

## ACRC Statement on the Tenth Anniversary Celebration of Accra Confession

### Preamble

*In Nairobi, Kenya, on the 26th to the 28th September 2014, at the Desmond Tutu Centre of the All Africa Conference of Churches, 27 delegates of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC), in partnership with the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), together with ecumenical friends, held a consultation intended to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Accra Confession.*

*Through inspiring Bible studies and God's guidance, critical theological perspectives on the Accra Confession, reflections on the ecological, economic, socio-political and religious context on the continent of Africa, they discerned what the future activities on the faith stance of the Accra Confession could be in a number of ways.*

*Notwithstanding the challenges the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches has faced since the adoption of the Accra Confession, the consultation was re-energized and motivated to discern opportunities to participate in the WCRC communion building, justice programme and programmatic strategies for future prophetic witness and activities by member churches to strengthen the impact of the Accra Confession on the continent of Africa in particular and the globe.*

### Listening and discerning together

Delegates of the consultation, through worship and inspiring presentations, group and plenary discussions, guided by the power of the Holy Spirit discerned *inter alia* that:

- The Bible gives testimony of a life-giving God, e.g. in the story of Creation (Gen 1:27) and that the earth is the Lord's; God owns the whole of creation (Psalm 24), and through the Gospel of Jesus Christ continues to promise fullness of life despite the degradation of creation by selfish human acts manifest in the suffering of millions in Africa and other parts of the world.
- The Accra General Assembly in 2004 employed the Biblical understanding of Babylon as empire<sup>1</sup> to conceptualise the convergence of military violence, economics, politics, religion and culture as empire in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that destroys the whole of creation and life. In harnessing its resources of faith the Accra Confession is a prophetic faith stance, aligned with the heritage of other confessions that irrupted in crisis situations that undermined the integrity of life and the dignity of creation and humanity.
- Empire has worsened in the ten years after the adoption of the Accra Confession.
- Accra speaks to the theological understanding of human dignity, challenging the African Church to constantly critique her own internal contradictions in the light of the commodification of life and her complicity in furthering the death dealing effects of Empire.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and the Evangelical Reformed Church in Germany, after much deliberation have come to a definition of empire as we have stated in the Preface, but find important enough to repeat at this point. "We speak of empire, because we discern a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power in our world today. This is constituted by a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind. An all encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while exploiting creation, imperiously excludes, enslaves and even sacrifices humanity. It is a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed – the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel of consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed. It is a colonization of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life," Boesak, A. Weusmann, J. Amjad-Ali, C. 2010. *Dreaming A Different World-Globalisation and Justice for Humanity and the Earth, The Challenge of the Accra Confession for the Churches Dreaming a Different World*, p23.

## Challenges on the Work of Accra

Confessing its own omissions in furthering the work of Accra on the continent, in the light of evidence about little awareness of the confession among member churches, while affirming efforts<sup>2</sup> made by a few members in the region to keep the work of the confession alive, the consultation offered its own critique of the Accra Confession and identified *inter alia*:

- The language of justice in the Accra Confession dichotomises eco-justice from gender justice, thereby potentially excluding other women whose experiences and location in Africa are pertinent to the cries for justice that God equally listens to.
- Ten years after the adoption of the Accra Confession and continuing efforts to enhance its witness among member churches and the continent at large, we are witnesses to the undying stubbornness of empire as seen in the harrowing experiences of the death of consciousness among victims of centuries of oppression and racial, economic, cultural and sexist exclusion.
- The relationship between the Belhar and Accra confessions should be mutually held together in order for their prophetic contribution to offer a framework for African Christianity and its own theology.

## Way Forward

The consultation, after listening, critiquing and discerning its witness to the prophetic stance of the Accra Confession, grappled with the need to move out of the “mission-station” mind-set, identifying some of the theological principles and activities in the interim to advance its work of the Accra Confession. The consultation:

- Urges the ACRC executive committee to encourage the leaders of member churches to motivate their denominations to support ACRC’s work and to find ecumenically minded persons to solicit support for the ACRC and WCRC.
- Urges the ACRC executive committee to discern and investigate the role of the ACRC in the life of the African Union and other pan-African bodies as the ACRC speaks prophetically in the African context.
- Seeks the creation of opportunities for African church leaders, theologians, pastors and Christians to discuss cultural and spiritual experiences that are uniquely African.
- Urges the ACRC executive committee to investigate opportunities and facilitate processes for theological reflection, including the organization of conferences, scholarships and stimulating engagement on the Accra Confession.
- Acknowledges a lack of participation by the youth and differently abled people of the continent in its activities generally, and resolves to convene a youth consultation and a similar consultation for differently abled people on the Accra Confession in the region as a starting point in consultation with ecumenical partners and networks.
- Requests all member churches in the region to remember in prayer victims of harmful religious practices and violence particularly in the continent and around the globe as a whole.

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<sup>2</sup> Boesak, A. Weusmann, J. Amjad-Ali, C. 2010. *Dreaming A Different World-Globalisation and Justice for Humanity and the Earth, The Challenge of the Accra Confession for the Churches Dreaming a Different World*

- In partnership with the WCRC “Broken for You” project, pledges solidarity with African young women and men who are victims of the evil acts of human trafficking and child abuse on the continent.
- Denounces power obsession in all structures of member churches so as to enhance and live out the teachings and principles of the Accra Confession.
- Seeks means to discuss and translate the Accra Confession into all official languages of the region and encourage member churches to ensure its dissemination in vernacular.
- Suggests developing liturgies and Bible study material on the Accra Confession that challenge the status quo.
- Suggests compiling narratives of the victims of socio-economic, ecological and religious violence so as to develop prophetic story-telling in public witness.
- Encourages member churches to participate in prophetic policy making processes at levels of the WCRC.
- Encourages member churches to declare environmental days in their annual plans to grow rather than plant trees.
- Celebrates, in partnership with the community of the WCRC, the thirtieth anniversary of the Belhar Confession in 2016.

#### **Prayer**

God in your Mercy, journey with us your servants, in your Mission to transform and restore your Creation to the fullness of life in Christ Jesus.