

120-02G APPEAL FOR STRUCTURAL UNITY IN THE SOUTHERN AFRICA UNION CONFERENCE

At the 1991 Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, held in Perth, Australia, the Final Report of the Commission on the Church in South Africa was presented. Recommendations were made in the interest of the unity of the church in South Africa. The commission based its recommendations on the clear teachings of the Word of God and the counsels of Ellen G White in which the concept of unity within the Church is set forth. Included in the report was the following appeal:

“The Church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning and nationality; and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children.

“The Church must not neglect taking the necessary spiritual and organizational steps required to close ranks and work in equality and unity to finish the work.”

The action of the 1991 Annual Council called for the merger of the two Southern Africa Unions by December 31, 1991, and the merger of local conferences and fields into new unified structures with boundaries drawn geographically. Due to a number of factors requiring time, the objective, as voted, was that mergers in all areas be accomplished by December 31, 1993.

It was further noted in the action that “The General Conference, having initiated the present process, will continue to give guidance until it is completed.”

More than ten years have passed, and during that time the General Conference has remained active in encouraging compliance with the committee action of 1991. This introduction acknowledges with satisfaction the mergers that have been accomplished—first the two unions, subsequently the conferences in the Natal area, and then two of the conferences in the Cape region. These mergers have proved to be successful and are cause for rejoicing.

However, the task is but partially fulfilled. Therefore it is,

VOTED, To record the concern of the General Conference Executive Committee that there are organizational units in the Southern Africa Union Conference that have not yet achieved the projected organizational unity which the 1991 Annual Council action requested; and further, to call upon the church members, pastors, and conference leadership in the Southern Africa Union Conference, in the true spirit of humility and unity, to take immediate steps to correct the situation and to take actions that will establish a unified administrative structure in each geographic territory.