



# Genesee Ecumenical Ministries

17 South Fitzhugh Street • Rochester, New York 14614 • Telephone (716) 232-6530

The Rev. Lawrence E. Witmer, Executive Director

April 8, 1980

The Rev. Richard Gilbert  
1895 Highland Avenue  
Rochester, New York 14618

Dear Dick:

For several months the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries has been studying the feasibility of sending a group of Rochesterians on a mission to the Republic of South Africa in order to improve our community's first-hand understanding of the racial crisis in that part of the world and share with Black and White Africans person-to-person insights for dealing with the problem of racism. Events in Iran, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe do not lessen the fact that South Africa remains one of the most explosive areas of the world. Our contacts there (mainly the South African Council of Churches) continue to be interested in a visit by Americans who are able, upon their return, to raise the consciousness of Rochesterians about the critical racial problem in South Africa. The consequence of such a visit should be greater support in Western New York for racial justice and reconciliation in both South Africa and in the United States.

The Genesee Ecumenical Ministries, acting upon an invitation from the South African Council of Churches, is considering a list of nominees for the trip. Your name has been suggested as someone who has shown interest in the situation in South Africa and would have something to contribute from your experience in one of the several categories of persons being considered. We are writing you today in order to ascertain your interest in making such a trip. Expenses will be raised by GEM, although it is likely that some persons going will be asked to make a relatively small contribution from personal resources.

If the money can be raised, the team will leave sometime in July-August 1980 and spend about three weeks itinerating four different areas in South Africa. The present plan includes extensive briefing meetings this summer and a possible briefing stop-over in Europe before proceeding to South Africa.

The purpose of this letter is to learn of your willingness to remain on the list of nominees. We expect that many of the persons nominated will, for various personal reasons, not be able to accept. We also anticipate that not everyone who accepts will be elected to the visitation team. It should be understood that nomination and acceptance at this date in no way bind you or guarantee that you will be finally selected. It is also important that members of the group agree to make a meaningful commitment to share their experiences in public events for a reasonable period after their return to Rochester.

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You will find enclosed a copy of the proposal and itinerary adopted by our hosts in South Africa. It will be further revised as correspondence continues, but please note that the essential character of the trip is dialogue, focusing upon the social responsibility of the churches and church-related institutions. This theme will provide the context for wide-ranging conversations, information-sharing and observation of conditions in South Africa by the Rochester group. Most, but not all, of our group will be made up of persons who are competent in theology, social analysis and religious social action strategies. As soon as the visitation team has been formed, it will begin meeting regularly to study various aspects of South African history, inter-religious cooperation against racism and current developments in the race relations conflict in Southern Africa.

This is a demanding but serious and challenging proposal. Please give it your most careful consideration and reply on the enclosed post card before April 17. Many of the questions you will have cannot be answered conclusively at this time, but if you need to discuss this letter with someone on the planning committee, you may feel free to call me at 473-6142.

More detailed information will be shared as soon as nominees indicate their interest.

Sincerely,



Rev. Frank H. Anderson, Chair



Prof. Gayraud S. Wilmore  
Corresponding Secretary