

## APPENDIX B TO THE GENDER DESK REPOST POLICY OF THE UNITING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA ON GENDER JUSTICE

- a. Introduction
- b. The Scope and Objectives of the Policy
- c. Biblical and Theological Foundation of Gender Justice
- d. Gender Justice Premised in the Doctrine and Faith of the UPCSA
- e. The Story of Gender Justice in the UPCSA
- f. The Concepts from the Perspective of the UPCSA
- g. The Guiding Principles
- h. Guidelines for Realisation of Gender Justice in the UPCSA
- i. Scope and Application of the Policy
- j. Authority of the Policy

**INTRODUCTION** The good news is that God created all things through Jesus Christ, in an overflow of divine love, and thus created them all very good. All the vast universe is the theatre of God's glory. The heavens declare this glory, and human beings were created to glorify the Creator in word and deed: by delighting in communion with God and with one another, by rejoicing in creation and the blessings of life on earth, and by loving and serving God and one another. This remains God's purpose for humankind and is the reason why we exist. But humankind has fallen into sin, and sin brings us all under divine judgement. (Manual of Faith and Order. Prelude to Chapter 2)

1. The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) seeks to **establish a just and equitable society for all – men and women**. The latest and overarching development towards this pursuit has been the establishment of the Gender Desk, as per the resolution of the 2018 General Assembly. The Gender Desk has played the advocacy role and conceptualised the struggle for gender justice in the UPCSA. Through a variety of processes, the Gender Desk defined how gender justice should be understood. It also delineated the behaviours and actions which amount to and border on injustice and expressed uncompromisingly the need to fight against gender inequalities and inequities. It condemned gender-based violence and femicide. Gender justice, thus, is conceived as an ongoing journey of prayer that is motivated by the Spirit. Gender justice includes just and right relationships, mutual respect and accountability, respect for creation and the rights of all people to live life in all its fullness. Gender justice addresses gender and economic injustice, gender-based violence and a whole range of social issues that are rooted in unequal power relations. It is a fundamental building block for church and society.

2. **Gender justice** is not just a women's concern or a concern about women only, but instead, is an issue for everyone, seeking to ensure that both men and women coexist without any discrimination, undermining or prejudice. It seeks to address and dismantle patriarchy, which controls women's labour, sexualities, and fertility. Patriarchy also stereotypes and marginalizes men, who have been socialized into deeply held beliefs and values on what their roles should be. Patriarchy defines masculinity as showing bravery, virility, aggressiveness, dominance, competitiveness, and emotional repression. Men are often socialized into not dealing with their emotions, fears, and vulnerabilities. Men have a vested interest in changing these stereotypes so that they can become better sons, fathers, brothers, partners, lovers, and humans. Gender justice requires all genders to work together in partnership. It prepares women to occupy their rightful position in the society without seeking any favours. It empowers women to see men as fellow human beings in God's design, created in the image of God in a similar manner as women are created in the image of God. 265

3. Gender justice should be seen as an **ongoing journey of prayer motivated by the Spirit**. It is integral to our spiritual growth and must be realized in our right relationship with God. Gender perspectives require us to examine and unravel power relations across the breadth of gender identities, paying particular attention to those persons in the intersections of gender and race, colour, sexuality, class, disability, poverty, and social status. Our

continuing concern and commitment to transformative gender justice is firmly rooted in the story and mission of the Church, the UPCSА particularly. Beyond formal equality, we are challenged to examine the deeper questions of substantive equality, that is, of achieving equitable outcomes, and thus creating a true community for all. God rejoices when we celebrate spirituality with holiness and integrity.

#### **THE SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY 4.**

This Gender Justice Policy is created to transform who we are, what we do, and how we act. Grounded in respect for the body, it fosters physical, emotional, and spiritual health and wholeness. This policy is rooted in the scriptures and anchors on the Manual of Faith and Order of the UPCSА, and the constitutions of the countries the UPCSА operates in, in relation to the human rights enshrined therein. It is envisaged that this policy will assist the denomination in identifying positive actions to address all gender relations. It is supplemented by a Gender Desk Action Plan on Gender Justice. This policy will also help the denomination to deliberately or intentionally assist those genders that have been disadvantaged especially women and children in the church. It is envisaged that women will, through this policy, be recognised as having been created in the image and the likeness of God. Therefore, they should occupy leadership positions without prejudice and push their own agendas in the church without being judged based on their gender. Their voices must be heard. Through this policy, the UPCSА will be able to celebrate and restore the human dignity of all genders within the denomination. The objectives of this Gender Justice Policy include the following: a. Transformation of the UPCSА and its communities so that God's desire for gender justice is realized and that human dignity is ensured for all. b. Articulation and re-construction of our theology of gender justice built on sound principles of theological reflections. c. Transformed Councils and structures of the UPCSА to ensure the full, just, and equitable participation of all persons in all aspects of church life. d. Creation of safe environments to end marginalization and the abuse of persons by implementing policies and oversight mechanisms that address gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

**BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF GENDER JUSTICE 5.** When we celebrate Holy Communion, there are words that read as follows: "If, when you are bringing your gift to the altar, you remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift where it is before the altar. Go, make your peace with your brother (and sister), and only then come and offer your gift." Christian men and women should understand that to continue bringing their gifts to the altar when they know that they continue with their discrimination of each other and have in their hearts this grievance is a travesty of gender justice. It is playing church. In Genesis 1:27, it is written, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Both male and female were created equally by God. God did not give a man a better blessing than a woman but blessed them equally and gave them a responsibility. Anybody in the church who believes that women are less beings than men should be judged of preaching heresy. The UPCSА, through this policy, should remind all 266 in the church that human beings are a creation of God and should be treated and viewed as such.

6. During Jesus' ministry, we are also provided with **evidence that Jesus promoted the dignity and equality of women**. In cases where women were despised, looked down upon, ill-treated, made to be outcasts in the society, Jesus came in and turned the tables, restored the broken people, sat and dined with them, promoted them to leadership positions, and made them His disciples. This is so clear when we read the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4) and in the stories of Mary and Martha (John 11). The role of women during the ministry of Jesus Christ is well documented in the New Testament. The church has no reason therefore to misquote the Bible when it wants to oppress women. The UPCSА needs to do what Jesus Christ did, to promote the fullness of life and to allow women to flourish and have life to its fulness.

**GENDER JUSTICE PREMISED IN THE DOCTRINE AND FAITH OF THE UPCSА 7.** The UPCSА's Manual of Faith and Order covers adequately the rationale for gender justice. What follows are the excerpts from the Manual of Faith and Order: The Church has been called into being by the will of God, who gathers all people into a fellowship in Christ, which is created and sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit. Its purpose and function is to bear witness to the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to all who do not yet believe in him, to build up in faith, hope and love those who already believe, and to proclaim his sovereignty over the world. The Church is holy because it is of God, and not of human creation. It is catholic in that God of his love calls all people to share in its membership. It is apostolic in that it is built upon the foundation of the apostolic teaching. (Chapter 1. Clause 1.1)

**8. The UPCSA is inclusive and welcomes all into the body of Christ.** There should be no discrimination of whatever sort. The following excerpts are drawn from Chapter 2: The Faith of the Church.

1.1 Human beings were created in the image of God, as creatures little lower than the angels. As the story of Adam and Eve portrays, however, the tragic paradox is that humankind has from the beginning yielded to temptation and turned away from God. Instead of trusting and obeying God we have rebelled against God's holy will. In pride we have aspired to be like God, self-sufficient and autonomous, choosing our own moral laws. Instead of living with and for God, and so also for other, as human beings we have come to live primarily for ourselves.

1.2 It is God's grace and holiness in Jesus Christ that reveal what sinners we are and how empty before God every human claim to be righteous is. Christ claims the whole of life for God and so reveals how far short of grateful and loving obedience to God we have fallen. That he needed to die for our sins shows how grave sin is.

1.3 Human society is capable of degrees of justice, and human beings of great altruism, heroism and self-sacrifice. Yet both societies and individuals are also capable also of appalling brutality and degradation. The most just society is radically flawed with injustice, and our noblest deeds and highest virtues with individual or group egoism, pride and self-interest. Group and individual interests distort even how we judge between right and wrong.

1.4 Sin is a corruption of our very nature; it infects and dominates the whole of human life. In our private and our public lives we fall under the power of evil. We sin individually and collectively. We are proud, self-centred, resentful, lustful, greedy, corrupt; we hurt, exploit, discriminate against and oppress others; we neglect the needy; we sin by commission and by omission. Sin misuses our greatest technological advances, so that instead of caring for the creation we pollute and ruin the environment and deplete the earth's resources, overpopulation spreads 267 hunger and starvation, and modern weapons threaten us all with destruction. Sin warps religion itself with individual and group egoism, self-righteousness and prejudice.

1.5 Sin darkens our minds and perverts our very wills. All human beings are in bondage to sin, unable to rescue themselves and unable of themselves to turn to God to be rescued. The worst state is to believe in our own righteousness or moral superiority, as though we were not in radical need of grace and forgiveness.

1.6 Sin empties life of meaning and issues in despair. It makes us enemies of God, of one another, of our natural environment and even of ourselves. It grievously offends God, brings us all under God's righteous wrath and just judgement, and threatens final alienation from God.

1.7 In this predicament, because we reject grace and yet seek meaning and hope for our lives, we create or turn to a multitude of false gods. Even though it may well be of relative value, anything other than God to which we give absolute value or in which we put our final trust and so make into an idol is a false god. Some have made false gods of their race, nation, family or culture, or of social status, money, possessions, power, worldly success, fame, an ideology, nature, science, technology, sex, pop stars, political leaders, sport, alcohol or drugs. The idolization of every false god is itself further bondage.

20.1 God created man and woman together out of earthly matter but in the image of God. Thus, both men and women share in the image. As God's own being is essentially relational, a being-in-communion, so human beings are created to be not solitary or self-centred but to live in fellowship with God and one another and in mutual concern for one another. A person is a person through being related to God and to other people.

20.2 Sin has radically corrupted our whole human nature and so marred that image, but it is never entirely effaced from anyone. Christ, who is the perfect image of God, came in human form in order to restore that image in humankind. He has taken our likeness that we might be transformed into his likeness and become imitators of him and so of God.

20.3 Because God created all people equally in that image and Christ gave his life to restore it, every person's life is sacrosanct. Everyone has a God-given dignity and a right to be treated with respect and protected from violence and abuse, no matter their gender, age, race, social status, sexual orientation, religion and despite any mental or

physical handicap. God judges those who in any way abuse or oppress others and calls us to oppose all such abuse.

20.4 We are not to measure others according to our own image but to receive one another as human beings created in God's image. Christ calls us to minister to him himself by ministering in particular to the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, those in prison and widows and orphans.

22.8 The one Body unites together all its different members. Unlike Israel after the flesh it is not a nation constituted by ties of descent and culture. For Christ has broken down the barrier of alienation between Jews and Gentiles and every barrier of race, nation, tribe, caste, class, language, culture, social status and gender to form a single new humanity. The claim of Christ and his Body on believers far outstrips the claim to loyalty of any group defined by any of these terms. Not race, nationality, culture or class but baptism and the Holy Spirit determine who belongs to the Church. No member of the Body can reject any other; for God has accepted us all in the beloved Son and bound us together in one Spirit, as members who need one another for the Body to function properly in its work and witness to the world. In covenant with God, we are all in covenant with one another, called to walk together in God's ways and ordinances, in a community of mutual love and care. The one Body anticipates the union of all things with Christ as their one Head that God plans. Thus, God calls the Church to be the vanguard of a new humanity. As the community of the faithful, the Church stretches beyond this world to include all believers who have departed this life.

9. To conclude this section, we draw attention to the **Declaration of the Church in Southern Africa** which is shown below: We believe in the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We believe in the Father, who created and rules all the world, who will unite all things in Christ and who wants all his people to live together as brothers and sisters in one family. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son, who became human and lived and died and rose in triumph to reconcile both the individual and the world to God, to break down every separating barrier of race, culture or class, and to unite all God's people into one body. He is exalted as Lord over all, the only Lord over every area of life. He summons both the individual and society, both the Church and the State, to seek justice and freedom for all and reconciliation and unity between all. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the foretaste of God's coming reign, who gives the Church power to proclaim the good news to all the world, to love and serve all people, to strive for justice and peace, to warn the individual and the nation of God's judgement and to summon them both to repent and trust and obey Jesus Christ as the King who will come in glory. 10. In later developments, the 2012 General Assembly adopted the current vision and mission of the UPCSA, which read as follows: Our Vision To be a reconciled community of Christians exercising a prophetic witness to Christ. Our Mission We will proclaim our Triune God in Southern Africa through • Bearing witness to the saving love of Jesus Christ; • Building vital, reforming congregations for worship, ministry and discipleship; and • Visibly proclaiming the Kingdom of God through unity, justice, peace and love.

**THE STORY OF GENDER JUSTICE IN THE UPCSA** 11. The UPCSA, from its establishment in 1999, embarked on efforts to establish gender justice. The 2000 General Assembly passed the following resolutions, among others:

11.1 The Assembly urges Presbyteries to a. appoint Gender Issues Committees; and b. give them copies of the first report of the Assembly's Gender Issues Committee.

11.2 The Assembly urges Sessions to a. appoint women as well as men as commissioners to Presbytery; and b. move towards parity in the number of men and women appointed as Commissioners to General Assembly.

11.3 The Assembly instructs all ministers in the UPCSA, to make clear to their congregations that God may call women as well as men to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments.

11.4 The Assembly agrees to call on women as well as men, encourage suitable women as well, to consider whether they may be called to the ministry. 269

11.5 The Assembly urges all vacancy committees to consider all women as well as men among available ministers in deciding whom to nominate for a call.

12. There has been a long period of lull, where there was not much push towards the realisation of gender justice until the Ecumenical Relationships Committee of the General Assembly initiated the move towards the establishment of the Gender Desk in 2018. Eventually, the 2019 Executive Commission endorsed the establishment of the Gender Desk under the Church in Society Committee of the General Assembly. Thus far, the Gender Desk is the custodian of the gender justice initiatives. Its approach is informed by Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it."

**The objectives of the Gender Desk are as follows:**

- a. Building solid relationships between all genders..
- b. To promote a culture of a Godfearing community.
- c. Respond to all gender – based violence cases within the denomination.
- d. Create a safe space/environment for all the victims/survivors of GBV.
- e. Objective availability and listening to all without judging, by creating independent structures. that will deal with all cases of GBV.
- f. Promote awareness and accountability.
- g. To promote gender equity between men and women.
- h. Promote the role of the gender desk of the general assembly of the UPCSA.
- i. Assist and equip presbyteries with tools to respond as quickly as possible to all gender-based violence taking place within presbyteries.
- j. Investigate effective ways to prevent gender-based violence and to implement those.
- k. To put measures in place that will assist in eliminating all forms of harassment and discrimination, especially in the advertisements of employment of ministers by congregations of the UPCSA.
- l. To promote the vision of the UPCSA.

**THE CONCEPTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE UPCSA 13.** Gender Equality: As pre-empted in the excerpts from the Manual of Faith and Order, gender equality is about the equality of all and there should be no discrimination on any grounds, including age, sex, disability, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, or social status (marital status included). See MFO Chapter 7, section 7.53 St Paul writes, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28). "The equality and differentiation of women and men is based on their God-given, natural, biological, and specific personal constitution. Gender inequality is not a "women's issue" but should concern and engage men as well as women." (Catholic Gender Policy). The UPCSA has an obligation to affirm women that gender equality is a human right that is enshrined in the Bible. There is no reason whatsoever for men to discriminate against women.

**14. The Rights of Women and Men to Integrity:** All members of the UPCSA have the full right to integrity. They have the right to decide on what is right or not right for their bodies without certain individuals deciding on their behalf. No one in the UPCSA should be superior to the other. Every member should treat each other with integrity. Women should be given a space to make informed decisions about their bodies without the church exerting unnecessary pressure. For example, it is a democratic right for a woman to decide on whether/when to get married and/or not to get married, when to have children and/or not have children. It is, therefore, wrong and sinful for the denomination to allow the discrimination of those who do not want to get married not to be considered for employment by certain congregations. This infringes on human integrity.

**THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES 15.** "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it. (Psalm 24:1)" All human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, all should be treated equally. We should love the other the same way as we love ourselves. Women should, therefore, be afforded the same opportunities as men. All Sessions should implement paragraph 7.53 of the Manual of Faith and Order when appointing Elders for Session. Women should be afforded equal chances as men to reach their full potential within the Councils and structures of the UPCSA. The UPCSA should be cognisant of the different backgrounds of women within its ranks. For example, some come from rural areas with different needs and disadvantages, others are disabled and others young. These factors should be taken into consideration when opportunities are being created. Hence, there is need for proper needs analysis.

**GUIDELINES FOR REALISATION OF GENDER JUSTICE IN THE UPCSA 16.** This policy sets out the guidelines that should be followed towards the actualisation of gender justice in the UPCSA. It is imperative that all the structures of the UPCSA should implement and promote the guidelines:

a. **Women Empowerment:** This is essential as it is one of the tools to expose power dynamics in the church. When women are empowered, they will see the inequality and unequal power relations. It is through empowerment that women will begin to realise the need to be in control of their own lives, to demand equal participation in the denominational processes and demand that their voices be heard and not only in church but also in their own homes and in the society.

b. **Gender Equality:** It is compelling to the UPCSA to integrate women in all the Committees, Councils, programmes, and structure of the church, not only to be members but to be in leadership positions even in all the strategic Committees of General Assembly.

c. **Equal Partnership:** Women should always be included in plans of shaping the present and the future of the denomination. The denomination needs to create an environment where women can articulate their needs, their interests, and their own visions about the future of the church and about the issues that affect them now in the church. The decisions of women in this regard should be respected and taken seriously.

d. **Collaboration with other Ministries:** To achieve the transformation envisaged by the UPCSA, it will be important to synchronise all the efforts towards the realisation of gender justice and encourage the Gender Desk to work hand in hand with other women and men's organisations within and outside of the UPCSA. Within the UPCSA, the Fellowships should be given priority. The UPCSA General Assembly already resolved that the Fellowships should be fully represented in the following Committee of the General Assembly: Priorities and Resources, Church in Society, Finance, and Mission and Discipleship. Other Committees may be considered.

e. **Relationships Building and Healing of Memories:** The church that works as a unit has a better chance of achieving more. Working together and respecting one another's viewpoints are key. This only happens when people have good relationships, based on mutual respect. The UPCSA needs to build bridges when all will be able to find each other. This includes opening the wounds of the past and allow a space for healing to take place. It is envisaged that the UPCSA will undergo a process of redress. The General Assembly already resolved to establish a "Truth and Reconciliation" like structure to help the members to deal with the past and be able to move forward trusting each other.

f. **Transformation:** The advertisements for vacancies in all the levels of the denomination should be written in a language that protects the dignity of all people. The language should be inclusive and the requirements for the job should not be discriminatory, especially according to gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and marital status. We should all strive for life affirming communities.

g. **Representation:** There should be equal representation of genders in all the structures of the UPCSA. This should not be about the numbers only, but skills and abilities.

**APPLICATION OF THE POLICY 17.** This policy applies and binds all those who are full members of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (by baptism). The Council should ensure that the policy is applied at all the levels of the UPCSA, particularly in the congregations. The UPCSA is in four countries, namely: Zambia, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Africa. All the members in these countries are included in this document. **AUTHORITY OF THE POLICY 18.** This policy, having been adopted by the General Assembly, will have full binding authority to all the members of the UPCSA. It will form part of the laws of the denomination. All the Councils will be responsible for the enforcement of the tenets of this policy in their areas of jurisdiction. The Church in Society Committee, through the Gender Desk, is the custodian of this policy.