**IMPRESSIONS OF WINTER SCHOOL 2015**

**Dr Danie O’Kennedy**

I had the privilege of walking around and attending most of the sessions at the Winter School. I wish to share three impressions:

* In many of the sessions I heard the names of the late pres. Mandela, prof Botman and bishop Tutu. We have role models of faithful disciples and responsible citizens in our country. Prof Amanda Gouws told as that there is still trust in religious institutions and religious leaders. Prof Barney Pityana told us that there can also be bad religion, but he also said that to believe is “faithful self-giving”. May God use us to be role models of faithful disciples and responsible citizens in this country – we need more role models.
* Our professor in pastoral care at Stellenbosch taught us in Afrikaans that a crisis can be a “verleentheid of ‘n geleentheid vir groei” (A crisis can be an EMBARRASSMENT or an OPPPORTUNITY for growth). Yes, we heard about the crisis in our country, but we also heard many stories of hope – from people who make a difference amongst the gangs in the Cape Flats to a pastor in Diepsloot who tries to alleviate poverty in his community. I listened to many speakers and talked to many delegates during the past three days. I experienced the unity in Christ, you inspired me, you give me hope for this country. May the church be a bearer of hope. Do you really believe that you and your congregation can be a bearer of hope in this country?
* In several sessions the presenters used the expression “post-apartheid SA”. Many Christians prayed for the dismantling of apartheid. God answered our prayers. It is our prayer that in a few years time we shall use the expressions post-corruption SA, post-violent SA, post-racist SA, post-poverty SA. God can use the church (that is me and you) as faithful disciples and responsible citizens to be agents of change in this beautiful country. That is what we hear in the Bible in Eph 3:20-21: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”