

## **MESSAGE FROM THE ACRC/NEAAC BI-REGIONAL CONSULTATION, HELD AT APAADE LODGE HOTEL, TESANO, GHANA FROM THE 16<sup>TH</sup> TO 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER, 2015**

Delegates of the two regions of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)—the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC) and Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC)—met in a bi-regional consultation under the theme “*Gender Reading of the Signs of Times: Bi-regional Conversations, Accra Confession + 10*” in Tesano, Accra, Ghana, 16-21 November 2015.

The general objective of the consultation was to reflect together through the lenses of gender perspective and different contexts on our challenges as churches facing the global situation of violence, injustice and degradation of both human beings and nature.

Opening each day with a Bible study, the consultation set off on quite an engaging mode, with various voices attempting to deconstruct as well as read various texts in the Bible—Esther, Gospel of Mark and Revelation, from a womanist perspective.

In the keynote address, the centrality of the Word of God was reiterated. Drawing from the experience of the 24<sup>th</sup> General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches from which came the Accra Confession, the radical implications of the reading of the signs of times and Scripture to our faith was emphasized; unless we act out of faith against the realities we see, our integrity is at stake. A question worth asking is whether things have changed since the General Council in 2004, and how the church can then continue looking on when there is so much brokenness: human trafficking, enslavement in our very countries, current arrangement of the world’s economy, domestic violence, unemployment, sexual harassment. We heard also from Northeast Asia Area Council about discrimination and violence against diverse sexualities. The conclusion was that the Church needs to put its house in order first and be able to critique itself. Various presentations, which reflected experiences from various contexts helped to emphasize the point above; the struggle continues.

To enable the delegates to have a deeper understanding of the question of justice from the painful history of slavery, the ACRC organized a moving visit to the Elmina Castle in Ghana. The hypocrisy demonstrated in having a Reformed chapel above the female dungeon where human beings were commoditized, maltreated and starved to death when they resisted inhuman actions like rape, and the general treatment of all the slaves demonstrates how the Church can allow itself to become the cultural guardian of the symbols of domination and subjugation—an apostasy to the mission of the church.

The delegation was honoured to be warmly welcomed by leaders of both the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church Ghana (EPC) and a host of other local members which included a choir. The week’s experiences will remain memorable, as well as serve as a catalyst as we prayerfully engage in working and waiting for the new earth, a context in which righteousness and justice flow like a river.

After a process of discernment and studying the Word of God the delegates committed to work at the following issues and call the attention of all the member churches to the same:

1. Churches to facilitate training and re-training of ministers in order to have life-affirming biblical interpretation.
2. Work at amending policies and constitutional provisions that impede the full participation of all, for instance in the area of women and ordination, so that men, women, youth and children are not only represented but have a voice.
3. Develop a Bible study model for use in local churches to encourage participation.
4. Enhance the network between the member churches, regions and the international Communion and support their work as well as ensure fair representation in the same for all delegations.
5. Create/strengthen justice desks in all our member churches.
6. Break the silence!