

THE AFM OF SOUTH AFRICA

Pastoral Letter

• 3rd QUARTER 2019 •

THE APOSTOLIC FAITH MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA NATIONAL OFFICE

Building no. 14, Central Office Park, 257 Jean Avenue, Centurion,

Gauteng, South Africa

P.O. Box 9450, Centurion 0046

Tel: 27 12 644-0490

Fax: 27 12 644-0732/4

www.afm-ags.org

www.facebook.com/AFMOFSA/



SPECIAL EDITION: AFM NATIONAL CONFERENCE *ROOTED IN CHRIST*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Greetings in the lovely and precious Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This week marked the 2019 AFM National Conference. The conference took place on 15 – 18 September at the Lighthouse Ministries in Parow (Cape Town). The conference theme was "Rooted in Christ" - based on Colossians 2:6-7. In this Pastoral Letter we reflect on some of the core messages that was shared during the conference. I trust that it will bless you and encourage you!

IN THIS EDITION:

Pg 1 - GREETINGS

Pg 2-4 - ROOTED IN CHRIST:
ESTABLISHED IN OUR FAITH

Pg 4-6 - ROOTED IN CHRIST:
SERVING OTHERS

Pg 7-8 - ROOTED IN CHRIST:
CARING FOR & PROTECTING OUR
COMMUNITIES

Pg 8 - CONCLUSION



ROOTED IN CHRIST: ESTABLISHED IN OUR FAITH

Past. M.G. Mahlobo (President of the AFM of SA) - mmahlobo@afm-ags.org

The ancient town of Colossae was in proximity of the ancient town of Laodicea and not far from Ephesus. Paul had not visited Colossae at the time of the writing of this letter. It must have started because of his ministry in Ephesus which spanned for almost two years. While Paul was in house arrest in Rome and awaiting trial, Epaphras visited him. Epaphras informed Paul about the spiritual condition among the Colossian Christians, who were strong in their faith at one time, but had now become vulnerable to false teachings (2:4, 8, 16, 18, 21–23). He wrote this letter (Colossians) to refute these heresies. Some of the features of the heresy in Colossae had to do with the supremacy of Christ, sufficiency of our redemption in Christ and supplementary things to salvation.

Supremacy Of Christ

There was a false teaching which denied that God's fullness dwells in Christ. It sought to lower the divinity aspect of Jesus Christ. It was a blend of Christianity, Greek Philosophy and Zoroastrianism elements. Among its teachings it taught that the created world is evil, and all matter is corrupt. It then concluded that Jesus' body was corrupt. Paul is responding to this teaching in **Colossians 1:15-17**: "The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together" (NIV) and in **Colossians 2:9** "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (NIV).

Sufficiency Of Our Redemption In Christ

The Colossian heresy taught that salvation is achieved through secret knowledge (gnosis) by which individuals come to know themselves, their origin and destiny. Paul's response is in **Colossians 2:10** where he states: "...and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority" (NIV).

Supplements To Our Salvation

The false teachers wanted to substitute salvation through Jesus with various ascetic abstinences, Jewish rituals, worship of angels, dreams and visions (See Colossians 2:8-12 & 16-18). Paul's message to them and to us is: "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, **rooted and built up in Him** and established in the faith as you have been taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

"It is when we are matured that we would be able to stand against false teachings and hard times..."

The metaphor of roots and building structures as references to the Colossian saints should remind us about the importance of being anchored in Christ. Receiving Christ and baptisms should be followed by growing into the full image of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is when we are matured that we would be able to stand against false teachings and hard times - in the same way we are currently facing various challenges. Some of these are materialism, secular humanism and formalism.

ROOTED IN CHRIST: ESTABLISHED IN OUR FAITH cont.

Materialism

Material things, like money are important as a means to an end. There is a tendency among us which rate material possessions and physical comfort to be more important than our spiritual values. I am not against buying material things for purpose of utility. My problem is when it replaces prayer, humility, serving other people and honouring God with the possessions God has granted you. Life is more important than material wealth. The Lord Jesus warns us in **Luke 12:15** and says: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (NIV). Our life must reflect Christ. We must always bear in mind that real deliverance comes from righteousness and not from the riches we have (Proverbs 11:4).

"Our life must reflect Christ."

Secular Humanism

This phrase has been used since the 1930s by Anglican priests. It is a progressive philosophy of life that affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfilment aspiring to the greater good of humanity, without God or other supernatural beliefs. In other words, it is a comprehensive, non-religious life stance. Up to date I know of four Manifestos that have been produced in this regard. They are Humanist Manifesto i (1933), Manifesto ii (1973), Manifesto iii (2003) and Manifesto iv (2017). In their Manifesto ii they stated that: "...faith in the prayer-hearing God assumed to live and care for persons, to hear and

understand prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is unproved and outmoded faith." The Secular Humanism stance regarding religion can be summed up as: "No God will save us; we must save ourselves."

"We are a Bible-based Church, our ministry is Christ-centred and Holy Spirit driven."

Formalism

We are a church on a mission to fulfil the Great Commission (Matthew 20:18-20). We must always remember our 'roots'. We are a Bible-based Church, our ministry is Christ-centred and Holy Spirit driven. Our members must receive Jesus as Saviour and Lord. They must be baptized in water and in the power of the Holy Spirit. They must uphold the Biblical values of integrity, accountability, constructive relationships and excellence. Above all we must always remember that we are missionaries bearing the Good News of Jesus Christ. We must guard against formalism. Formalism is when the working of the Holy Spirit is replaced with human programs that have nothing to do with the extension of the Kingdom of God. We are formal when we begin to emphasize the building of swimming pools in the churches at the expense of baptismal fonts. Paul gave a warning in **2 Timothy 3:2-5** when he said: "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous,

ROOTED IN CHRIST: ESTABLISHED IN OUR FAITH cont.

without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them" (NIV).

"We need to deepen our roots."

It is my prayer that we will not only receive Christ, but that we would walk with Him, rooted and built up in Him, **established in our faith** and abounding with thanksgiving. We need to deepen our roots through prayer and guidance from those who are leading exemplary Christian lives. We need to be built up in Christ through the Word (Bible) and fellowship with our Brothers and Sisters.

ROOTED IN CHRIST: SERVING OTHERS

Dr. Henri Weideman – General Secretary of the AFM of SA - henri@afm-ags.org

I have planted an apricot tree in my garden two years ago and was delighted to see blossoms on it during August this year. In the beginning of September I saw several small apricots forming - now I am sure that it is indeed an apricot tree! I recognized the fruit. Have you ever walked amongst fruit trees and you were unsure if it was a Peach or an Apricot tree, an Apple or a Pear tree, an Orange or a Lemon tree? Matthew 7:20 tells us that we will know a tree by its fruit. When you see the fruit and identify it, you will know what type of tree it is. Did you know that the fruit of a tree tells you a lot about the roots of that tree? Especially if it is a fruit tree.

The fruit producing areas in South Africa has many big orchards full of fruit trees that have all been grafted onto specific rootstock (understock). Grafting involves physically joining part of a twig or shoot of a certain cultivar or type of fruit, onto the roots of a different but closely related species, so that the two parts grow together as one plant. The process of joining the two varieties must ensure

maximum contact between the layer just below the bark (the cambium) of each of the two pieces -the rootstock and the little twig, called the scion grafted onto it, so that they grow together successfully.

The rootstock makes a big difference in the life of a fruit tree: It determines the quality and strength of the root system of the newly formed tree. The understock or rootstock is usually chosen because it has strong roots, causing the tree to absorb nutrients and water better. It enables the tree to resist drought, root rot and different soil pests (like soil viruses, cutworms and bacterial infections). It also goes a long way to anchor the tree so that it will be able to stand firm during a storm. The rootstock, providing the root system of the tree has an influence on the number of blossoms the tree will produce. It determines the quantity and quality, as well as the size, shape and even the taste of the fruit. Studies have shown that most tree roots occupy an area two to four times the diameter of the crown of the tree. Which means that in most trees if the root

ROOTED IN CHRIST: SERVING OTHERS *cont.*

spread is small, the tree will be even smaller....
(there are exceptions of course).

made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green and they never stop producing fruit."



"We become rooted in Christ by loving God our father with everything in us, just like Jesus did."

To be rooted in Christ means that we would be growing differently. We would be anchored against the storms and pests of life. We will bear fruit of a particular shape, size and taste if we are rooted firmly and deeply in Jesus. If our roots in Christ are small and shallow, the trees that our lives represent most probably will be feeble and small as well. In **John 15** Jesus talks about the importance of pruning the branches a tree, so that it will produce more fruit. However, He also emphasizes the importance of the roots and says that a branch cannot produce fruit if it is not connected to the vine (the main trunk), which in turn is connected to the roots, to bring the food and water that the branches need to produce fruit.

Jesus said in **John 15:4b (NLT)**: "You cannot remain fruitful unless you remain in Me." He is the Vine and He must be our rootstock. We should become more and more rooted in Him. We become rooted in Christ by loving God our father with everything in us, just like Jesus did. The more we grow in loving God, the more we will be rooted in Christ, because Jesus and His Father are One. We become more rooted in Christ as we share Him with everyone around us. It is like the root system of a tree that is on a constant mission to spread out and reach further and deeper. The further the roots spread, the bigger the diameter of the tree's crown become. The more we are rooted in Him, the more fruit we will bear. The fruit of the Spirit which is also the fruit of the likeness and character of Jesus.

Psalm 1, as well as Jeremiah, Jesus and Paul compared us to trees. **Jeremiah 17:7 (NLT)** says: "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have

We learn more about one of these fruits in **John 13** where Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. In

ROOTED IN CHRIST: SERVING OTHERS cont.

verse 12-17 (NLT) we read: *"After washing their feet, He put on his robe again and sat down and asked: Do you understand what I was doing? You call me Teacher and Lord and you are right, because that's what I am. And since, I your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them."*

The principle that Jesus teaches His disciples and us as His followers is not so much about washing feet. He is not saying go every Sunday, even in the 21st century, take off the shoes of your fellow believers in church and wash their feet. He is teaching His followers the principle of serving others. To be rooted in Christ is to serve others just like He served: He, our Lord and Teacher took off His robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, pour water into a basin and did what was normally done by a servant at the time: He washed the feet of His disciples. He sets the example of a leader not sitting on a big armchair with a high back, but kneeling down to serve those who followed Him.

"He is teaching His followers the principle of serving others."

We are messengers of the Good news of God's Grace and Forgiveness. We are not more important than the One who sends the message. We are not greater than our Master. We should never forget

that we are send on a mission to fulfil a particular task - that of making Jesus known to all nations. We are messengers. We are missionaries. God is the one who sends us. To Him alone belongs the glory and the honour! We should never think that we have arrived or that we should be served. That people should pull out chairs and open doors for us. We should rather say like John in John 3:30 (NLT) *"He (Jesus) must become greater and greater and I must become less and less."*

Even if we think of ourselves as great and strong leaders, we are reminded of the words of Jesus in **Matthew 20:25-28 (NLT)**: *"You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be (or should be) different. Whoever wants to be a leader amongst you must be your servant and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came, not to be served but to serve others and to give His life as a ransom for many."*

The example of Jesus compels us as His followers to serve others: To greet the people that no one sees, to endeavour to understand and acknowledge the viewpoint and experiences of people living in other circumstances and cultures than our own. How do we do that? By caring, by reaching out, by seeing and acknowledging the humanity of another person, by smiling and greeting, by touching, by showing respect, by talking to others. By telling and listening to the life stories of people. By doing life together. For as much as you do these things to the smallest of people, even to children, you have done it to Me,

ROOTED IN CHRIST: CARING FOR & PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES

Past. Barend Petersen (General Secretary & Chairperson of the Executive Welfare Council of the AFM of SA) - barend@afm-ags.org

Loving and serving others is not just a calling, it is an instruction from God and it is meant for everyone. The heart of God is reflected in the Words of Jesus Christ in **Matthew 25:34-36**: Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me."

"Loving and serving others is not just a calling, it is an instruction from God and it is meant for everyone."

Some of the most significant socio-economic challenges in South Africa are poverty, high unemployment and low income, crime, family breakdown and poor standards of education. This is our missional context in which we must demonstrate our caring spirit and commit to actions that will make a difference in the lives of people. The Executive Welfare Council of the AFM of SA, is the ministry through which the AFM has and will continue to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people, especially children, women and older persons. Through the CHURCH, a caring community can bring change in the lives of many people that are suffering. Such Community Involvement or Developmental Action can "heal" the hurt, "meet" the need and bring sustainable living to many.

What role is your Assembly playing in addressing these major problems?



Community Involvement is one of the drivers of the One AFM Game Plan. Every AFM Assembly can and must be involved with developmental actions that will bring change to the people; fulfilling the original missional calling of our church. The AFM Welfare Department has the tools and programmes to support your Assembly with understanding, planning and implementing social development actions and projects. We assist Pastors and Assemblies to identify the most important social problems in their communities and equip them to be part of the solution.

"Community Involvement is one of the drivers of the One AFM Game Plan."

ROOTED IN CHRIST: CARING FOR & PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITIES cont.

uManelisi is the programme that empowers Assemblies to respond to these challenges. We work with and through Assemblies to deliver the following services:

- **Community-Based Services** - supporting vulnerable children, families, women, older persons and persons with disabilities.
- **Socio-Health Services** - raising awareness through education and training, supporting persons suffering from chronic illnesses like AIDS and TB as well as those addicted to drugs and other substances.
- **Socio-Educational Services** - support Assemblies that are running Early Childhood Development programmes, literacy programmes, schools as well as raising awareness in public schools.
- **Socio-Economic Projects** - aimed at supporting government's priorities addressing poverty, unemployment and inequality through projects that focuses on food security, social relief, job creation, skills development, women empowerment and youth development.

The church is ideally positioned to bring change in the lives of people across South Africa. Every AFM Assembly can and must become involved with developmental actions that will bring change to the people in your community. For clear guidance on how to practically implement Community Involvement, as a driver of the One AFM Game Plan, contact our acting CEO Ashley Theron:

Landline: Call Lizelle de Bruyn or Rebeca Kola on 012 753 7940/1

E-mail: afmwelf@rsn.co.za

CONCLUSION

“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, **rooted and built up** in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness”

Colossians 2:6-7 (NIV).

