

# MC IS NOT AGAINST RELIGION, IT'S FOR HEALTH.

**Reverend Nicholas Nyawo** of the Evangelical Church, Matsapha is a believer of male circumcision. "I myself am circumcised and both my sons were circumcised shortly after birth."



Many people believe they will not go to heaven if they are circumcised but the Reverend points out that male circumcision has no religious significance to the Swazi people. "It has nothing to do with religion, the reason Swazis did not circumcise is because our parents were not aware of the health benefits." However, the Reverend does not like the fact that MC is promoted as a means of HIV protection. "Although HIV preven-

tion may be one of the reasons, it should not be the main one. People should practice abstinence and faithfulness rather. Circumcision is not a license for bad sexual behaviour."

While the Reverend himself prefers to promote MC for its cleanliness he says there are those with a medical background who relate it to HIV. "Our church has a health committee consisting of nurses and whenever they talk about HIV they include circumcision as one of the ways in which HIV can be prevented. It's not the only way but part of the prevention package."

Rev Nyawo believes the best time for circumcision is after birth but it is discussed in during Married Couple Sessions in his church as well. "I support

the Soka Uncobe campaign and all men should be circumcised for health reasons."

One of the challenges the Reverend faces is that many men in Swazi society are still scared of knowing their HIV status. "Women have more opportunities to test but when they find they are HIV positive they struggle to get their husbands to go for a test. It seems men prefer to live in darkness. It is a pity because HIV can be managed with medicines. Instead they prefer to die, or even worse, put their wives at greater risk due to re-infections"

**"Our health is in our hands."**

"Many Swazi men say that if they get HIV that is fate. But that's not true. It is fate only when you can do nothing about it but, fortunately, we can do something about it. Our health is in our hands. "