

Good News: The Heart of
the Christian Message.

Methodist Church,
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Mark 16: 9-16 (vs. 15)

Coming Thursday, Ascension Day, the whole Christian church throughout the world will be commemorating the ascension of Christ - his farewell from his disciples after having conveyed to them 2 crucial messages ~~during~~ in the period between his resurrection and his ascension. One of those messages is contained in the passage we have read (Mark 16: 9-16) ~~and the other~~ ^{in which every disciple} of Christ is called upon to proclaim Christ's message to the whole world as the Good News. In these words Christ is calling upon his followers, his disciples to fulfill the task of mission - proclaiming the Good News to the whole world that God so loved the world that He gave Himself in Christ to save and transform the world, to renew it to the reality of the Kingdom of God.

(1) In this charge Christ inextricably links Church and mission. He makes it very clear that there cannot be a division between Church and mission; where any church exist in obedience to Christ's call, there he will find a community undertaking mission i.e.

proclaiming the good news to all men, especially to those who have never heard this news or those who have not accepted it although they may have heard it. Mission thus becomes an essential part of the nature and life of a church; a church which does not undertake mission cannot, in the real sense of the word, be regarded as church. And a church which neglects its mission is a disobedient church.

In what way is this affecting us in S.A.? It would be helpful if we could first look at the situation regarding the percentage of Christians to be found in S.A. According to figures supplied by the Department of Statistics in 1982 ^{more than} 90% of all whites in S.A. (4 1/2 m.) are Christians, 87% of all Coloureds are Christians while approx. 75% of all Africans ~~are~~ have indicated themselves to be Christians and approx. 12% of all Asians are Christians. Of the non-Christians among all races a substantial percentage belong to another faiths: Jewish, Moslem, Hindu so that the percentage of people being heathen, atheists or agnostics is indeed very small.
 A remarkable testimony to the Christian church in S.A.

at the same time we are aware that serious tensions have arisen in the last number of years within the Christian community around the concept of mission. A number of churches ~~have~~ experienced great resistance, opposition or reluctance against mission work being conducted amongst Coloured, Indians and Africans. A lack of trust, of openness, of real community has arisen between groups of Christians in the Christian church which has become a serious stumbling block to the missionary effort of the church.