



THE UNITING  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
IN SOUTHERN  
AFRICA

**Statement of the General Assembly Executive Commission of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa on Social Cohesion, Human Dignity, and a Day of Prayer**

*Issued at the Meeting of the General Assembly Executive Commission of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa held in Kempton Park, Johannesburg, South Africa, from 13-17 June 2026.*

*"For Christ himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." – Ephesians 2:14*

The General Assembly Executive Commission of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA), meeting in Kempton Park from 13-17 June 2026, has reflected prayerfully and with deep concern on the recent protests, violence, and growing hostility directed toward undocumented, documented, and irregular migrants in various communities across South Africa.

We recognise that Southern Africa's migration challenges cannot be understood apart from the enduring legacies of colonialism, empire, and apartheid. Artificial borders, extractive economic systems, and patterns of labour migration established during these periods continue to shape our societies, contributing to persistent inequality, economic exclusion, and competition for limited opportunities.

For generations, people across our region have crossed borders in search of safety, work, education, and opportunity. Yet the structural inequalities inherited from the past remain deeply entrenched. We therefore affirm that current tensions surrounding migration are rooted not simply in the presence of foreign nationals, but in broader historical injustices and ongoing socio-economic failures.

We recognise the pain, frustration, and anxiety experienced by many South Africans who face unemployment, poverty, inequality, inadequate service delivery, crime, and economic exclusion. These challenges demand urgent, ethical, and effective responses from government, business, civil society organisations, and faith communities.

However, no social crisis can justify violence, intimidation, or the denial of human dignity.

As a Church rooted in the Reformed tradition and guided by the lordship of Jesus Christ, we affirm that every person bears the image of God and possesses inherent worth and dignity, regardless of nationality, citizenship, ethnicity, economic status, or documentation.

The biblical narrative reminds us that the people of God have repeatedly experienced migration, displacement, exile, and the vulnerability of being strangers in foreign lands. Israel was called to remember its own history: *"The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt"* (Leviticus 19:34).

The UPCSA rejects all forms of vigilantism, scapegoating, hate speech, and violence directed at migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and foreign nationals, irrespective of their legal status. Such actions undermine the Gospel of reconciliation and the vision of a society founded on justice, peace, and the common good.

We recognise the legitimate responsibility of the state to manage migration effectively, maintain secure borders, combat corruption within immigration systems, and uphold the rule of law with fairness, transparency, and compassion.

At the same time, we call upon the Government of South Africa to strengthen diplomatic engagement and regional cooperation with governments whose citizens are affected by migration-related tensions and violence. The realities of migration in Southern Africa cannot be addressed by any one nation acting alone. We therefore encourage closer collaboration through regional bodies, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union, to promote safe, orderly, and humane migration policies, address the root causes of displacement, and advance sustainable development across the region.

We call upon all spheres of government to address the structural causes of social unrest, including poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption, and failures in public administration. We urge political leaders and public representatives to refrain from rhetoric that exploits fear and division for political gain.

We call upon congregations of the UPCSA and all churches in Southern Africa to become communities of hospitality, dialogue, healing, and peacebuilding. The Church is called to stand alongside all who suffer while advocating for justice that embraces both citizens and migrants.

Our shared future as nations and as a region cannot be built upon exclusion and hostility. It must be founded upon the biblical vision of justice flowing like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24).

Accordingly, the General Assembly Executive Commission hereby declares *Friday, 26 June 2026, a Day of Prayer for Healing, Justice, Peace, and Social Cohesion* throughout the

Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa across the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

We call upon all presbyteries, congregations, ministers, elders, fellowships, and members of the Church to set aside this day for prayer, fasting, reflection, and acts of reconciliation.

We invite the Church to pray:

- For peace and protection in communities experiencing unrest.
- For wisdom, integrity, and compassion among government leaders and public officials.
- For unemployed and struggling citizens.
- For migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented persons living in fear and uncertainty.
- For an end to exclusion, violence, and division.
- For economic justice, social transformation, and ethical governance.
- For healing and reconciliation throughout Southern Africa.

May our prayers lead us beyond words into faithful action. May the Holy Spirit empower us to build bridges where others erect walls and to embody the reconciling love of Christ in a wounded world.

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." — Matthew 5:9*

**Issued by the General Assembly Executive Commission of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, meeting in Kempton Park, Johannesburg, South Africa, from 13-17 June 2026.**

**Signed: Rev Vusi Mkhungo - Clerk of Assembly**

**Signed: Rt Rev Dr Amon Kasambala - Moderator of General Assembly**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026**