

## Themes of the Previous Seven Social Justice Seasons

- 1999 - Who runs the World?  
(Jubilee 2000)
- 2001 - AIDS, Word, Democracy, Peace  
(Economic Justice)
- 2003 - God's Gift, the Earth - our Home  
(Environmental Justice)
- 2005 - Good News for the Poor  
(Eradicating Poverty)
- 2007 - Making a Difference  
(The *Oikos* Journey)
- 2009 - Building Bridges  
(Reconciliation with God, Self,  
Neighbour and Nature)
- 2011 - Towards a Transformed Society  
(Linking Faith to Transformation)

**Our aim is to have 80  
local congregations  
on board in 2013.**

**Do join us!**

## The Mission Statement of Diakonia Council of Churches:

In partnership with our member churches and organisations, we are inspired by our Christian faith to play a transformative role enabling people to take responsibility for their lives and to promote prophetic action on social justice issues.



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Diakonia Council of Churches

A Transformed Society Actively Working for Social Justice

## Social Justice Season 2013

In 1985, while delivering the first Denis Hurley Lecture, the late Archbishop Hurley proposed an annual Social Justice Season. For about a month or so, the local churches would concentrate their attention on one social issue. Through the hymns, readings and prayers of the liturgy, through sermons, bible studies and exposure programmes, the churches' energies would be galvanised for practical social action. The most powerful way of establishing a strong tradition of social justice activism in the churches, he suggested, is to encourage churches to form small groups that would work together on these issues.



Churches as Life-Affirming Communities



# Churches as Life-Affirming Communities

## Social Justice Festival

A well-travelled biblical image is that of the vine keeper pruning the vines, removing the deadwood (non-productive branches) so that the available nourishment will be focused on the remaining productive branches. Experts know that is the way to better wine and, to take that image into the arena of human aspirations, to a better life. However, the biblical image of pruning, as applied to the lives of believers, admits that the process is inherently painful. It hurts to let go of what we have invested in, even if that investment is draining our resources with no real redeeming purpose.

The Social Justice Festival, planned for October 2013, will be called “**The Vines Social Justice Festival**”. What we envisage is that local congregations, through their small bible study groups, will prepare to showcase their social justice activities and projects at the Diakonia Centre during the Social Justice Festival.

## Facilitators Training Workshop:

The group leaders, who would like to come, are invited to join us on Saturday, 6 July 2013, for an informative morning of training and discussion.

## Introduction:

Life-affirming churches should be communities of care, according to Prof Christina Landman, Research Director at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa (UNISA). Prof Landman was facilitating the biannual Ecumenical Conference on 25 August 2012.

The Ecumenical Conference is held every other year and alternates with the Social Justice Season, which this year has embraced the same theme. The Ecumenical Conference’s aims are to promote fellowship, information sharing, motivation and inspiration to work for social justice within the Diakonia family. The Social Justice Season builds onto those aims and seeks to empower churches to put their plans into action.

Prof Landman chronicled communities of care in the biblical tradition, seeing Jesus' and the disciples as forming a community that cared for those who were on the margins of society, like widows, adding that Jesus' parables had a concern for the underprivileged. “Jesus' parables related to the common people, not to the rich and powerful. In these parables, even those without rights were included in the reign of God,” she said.

Prof Landman said in the context of HIV and AIDS, poverty and abuse of women and children, churches should be life-affirming. Churches should, in this situation, promote healing through preaching, its liturgies and counselling.

We anticipate that in your small groups members will discuss how the church could be more life-affirming. It might be good to explore how churches could create more safe spaces for communities to share their challenges and explore means of solving them. It might also be valuable to affirm your own local church in its present life-affirming activities.

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