to report on the results of all such visitations within its bounds to the Synod. If the Presbytery finds itself unable to report satisfaction with the state of a congregation, it may, if it see fit, withhold its report for a period not exceeding one year, in order that it may itself by renewed visitation remedy the situation. At the end of this period, if it is still unable to report satisfaction, it must report on the whole situation to Synod. It is the duty of Synod whenever a Presbytery reports dissatisfaction, to appoint a Commission of Synod (a) to make further enquiry in consultation with Presbytery, and (b) to take such steps as it deems necessary to remedy the situation, and (c) to report back to Synod.

(4) Care of the Schemes of the Church:

The Synod exercises the supervision over Presbyteries in regard to the maintenance of the Schemes of the Church, and Presbyteries are required to report to Synod their diligence in stimulating support of such Schemes within their respective bounds.

- (5) The Synod has jurisdiction to adjudicate on matters affecting delimitation of areas within its province, which are brought before it by motion, complaint or petition and its judgment is final, but it cannot by its judgment alter its own bounds.

(6) Appeals and Complaints:

The synod may hear and dispose of appeals and complaints brought before it from Presbyteries, subject to the right of appeal to the General Assembly against its decision in cases involving doctrine, or worship, or censure of a Minister or Elder.

(7) Change in method of administering the financial affairs of congregations:

The Synod has authority to dispose of all cases in which congregations within its province desire to change the method of administering their financial affairs, provided that where grants are being received or sought from Assembly Committees, no actions shall be taken without the approval of such Committees, and provided further that no action shall be taken until legal advice has been obtained that the proposed change is not in conflict with the trust deeds or other legally binding documents of the congregations concerned.

(8) Appointments to Standing Committees of the General Assembly.

The Synod makes such appointments to the standing committees of the General Assembly as that court may provide for in its standing orders.

(9) Activities of Assembly Committees:

The synod is entitled to receive at its ordinary meetings reports from Assembly Committees on their activities within its province. To that end it may invite the conveners or other members of such Committees to attend its meetings, and to report to it on their activities within its bounds, and it may make to such Committees such recommendations as it may deem fit.

(10) Transmission of Overtures:

The Synod transmits to the General Assembly all overtures, whether originating in itself or transmitted to it from or through Presbyteries.

(11) Presbytery Records:

The Synod calls for Presbytery records at such times as it may fix for examination and attestation, and for such action thereon as it may deem expedient. The attestation of Presbytery records must be signed by the Moderator and Senior Clerk of Synod.

(12) Assembly Review

The Synod must submit its records to every meeting of the General Assembly for examination and attestation.

(13) Report to Assembly:

The Synod shall report to each ordinary meeting of General Assembly on the following matters:-

- (a) the name of its Moderator;
- (b) the time and place of its ordinary meeting(s);
- (c) changes in the ministry within its province during the period under report;
- (d) the establishment, reduction and/or dissolution of charges within its bounds during the period under report;
- (e) the creation of new charges within its bounds, either by establishment, or by the union or amalgamation of existing charges;
- (f) any matter arising in any of its Presbyteries, which requires to be dealt with by General Assembly;
- (g) references of cases to the General Assembly for advice or judgement, and appeals against decisions of the Synod in matters in which the Synod is not the final court of appeal;
- (h) the names of Licentiates, Ministers without charge, and Ministers from other Churches, who have been received by any of its Presbyteries during the period under report under any law of the Church, and
- (i) any other matters upon which the General Assembly directs it to report.

No other matters than those above specified shall be dealt with in the Synod's report.

- 20. A Synod has the right to call upon its Presbyteries to report to it on any matters, upon which it is required by these rules or otherwise to report to the General Assembly.
- 21. It is the duty of the Senior Clerk of Synod to forward its report to the Clerk of General Assembly at least six weeks before the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly.
- 22. If a Synod desires to bring before the General Assembly any matters not covered by its report, it does so by overture or petition.

23. No Presbytery within the province of a Synod has access to the General Assembly except through its Synod, provided that a Presbytery can submit direct to the General Assembly its commissions appointing its representatives to be members of that court, and its returns of Assembly remits.

SECTION 111 - MEETINGS AND PROCEDURE

24. An ordinary meeting of the Synod is held either by direction of the General Assembly or by appointment of the last preceding ordinary meeting of the Synod.
25. A Synod shall hold an ordinary meeting at least once annually not later than 31st Many in each year.
26. A Synod may meet in hunc effectum, and the rules governing such a meeting are the same as those applicable to Presbyteries.
27. The Moderator of a Synod may, either on his own authority or on a requisition from at least a quorum of Synod, convene a meeting pro re nata to deal with any business which has arisen and which appears to call for immediate decision.
28. At a pro re nata meeting of Synod the first business is to approve or disapprove of the action of the Moderator in convening the meeting. If this action is disapproved no further business can be transacted at the meeting. If his action is approved no other business than that for which he convened the meeting can be transacted.
29. If the Moderator has ceased to be a member of the Synod, his duties and responsibilities in convening a pro re nata meeting devolve upon the Senior Clerk.
30. If the Moderator, or Senior Clerk, refuses to convey a pro re nata meeting after receiving a requisition in proper form to do so the whole circumstances of the matter must be brought before the Synod at its next ordinary meeting for its judgement.
31. Fourteen days' notice must be given by the Senior Clerk of all meetings of the Synod, to all its members, and in the case of meetings in hunc effectum and pro re nata the business to be transacted must be stated in the notice.
32. A quorum of the Synod consists of at least five members, representing at least two Presbyteries, at least three of which members must be Ministers.
33. A quorum being present, the Moderator constitutes the meeting with prayer and failing him, an ex-Moderator or the senior Minister present constitutes the meeting.

34. The Synod is an open court and therefore it meets in public, but it may sit in private if it deems it necessary or expedient to do so.
35. Every session of a Synod shall be opened and closed with prayer.
36. A Synod may appoint such committees as it may deem necessary to deal with and to report upon matters within its jurisdiction, including a Business Committee to submit recommendations regarding the arrangement of its agenda and the method of disposing of matters to be brought before it.
37. The Synod appoints a Record's Committee to examine and report upon the records of Presbyteries within its province. The Synod prepares and submits to the next ordinary meeting of the General Assembly a return showing its findings on its examination of presbyterial records, and on the visitation of congregations by Presbyteries within their respective bounds.
38. Any business proposed to be brought before a meeting of Synod, including notice of proposed overtures, must be intimated to the Clerk at least three weeks before the date of the meeting; and the text of any overtures of which notice is given must appear on the notice calling the meeting. All documents and papers, in connection with any business to be laid before Synod, but be in the hands of the Clerk at least ten days before the date of the meeting.
39. A Synod is responsible to the General Assembly for the keeping of its records, which must be sent up to that court for examination and attestation at each ordinary meeting of the General Assembly, and which must be in the hands of the Clerk of General Assembly not later than the first day on which that court sits in its ordinary meeting.

SYNOD BOUNDS:

After full discussion of various alternative proposals put forward by the sub-committee, it was agreed to recommend to the uniting churches that the bounds of Synods in the United Church should be as follows:

In the light of the draft rule as to the number of Presbyteries in each Synod, certain possible sub-division of Presbyteries are indicated, but the union committee has not considered Presbyterial bounds in detail, and consequently these should be regarded as an indication of possible administrative bounds rather than as definite proposals. The only definite proposal at this stage is Synod bounds.

1. Synod of Rhodesia

to consist probably of three Presbyteries, centred in Salisbury, Bulawayo, and Lusaka.

2. Synod of Transvaal and Orange River

to consist probably of five Presbyteries, the four envisaged in discussion with the Tsonga Church (vide B.B. 1960 pp 34-5) namely Johannesburg, Pretoria, Zoutpansberg, and Selati, and the Presbytery of Orange River.

3. Synod of Natal and Transkei

to consist of the BPC Presbyteries in the Transkei, all PCSA work in the Transkei, plus all the work of both churches in Natal. The number of Presbyteries is at present uncertain since both amalgamation and sub-division of Presbytery bounds may be necessary in this area.

4. Synod of the Cape

to consist of three or four Presbyteries, covering BPC work in the Ciskei and Eastern and Western Cape and the PCSA Presbyteries of Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Kingwilliamstown. It is possible the same re-arrangement of Presbytery bounds may be desirable in the Eastern Cape, resulting in three Presbyteries in that area.

For the information of Assembly, the main factor in determining Synod bounds is the allocation of existing work in the PCSA Orange River Presbytery. The BPC has no work in this area, and it therefore cannot of itself constitute a Synod. Rhodesia is an obvious geographical and social unit; and as noted in the Tsonga Church discussions the Transvaal is capable of constituting a Synod of itself. The Orange River must either go with the Transvaal, or with one of the coastal Synods. Various possibilities were examined. To join Orange River with the Cape Town and Port Elizabeth Presbytery areas would result in a geographically unmanageable area with no central meeting place and relatively poor communications. To join Orange River with the Port Elizabeth and Ciskei areas would isolate the Western Cape, which could neither from a Synod on its own or readily link with any other. To combine all these areas in one Synod would give an even more unmanageable unit than the first proposal. It would be possible to combine Orange River with Natal and

to create a separate synod of the Transkei. The BPC representatives felt that an almost entirely African Synod would not be in the best interests of the United Church and from the point of view of the very small units of the PCSA in the Transkei it would be equally unsatisfactory. In addition to these negative factors, there is the positive factor that the Orange River probably has better communications to the Transvaal, and is socially and commercially more closely connected with it, than with any other area. The suggested Synod bounds will also provide a better balance of Presbyteries, and of numerical strength and resources in the United Church than any other.

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