

United Church of Christ responds to Falwell

by Hans Holznel

Leaders of the 1.7 million member United Church of Christ, responding to the Rev. Jerry Falwell's comments on apartheid in South Africa, described the Moral Majority leader's positions as "appalling," "insensitive" and "dangerous."

The United Church leaders also reiterated their support for Bishop Desmond Tutu, the Anglican Bishop of South Africa, whom Mr. Falwell called a "phony" and who was criticized by the U.S. Government for refusing to join a meeting between South African clerics and the country's president, P. W. Botha.

Mr. Falwell made his comments in press conferences this week after he completed a five-day "fact-finding" trip to South Africa, which included a meeting with Mr. Botha.

"In his recent trip to South Africa, Jerry Falwell has shown a dangerous, even a smug, self-righteousness that has played into the hands of the Botha government," said the Rev. Dr. Avery D. Post, president of the United Church of Christ. "He gives no evidence that he perceives the demonic

character of apartheid. His selective observations betray an atrophy of conscience and compassion.

"In his visit to South Africa at this time, we have the specter of a religious leader providing moral, and by inference, theological support to the apartheid system. This is a shocking insensitivity to what many of us believe are the imperatives of a just God: to be present with people who have been in bondage and whose humanity has been violated.

A news report of Mr. Falwell's comments on his South African visit quoted him as saying, "I have yet to find one person — black, colored, white or Indian — who wants disinvestment." However, the United Church of Christ's General Synod, its highest deliberative body, heard a different story this summer in a speech by the Rev. Allan Boesak, a Black South African who is president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and is an outspoken opponent of apartheid. Both Boesak and the South African Council of Churches, to which he belongs, spoke publicly in favor of divestment for the first time this summer.

30 pieces of Krugerrands

"Most Americans won't listen to Jerry Falwell's siren song to sell out our belief in human rights for 30 pieces of Krugerrands," said John Buchanan, chairman of the 150,000-member citizens organization People For the American Way, attacking Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell's support for the government of South Africa. On August 18, Rev. Falwell said he will urge "millions of Christians to

buy Krugerrands," the South African gold coin.

Buchanan was a Republican Congressman from Alabama, from 1965 through 1981 serving on the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He visited South Africa in 1982, meeting with governmental, religious, and human rights leaders. Buchanan is also an ordained Southern Baptist minister.



Financial combat of apartheid

CHICAGO — Mobilization of the invested financial power of 13 national and international agencies of the United Methodist Church against apartheid racial policies in South Africa was mapped in August.

The proposals, developed at a consultation called by the denomination's chief fiscal arm, are directed toward U.S. banks and corporations doing business in South Africa. The suggested steps stop short of advocating widespread total divestment of companies doing business in South Africa, but say such a move should be considered as one step in a blend of several strategies.

Investments of the agencies represented here total approximately \$2 billion, an undetermined amount of it in companies doing business in South Africa. The recommendations now go to the individual units for consideration.

Constructive engagement denounced

After 13 days in South Africa, a United Methodist superintendent has called for the resignation of Chester Crocker, architect of the Reagan Administration's policy of "constructive engagement."

The Rev. R. Randy Day, superintendent of Metropolitan New York churches, said, "With South Africa's experiencing the worst turmoil in its history, Mr. Crocker's destructive, demonic policy puts a muzzle on the U.S. government when we should be leading the international community in condemning and dismantling the repugnant racist policy of apartheid." Mr. Crocker is assistant secretary of state in charge of the Bureau of African Affairs.

Mr. Day was one of seven members of the New York Annual Conference who visited South Africa Aug. 3 - 16. In the group were four whites and three Blacks.

"If white South Africans were dying at the rate that Blacks are, the State Department would drop constructive engagement in favor of something more effective," Mr. Day commented.

Responding to the white contention that economic sanctions and divestment would harm Blacks, Mr. Day said more than 50 percent of the Blacks in South Africa are unemployed and have little hope of jobs. "They are already hurting," he said.

The group toured Soweto, the large Black township outside Johannesburg, guided by a Methodist minister.

"The community was very tense," said the Rev. Linda Thomas, co-pastor of Memorial United Methodist Church in White Plains, N.Y. "It was just like on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek* — an armored vehicle, lots of white armed soldiers arresting a young Black man and kicking the Black man," she added.

"It's almost as though white South Africa has begun a war on Black people," said Ms. Thomas. "Clearly it's a patriarchal, militaristic society that has done its best to separate Blacks from whites. Blacks live in townships that are virtual concentration camps," she said.

The visitors also spent two evenings with Afrikaners, native South Africans of European descent. One evening was with students from the University of the Orange Free State and the other with two university professors, a Dutch Reformed minister and a woman children's worker.

"Spiritually, psychologically and emotionally they have been inculcated with the idea they're a superior race," said Ms. Thomas. "When the church says that, it's difficult for people to follow their own leanings."

Meeting

Morning Star Baptist Church is holding Christian Women Against Crime on Thursday, September 5, at 7:30 p.m. in the Education Building.

Christian Women Against Crime is an organization's Christian view of justice. The discussion topic will be Issues on Community and the Law: Problems and Solutions to Problems.

For more information, contact Alberta Phillips, 281-3388, after 4 p.m.

RELIGION

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Leaders voice dismay

Methodist leaders in South Africa, among nine religious figures who met with that nation's president Aug. 19, expressed dismay at the prospects for an end to the violence there.

Both the Rev. Peter Storey, president of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, and the Rev. M. S. Mogoba, the church's secretary, were widely quoted in news accounts carried in the U.S. in the wake of the meeting. Mr. Storey told reporters that it was clear that the two sides live in totally different worlds and that the religious leaders had attempted to impress on President Pieter W. Botha the "desperate need... for dramatic action." Mr. Mogoba said "some of us are beginning to feel... Black life is cheap."

Earlier in August, Methodist leaders urged President Botha to call a national convention to negotiate with the leaders of all factions in the troubled nation. The statement released by Mr. Mogoba reiterated the church's opposition to violence, "no matter who perpetrates it."

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