

Resources
for Celebrating
Reformation Sunday

RENEWING THE CHURCH

Church Renewal, Justice and Partnership
World Alliance of Reformed Churches
Geneva 2006

The 24th General Council logo on the back cover was designed by a Ghanaian artist. At its centre is the *Gye Nyame* (except God) symbol. An Akan proverb says, “The great panorama of creation dates back to time immemorial, no one lives who saw its beginning, no one will live to see its end – except God.” Circling the *Gye Nyame* is the *Nyankonton* kente, which represents the rainbow and reminds us of God’s covenant with creation. The egg shape of the design is a common African symbol for life.

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RENEWING THE CHURCH

Resources for Celebrating Reformation Sunday

Introduction

Reformation Sunday is an important event in the calendar of Reformed churches worldwide. As Lukas Vischer, in his article on the Significance of the Reformation, writes:

“Every year Reformation Sunday provides the opportunity to ask together with the Reformers of the 16th century: ‘What does it mean to be the Church of Jesus Christ today?’ ‘Where does he intend to lead us by his Spirit and his Word?’ ‘Are we really instruments in his hand?’ ‘What does it mean that he has made us free through his grace and love?’ ‘What are the next steps he expects from us?’”

The Office for Church Renewal, Justice and Partnership of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) has developed this package of congregational resources to celebrate Reformation Sunday 2006. For this year’s observance, the focus is on the Accra Confession: Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth, with an invitation to churches to renew their ministry, witness and mission as they reflect on what it means to be Reformed today, within their social and economic contexts.

This publication consists of a variety of resources written by persons from around the world and begins with messages to churches from the WARC President and General Secretary and ends with a brief introduction to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches by the Executive Secretary for Communications. We encourage you to share with your congregation information about the Alliance and to strengthen your relationship with the Reformed family worldwide.

Lukas Vischer’s article inviting churches to reflect on the Significance of the Reformation in our World Today is followed by an Order of Worship prepared by Gerardo Oberman, a Litany inspired by the Accra Confession and created by Peter Cruchley-Jones and prayers by four young women: Sonja Rauchfuss, Tara Tyme, Lei Garcia and Rotaiti Kabatitaa.

Dorcas Gordon and Dale Bisnauth have developed sermon notes and share two true stories about women’s survival and resistance. A Children’s Story written by John Asling and Akpene Nyomi is intended to include children in this observance as they learn about the Reformation and its meaning for their lives. Bible study notes and guidelines have been prepared by Bokyoung Park and Alexander Horsburgh and should be studied together with the article on the Accra Confession which follows and the earlier article by Lukas Vischer.

Susan Davies and Fulata Moyo have taken the Accra Confession to another level of interpretation and translation as they converse on what life means today for their communities within the current system of neo-liberal economic globalization. They also offer two stories of resistance and hope. Gerardo Oberman shares a popularized version of the Confession of Faith in the Face of Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction (Accra Confession) in the form of a liturgy.

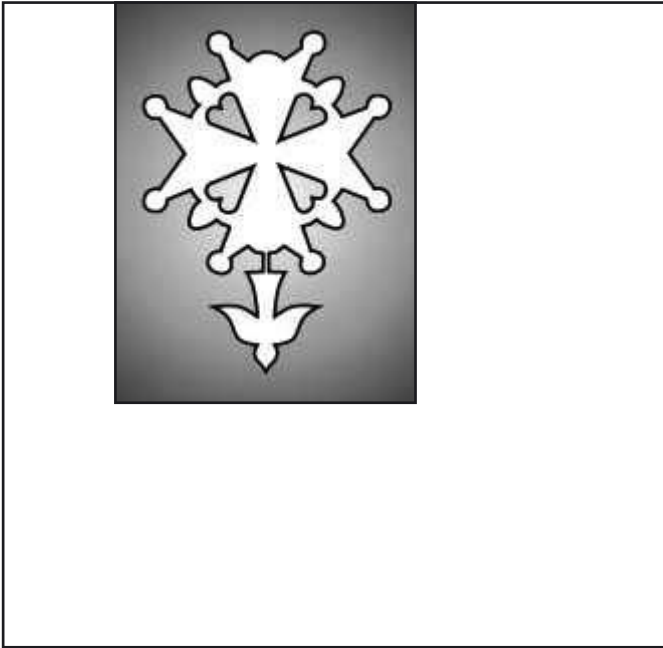
We hope that you will share this congregational resource with all churches, including Sunday Schools, youth, women’s and men’s groups and other organizations. As we reflect on the history of the Reformation led by John Calvin and others, we are reminded that we are called to be a church that is always reforming and renewing. We need to be present within the lives of our people and in our communities, as salt and light. To remain silent and oblivious to injustices, hunger and insecurity or to hide behind walls of self-protection may seem safe and less risky but it denies the church opportunities to reform, renew and grow. We are called upon to participate in God’s transformation of the world and to become positive forces and to influence our communities.

We invite you to use this resource for organizing studies, discussions, workshops and worship. We suggest that you add your stories of resistance, survival and alternatives. We would be very happy if you would share with us these stories and other comments. Please write to us at the following address: Office for Church Renewal, Justice and Partnership, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 150 route de Ferney, PO Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Email: crjp@warc.ch or warc@warc.ch

Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth
Executive Secretary, Church Renewal, Justice and Partnership

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A Message to Churches on Reformation Sunday 2006

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

One of the great treasures we share in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is a common heritage in the Protestant Reformation. Reformation Sunday each year is a time to reclaim that heritage and draw upon its strengths for our contemporary witness.

Reformation Sunday is the last Sunday in October because that Sunday is the one closest to October 31, when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on the church door in Wittenberg. That dramatic event marked the beginning of a movement of reformation in the churches and set forth a spirit of reform that is at the heart of the gospel. Some in our family will relate to even earlier Reformed movements (such as the Waldensians and the Czech Brethren), who date the reform impulses that gave rise to their churches to an even earlier time in history. In fact, all of us find the true source of those impulses in a much earlier time – in the New Testament Church!

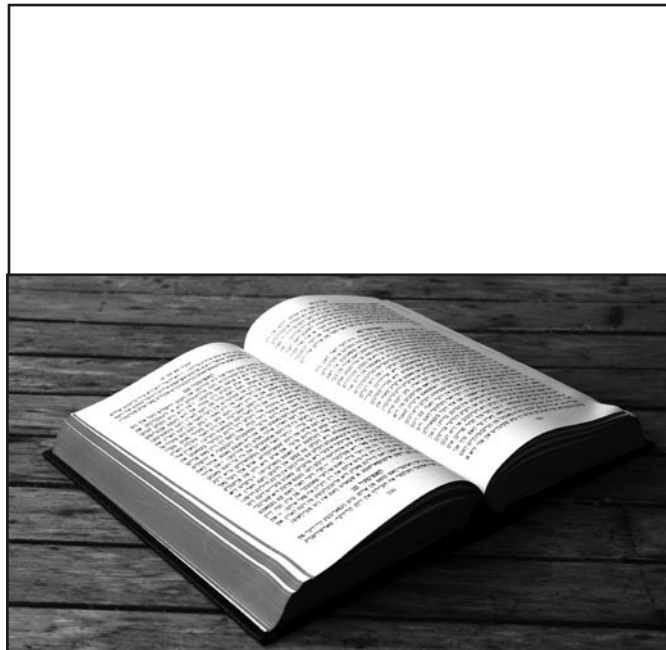
Whenever the origins, Reformation Sunday is an important time for Reformed churches to reclaim the great motto of the Reformation, *Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda* (“a church reformed and always being reformed”) for the challenges of our life and witness today. While Reformation Sunday is indeed a time to look back to the great truths and insights articulated by the Reformers almost 500 years ago, it is much more importantly a time to look forward.

The spirit of the Reformation calls us in each new age to look forward towards the renewal and reformation to which God is calling our churches today and into the future. That is why we are hoping that “renewal” will be the central theme which will be shared by Reformed churches in every part of the world as they commemorate Reformation Sunday. We also hope that Reformation Sunday will become in your churches a day to lift up the global fellowship of churches of the Reformation that we find in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and to be in some important way a “WARC Sunday”.

We are pleased to share with you this packet of resources to help you and your churches make Reformation Sunday come alive in a life-giving way on October 29, 2006. We hope these materials will help Reformed Christians all over the world to re-appropriate the great themes of our tradition:

- “faith alone, grace alone, scripture alone”
- “the priesthood of all believers”
- the sovereignty of God over the whole creation
- the Church as a covenant community

We are also sharing with you materials on how through the World Alliance of Reformed Churches we are able to give contemporary expression to the motto of our movement, *Ecclesia Reformata, Semper*



Reformanda, and to these great themes. The efforts of the Alliance to connect us all together on behalf of justice in the economy and the earth, expanding the priesthood of all believers to eliminate all gender barriers in our churches, and interpreting and re-interpreting the Reformed tradition for our day grow directly out of these impulses of the Reformation. We believe these callings are at the core of what it means for Reformed churches to live out reformation in our day and hope that they are finding vital expression in your church.

The Alliance is seeking to serve as an agent for renewal and reformation in our member churches, not as an end in itself, but to enable our churches to be God's agents of renewal and reconciliation in a world that is hungry for the gospel and for the justice and mercy of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Through our own renewal and our active commitment to the inclusion of youth, to gender justice, to spiritual renewal, and to our common covenant for justice in the economy and the earth, our churches can become a visible demonstration of what God intends for the whole human family. We hope that Reformation Sunday will be an important step in that pilgrimage and that these resources will contribute to that renewal in your churches.

Because we know that "God so loved the world..." (John 3.16), we are called to transform this world according to the purposes of God, and that is why we seek renewal and reformation in our churches. The Church is a missionary society! In some sense we are chosen by God to be God's agents to reconcile and transform the world. God was indeed in Christ reconciling the world and giving to us the ministry of reconciliation. (II Cor 5.19) It is at the core of who we are called to be as Reformed Christians.

I hope you will find these materials helpful, and more importantly, I hope that Reformation Day will be a real time of renewal and reformation in your churches and in the global movement in which we share through the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Yours in Christ,

Clifton Kirkpatrick
President

From the Desk of the General Secretary



Is Reformation Sunday on your congregational calendar? How are you celebrating it this year? For some people the Sunday closest to October 31 may be just another Sunday. Many others commemorate it meaningfully by using the days of the week preceding it as a time of study and reflection. WARC has committed itself to producing resources which are intended to help churches in the Reformed family worldwide to get in touch with our shared heritage in order to foster inspiration and renewal of the church today.

In this issue of Reformation Sunday congregational resources we focus on a theme which is at the heart of the Reformation – renewal. Our 16th century Reformers and their earlier precursors such as Pierre Valdes and Jan Hus had a major motivation – the renewal of the church. Theirs were not deliberate attempts to initiate new churches. They responded to a calling to be agents of renewal in the church. As we commemorate Reformation Sunday with a period of study and reflection, it is appropriate to focus our thoughts on the renewal of the church.

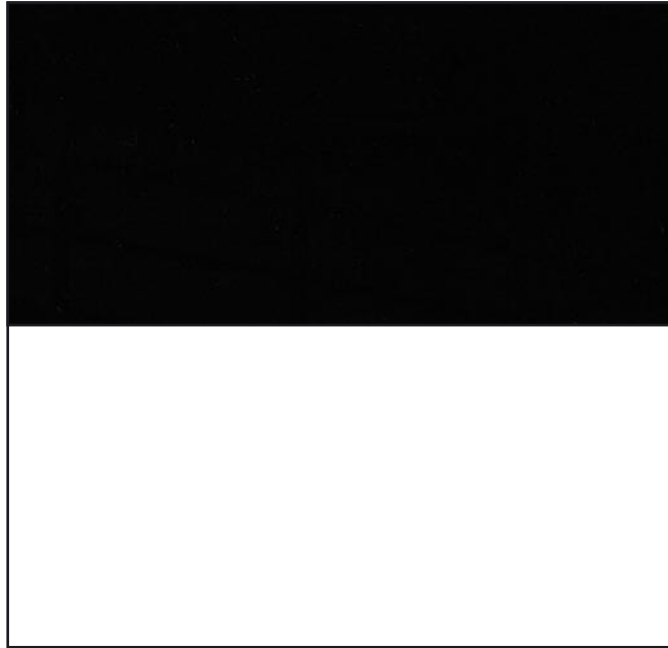
Our calling today will be meaningless if our questions are limited to asking how the church was renewed in the 16th century or in other centuries gone by. In addition, more important questions include: How are we agents of renewal in church and society today? How are women and young people honoured and celebrated as equal partners? What are the issues which demonstrate a need for Reformation today, as we join in praying the World Council of Churches Assembly theme “God in your grace transform the world”? God’s answer to that prayer includes our actions.

When WARC member churches gathered at its 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana, they sought among other things to address the rampant injustice in the global economy and humanity’s mismanagement of the earth’s resources. This resulted in the *Accra Confession* – a faith-based response to economic injustice and ecological degradation. In Accra, churches also drew attention to existing gender-based, age-based, and other forms of injustices in our world. Churches need to be at the forefront of the much-needed transformation in the world today.

The Gospel of Luke records our Lord Jesus Christ in the synagogue in Nazareth reading Scripture with a new meaning (Luke 4.16ff). People were given the opportunity to see how God’s Word concerning justice and good news to the poor, blind and oppressed applied to the realities of their own times. The Lord who came that people may have life in fullness (John 10.10) and who proclaimed liberty to the oppressed still calls us today.

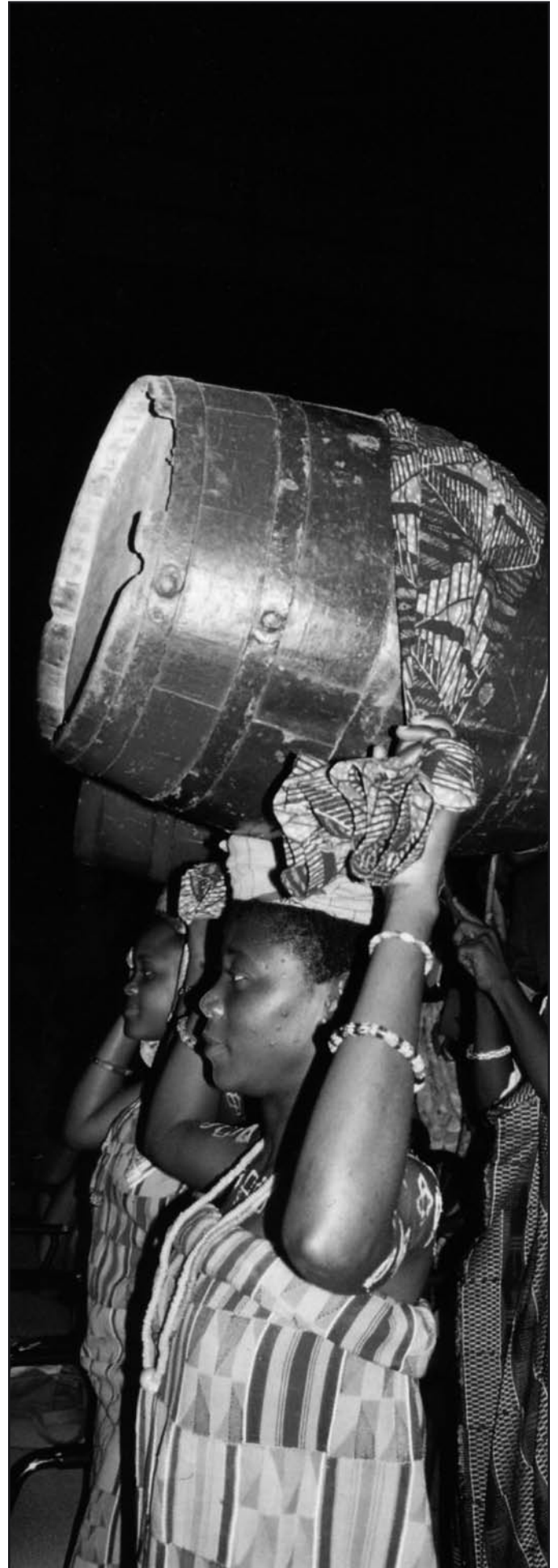
The recently-published English version of Andre Bieler’s book, *Calvin’s Economic and Social Thought*, reminds us that justice was one of the elements of renewal ushered in by the 16th century Reformers such as John Calvin. We all have the same responsibility today – every church leader, every single Christian, young and old, women and men, lay and clergy.

I pause to say thank you to all those who contributed to this publication and to its preparation, especially the Office for Church Renewal, Justice and Partnership led by its executive secretary, Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth.



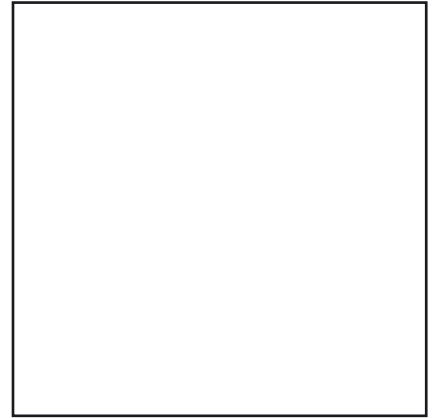
We encourage all to use the resources in this publication during Reformation week as well as other times of the year. The themes covered here are not time-bound. As we use the resources gathered here, let us commit ourselves to be God's agents of renewal of our churches. "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5.24).

Setri Nyomi
General Secretary





The Significance of the Reformation in Our World Today



Reformation Sunday? Every year we recall the Reformation. What is the deeper meaning of this special day? What is it we celebrate? The same questions also apply to the persons of the Reformers. In a few years' time many Reformed churches will celebrate the memory of John Calvin. Five hundred years will have passed since his birth in Noyon, France (1509-1564). Why has this date a significance for us? What is it we celebrate when we recall the great figure of Calvin?

The Reformation was a turbulent period. It was characterized by harsh debates and struggles. They led to a deep rift in Western Christianity and eventually even to violence and military conflicts. At first sight the 16th century does not offer much to celebrate.

But during those decisive decades an insight was born which accompanies the Church right up until today and is the cause of deep gratitude: **The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ; the gospel he brought into the world, is the true source of its life.** The Church is the Church of Jesus Christ or it is no church. If it is to represent God's voice on earth, it has no other choice than to return to him and to be guided by his Word. *Ad fontes!* To the sources! was the general cry of those years. The Church cannot rely on tradition, on structures, on its own spiritual vitality or anything else in the world. It draws its life from communion with the crucified and risen Lord. This insight is the gain of that period with its highs and lows, its grandeur and its failure. It is like a vein of gold shining in a dark rock.

Let us listen to two passages from Calvin's early writings:

To his preface to the translation of the Bible by Pierre-Robert Olivétan (1535) Calvin gives the characteristic title: To all those who love Christ and his gospel, and then continues:

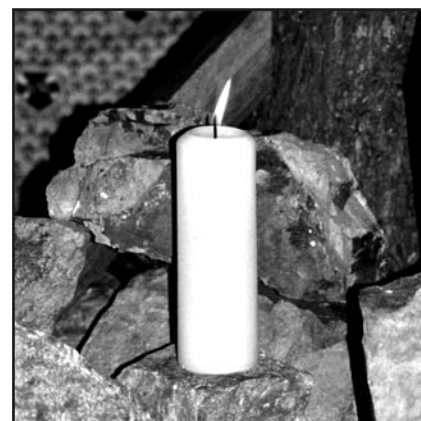
“Without the gospel everything is useless and vain; without the gospel we are not Christians;

without the gospel all riches is poverty, all wisdom, folly before God; strength is weakness, and all the justice of man is under the condemnation of God. But by the knowledge of the gospel we are made children of God, brothers of Jesus Christ, fellow townsmen with the saints, citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, heirs of God with Jesus Christ, by whom the poor are made rich, the weak strong, the fools wise, the sinners justified, the desolate comforted, the doubting sure, and slaves free. The gospel is the Word of life.”

And in his reply to Cardinal Jacobus Sadoletus (1539) he emphasizes our total dependence on Jesus Christ:

“As all humankind are, in the sight of God, lost sinners, we hold that Christ is their only righteousness, since by his obedience he has wiped off our transgressions, by his sacrifice appeased the divine anger, by his blood washed away our stains, by his cross borne our curse, and by his death made satisfaction for us. We maintain that in this way humans are reconciled in Christ to God the Father, by no merit of their own, by no value of works, but by gratuitous mercy.”

What is it therefore that we celebrate on Reformation Sunday? Certainly not the “foundation” or the heroic beginnings of the Reformed Church. What happened in the 16th century is not the content of that Sunday. Nor do we celebrate the great figure of Calvin. Reformation Sunday is not a Saint's Day. Calvin has consistently emphasized that ultimately his own person did not matter. He would not be pleased with the massive Reformation monument in Geneva. The place of his tomb is unknown and cannot be visited and decorated by pilgrims. On the contrary every year Reformation Sunday provides the opportunity to ask together with the Reformers of the 16th century: “What does it mean to be the Church of Jesus Christ today?” “Where does he intend to lead us by his Spirit and his Word?” “Are we really instruments in his hand?”



“What does it mean that he has made us free through his grace and love?” “What are the next steps he expects from us?”

The Reformers were not content with a general affirmation of Jesus Christ as the source of salvation. For them, Christ was more than a liturgical formula. They, and Calvin in particular, sought to develop in detail the significance of the gospel for the faith of the believers, and to show what response was required from the community as a whole as well as from each member. His answers are impressive – full of insights and perspectives which continue to be valid to the present day. But it is important to recognize that Calvin considered himself the servant of the gospel. The Reformed Church is not identified with his name; it must not be called Calvinistic. He knew that every generation has to decipher anew the significance of the gospel; and it belongs therefore to the particularities of the Reformed tradition that its confession of faith has been reformulated in the course of the centuries as new horizons opened and contexts changed.

The preface to the Second Helvetic Confession (1566) reflects this openness to new insights:

“But in especial we profess that we are always ready (if any man require it) more at large to declare all and each particular thing, that here we have purposed, yea and to yield, and give them most hearty thanks, and to obey them in the Lord, which can teach us better doctrine by the Word of God, to whom be praise and glory.”

And what about today? At its General Council in Accra (2004) the World Alliance of Reformed Churches formulated, and submitted to its member churches for examination, a confession of faith for our time. A confession of faith cannot be decreed, it can only be declared and proposed. It will depend on the answers of the churches whether it can be considered the confession of the Church. The General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is the most representative gathering in the Reformed world. Delegates from

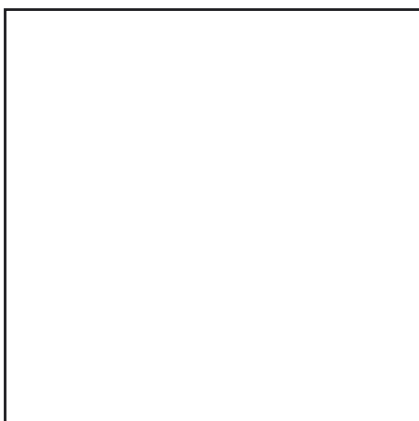
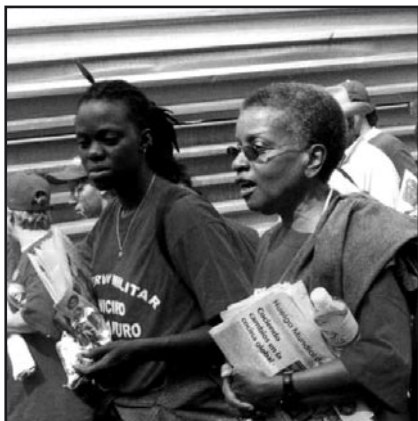
churches all over the world participated in it. Its message deserves therefore to be listened to and examined by all Reformed Christians with the greatest attention. And what day would be more suitable for this purpose than Reformation Sunday, the day which reminds us of the original and purest intention and impulses of the Reformation?

We are therefore invited to ask with the Reformers: **To what degree does the Accra Confession express what the Church of Jesus Christ is called to proclaim and to witness to at the beginning of the third millennium?**

To listen to God’s Word today together with the Reformers! To do justice to this task it is essential to spend some time looking back to the time of the Reformation. What were the main preoccupations of the Reformers? What were the fundamental principles guiding their preaching and their action?

As we deal with the legacy of the Reformation, three aspects must not be forgotten:

- a) Almost five centuries separate us from the Reformation. We are facing new horizons. The frontiers of witness have changed. The answers of the Reformers can therefore not be literally transposed and applied to our time.
- b) The introduction of reforms led to struggles. The representatives of the old order offered determined resistance to the proposed changes. The time of the Reformation was therefore a time of bitter polemics. Calvin sought to summarize the insights and reforms of the Reformation in a coherent and balanced form, but the conflicts led almost inevitably on both sides to pointed answers and exaggerations which have today lost their validity. To avoid one-sidedness, they need to be corrected.
- c) Not all the insights and goals of the Reformers could be achieved and realized. Reforms often met with resistance also in the camp of the Reformed churches themselves.



Some hopes of the Reformers remained unfulfilled.

Against this background, let us recall nine fundamental insights of the Reformation period.

1. God guides the Church through his Spirit and his Word

In Jesus Christ God entered this world, he became flesh and reconciled the world with himself. The Church's first task is to proclaim this liberating message. Through Christ the door to the communion with God has been opened. The Church is a wandering people. God guides it by his *Spirit and Word* through the centuries. To be the Church it is essential that the Church opens itself to the guidance by the Spirit and listens to God's Word.

What do you believe concerning the "holy catholic Church" of Christ? The Heidelberg Catechism answers this question as follows: "That, from the beginning to the end of the world, and from among the whole human race, the Son of God, **by his Spirit and his Word**, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself, in the unity of the true faith, a congregation chosen for eternal life. Moreover, I believe that I am and forever will remain a living member of it (question and answer 54)."

The concentration on God's Word is central to the Reformed tradition. The emphasis has, however, also led to exaggerations. In the Reformed churches the role of human words tends to be over-estimated. Reformed worship is too exclusively dominated by preaching and characterized by a high degree of intellectualism. Calvin knew that God's Word is greater than human words. Above all, he knew that Christian worship has two poles: preaching *and* the act of the Lord's supper. In his view the Lord's supper was to be celebrated every Sunday.

What is the situation in our congregation today?

2. The Church must rely on the witness of the Holy Scriptures

The Bible is the unique witness of God's Word. Therefore, the Church must again and again return to this original witness and listen to the voice of the Spirit. It is essential that we allow the Bible to call us into question. We are not listening to the Bible if we select from it the phrases which speak to our expectation. The Bible is not a self-service shop, but the door through which God himself promises to speak to us.

During his ministry in Geneva Calvin preached every Sunday and also on certain weekdays on biblical texts. He interpreted almost all biblical books for his congregation, and whoever reads his commentaries today, is impressed by his will and ability to build a bridge between the Bible and daily life.

The concentration on the Bible has also had negative consequences. In many Reformed circles the authority of the Bible has been turned into a principle. God's voice has been obscured by the "words" of the Bible. The biblical witness has been transformed into biblicism.

Have we understood that the Bible witnesses to the God who is ready to speak to us today?

3. The individual and the Church

The gospel is addressed to every individual human person. God speaks to us and we have to respond to his Word by our faith, our prayer and our action. In order to have access to God, we do not need the mediation of any ecclesiastical authorities. Each person is responsible before God. This does not, however, mean that we, each and every one of us, are islands. We are part of the Church, members of Christ's body. We can live our faith only within the communion of the Church.



Calvin writes:

“What God has thus joined, let not man put asunder: to those to whom he is a Father, the Church must also be a mother ... Let us learn from her single title of Mother, how useful, nay, how necessary the knowledge of her is, since there is no other means of entering into life unless she conceive us in the womb and give us birth, unless she nourish us at her breasts, and, in short, keep us under her charge and government, until, divested of mortal flesh, we become like the angels (Institutes IV.1.1 and 4).”

In the Reformed tradition the role and responsibility of the individual has often been over-emphasized. Faith is considered to be a private affair. The consequence is that the significance of communion for the Christian faith is not sufficiently recognized.

What is our situation today? How do we understand the relationship between personal responsibility and our insertion in the communion of the faith?

4. Where two or three are gathered in my name I am in the midst of them

Christ is present wherever God’s Word is preached and listened to and where the gift of his grace is celebrated through the Lord’s supper. The Church is therefore primarily the community in each place. The one holy catholic and apostolic Church consists of local communities, and in each local community Christ is fully present. At the same time, however, the local communities are a whole. They are called to act together. The representatives meet in synods to interpret together God’s Word for our time.

“Wherever we see the Word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have

any doubt that the Church of God has some existence (Institutes IV.1.9).”

The priority of the local community has often been over-emphasized in the Reformed tradition. Though synods have played a significant role in the life of national churches, the Reformed churches have not succeeded in developing firm structures for their common witness at the international level. But in our time the witness at this level has acquired increased urgency.

How can we strengthen today the common witness of the Reformed churches at the universal level?

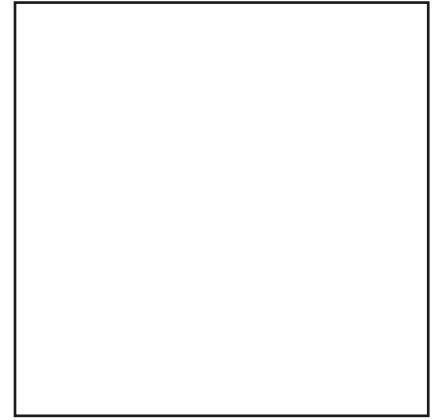
5. The Church is a body in which every member counts

The Church is not primarily an institution but a living organism. Every member counts, and it is essential that each member contributes through his or her gifts to the common witness of the whole Church. The quality of relationships among the members is an important dimension of the common witness.

“Furthermore, we are called to this inheritance without respect for persons; male or female, little or great, servant or lord, master or disciple, cleric or lay, Hebrew or Greek, French or Latin – no one is rejected ...who in short acknowledges Jesus Christ for what he is and as he is given by the Father (Preface to the translation of the Bible by Olivétan).”

The principle is clear. The application of the insight took, however, much time. In the International Museum of the Reformation in Geneva earnest bearded men look from almost all the walls out of golden frames upon the visitor. For centuries they all held posts of responsibility in the Church. Only in recent times has the original vision begun to be realized. But even today obstacles persist.

To what extent is your own congregation a community of men and women?



6. God's Word gives guidance in all areas of life

God's Word is not only a source of spiritual inspiration but also provides guidance on the ordering of society. The reforms introduced by Calvin concerned not only the realm of the Church but extended also to the public sphere. His writings are full of reflections and advice on family life, education, social justice, fixing of prices, political responsibility and similar themes and issues.

In particular Calvin stresses the need to protect the poor. *All* members of society must receive what is necessary for life. Riches must be shared. Neglecting poor people is a betrayal of God's will. "Whenever we are reluctant to assist the poor, let us place before our eyes the Son of God, to whom it would be base sacrilege to refuse any thing (Commentary on Matthew 25.40)."

The passion for social justice was characteristic of the Reformers, especially of Calvin. This legacy has often been forgotten. Calvin is today considered by many as the "father of modernity and the liberal economic system". In reality he was consistently denouncing all forms of greed and exploitation.

What would Calvin's assessment and judgement of today's economic system be?

7. The human attitude to the gifts of Creation

Calvin was aware of the vulnerability of nature and of the sinister role human beings are capable of playing in the whole of God's Creation. The curse God declared on human beings has consequences for the whole of Creation. "The condemnation of humankind is imprinted on the heavens, and on the earth, and on all creatures (Commentary on Romans 8.21)." And in his eyes Christ's redemption includes the whole Creation.

We have therefore to make as moderate a use as possible of the gifts of nature. Creation must not be exploited. God gives to every human creature what is needed for life. "We should desire nothing more than the necessity of this life demands ... For nature is content with a little, and all that goes beyond the natural use is superfluous (Commentary on 1 Tim 6.7-8)."

The following passage sounds almost like the anticipation of the modern notion of "sustainable agriculture": "Let him who possesses a field, so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavour to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated (Commentary on Genesis 2.15)."

The destruction of the environment as we experience it today was outside the horizon of the 16th century. But what Calvin has to say about the place and role of human beings in the whole of Creation clearly shows what stand he would take in our days.

8. The proclamation of the gospel and the use of violence are mutually exclusive

Calvin warned the evangelical Christians against using the force of arms. In the face of violence and oppression by hostile regimes Christians have to confess their faith and trust in God's help. The proclamation of the gospel does not permit the use of violence. We know that this attitude to violence was not applied in the case of Michael Servet. But Calvin foresaw with clarity the horrors of the confessional wars. He was aware of the deep roots of violence in human hearts. He knew how the mechanisms of violence function. Inescapably violence gives birth to new violence.

On April 16, 1561 Calvin wrote to Admiral Gaspard de Coligny: "Even if only one drop of blood is shed, streams of blood will pour over



the whole of Europe. It is therefore better to die a hundred times than to expose the name of Christendom and the gospel to such a scandal (Corpus Reformatorum XVIII, col. 426).”

What is the significance of this witness in today’s world where we face a spiral of violence?

9. Unity is of the essence of Christ’s Church

Throughout his life Calvin engaged himself for the unity of the Church. In his eyes the biblical witness left no room for doubt. It is God’s will that Christ’s disciples have to form one communion. The Reformers had no intention of founding a new church. Their aim was to purify the Church of Jesus Christ and make it visible in its true shape. Unity is an indispensable dimension of the Church’s witness in the world.

“The ruin of the human race is, that, having been alienated from God, it is also broken and scattered in itself. The restoration of it, therefore, on the contrary, consists in its being properly united in one body, as Paul declares the perfection of the Church to consist in believers being joined together in one spirit and says that apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors, were given, that they might edify and restore the body of Christ, till it came to the unity of faith; and therefore he exhorts believers to grow into Christ, who is the Head, from whom the whole body joined together, and connected by every bond of supply, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of it to edification (Eph. iv. 3,11-16). Wherefore, whenever Christ speaks about unity, let us remember how basely and shockingly, when separated from him, the world is scattered; and, next, let us learn that the commencement of a blessed life is, that we be all governed, and that we all live, by the Spirit of Christ alone (Commentary on John 17.21).”

Today the Reformed churches are deeply divided. In all parts of the world their unity has been torn apart, and very often this state of division is considered to be unavoidable.

What can your church or congregation contribute to the restoration of unity among the Reformed churches? What can it undertake to promote a communion witnessing to God’s love for this world?

What hope is guiding us in our reflections on Reformation Sunday? Calvin expressed his hope for the renewal of the Church in the following words:

“The Church is so preserved in the world, that it sometimes rises again from death: in short, the preservation of the Church, almost every day, is accompanied with many miracles. But we ought to bear in mind, that the life of the Church is not without a resurrection, nay, it is not without many resurrections, if the expression be allowed (Commentary on Micah 4.6).”

Order of Worship

Suggestions for preparing worship: arrange selected Bible texts about the Reformed faith on notice boards and in other visible places. Three candles or local lamps symbolizing the Trinitarian presence of God, an open Bible, a cross and other symbols of importance to the community may also be used.

Prelude

Welcome and greetings *(share with the congregation the importance of celebrating faith and the significance of the Reformation, see resource on pages 8-13)*

Leader: Our help is in the name of God,
Who made heaven and earth. *(Psalm 124.8)*
All: Yes, our help is in the name of God,
Who made heaven and earth. *(Psalm 124.8)*

Hymn

Prayer *(see prayers on pages 19-21)*

Reader 1: We light this candle in the name of God who illuminates the world and inspires us with the breath of life. *(1st candle or lamp is lit)*

Song/chorus

Reader 2: We light this candle in the name of the Son who has come that all may have life in fullness. *(John 10.10) (2nd candle or lamp is lit)*

Song/chorus

Reader 3: We light this candle in the name of the Holy Spirit which embraces the world and blesses our souls with love. *(3rd candle or lamp is lit)*

All: We have lit three candles for the trinity of love; God over us, God with us.
From the beginning to the end, from the start to all eternity.
From the CLAI worship book: Libres para construir la Paz

God of Life: may your light
Shine on your people today,
As it shone in each moment of history.
May the light of your presence
Inspire this celebration,
And inspire our lives,
To praise you and recognize you,
As source of all creation,
As strength that sustains,
As sap that nurtures,
As wisdom that foresees,
As clarity that discovers,
As love that understands,
As mercy that forgives...
May the light of your presence,
Eternal and inextinguishable,
Shine on us now and forever
Till the dawn of your Kingdom,
Present in each day.

Litany: The Spirit gives us ears *(see page 18)*

Hymn

Children's story *(see pages 26-27)*

God's word liberates

Scripture readings

Sermon *(see sermon notes on pages 22-25)*

Hymn

Prayers of intercession *(see pages 19-21)*

Confessing our Faith *(see page 37)*

Sharing the peace with each other

Gathering of gifts and Holy Communion

Offerings are received and blessed *(during this time a special song may be sung – solo or choir)*

Invitation and blessing of elements

Leader: Share with faith and joy
This sacrament; the mystery of love.
We share as a people in unity,
In solidarity with each other.
We draw near together as sisters and brothers,
Because this sacrament only makes sense,
When it is shared in love.

As Christ gave his life for love of
His brothers and sisters,
So in love we bear our offerings and gifts,
Committing in this gesture our whole life
To the service of the Kingdom.

As Christ with his own hands
Broke bread and shared it,
We take this bread and share it

Remembering that Christ has promised life in fullness for all people.
As we eat this bread,
We pray for those who hunger for bread,
And for those who hunger for justice,
We share each other's pains and hopes.

As Christ himself drank from the cup
And shared it with friends,
We drink this wine as we share our hope that another world is possible,
A world based on justice and equity; love, respect and understanding,
Among all women and men, of all faiths and races, and in all places,
Living in dignity and peace.
May the Church be renewed and reformed to participate in God's transformative works!
And may your grace abound!

Communion is served *(as congregation sings)*

Hymn: Hay Buena Vida

Blessing

Leader: We praise and bless you, God of Life.
All: Bless us with your presence each day of our lives.

Leader: We have seen you and have felt your presence in the history of your people.
All: God, be present in our history, in our communities and be part of our lives.

Leader: With love and mercy, you have cared, led, inspired and sustained your daughters and sons in all generations.
All: Shine within us, inspire us, use us to make visible your peace, justice and truth.

Leader: You, who are holy for all eternity
All: Sanctify our lives with your blessing.

Adapted from the liturgy of the Reformed Church in Mar del Plata

Vida para Compartir

L.: Gerardo Oberman (Argentina)
M.: Horacio Vivares (Argentina)

Yo cre - o, tu cre - es, cre - e - mos,
I do be - lieve what you be - lieve, what we be - lieve:

que hay vi - da ple - na pa - ra com - par - tir.
life in its full - ness is - ra life ful - ly - shared.

Chords: *bm/F#*, *A/F#*, *Gmaj7*, *em7*, *G6*, *G5maj7*, *F#sus4*, *F#7*, *B*

English Terry MacArthur

Hay Buena Vida

L.: Gerardo Oberman (Argentina)
M.: Horacio Vivares (Argentina)

Moderato

1. Un ai - re fres - co en - vuel - ve la tie - rra, re - nue - va la cre - a -
1. Re - fresh - ing breez - es blow - ing a - round us, cre - a - tion sings us a

ción, so - pla jus - ti - cia, sil - ba es - pe - ran - za, y a - bra - za al mun - do u - na i - lu -
song. It's hum - ming jus - tice, and whis - tling prom - ise dream - ing a world where all be -

Chords: *G*, *C/G*, *D/G*, *C/G*, *G*, *Bm7*, *Cmaj7*, *Am*, *Am/G*

D/F# D G C/G D/G C/G G /F#
 sión. Tiem - po de siem - bra y de a - le - grí - a, de paz y de i - gual - dad, por - que la
 long. It's time for sow - ing seeds of re - joic - ing, e - qual - i - ty and good - will. A - gainst op -

14 Em7 A7/Eb G/D Em7 A7/C# A7 D7add2 G /F#
 vi - da se anuncia li - bre de o - pre - sión e in - dig - ni - dad. Hay vi - da, hay bue - na
 pres - sion it's ringng free - dom, the dig - ni - ty of life ful - filled. A - bun - dant, yes, life a -

19 Em7 /D C Am7 D9 D9sus4 D7 G /F# Em7 /D
 vi - da, es tiem - po de com - par - tir la, — es pu - ra y es pa - ra siem - pre, nos
 bun - dant, it's time that we learn to share it. It heals us and re - con - ciles us. E -

24 C C#7 D9 D9sus4 D7 C D/C G/B Am7 Gadd2/B Am/C A/C#
 sa - na y nos re - con - ci - lia. — Hoy flu - ye, co - mo en un rí - o que trae paz y ben - di -
 ter - ni - ty dares de - clare it. Even now it flows like a riv - er bear - ing bless - ings, carr - ying

29 D9sus4 D7 G D/F# Em7 C Am G/D D9 G
 ción. — Hoy bro - ta en a - bun - dan - cia del mis - mo co - ra - zón de Dios.
 peace. Even now, it blos - soms full from God's heart a - bun - dant life re - leased.

English, Terry MacArthur

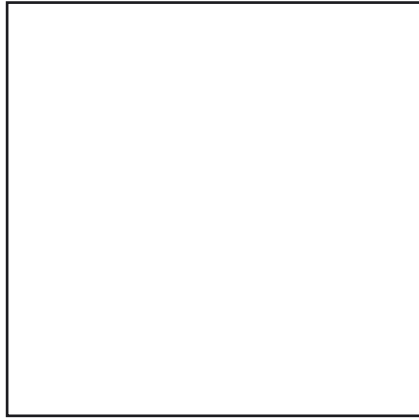
2. Manos tendidas curando heridas,
la historia cambiarán,
este sistema que vende muerte
está llegando a su final.
Se abre al mañana la vida plena
y canta la creación,
danzan los viejos, ríen los niños,
la vida es buena, ¡Gloria a Dios!.

3. Siendo distintos, vamos unidos
hay tanto por reformar,
nuestro llamado privilegiado
es construir otro lugar.
Cantemos juntos con este ritmo,
con fuerza y con pasión,
que es para todos, sin exclusiones,
la vida que nos da el Señor.

2. With hands outstretched to heal all the wounded,
our history will be changed.
This deathly system which sells destruction
will find its ending rearranged.
Abundant life will dawn in the morning,
Creation readies to swing
the old folk dancing, the children laughing
for life is good. God's glory sing.

3. Knowing we're different we're still united.
There's much to be reformed.
No more forestalling, we have this calling
to build another place, transformed.
We sing together keeping our rhythm,
a strong and passionate beat
for everybody. No one's excluded.
Life is the gift of God replete.

Litany: The Spirit Gives Us Ears



This is a statement to be shared among different voices and with music that is sympathetic to the mood and meaning of the statement. With some imagination it might be possible to convey dramatically or symbolically the situations described in this litany.

Listen

The Spirit gives us ears
Hear the voices
A mother crying for her lifeless child
A wife moaning after another beating
A child begging and people are passing
Doctors giving more bad news in clinics
Market traders calling selling
For less than it cost to grow
Board meetings celebrating profit updates
Politicians doing deals, pocketing bribes
Prayers and whisperings
As the time of detonation nears

Quiet

Listen

The Spirit gives us ears
Hear the sound
Footsteps dragging
Carrying water, collecting firewood
Dumping the body of a trade unionist
In a lonely spot
Trees crashing and logging lorries idling
The quiet ooze of factory waste
Sewing machines humming, stock crashing
Land mines clicking
Bombs bursting
Earth shattering

Listen

Hear the Spirit's voice
Hear her weep

Music

Listen

The Spirit gives us ears
Hear the voices
Hear the sounds
Campaigners challenging
Protestors demonstrating

Workers negotiating
Governments conceding
Corporations accounting
Men confessing
People changing
Earth sighing

Listen

Hear the Spirit's voice
Hear her sing

Music

Life Giving Spirit

Invite us again to

Treat the earth gently and each other justly

Bind us together

To work for justice

In the economy and the earth

Seal us in a Covenant

That gives dignity to us all

Men and women

Young and old

Black and white

Seal us in a Covenant

That anoints the wounded

Humbles the proud

And resists evil without doing harm

Seal us in a Covenant

That cherishes the earth

Challenges injustice

And chooses life

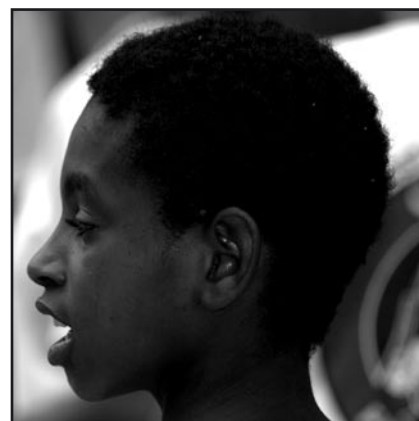
Life in fullness

Life revealed

Empowered and exalted

By the coming of Christ

Prayers from Young Women around the World



A Prayer of Celebration

We celebrate you, oh God of Life

In the midst of the noise of our cities,
We celebrate you for your gift of silence.
In the midst of the greyness of our houses,
We celebrate you for your gift of colours.
In the midst of our distorted relationships,
We celebrate you for your gift of life in abundance.

We celebrate you, oh God of Life

In the midst of the hierarchies of our society,
We celebrate you for your creation of equals.
In the midst of the abuse of power and money,
We celebrate you for your gift of justice.
In the midst of a reality
where everything comes with a price,
We celebrate you for your gifts of life in abundance.

We celebrate you, oh God of Life

Sonja Rauchfuss

A Prayer of Confession

Too many times we are too preoccupied with Our own lives to hear the cries of injustice:

The cry of the single mother
Working night shifts so she can feed her children.
The cry of the cleaning lady who just lost her job,
Struggling for dignity
As she lines up for social benefits.
The cry of the young Russian sex worker
Who was promised a land of milk and honey
And found only violence.

We have been too busy thinking That injustice was far away.

Forgive us, oh God of Justice
That we have failed to see
That there is no far away with you.

Too many times our churches are too preoccupied
**With restructuring, and household debates,
With numbers and figures,**
To cry out.
To speak up.
To act up.

We have been too busy thinking About things that seemed less far away.

Forgive us, oh God of Justice
That we have failed to see
That there is no far away with you. Amen

Sonja Rauchfuss

A Prayer of Confession for Ecological and Economic Justice

God our Mother, God our Father,
You, whom we have experienced and continue to
experience as Creator, Christ and Comforter,
**Hear us your children as we bring to you our
prayers for ecological and economic justice.**

In awe and splendour we marvel at the work of
your hands with creation.
Only a God who is creative and imaginative could
create such beauty for our eyes to behold:
The Caribbean Sea that forms the backdrop for
our mountains, hills, plateaus and valleys;
our rivers, streams and springs that flow with life,
reminding us of your faithfulness and everlasting
love for humanity.

And yet, we have failed to be good caretakers
of your providence, even as we sing praises in
honour of creation.
We have failed to nurture, to protect and to
preserve mother earth and her bounties.
We have taken for granted that creation embodies
your love, presence and grace among us.
**Have mercy upon us,
Jehovah Hoseenu (God our maker).**

We have plundered, wasted and misappropriated
your economic gifts.
Many are suffering at our hands because we have
allowed our greed, our envy and our selfishness
to stand in the way of equality, justice and
responsibilities for our communities.
We have abandoned the needs of our children,
sisters and brothers so as to create our own
“kingdoms of power” at the expense of perpetual
poverty and depravity.

**Gracious God, have mercy upon us. Forgive us,
Jehovah Jireh (God our Provider).
Cause us to recognize and to understand that
in creating you created for the needs of your
people, therefore no one should lack or want
anything.**

Turn us aright.
Stir our consciences and awaken our
consciousness.
Stir our hearts, our will and our desires that they
may be illuminated and ignited by the fire of your
love.

**Renew us by the power of the Holy Spirit
dwelling in our lives so that together we may
all have life and have it more abundantly.
Amen**

Tara Tyme



Grant Us Peace

Grant us peace that will
Break our silence in the midst of violence
Then prophetic voices shall resonate

Grant us peace that will
Pull us down from the steeple of our pride
Then we'll learn to wash each other's feet

Grant us peace that will
Empty us of hate and intolerance
Then we'll turn guns into guitars and sing

Grant us peace that will
Shut our mouths up when we speak too much
Then we'll learn to listen and understand
What others are saying

Grant us peace that will
Disturb our apathy
Then we'll dance together under the sun

Grant us peace that will
Burn our weary hearts
Then we'll let love and justice glow.
Amen

Lei Garcia



Peace in Asia

For homeless children
begging in the streets of Colombo,
close to a million internally displaced Burmese,
prostituted women
waiting under Bangkok night lights,
church people and peace advocates
killed in the Philippines:

We pray for peace.

For the victims of war-torn East Timor,
Tuvalu and Kiribati threatened by rising sea level
because of global warming,
the alarming rate of suicide incidents in Tokyo,
sexually abused migrant workers in Singapore:

We pray for peace.

For factory workers receiving low wages in Beijing,
the long-standing rift in the Korean Peninsula,
oppressed and persecuted Dalits in India,
refugees starving to death in Afghanistan:

We pray for peace.

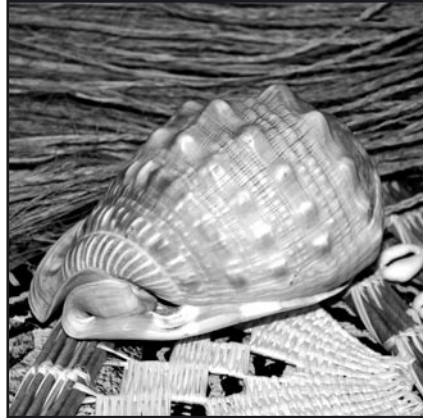
For tsunami victims in South Asia,
troubled relationships between Taiwan and China,
babies born without eyes in Saigon
because of Agent Orange,
brothels filled with thousands of child sex slaves
in Cambodia:

We pray for peace.

We pray for peace

so that carpenters building rich peoples' houses
will have roofs over their heads,
the life-giving earth will bless us with its fruits,
farmers, whose tears and blood have watered the
fields, will have food on their tables,
textile workers will clothe their weary bodies,
and those who struggle for peace will find justice,
because Christ is our peace. Amen

Lei Garcia



A Prayer from the Pacific

God Almighty, Creator and Sustainer
It is you Lord, who created our lands,
Resources and our cultures which we enjoyed
You expected us to use them
Accordingly to your will
Our freedom has led us astray
To damage our cultures and environments.
We have neglected the obligation
To look after our lands.

Merciful God, we confess all our wrongdoings
Particularly those
That have affected our lands and ourselves
For the climate change,
Which has resulted in the sea level rise
For the pandemic HIV/AIDS
Which has killed our people
For the economic globalization
Which has ruined our cultures
And the new culture
Which has torn our families apart
And left many in poverty and depressed.

Merciful God,
We bring all these worries into your presence
We beseech you
To awaken the eyes of those responsible
Empower us,
With all the children of God across the globe
To continue to pray and work for peace and justice
Strengthen our faith in you our Triune God
Give us hope in Jesus as the sign of all times.
In his name we pray, Amen.

Rotaiti Kabatiiaa

Sermon Notes and Illustrations

Exposing A Lie

Luke 18.1-8

Luke 18.1-8 contains a marvellous story for us who call ourselves reformed people; those who by virtue of our heritage are called to invest ourselves in the economic and social issues of our own day.

A woman is caught not only in a web of patriarchy and patronage but also in legal and religious systems that uphold and support these structures. The widow faces a power imbalance within the structures of a 1st century agrarian society (an economic system as all encompassing within the century as the global economy in the 21st century) that supports the elite and attempts to render invisible those who are marginalized by it or dare to challenge it.

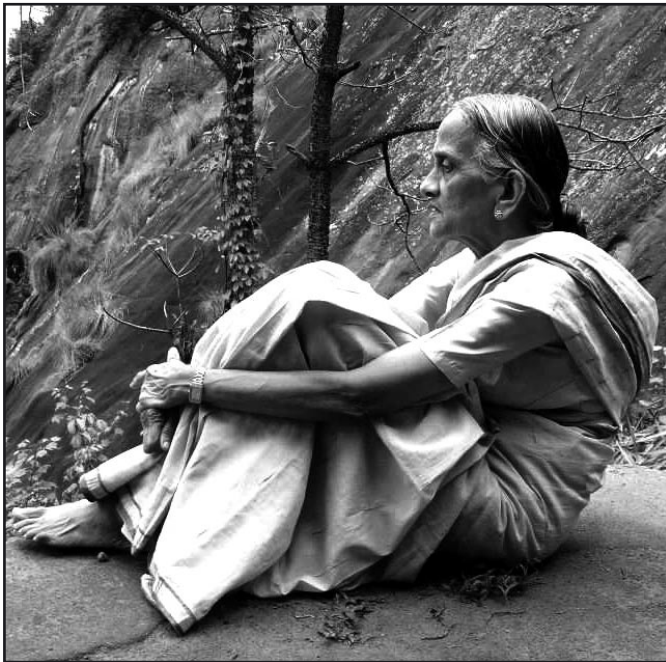
A widow persists in her demand for justice from a judge who fears neither God nor has respect for people (v.2). In 1st century Palestine, a widow is one who receives special protection under Torah law (see especially Exodus 22.21-24), but also one who is potentially a dangerous person, in that within the established household (patriarchal) structure she was not strictly bound either to husband or father.¹ With William Herzog we interpret and preach this parable “as exposing the conflict between the Torah as it exists ideally and the Torah as it functions in practice”. The heroine is the widow “whose voice breaks the culture of silence in which she is immersed and forces an accommodation with the Torah as practised by the judges of unrighteousness or injustice.”² (Herzog, p.215)

Gerhard Lenski explains how the law in advanced agrarian societies³ is regularly codified to support the rule of the elite so that their power is firmly

established as what is right, and, wherever possible, divinely instituted. The role of scribal retainers, members of the financial and legal bureaucracy, is to recodify laws so that they seem to support justice while actually protecting and expanding the privilege of the ruling elites. Judges make sure that this recodification works. In other words it was possible to apply the law so that it appeared impartial even though it really supported oppressive societal structures. Important also is the fact that in a patron/client society the primary allegiance of a judge was not justice but the support of the ones who appointed him and to whom he owed his patronage. The judge, says Herzog, “is doing what he has learned to do, use his office to line his pockets”. In an agrarian society this is simply how it works; it is not viewed as immoral or unjust; it is “honest graft”. (Herzog, p.227) He continues, “when one descends... into the details of the everyday life, the Torah changes. It becomes a tool for legitimation and social control, prescribing and proscribing behaviour, and it is also employed to protect the interests of a ruling class.” (Herzog, p.228)

Add to this a woman who is in an ambiguous place within the social order and the conflict intensifies. I would agree with Herzog that she is wily and knowledgeable about the system and her place within it; she is one who knows the odds are stacked against her. What is it that the woman does that causes the judge to crumble? She goes public! Here Herzog quotes Walter Wink on the Domination System:

“Whenever anyone steps out of the system and tells the truth, lives the truth, that enables everyone else to peer behind the curtain, too...



Illustration

An excerpt from a story that was shared with me while I was attending a conference in Guatemala in 2002.

Anyone who steps out of line therefore denies it in principle and threatens it in its entirety. If the main pillar of the system is living a lie, then it is not surprising that the fundamental threat to it is living the truth.” (Wink, p.98 as quoted in Herzog, p.230)

The result is that she achieves justice. She refuses to be silent in her own oppression, and the judge, after a great deal of persistence on her part, gives her a favourable verdict. It is a widow, a woman, who defeats the judge, using what is available to her to undermine the system in one rather insignificant case, but in a way that allows others to get a glimpse of the lie that is being lived.

This story challenges all people of faith especially those committed to ongoing reformation, to speak out in the face of injustice, to expose lies, to name truth and to challenge social and political systems of oppression. It also propels people of faith to examine how religious “law and practice” can be used to support and collude with oppression rather than to give life. This is a dangerous story with a dangerous heroine! In real life the fact is that the truth-teller is often marginalized, imprisoned or destroyed in the process of proclaiming truth. Preach it carefully but faithfully!

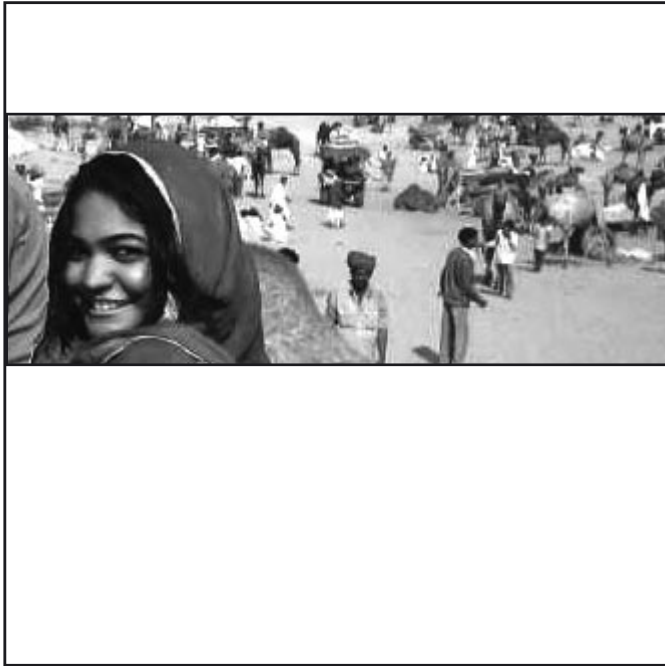
In 1981 Rufina Amaya miraculously survived the massacre that destroyed her husband and her children. When the soldiers came to her village in Guatemala, Rufina watched as her family and her friends were systematically murdered. She saw it all, having escaped by hiding behind an apple tree. They killed them all – first the men, then the women, and then the children, including four of her own. At one point she almost gave up her hiding place to return, to return to try to save the children, but realized how futile that would be. She told herself: “If I throw myself to die there won’t be anyone to tell the story. There is no one else but me.”

As she began to regain her health, Rufina committed her life to speaking the truth so that the world could glimpse the lie that was being lived. In her own words: “I feel some fear in speaking of all this... Why would I be afraid of speaking the truth? It has been a reality that they have created and we have to be strong to speak it.”

¹ Col 3.18-21 sets out the established order for this system while 1 Tim 5.2-16 sets out to control the widows because of their ability to subvert it.

² William R. Herzog, II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994, Chapter 12.

³ An advanced agrarian society has an economic surplus lucrative enough to encourage an exploiter class and significant enough to support urban centres and with three types of bureaucracy: financial/legal, military and religious, cf. Gerhard Lenski. *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Stratification*, New York: McGraw Hill, 1966.



Our Destiny - To Glorify God

“Creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God.” (Romans 8.21)

One of the great emphases of the Reformation – that of John Calvin – is the glory of God. According to him, the purpose behind creation itself and the creation of humankind is the glorification of God. While we know that, strictly speaking, only God can glorify God-self, yet in lives that are transparent to God, God’s glory is revealed, just as the “glory” of the sun (light and heat) is revealed in a window open or transparent to the sun. The mind turns immediately to the occasion when Jesus announced the death of Lazarus to his disciples. He declared that the end of the story will not be death but the glory of God revealed in the action of God’s Son. Jesus then proceeds to raise Lazarus from the dead, concretely emphasizing the powerful truth of what he had said before in John 5.24.

The point of John 5.24 is that the hope of Judaism is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The voice of the Son of God that will quicken the dead at the last day is already audible and active in his ministry. Those who hear and believe already have eternal life; for them the experience of death and judgement is already over.

Those who hear and believe, that is, those who have what Paul would describe as “faith” – another great emphasis of Reformation theology – have passed from death to life, the eternal life or life in fullness that was celebrated in Accra, Ghana, and affirmed in the Accra “Confession”. This is

exactly the thrust of Romans 8.1, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” These are the people who live by faith (Romans 1.17). Fullness of life is the portion of those whose rightness with God springs from God’s faithfulness and their own faith. Another way of putting this is to say that the glory of God (i.e. God’s faithfulness) is apprehended in the faith of believers.

Romans chapter 8 describes the life of those who are members of the body of Christ, the practical consequences of the life of faith. The primary obligation of believers is to glorify God, that is to embrace the spiritual way of life and reject its fatal opposite. The hallmark of their faith is to call God “Father” and Jesus Christ “Lord” in earnest. In both cases, the Holy Spirit is at work in believers. And while these believers groan and travail as they await their complete liberation, they are called to be midwives in the birthing of a new world order that includes no less than creation itself and the communities of women and men.

The sons and daughters of God, having themselves apprehended something of the glory of God, have the responsibility of engaging with the Spirit of God in the transformation and redemption of this world so that, in the end, the total picture will be a redeemed humanity of God’s children living in a transformed universe – to the glory of God.

From first to last it is the glory of God. By that and for that we live.



Illustration

A true story

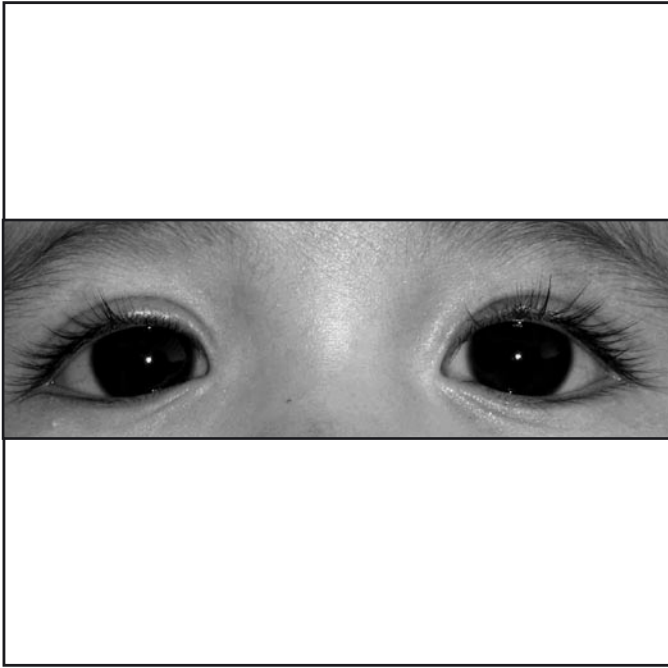
Santa Mission is a settlement of indigenous people or Amerindians as they are called in Guyana. The settlement is located on a small tributary of the Demerara river some forty minutes away by speedboat from Timehri. It consists of about fifty families.

The people subsisted on cassava, which they grew in small garden plots and on fish, which they caught in the tributary. This subsistence diet was augmented by the meat, which the men might bring in from hunting.

Unseasonable weather patterns of late, drought when rain was expected and flooding when rains were not expected made life on the Mission miserable. There is a school, but parents were too poor to afford to send their children to school. Indeed, children were kept away to help with fishing and farming.

Then, the women decided to take things in hand. Much to the annoyance and objection of the male-dominated village council. They organized themselves into work gangs and built dams to prevent the river water from inundating their farms, which they extended. Some travelled to Georgetown and obtained seeds. Now they grow crops other than cassava. Their families' diets are now more wholesome. They have built fish farms behind the river defences where they practise aquaculture and

which provide a regular supply of fish. What is more, they can market fish at Timehri along with cassava bread. They do these things on a co-operate basis. With access to income they can afford to send their children to school properly dressed. They can also afford to take them to health and dental care centres. They have begun to infiltrate the village council and are strong advocates for women's rights, and stern opponents of spouse abuse, trafficking in persons particularly girls, and proponents of adult literacy and numeracy. Their motivation? Their Christian faith.



Children's Story: Restoring Our House Together

A long time ago there was a beautiful old house that had fallen into disrepair. The house was situated in the midst of a growing and changing city. It was a large sprawling home with plenty of room for all kinds of guests. It boasted a solid frame with a good foundation – but it needed work, much work. The sagging beams needed support, the cracked walls required fresh plaster and the faded shutters cried out for paint. It had lost a bit of its welcoming ways over the years. It was no longer the best house it could be. It needed restoration.

The family that lived in the house was very busy doing important things but had neglected some of the best features of the house. But some family members started to express their concern with the state of the house. They weren't interested in building a new one. They wanted to fix the old one. They called for hammers and nails to straighten the beams, plaster for the cracked walls and fresh paint for the shutters that greeted passing neighbours. And these family members called for the whole family to join the restoration work. And so it began.

God's church which Jesus started is like that house.

About 800 years ago some church people began to rally good church people to help restore or reform the church, to make it as good as it could be. They were men and women like Pierre Valdes, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Ulrich Zwingli, Katherine Zell, Jeanne d'Albret and Marie Dentière. They came from several different

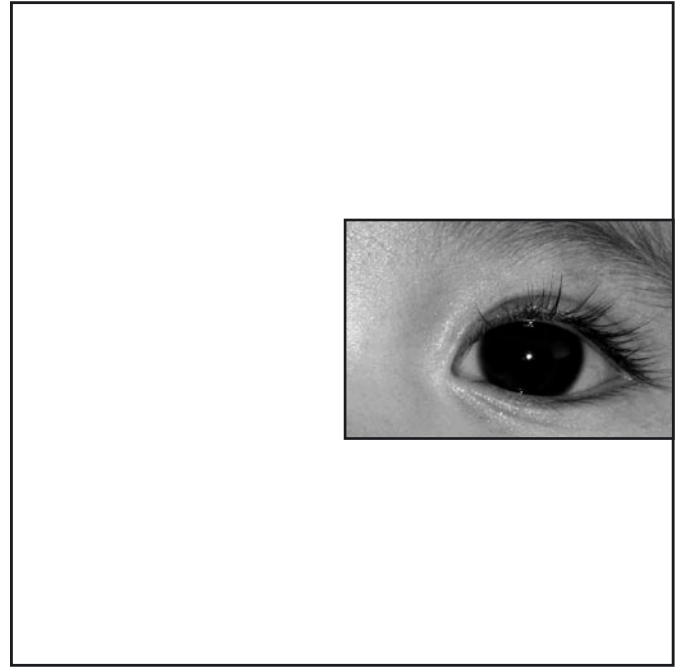
countries around Europe. They were called "reformers" and the great movement that changed the church over many years became known as the Reformation. Today we celebrate Reformation Sunday to remember these church leaders but mostly what they taught us.

The reformers spoke out against the deterioration of the church – not the building but the family of God and how it was behaving. They reminded Christians that God continued to be active in the world and in the church through the Holy Spirit, that God continued to speak to people through the Holy Bible and that every believer had a duty to listen to the teachings of God.

The reformers insisted that all members of the church were important, that each one of them had special gifts to offer the church and the world and that church people should treat each other like sisters and brothers so that the world would understand more about the love of God.

And the great reformers taught that the church must help poor people by sharing the things they owned, and work to make changes in their communities so that there would no longer be any poor people. And some reformers also said it was important to treat nature more gently, not taking more from the land and sea than was truly needed to feed and clothe themselves.

Some groups of these reformers also made strong statements against violence: not just not hitting your brother or sister but also against using guns to kill people you know or people you don't know in wars.



The reformers were not interested in creating a new church – only in making the original church better. They wanted all the people who believed in a loving God and in the coming of God’s son Jesus to create a fairer life on earth for all people to be in one church.

Today, on Reformation Sunday, we thank God for the work and the lessons of the reformers and continue to pray for the unity of the church.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the church and for all the people over the years who have helped to make it the kind of loving place you want it to be. Especially today, on this Reformation Sunday, we thank both the men and women reformers of long ago and those who continue to make things better today. Amen.



Bible Study

Mary's Song of Praises

“God’s mercy extends to those who fear God from generation to generation.
 God has performed mighty deeds with God’s arm;
 God has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
 God has brought down rulers but has lifted up the humble.
 God has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.”
 (Luke 1.50-53)

Overview

Traditionally known as the “Magnificat”, this song of praise has been used in the praises of the Christian churches for a long time. Mary praises God when she hears from the angel Gabriel about the message of the coming of Messiah through her. In this wonderful song, we find that through the coming of the Messiah, a new principle has been accomplished; that is, the so-called principle of reversal.

This principle entails a complete reversal of all human opinions of greatness and insignificance. But, when we hear the song of Mary, we often fail to realize how radical and revolutionary the song really is. In the “Magnificat,” God totally changes the order of things. God turns everything upside down, and puts the bottom on top and the top on the bottom. Here, Mary announces that the proud have been scattered by God’s mighty arm, and the oppressors who tyrannize the poor and lowly are deprived of their power and high standing, but those who are truly humble are exalted and the hungry are blessed, but the rich are shamed.

Reflection and Application

The spirit of the Reformation is for churches to engage in the renewing endeavours in the communities and the world in seeking justice and life in fullness for all people. Churches are called upon to participate in God’s transforming work of the world. In doing so, the church should not remain silent and oblivious in the face of injustices including any form of gender discrimination, hunger and insecurity.



In this song of praise, Mary announces that God is with the oppressed and downtrodden. Through solidarity with the oppressed, God is seeking justice in the world. This is the essence of messianic work. It is amazing to see how well the essence of Christ's ministry is crystallized in such a short song. More amazingly, Mary, a deprived, disadvantaged, exploited woman, is the person who understands the true meaning of the Incarnation. Therefore, churches in the world, as the representatives of Christ, ought to understand the true meaning and purpose of the messianic mission and its revolutionary character. The ministry of the Messiah as perceived by Mary in her song was to be with the downtrodden and to provide solidarity with the underprivileged.

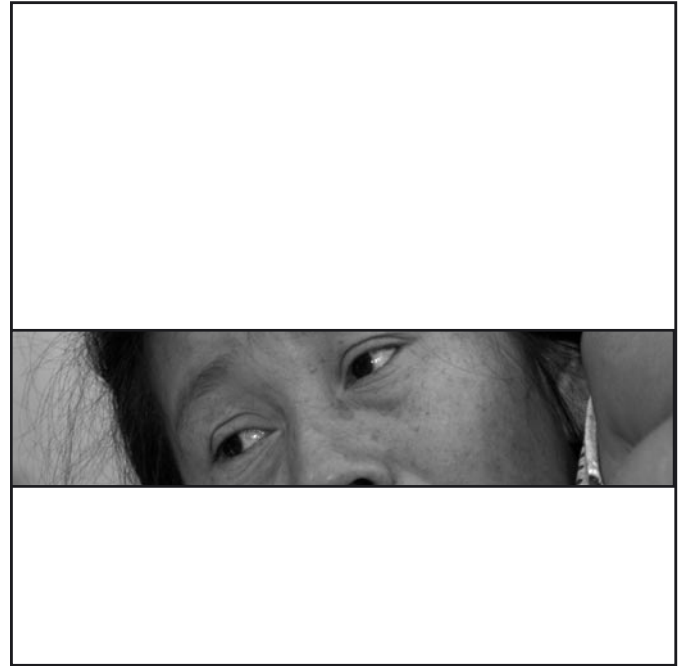
Guidelines for Discussion

1. In your context, who are the rulers that the Messiah brought down from their thrones and who are the hungry and the humble that God is going to lift up?
2. Has God's revolution occurred in your life? Have things been turned upside down due to God's revolutionary work in your life?
3. Taking into consideration the feminization of poverty in the world, based on the fact that 60-70% of the world's poor are women, how do you envisage your churches' participation in God's transformational work?
4. Discuss the situation of women and poverty in your community. Give examples and discuss ways in which your church can speak out against the systemic economic injustices against women, indigenous peoples, youths and ethnic minorities.

Prayer

Dear gracious God,
 We believe that you are the God of all people.
 We believe that you are the God of the
 downtrodden.
 We believe that you are the God of poor women.
 Please help us to renew our spirit so that we
 can be true agents of God's transforming work.
 Please help us to be a reforming force so that we
 can be the light and salt in this suffering world.
 In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord we pray.
 Amen

Bible Study



The Suffering of Hagar and Ishmael

Genesis 16.1-16 and 21.8-21

Out of this harrowing tale of cruelty and suffering, borne by an almost powerless woman and her helpless child, come unexpected messages of hope for those experiencing alienation.

Sarah, aware that God has promised that her husband Abraham will be the father of a great nation, and aware of her own inability to date to have children, offers him her servant, Hagar, to become a sort of surrogate mother. Hagar is treated no better than a possession, a commodity. When she becomes pregnant, we see that she is so much more, a real woman with real feelings. She despises her mistress for the way she has been treated. Sarah's response is to treat her yet more harshly, with the result that she flees.

God, through an angel, intervenes, and persuades her to go back. It is a brave thing to do as she is still a slave but it is within the context of Abraham's family that she and her child become recipients of God's promised blessing. God tells Hagar to give the child the name Ishmael, yishma'el, meaning "God hears". In return, she acknowledges that God is the God who sees, specifically seeing her suffering.

After Isaac is born, relations between Sarah and Hagar do not improve. Sarah is jealous of

Hagar and fearful that it might be through her slave's son that God's promise to her husband is fulfilled. Again treating Hagar as a disposable commodity, she persuades Abraham to get rid of her. Perhaps reassured by God that his promise applies to Ishmael as well as to Isaac, Abraham sends them away. Effectively, without the expectation of divine intervention, Abraham sends them out into the desert to die, the provisions he gives them being insufficient for long-term survival.

As Hagar sets Ishmael down under a bush to die, they both howl in anguish. Neither pray nor call out to God. Theirs is the cry of absolute desolation. But God hears and intervenes a second time. The promise of God was on this child and God could not let him die. From now on, God will be with Ishmael, implying a covenant relationship.

In time, Abraham will put both his sons at risk but with both God intervenes in order that his promise may be fulfilled through both Isaac and Ishmael. The Islamic world traces its spiritual ancestry to Ishmael and this story reminds us that God is committed to followers of Islam as well as Jews and Christians.

For Discussion

Hagar is an archetype for oppressed people. She is a woman, a slave and a foreigner, specifically an African (Egyptian). No matter how cruelly she is abused, God hears and sees her and acts with compassion towards her. To whom is God listening in his world today?



Sarah is motivated by the desire to keep God's promise only for her son. Are there times when we act out of a desire to keep things for ourselves, even the blessings of God? How can we learn better to share what God offers us? Who are the people to whom we should be reaching out? What are the things which we think are hindering us from doing so?

Christians, with Jews and Muslims, revere Abraham, but this story shows how even great people who are highly favoured by God can do evil things. Use this story as an opportunity to examine your own conscience, asking in what ways you may contribute to the oppression of others. What can you do to change lifestyle patterns which deny fullness of life to others?

God works against the trend in this story towards treating Hagar as a disposable commodity, twice rescuing her and her son. All over the world, people are still commodified, women being trafficked across Europe and forced into prostitution, slavery in many forms still being prevalent, people being used by industry and discarded when no longer fit to work, children being forced into armed combat. How does the work of God in this story encourage us to challenge the commodification of people?

Relationships between Christianity and Islam have long been fraught, and perhaps especially now. This story reminds us that, in the eyes of God, Christians and Muslims are cousins, sharing a spiritual grandfather in Abraham. In what ways, in your context can you reach out a hand of familial love to those who follow God through Islam?

Prayer

Almighty God, who sees suffering and hears cries, whose son suffered too and cried in desolation, bring relief to those who are oppressed and bring those who oppress to repentance. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen



Survival of the Fittest and the Slickest: The Impact of Economic Globalization

Introduction

We are two women who live within the reality of economic globalization. Each lives in a community affected differently by this reality but which shares some common experiences of pain and deprivation. Through this article we would like to share our reading of the “signs of the times” in the light of the Accra Confession.¹ We invite you to join our conversation and to bring with you language and images that speak about life (within your local and national situation) in the face of neo-liberal economic globalization.

Our conversation began in Porto Alegre, Brazil, during the 9th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, and continued by email. One of us is from Malawi, currently living in South Africa, and the other lives in the State of Maine in the United States.

What is Neo-Liberal Economic Globalization?

In the 1980s and 90s, “neo-liberal” economic policies were established and enforced by international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and then by the World Trade Organization. A major economic reform of these agencies is Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) imposed on countries seeking financial loans and grants. Structural Adjustment Policies have deeply affected the economies of most of the world’s nations and peoples, and have increased the divide between the rich and the poor both within and between countries. “The mounting

controversy surrounding economic globalization centres on its effects on equity between developing and developed countries as well as within these countries, ecological sustainability, and equality between women and men.”²

Neo-liberal economic globalization is a particular understanding of the way markets should work. It holds that any market, whether within or between countries, will benefit most people most efficiently if it is not controlled or regulated by government. All tariffs and other barriers to the free flow of capital, goods, services and ideas between countries should be removed (“free trade”). Internally, each nation should stop regulating or controlling economic transactions (de-regulation), and public companies (water, electricity, broadcasting, public schools) should be sold to private companies (privatization).

The argument is that government bureaucracies are inherently cumbersome, inefficient, and politically controlled, while private companies are by nature competitive and therefore will provide better services. In the USA this argument has been used in relation to access to public airwaves (radio/television), airline deregulation, and opposition to unions as interference with the free working of the marketplace.

Another way of thinking about this is that according to the rules of the international financial organizations (World Bank and International Monetary Fund), the privileged actor in all economic transactions is money or profit. This way of thinking stipulates that the factor of profit, or how much money a company and its shareholders



will make or lose, be the key factor in informing and determining business decisions. The questions of profit and loss are the only legitimate questions, not whether the ground is being polluted or people are being displaced or exploited. For example, if it costs less to use mercury in gold mining operations, then it is considered efficient even when the consequences mean destruction of people's livelihood and death (as it poisons people and the earth).

In the past many governments understood their responsibilities to include care for vulnerable people through social and medical support systems. According to the neo-liberal economic model, people's welfare is not the responsibility of the state but of the individual. It fails to take into consideration the fact that most people in developing countries and many in developed countries are unable to do so and this has many negative consequences for their lives and for the development of their communities and countries. It also has many serious social consequences such as violence and social unrest, trafficking and the use of narcotics, and the destabilization of families and communities.

An Example from the South: "Blowing the trumpet of warning below the roars of a beast"

Writing these reflections from the South is like blowing the warning trumpet while the neo-liberal economic globalization beast is roaring, at the top of its voice, consumerism slogans for unlimited economic growth and the accumulation of wealth.

For huge South African business enterprises like Pick and Pay and Checkers (Shoprite), the drive to accumulate wealth defies even national boundaries. With the blessings of the greedy political machinery in poorer countries, these economic beasts roar their way to all Sub-Saharan African countries wiping out small local business entrepreneurs who cannot match the unrestrained competition. The huge delivery trucks hoot out pollution all the way to these business depots nationally as well as internationally. In Malawi, even the historic grocery stores such as Kandondo (locally viewed as economic giants) have since been pushed into the margins after suffering humiliating bankruptcy and leaving so many people unemployed. Some of these unemployed masses have no alternative means of livelihood and find themselves joining those who destroy (rape) the earth and creation by desperately cutting trees and burning wood to make charcoal.

Such huge business enterprises not only prosper by economically disabling other local businesses but they also increase their earnings by milking every last drop of effort from their own employees. The masses of those who serve and daily interact with customers are temporary workers who are not entitled to services such as medical aid and pension schemes. Women who are still of childbearing age are in constant danger of losing their jobs because there is often no maternity leave.

For the economically powerful North, AIDS has become more or less a chronic disease due to readily available anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) along with good and effective medical care. In



the South very few persons living with AIDS have access to ARVs. Government hospitals tend to have few medical supplies, because governments have been muzzled and subdued by international economic giants like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and have removed subsidies for health care under conditionalities of their SAPs. Moreover, there is a mass exodus of medical personnel to the North, in search of greener pastures, because government hospitals cannot afford competitive salaries. Some African politicians, with their selfishly calculated gains, advocate health foods for AIDS patients rather than challenging the powerful pharmaceutical companies of the North which monopolize patent rights on ARVs. Less expensive ARVs are available from pharmaceutical companies from the South, for example in India and Brazil, but some governments are afraid of being sued by the pharmaceutical companies of the North for patent violation.

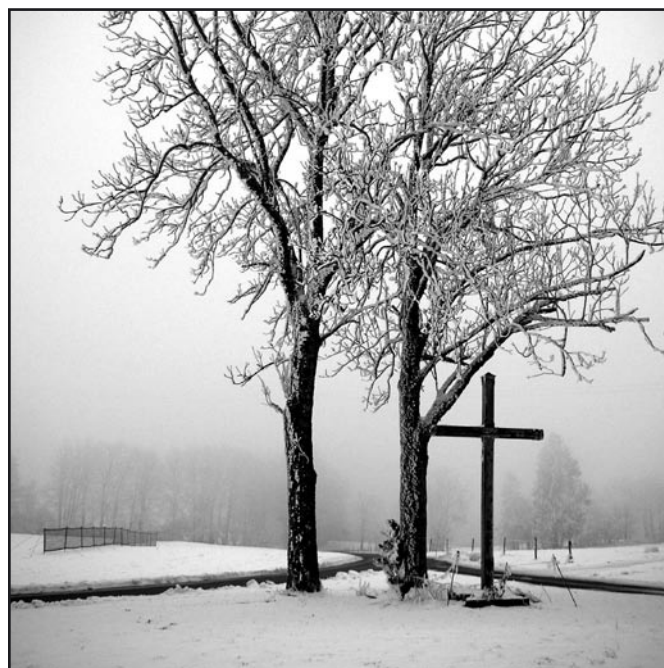
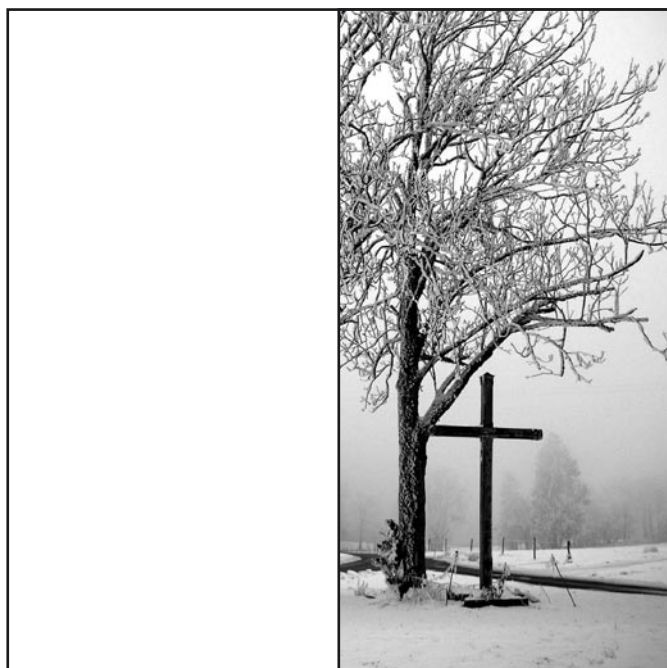
An Example from the North

In Canada and the USA the neo-liberal development model is now called neo-conservative economic and political policy. This shift in terminology can make it difficult for people in the “North” (meaning “developed” countries) to understand the discussion about neo-liberal economic globalization. Perhaps if we take Wal-Mart as an example of neo-liberal (neo-conservative) economic philosophy, the picture will be clearer. Wal-Mart’s motto is “Always the Lowest Prices”, and that is true. These low prices draw shoppers from miles and miles around, giving consumers more for their money, which is good.

Wal-Mart has created 1 in 20 of the new jobs in the USA over the last five years, and as they move into financial services, they provide inexpensive money orders, wire transfers, and check-cashing services for people with low incomes. Wal-Mart stores contribute generously to their communities, most recently donating goods, services and money to the recovery from Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast.

At the same time, their high volume, low price business model drives local manufacturers, producers, farmers, transportation companies, and retailers out of business, notably hardware, grocery, clothing, toy, and jewellery stores. Their move into banking services may do the same to community banks. Many of their stores and distribution centres have been subsidized by local governments as states and regions compete with one another for manufacturers and businesses. These subsidies include industrial revenue bonds, site preparation grants, property tax abatements, state tax credits, enterprise zone tax credits, state job training grants, and infrastructure assistance (roads, sewers, electrical supply). In addition, most of the money spent at a Wal-Mart store leaves the community because the income is not spent on local suppliers. While Wal-Mart does offer health insurance to its employees, many employees cannot afford it and need state Medicaid and other assistance. Some, including the State of Maryland, argue that Wal-Mart employee dependence on state medical subsidies constitutes a shift of the cost of doing business from the company to the state.

If we translate what happens to local economies into the larger picture, globally, think of all those government subsidies as policies of the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Think about Structural Adjustment Programmes and Free Trade agreements. We do not usually see those policies, just as we do not see government subsidies for retail or manufacturing businesses, but they deeply affect our lives. For one thing, subsidies mean that the state or local government receives less tax income from the business, so that the government has less money to provide for schools, roads, and people who live with a variety of disabilities. In the State of Maine, it has meant that the woollen and paper mills, the shoe and shirt factories have almost all closed and moved south or overseas to where the costs are lower. This has shrunk the tax base at the same time as it has increased the burden on state and local governments for re-training workers and/or providing for their welfare. Homelessness and drug addiction have risen, and the population is shrinking as young people move out of the state to find jobs.



Conclusion

As we passionately write this, we hope that this denunciation of the injustices of neo-liberal economic globalization will speak not only to those who have been marginalized by such systems but also to those who have enjoyed some form of benefit from such unjust systems. We pray that together we will by the grace of God commit ourselves, our time, and our energy to changing, renewing, and restoring the economy and the earth, choosing life, so that we and our descendants may live (Deut 30.19).

We offer the following stories about initiatives by persons from the USA and South Africa in resisting neo-liberal economic globalization, seeking justice and finding ways to survive. We invite you to share your stories.

Clean Clothes Campaign

There I was, driving down the highway, talking to a USA supplier of clothing manufactured in Ukraine (yes, I had an earphone). “Working hours? Bathroom privileges? Hourly wages? Overtime pay? Air quality? Safety devices? Regular inspection by independent organizations?”

I was participating in the Bangor Clean Clothes Campaign, part of an international movement that unites the purchasing power of consumers and retailers in working for garment worker justice. It’s a constructive way to respond to economic globalization. For more information about Clean Clothes, go to www.CleanClothesConnection.org

What ways have you found to work for justice in the economy and the earth?

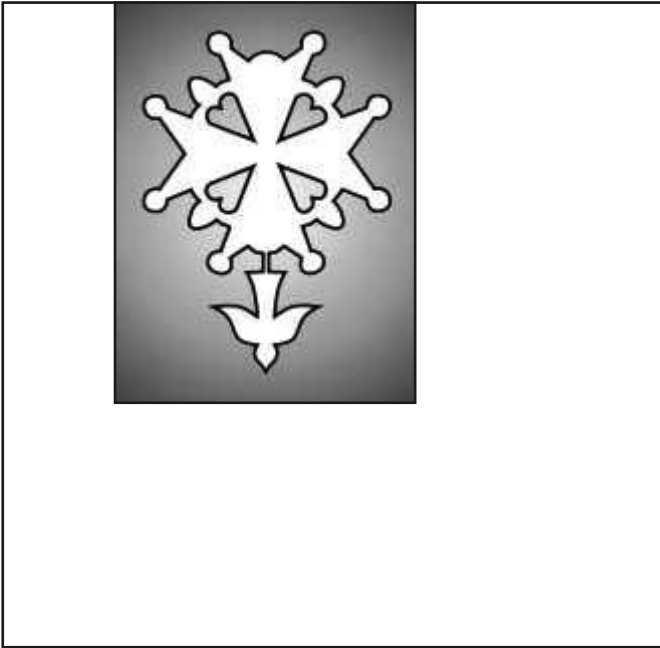
Sankha wekha

They call it “Sankha wekha” (chiChewa for “Take your own pick”) in Malawi; “Salaula” (Bemba for “select”) in Zambia! It is people’s “choice” and their chance to dress decently within their limited economic means. It is the “second-hand” clothing opportunity for people who would prefer to invest their limited income in other necessities than expensive clothing. Many people including professionals such as university professors buy second-hand clothing as they are usually good quality and profits go to small local businesses and charities. For many of us who boycott brand name or designer clothes, we can buy these as second-hand items, since the profits do not go to these big and beastly companies. So let us support our local economies and send a clear message that we do not want foreign conglomerates to eat up our local businesses.

In what ways can you raise awareness about the role of foreign corporations in the economic decline of your country? How can you campaign to support local businesses?

¹ Proceedings of the 24th General Council of WARC, p.153, WARC, Geneva 2005.

² Athena K. Peralta. *A Caring Economy: A Feminist Contribution to Alternatives to Globalization Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE)*, Geneva, WCC - Justice, Peace, and Creation Team, 2005.



The Huguenot Cross is a Protestant symbol, which has existed in various forms since the late 17th century as the emblem of French Protestant refugees. It comprises a Maltese cross made of a four-petal Lily of France, symbolizing the four gospels. The eight rounded points of the cross represent the eight beatitudes. Between the petals are four fleurs-de-lis, each with three leaves, representing the twelve apostles. The dove suspended from the lower central petal with wings spread in a downward flight signifies the Holy Spirit. The open space taking the shape of a heart, formed between the petals and fleurs-de-lis is a symbol of loyalty and suggests the seal of the great French Reformer, John Calvin.

Confession of Faith in the Face of Economic Injustice and Ecological Destruction



We believe in the world created by God,
A common house for both men and women
called to live life in fullness
framed by justice and peace,
your house, my house, our house.

We believe in the life that comes from God,
which is good, which is for all men and women,
which grows in solidarity
and is confirmed when it is shared,
your life, my life, our life.

We believe in God who made a covenant of love,
with groaning creation, longing for salvation,
who reached out with generous hands,
who spoke words of comfort,
who shaped horizons of hope,
a new world without exclusion,
without oppression, without hunger, without
chains,
with life to share and enjoy,
out of love for you, for me, for us.

We believe in the liberating proposal of Jesus,
because he was made human
to be near those he loved,
especially the little ones and the humble,
to listen, to heal, to accompany,
near you, near me, near us.

We believe in the need to live a consistent faith
according to the news of life in fullness
and therefore we reject the economic system
of neoliberal capitalism,
which excludes, alienates, hurts and kills.
I reject it, you reject it, we reject it.

We believe in the alternative of the gospel
which proposes God instead of Mammon,
love, instead of hatred,
respect, instead of intolerance,
peace, instead of violence,
justice instead of exclusion,
fullness of life, instead of meaninglessness.
I believe, you believe, we believe.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
which permeates all of creation,
which lives in each life, and calls each person
to join in the mission of transforming reality.
A Spirit which strengthens the church
and sustains the community of faith,
which encourages God's people to witness
and which keeps untiringly announcing
that the world can be made new.
**It encourages me, it encourages you, it
encourages us.**

We live and confess our faith
being assured of our forgiveness,
in the way of reconciliation,
longing for life in fullness,
constantly looking for unity
in the hope of a new life
and the end of all forms of injustice.
**I live it, you live it, and we shall live it forever.
Amen**



Introducing the World Alliance of Reformed Churches

What is the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)?

WARC is a worldwide movement working together for unity and fullness of life for all, both within the member churches themselves and in the wider context of a world that cries out for justice.

WARC brings together distinct branches of Protestant Christianity rooted in the 16th century Reformation of John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli and John Knox as well as in the movements before the 16th century led by reformers such as Pierre Valdes and Jan Hus. As a continuing body, it is the oldest of organized Protestant world communions. WARC also values the United and Uniting churches in its membership.

The Alliance of the Reformed Churches Throughout the World Holding the Presbyterian System, founded in 1875, merged with the International Congregationalist Council, founded in 1891, in 1970 to form the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational). The uniting General Council was held at Nairobi, Kenya, and delegates agreed to the following covenant: "We, the representatives of Reformed, Presbyterian and Congregational churches in all the corners of the earth, holding the word of God given in the Bible to be the ultimate authority in matters of faith and life, acknowledging Jesus Christ as the head of the church, and rejoicing in our fellowship with the whole church, covenant together to seek in all things the mind of Christ, to make common witness to his gospel, to serve his purpose in all the world, and, in order to be better equipped for

the tasks he lays upon us, to form this day the new World Alliance of Reformed Churches."

Today the Alliance brings together more than 75 million Reformed Christians in 218 churches in 107 countries – united in their commitment to making a difference in a troubled world.

In 2005 WARC made the following statement on its vision: "We are the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, consisting of Reformed, Congregational, Presbyterian, Waldensian, United and Uniting churches. We are called to be a communion of churches joined together in Christ to promote the renewal and unity of the church and to participate in God's transformation of the world."

General Councils Make an Impact

The Alliance has always been committed to playing a key role as a platform through which its member churches fulfil their mission, which includes being agents of transformation and justice in society. Actions from the last four general councils offer dramatic demonstrations of WARC playing this role.

The 21st General Council at Ottawa in 1982 declared that apartheid is a sin and its moral and theological justification a heresy. This was a watershed moment for WARC with it gaining major international attention for its courageous stand.

The 22nd General Council at Seoul in 1989 affirmed the commitment of the Alliance to address injustices experienced by women in church and society by launching a new



programme with full-time staffing for this work. It also questioned the disunity in the manner in which Reformed Churches engage in mission, laying the background for the Mission in Unity Project which came a decade later.

The 23rd General Council at Debrecen in 1997 took very seriously the suffering caused by economic and environmental injustice and called on member churches to commit themselves to a process of recognition, education and confession concerning economic injustice and ecological destruction.

The 24th General Council at Accra in 2004 adopted a confession of faith that stated that “the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization.” Its Accra Confession has been the subject of much attention and study both within churches and beyond.

WARC, then, has a dynamic history of making a difference by bringing churches together, seeking theological clarity that unites churches for social action while struggling for economic, ecological and gender justice. WARC and its two founding organizations have taken a faith stance when life and justice are at stake: for religious freedom for minorities, for freedom for those enslaved by others, for racial equality, for equality in the eras of Nazism and apartheid, for women’s rights in church and society, for a voice for young people when they are silenced, for the human rights of oppressed persons, for justice in sharing and managing the resources of the earth in an age of neoliberal economic globalization.

The Alliance continues to work for justice in the world and unity among churches. It believes it must carry on making a difference in a world where many cry out for justice.

WARC’s Core Callings

In order to facilitate this ministry of justice and unity, WARC in 2005 reorganized its work and its small Geneva secretariat under the following core callings:

- to covenant for justice in the economy and the earth: Programmes include mobilizing churches to address economic and ecological justice issues and advocating for just models for trade, agriculture and economics;
- to search for spiritual renewal and renewal of Reformed worship: Programmes include creating more meaningful forms of worship and deepening the spiritual renewal of churches;
- to foster communion within the Reformed family and the unity of the church ecumenical: Programmes include dialoguing with other communions on critical theological matters and collaborating with church groups on a wide range of justice and theological issues;
- to interpret and re-interpret the Reformed tradition and theology for contemporary witness: Programmes include assisting churches in celebrating Reformed accomplishments and developing leaders for churches;
- to foster mission in unity, mission renewal and mission empowerment: Programmes include finding new ways to be in mission together and strengthening the outreach of



churches in all parts of the world;

- to promote inclusivity and partnership in church and society: Programmes include addressing gender inequality and violence and making a place for women and youth in society;
- to enable Reformed churches to witness for justice and peace: Programmes include advocating for human rights and supporting peace initiatives.

A small Alliance staff, organized in a flexible structure, and Networks made up of WARC Executive Committee members and volunteers from member churches around the world, work on numerous programmes based on a set of values that include:

- the renewal of the church by the word of God discerned in partnership and with full partnership with one another;
- conciliarity which is togetherness, mutual accountability, strengthening and learning;
- the commitment to justice, diversity, reconciliation and sufficiency that responds to the cries of suffering people and the groans of creation.

WARC carries out this work through the following Networks:

- covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth and enabling Reformed churches to witness for justice and peace;
- communion within the Reformed family and unity within the church ecumenical;
- interpreting and re-interpreting the Reformed tradition and theology for contemporary witness and for spiritual renewal;

- fostering mission in unity, mission renewal and mission empowerment;
- gender justice;
- youth;
- finance and fundraising;
- communications.

In addition, WARC responds to mission and development challenges, devastating disasters and emergencies through the Reformed Churches Partnership Fund.

From the beginning the Alliance has been strongly interested in Christian unity. It has endorsed attempts to unite churches in particular countries and mission fields and today is engaged in dialogues with Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Lutherans, the Orthodox and others.

A “Major Step for Unity”

In what has been heralded as a “major step for unity” within the Reformed family, WARC leaders along with a team of leaders from the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC), recommended in February 2006 that a new global body named the World Reformed Communion be formed to represent the more than 80 million Reformed Christians worldwide. This recommendation will have to be processed by the governing bodies of both WARC and REC. REC has 12 million members in 39 churches in 25 countries. The two bodies, which have 27 common member churches, have been in bilateral talks since 1998.

WARC communicates about all these initiatives through its quarterly newsletter, *Update*, regular



news releases and the WARC website (www.warc.ch) and it offers analysis of the theological issues at the heart of the Reformed family in its quarterly journal, *Reformed World*. It also publishes many other studies and in 2005 jointly published with the World Council of Churches Calvin's *Economic and Social Thought* by André Biéler and *The World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Modern Ecumenical Movement* by WARC Executive Secretary for Theology and Ecumenical Engagement, Odair Pedroso Mateus.

WARC relies on the contributions it receives from member churches and the generosity of donors to continue its myriad programmes and publications. Many WARC member churches are located in the poorest regions of the world. All give out of a commitment to making a difference. Some congregations and individuals also willingly give to WARC.

You are encouraged to visit the WARC website (www.warc.ch) where you can learn more about WARC, get involved and be part of making a difference. You can also contribute to the Reformed Churches Partnership Fund that offers development and emergency assistance, give to the Theological Education Scholarship Fund for Women in the South, subscribe to WARC's *Update* and *Reformed World* and/or purchase one of our publications.

The current President of WARC is Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA). WARC has six Vice Presidents and 33 other members in its Executive Committee. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with a

dedicated staff team led by Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana.

WARC continues to welcome your feedback as we continue in our efforts to build communion and unity among churches, work for justice and transformation in the world and follow Jesus who came "that all may have life in fullness." Write to us at warc@warc.ch



About the Writers

Rev. Dr Clifton Kirkpatrick,
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Clifton Kirkpatrick is the President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. He is also the Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi,

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Setri Nyomi is the General Secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Rev. Dr Lukas Vischer,

Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches

Lukas Vischer is a professor emeritus of ecumenical theology at the University of Berne, Switzerland, former Moderator of the WARC Theology Department (1982-1989), and lives in Geneva.

Rev. Gerardo Carlos Cristian Oberman,
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Gerardo Oberman is a pastor of the Reformed Churches in Argentina. He is co-founder of the liturgical network *Red Create* and executive producer of various publications of Latin American Christian music.

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Peter Cruchley-Jones is a minister of the United Reformed Church in the UK. He works in pastoral ministry in Cardiff, Wales, and also teaches Mission on an ecumenical course in St Michael's Theological College.

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Sonja Rauchfuss is a final year student of the Faculty of Theology of the Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany. In 2005 she served as Youth Intern with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Ms Lei Garcia,

United Church of Christ in the Philippines

Lei Garcia has heard and seen the sufferings of her people in the Philippines and is committed to work creatively for justice and emancipation. She believes that serving the poor and the oppressed is an imperative of the Christian faith we profess.

Rev. Tara Tyme, United Church in Jamaica and
the Cayman Islands

Tara Tyme is a pastor of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. She represents her church in the Caribbean and North American Area Council of WARC.

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Rotaiti Kabatiiaa is a minister of the Kiribati Protestant Church in the town of Betio on the island of Tarawa of the Republic of Kiribati. She works as an associate minister to the Betio Church.

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Dorcas Gordon is a biblical scholar whose interests lie in the area of New Testament hermeneutics. She is the Principal of Knox College (a Presbyterian College), Toronto, Canada.

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Dale Bisnauth is the Moderator of the Guyana Presbyterian Church. He is also the Minister of Labour, Human Services and Social Security, Government of Guyana.

Ms Akpene Esther Nyomi,
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Akpene Nyomi now lives in Geneva and has served as Sunday School teacher at the Church of Scotland, Geneva.

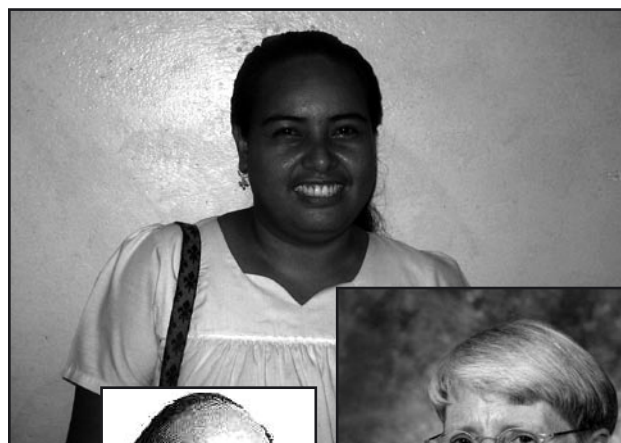
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Bokyoung Park teaches Missiology at the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary in Seoul, Korea. She also serves as a pastor in a congregation for mentally handicapped persons.

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Alexander Horsburgh is a parish minister of the Church of Scotland. He serves on the WARC Executive Committee.

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Rev. Dr Susan Davies,
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Susan Davies is Professor of Pastoral Studies and Dean of Students and External Relations at Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine, USA. She serves on the WARC Executive Committee.

Mr John Asling,
United Church of Canada
John Asling is the Executive Secretary for Communications of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.



In this authoritative work, Steve Douglas and economist André Biéler examine the economic and social thought of the reformer Johannes Calvin as a starting point to explore history that transformed European understanding of work and private work and leisure, civil government and the responsibility of citizens.

John Calvin, being and reading in Geneva, then Geneva centre of trade and banking in the 16th century when thought was mostly about economic and social issues, writing the Institutio Christianae Religionis in the 1530s and 1540s. In the past and approach of the work, Calvin's application of the teaching of the Bible is practical, aware of his place and time space in an ever-changing situation.

André Biéler examines the reformer's social ethics within the context of the proclamation of the Christian gospel and doctrine, carefully differentiating the authentic views of Calvin from those of later Calvinists, Protestants and even modern theologians in the United States, England and elsewhere.

Biéler's authoritative work, a synthesis of Calvin's own writing and reading, has inspired study since its French edition first appeared in 1999. With this new edition, it becomes available for the first time in English translation.

André
Biéler

CALVIN'S ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

CALVIN'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL THOUGHT



*reformed
Ludwig Calvin*

André Biéler



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“The spirit of the Reformation calls us in each new age to look towards the renewal and reformation to which God is calling our churches today and into the future.” Clifton Kirkpatrick