



17 November 2015

*Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. —Romans 12:16-21 (NRSV)*

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

We have long known that we live in a corrupt, sinful world where life is not valued, where structural injustices make God's creation groan. Our hearts have grown weary watching the pattern of spiralling violence repeat itself in country after country.

Again we have seen the evidence of this global crisis in the recent attacks against innocents in Beirut and Paris. And again we have seen political leaders react with military assaults instead of addressing the root causes of injustice, exclusion and oppression.

We condemn all violent actions and reactions. Violence has no place in this world so loved by God—in any place, at any time or for any reason. This includes violence perpetrated by the powerful on the weak, violence under the guise of any religion and the structures of violence propagated by a global military-industrial complex.

The National Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon has written: "Violence indeed negates the will of God who wills life for all. ...We call upon the whole world to stand against all acts of violence, to do all that is possible to bring to an end the tragic events in Syria, Iraq and other places. ...We invite all who believe in the God of life to pray with us so that the PEACE OF GOD may prevail in our world."

And from the United Protestant Church of France: "In the face of such fear and despondency, what can we do? We can pray. ...We can listen and we can share our words. ...We can also nurture the solidarity and fraternity, so fragile and so precious, with which we have been entrusted."

In this time of profound crisis, where smouldering fear is again stoked into flames, we must join our sisters and brothers in Lebanon, France, Syria, Iraq and around the world to boldly speak in the name of the God of Life.

As churches of a Communion dedicated to realising God's Kingdom here on earth, we must advocate for solutions that address the situation as a whole, that create peace-building

initiatives that address the root causes. We must collectively press our respective governments to radically change their policies to:

- prioritise peacemaking and reconstruction over violence and destruction
- welcome all as neighbours rather than build fences
- care for the marginalised and poor instead of shunting them into slums
- people as God's children instead of labeling them as "other"

Only when we are able to shift the conversation and change the priorities will we be able to effectively address these deep structures of injustice where wars and conflict are cloaked in false claims of religion.

Our calls for action must of course come with constant prayer and a profound recognition of our responsibility as God's people committed to do as much as we possibly can to transform the world for justice, reconciliation and peace.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CF', written in a cursive style.

Chris Ferguson  
General Secretary