

PRESS STATEMENT

BY NAIROBI COSMOPOLITAN CONFERENCE

ON CORRUPTION AND INJUSTICE IN THE SDA CHURCH IN KENYA

NAIROBI Thursday, 14 August, 2019

We, the leadership of Nairobi Cosmopolitan Conference, herein referred to as NCC, would like to issue this statement to the public after the leaders of the Central Kenya Conference (CKC) of the SDA Church dragged our organization to the ongoing leadership crisis at Nairobi Central SDA Church during their press conference on Monday 12th August, 2019.

We want to categorically say that the mentioning of NCC in the said press briefing was unfair and unwarranted. This statement is therefore to set the record straight and also inform the public on the mission and objectives of NCC.

NCC was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee by the Registrar of Companies on 15th March 2019 on exactly the same principles as the SDA Church's East Africa Union which is the registered entity of the SDA church in Kenya.

All current and potential members of NCC are Seventh-Day Adventists who believe in the mission of the church as per the biblical teachings and subscribe to the church doctrines as well as other established policies of the church.

Over the years, the church members have witnessed with dismay how the SDA church leadership in Kenya has lost focus of the church mission and veered off the course to concentrate on earthly pursuits of personal gain. This corruption and a litany of injustices in our church has manifested itself in unfair access to scholarship opportunities where leaders dish out these opportunities to themselves, family members and their cronies so as to gain more academic degrees to qualify for higher church positions.

The SDA Church in Kenya is also experiencing massive misappropriation of church funds for selfish purposes away from the original mission of the church which is **evangelism**. The church's leaders have effectively divided church members along ethnic lines to achieve and retain church administrative power to facilitate their continued plunder of church resources. Some of the church's top leaders are also engaged in outright theft of our church resources which members contribute in form of tithes and offerings. We have credible information that some of them are now involved in a chain of real estate ventures using the church's resources effectively contravening Article 10 of Kenyan Constitution.

These are the issues that the NCC is concerned about and now seeking to bring the Church to normalcy in order to concentrate on winning souls for Christ Jesus. Allow me to give more details about some of these issues:

Integrity Issues in the SDA Church in Kenya

A keen observation on the management of any of the SDA church institutions will reveal that the Adventist schools, colleges, universities, health facilities, among other institutions are run down and have become employment opportunities for close family members and relatives of the church leaders, qualifications notwithstanding. These institutions have also become cash cows for self-enrichment of the said leaders.

Accountability in the management of the SDA church properties, finances and human resource is wanting. Church funds move only one way up while the mission of the church suffers. It is common place to see worship conducted in dilapidated church structures which never receive back what goes up to those high offices. This is unfair and we believe God never intended that the SDA church members will worship in such poor state of infrastructure.

All attempts by church members since the 1990s to have the leadership address this entrenched impunity have fallen on deaf ears. We are dealing with an entrenched web of high level corruption, manipulation of church elections at all levels - conference, union, division and even at the global level. Members have witnessed unbelievable impunity coupled with sheer incompetence of church leadership. This is what NCC is fighting.

Negative Ethnicity

It is unfortunate that the SDA church is experiencing unacceptable ethnic profiling of members at various units and levels of the church administration, victimization and intimidation of members and employees on the basis of tribe. It is a fact that the Gusii community who are over 65% of the Adventist population in Kenya has been systematically targeted and excluded from various church management structures yet it is this community that contributes over 70% of the resources which for a long time have remained in the control and management of a few families in a community that is less than 10% of this church. These families are in prime leadership positions at all levels beginning from the local conference, the union, the Division up to the General Conference in the USA.

This is unacceptable and NCC is determined to bring this injustice to an end.

Gerrymandering of the Church Voting System

The current crisis witnessed in Nairobi Central SDA Church is a culmination of decades of agitation for a separate administrative Conference for Nairobi which includes Kajiado.

For example, in the last Central Kenya Conference constituency session of 2015 held in Karura, the president of CKC in his quest to entice the delegates to re-elect him, presented a request to divide CKC into three conferences which was gladly voted for. The conferences were to be created by the year 2020. Instead, the CKC and East Kenya Union Conference (EKUC) leaders in their usual manipulation varied that decision of the delegates (which is the highest authority of the conference) and went ahead to create one conference and a Field with doctored boundaries organised in such a manner that the city has been deliberately fragmented with the richer churches being aligned to the Mt. Kenya region. Further, these leaders have created over 13 administrative 'stations' in the friendly Mt. Kenya and Ukambani regions with a total Adventist membership of just below 37,000 while they have given Nairobi and Kajiado with over 82,000 only three stations.

These stations are not recognized in the church structure but are used here as the basis for sourcing voting/nomination committee delegates. This is a pure case of gerrymandering for purposes of retaining power and we hereby ask all Adventists in Kenya and beyond to rise up and speak against this evil schemes.

This is what Nairobi Cosmopolitan Conference is speaking against.

Purported Removal from the Register of 15 Members at Nairobi Central SDA Church

A case in point of this gerrymandering is the purported removal of 15 names from the register of Nairobi Central SDA Church (Maxwell) without following any known procedure of the church as provided for in the Church Manual and the Bible. We will share with you the relevant section of the Manual that stipulates the steps that are to be taken while disciplining church members.

The purpose of removing a member from a church register is supposed to be 'Redemptive' rather than "Condemnatory'. The leaders were shy to come out that they are angry with some of the members they have purported to remove from the church register because they have been highlighting and even stopping fraudulent activities within the church leadership. A good example is the intended sale of a prime church property in Kileleshwa worth KES 200 million which was forestalled by these members and had the sale eventually cancelled (see attached documents). In this matter, there was blatant forgery and misrepresentation of material facts that caused the DCI to investigate. The report is still lying at the Office of Director of Public Prosecution for action, which we believe should be taken up by all relevant government arms to bring the culprits to book.

So let it be known that there are no other reasons for wanting to remove the 15 except engaging and challenging the church leadership on grounds of corruption and embezzlement of church resources.

Nairobi Cosmopolitan Conference is not an Alternative Church

The formation of NCC therefore now gives all those affected by the way the SDA church affairs are managed a legal platform to engage not only with current leadership and the Government, but also with members and the general public.

The members of NCC are and will remain Adventists of good and regular standing including those purportedly removed from the register by Pastor John Kiragu which is by all intent and purpose a nullity. No member of the Adventist church should be perplexed and intimidated by these ill-intended actions.

It is important to emphasise that when these problems started at the Nairobi Central Church last year, NCC was not in existence. Let the church leadership give us the reason for starting the chaos and now blaming it on NCC which came into existence much later.

It is the plan and desire of Nairobi Cosmopolitan Conference to establish a model institution which embraces all good tenets of a church institution with good governance, integrity, honesty, accountability and unity which reflects the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NCC has been established to help pool members' God-given resources which will in turn enable them achieve the mission and goals of the Adventist church. Please note that NCC is not and will never be a competitor or alternative of the Adventist Church.

We want to conclude this statement by emphasizing that the problem the church is facing is inefficiency in leadership and corruption. It has nothing to do with spiritual matters which are seriously undermined by that rampant corruption and ineffective leadership.

We hereby ask all Adventists and Kenyans of goodwill to come out in large numbers and join us in this fight against corruption and injustice in the way the SDA Church is run in this country with a view to winning souls for the Lord.

We also urge the media to independently investigate and report on these matters as a moral issue in the public interest for the people of Kenya.

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