



Diakonia Council of Churches

REVD DR NORMAN HUDSON – DIAKONIA AWARD 2011 CITATION

An ordained Methodist minister, Norman was in active service from 1951 to 1996 during which time he also became bishop of the Natal Coastal District from 1990 to 1996. He proved to be a courageous and prophetic leader with a very relevant message for those difficult times.

A memory from the early 1970s shows Norman taking part in an ecumenical pilgrimage against migrant labour, walking with a small group of clergy of different denominations from Grahamstown to Cape Town, a distance of 950 kilometres, stopping in various places and speaking to local groups about the reason for the pilgrimage, and holding religious services to help local communities understand the purpose of this 'Pilgrimage for Family Life'. The walkers wanted to focus the attention of white people throughout South Africa, on the hundreds of thousands of families that were forcibly separated by the country's race laws. By so doing, Norman gave up his whole Christmas holiday to make a profoundly important point about apartheid.

He was a keen member of the Dependents' Conference Committee in Durban because he had a deep concern and compassion for political prisoners and detainees, their own welfare and that of their families. Norman was not afraid to conduct 'political funerals' despite the fact that they came under the close scrutiny of the security forces. He did so with great conviction and compassion.

He has been a keen supporter of the ecumenical movement, being Chairperson at various times of the Durban and District Council of Churches, the Diakonia Council of Churches and the Vuleka Trust, and was much involved with the KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders' Group. One of his most notable efforts in this regard was to help in the establishment of the new provincial council of churches, by visiting all the regions of the province together with Archbishop Emeritus Philip Russell, to encourage local church leaders to give their full support to this new venture. This really helped the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council to get off to a strong start.

Being a man with a great pastoral heart, he was at his best when the KwaZulu-Natal Church Leaders' Group visited places where there had been much violence and where many people were traumatised and grieving. We can remember very well how much he was moved by the suffering he saw and how compassionate he was in his response. This led him to organise parties of Methodists to go on weekend exposure visits to places all over his District to see how they could help people in distress.

We recall his enthusiasm for monitoring elections, especially the first democratic elections in 1994, when he was closely associated with the international Eminent Persons' Group, led by Kenneth Kaunda and Archbishop Emeritus Russell.

Norman has supported efforts to promote local financial support for its work, not least through the DT Hudson Trust which he has encouraged to fund a great variety of ecumenical and human rights efforts. Diakonia has frequently asked him to give motivational addresses to encourage greater involvement in social action for justice – most recently at the 2011 Annual General Meeting. He has also on many occasions assisted Diakonia in meeting other Trusts and Foundations to interest them in supporting the organisation.

He was drawn to the work of Diakonia precisely for the reason that here was a place where he could join in ecumenical efforts to promote justice. So, all his association with Diakonia has been a manifestation of his concern for justice.

A Methodist to the very bone, Norman Hudson is well known for his powerful singing, his vigorous preaching and his enthusiasm for practical solutions to the many problems that beset our society. He has always made an effort to meet and hear people and see if the church can respond to their plight.

Norman has supported peace projects to aid the church's involvement in assisting the process of peace in the province.

It is not surprising that in 1997, Diakonia honoured the holder of the Doctor of Ministry degree from the Southern Methodist University, Dallas (United States), by naming him *Patrius Emeritus*, joining such illustrious church leaders as Archbishops Denis Hurley and Philip Russell.

In his retirement, Norman has devoted his energies to a number of ecumenical, development and environmental efforts including the YMCA and the Heifer Trust, with which the churches in this province have been blessed.

We could go on and on about why you are deserving of the Diakonia Award, especially in this year when you have turned 80. But these few examples offer glimpses into your immense contribution to social justice.

For this reason the Diakonia Council of Churches saw it fitting to recognise your immense commitment to united work for social justice, peace and development and for outstanding contribution to united church efforts to address Durban's economic and political problems, by conferring on you our great 'living ancestor' the 2011 Diakonia Award. It is a richly deserved recognition of a lifetime of service to church and society.