

**10 years from the “Accra Confession”
We ratify our commitment with the
“Alliance Economic Justice and the Life on Earth”**

*“Since you did it for one of the least important
of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.
Since you didn’t do it for one of the least important
of these, you didn’t do it for me.”
–Matthew 25:40 & 45*

Background

In the last quarter of the 20th century, Christianity entered in a confessional emergency period: military dictatorships in South America, totalitarian governments, apartheid in South Africa, civil wars, revolutions, the fall of the Berlin Wall, globalization, “Free Trade Treaties.” In view of the dramatic historical changes, the Reformed confessional family found itself challenged to react against the reality of the world stating its faith and updating its speech in order to go with that context. From the Reformed perspective, the faith takes risks if it doesn't react against the injustices.

The Accra Confession was born within a long reflection process, since the increasing situations of injustice to which we, the church, are called to preach the Gospel of love and justice. Within this process we remember:

- 1989, 22nd Assembly of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Seoul, South Korea. A call to all member churches is made in order to get together in favor of economic justice.
- 1995, Theological Consultation in Kitwe (South Africa).
- 1997, World Alliance of Reformed Churches’ Assembly in Debrecen declares the *Processus Confessionis*.
- 2004, WARC Assembly in Accra, Ghana, the “Alliance for economic justice and life on earth:” Accra Confession.
- 2010, World Communion of Reformed Churches’ (WCRC) Unification Assembly, Grand Rapids, United States. The WCRC ratified the Accra Confession, not as another document but as a pact and a commitment, current and renewed in the communities through the reflective process led by the final document of the “Global Theological Consultation about Communion and Justice” which took place in Cartigny, Switzerland, in 2010 for the General Assembly:

“Communion and justice have always been core callings of Reformed people, but never more urgently than today. In Jesus Christ God has justified us. God who is just sanctifies us and calls us to do justice. In the commitment to justice we are called to act faithfully with what God has entrusted to us. Working for justice we see the world through the prism of God’s grace making manifest God’s love. Through covenanting for justice we are part of God’s work in the whole creation, “to clothe ourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:24)

- 2012, Meeting on the New International Financial Architecture, Sao Paulo, Brazil, mentions in its new Declaration: *The 2008 global financial and economic crash increased poverty and unemployment among millions in the global North and worsened and deepened poverty, hunger and malnutrition among even larger numbers in the global South, already experiencing decades of poverty and deprivation caused by injustices in international financial and economic relations. A system of speculation, competition and inadequate regulation has failed to serve the people and instead has denied a decent standard of life to the majority of the world’s population. The situation is urgent.*

Meaning and impact to our churches

More than 10 years after this *processus confesionis*, which culminated in our Accra Confession, we can affirm as Reformed Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean that we consider it as an echo to the clamour of millions of poor people who beg God to intervene in their liberation from poverty and in defense of human dignity (Exodus 2:23-25). The "Accra Confession" has allowed us to actualize the Good News of the Gospel in our reality, from our Reformed tradition, to announce hope and certainty that a new heaven and a new earth are possible (Revelations 21, 1ss). Therefore, the Reformed family in the region has promoted Christian education processes in the churches, it has organized courses in the theological education institutions, it has done publishing, and some of our churches have included them in their Book of Confessions. The confession is allowing us to strengthen our impact commitment from the analysis of the signs of the times, in order to hold talks with the government's representatives about the changes and reforms that the new economic model needs to make better conditions for our people's lives.

"The Church [is] Reformed, Always Reforming" (*Ecclesia Reformata, Semper Reformanda*) is not only a motto, but part of our identity, which appealed us to hold up the faithfulness to the Gospel of full life through the constant renovation of the church, through a continual reading of the signs of the times. However, and in view of the new economic model crisis which increases poverty and inequality in all regions of our world, as well as the ecological devastation and its implications shown in the climate change, we recognize in a humble way that our word and action as churches have been weak and inadequate.

In the theological horizon of the "Accra Confession", we have Jesus as center and model. In its Christology the human being is affirmed as a total and holistic being. Accra commits us to choose the radicalism of the love that is lavished on humanity, and the whole creation. Love which turns into peace with justice, and into dignity to the people. Love which transforms the people into a better distribution of the existing resources, in order to satisfy the decent needs of well living. Love which walks towards a "theology of the enough."

Accra explicitly exposes the ideal of "human being" from the exclusionary capitalist system, characterized by exploitation and selfishness, where humanity represents an object, or a means to rescue the Biblical image of the human being in God's image, only subject. Accra exposes tactically the absence of freedom and rights in the totalitarian systems.

The different types of migration in the world, internal as well as external, are usually related to the economic, social or political situation and the mistreatment of the nature, condemned in the "Accra Confession". As we shared the situation of the community "Predio el Tamarindo," in the Colombian and Caribbean, we got to know one of the cases of internal migration caused by the negative impact of the Free Trade Treaties, which have generated many violent forced displacements in Latin America. We saw how people like in "ASOTRACAMPO" get together to protect their lands. We have experienced in an explicit way the need to keep confessing our faith in the spirit of the "Accra Confession". We need to express that we must denounce this sin and announce that Jesus came to teach that every person must restore his or her dignity back. (Jn. 10:10)

This are signs of how human beings have learned to behave negatively, bringing violent relationships through our way of making economy in a speculative way, hardly democratic politics, which culminate in a negative patriarchal relationship that falls into a terrible mistreatment of nature. This type of ethic behavior denies our human values and even more our Christian spirituality.

Context and validity

"I am a person of black African descent.... I have no more tears, I have no more strength, I don't want to live anymore. A friend of yours asked me if she could make a book with my name and with a picture of me, from here a answer her: make your book, use my picture and use my name, and if that saves "Tamarindo"

and saves Colombia, sign it with my blood too."

–Marisol (Colombian woman 3 times displaced before arriving to Predio Tamarindo", where she has been, once again, displaced)

Over the years, and the recent crisis of the current economic system, which affects the Northern countries, shows that its capacity to produce poverty has no limits. Therefore, we can affirm today that the world economy has an undeniable reality: rich people are getting richer and poor people are getting poorer. It is not necessarily an academic study to see what happens in Latin America, where the gaps of incomes and wealth are getting dramatically bigger every day. Here we hold the inequality world title, with an average GINI coefficient of 0,51. In this sense, the Global Wealth Report from the Credit Suisse Research Institute found that the richest 10% of the world owns 84% of the world's wealth, while the poorest half owns only 1%. The same survey found that the richer 1% owns already 46% of the world's assets. On the other side, 50% of those with lower incomes own hardly 1%.

The OEA joined the international debate on inequality, when they turned it into a central theme in their meeting in Paraguay. They affirm that the economic growth itself does not resolve inequality and that the continent has changed a lot "for good" with the progressive governments in the last years, in terms of democratic progress and economic growth, but that this progress has not been complete. This is because the economic growth "has not turned our countries into more egalitarian societies. On the contrary, there still remains a high level of injustice in the distribution of wealth and the access to social goods, an inequality so big, that it even damages our democratic fabric."

This growing inequality is creating a consumer human being, without social sensibility and with a spirituality that focus on competition and its prosperity based on individual success in order to access the goods that are needed to live and be happy. In this way, the economic model denies the grace of God to all human beings and promises salvation through the accumulation and the economic growth.

Challenges and Tasks

10 years after the Accra Confession, the member churches of AIPRAL:

- Celebrate the strength of the God of justice, who challenges to resist in hope and solidarity and encourages us to commit in new prophetic actions where there is suffering and injustice.
- We recognize that we need to improve our commitment as confessing churches through strategies and actions that allow all members of our ecclesial community to know and interiorize what we confessed in Accra.

Therefore with the force of the Holy Spirit we promise:

- To recover a spirituality linked to God that protects human life and all His creation, that allows us to resist the dehumanization and insensitivity that produces the consumer culture and individualistic to the service of the God of the current economic model.
- To develop pedagogic and educative processes in our national and local churches, in the theological education institutions and in catechism spaces, which focus on the Gospel of full life that forms human beings that resist the god of this world, maintaining hope and building social alternatives in faithfulness with the God of life.
- From AIPRAL we ask God that His spirit moves the leadership of all our churches so that they encourage their ecclesiastic body to include "The Accra Confession" in their books of confession or founding documents.
- To translate the vision and theological challenges of the "Accra Confession" into a language that can be showed in public forums, in governments, in IMF spaces and the World Bank, in the intergovernmental organism of the region, to have an effect that serves as an alternative

for the current economic model or any other model of authoritarian system that doesn't state positively de good living of the whole creation.

- To participate and support community processes and social sectors that build economic, cultural and politic alternatives which focus on the defense of human dignity, the value of work y the protection of God`s creation, from which we all take part.
- To strengthen the dialogue and the communion with our sister churches in the Global North and South in order to organize a joint strategy that allows to keep resisting and searching alternatives to the current economic model, which makes its devastating consequences in this common house that God has given us to live in communion and justice.

*Now we proclaim with passion that we will 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 might live*
–Deuteronomy 30.19
Accra Confession (Art. 42)

This document has been produced and approved in the Consultation on the 10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession, which took place in Branquilla, Colombia, 3-5 June 2014.

Footnote: All quoted documents are available at <http://wrcr.ch/>