

Accra Confession: Global Consultation Report

Accra Confession: Ten Years Later

What have we done?

The Accra Confession emerges from the suffering and struggle of the people of God to live life in its fullest. As we celebrate ten years of the Accra Confession, we recognize that its adoption by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches broke new ground on an issue that was necessary and urgent. The Accra Confession has provided the basis for missional engagement in new and radical ways, becoming a paradigm-changing moment in the history of the Reformed communion.

Over the last ten years the Accra Confession has inspired conversations around what it means to live faithfully as disciples of Christ in the midst of economic injustice. Within the communion and beyond, these conversations provided for a new shared language for the naming of injustice and the call to build a just world. The Accra Confession recognized the connection between the ecological and economic crises and spoke of covenanting for the economy and the earth.

At the same time, certain concepts within the confession challenged member churches, particularly language around empire and neo-liberalism, confession and communion. Despite these contentions, the Accra Confession brought people together around justice issues.

What have we gained?

One of the most important gains since the Accra Confession was adopted has been the document itself: a confession that arose out of the cries and struggles of the global South, resonating with those who suffer in all parts of the world, and strengthening knowledge of North/South dynamics. In discerning the signs of the times, the Accra Confession has proven prophetic.

Since 2004, the Accra Confession has afforded us many opportunities to gain partners who are walking together, such as CWM, LWF, WCC, WSCF, resulting in many initiatives including the New International Financial and Economic Architecture. New faith-based social movements, such as Oikotree and Peace for Life, and numerous publications have also been made possible in part because of the principles of the Accra Confession. The confession also gives us entry points for individuals, churches, NGO's and even governments to engage realities of power, domination, inequality, gender injustice and climate change.

What has happened since 2004?

The emergence of the WCRC as a communion that brought the WARC and the REC together reaffirmed the centrality of the Accra Confession. The confession produced a number of consultations and conversations, among which were the South Africa—German dialogue, the Oikotree project, the São Paulo statement on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture and a Gender Reading of the Accra Confession, helping all involved come to terms with the meaning of some of the challenges of the Accra Confession.

The global financial crisis of 2008 confirmed the Accra Confession's definition of empire as "the coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power that constitutes a system of domination led by powerful nations to protect and defend their own interests." It also brought to light the convergence of interconnected and complex issues, such as global warming and extreme climate disasters, increased nationalism and non-state players affecting global and regional politics, sustained militarization, the shift in global political and economic powers, agri-business, and unjust trade agreements.

At the same time there has been an emergence of social movements in response to these issues. Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement are a couple of examples of these social movements.

What is missing?

We recognize that the world and economic powers look different today than they did at the 2004 drafting of the Accra Confession. Neo-liberal economics, race and patriarchy have entangled in legion manner. Economic inequality has increased exponentially and the obstinate persistence of racism and racial tensions escalate. Group identities that are most influenced by the effects and realities of empire include but are not limited to discrimination based on caste, indigeneity, gender, sexuality, and disabilities.

We must now work to address the effects of an unjust neo-liberal economic system in a more integrated manner that analyzes and responds to these unjust social, political, and economic realities. These interconnections include: growing inequalities that link to human trafficking, displacement and migration; environmental racism, the dangers of nuclear power plants and their vulnerability in the midst of extreme climate change; and political crises which lead to religious and political fundamentalism. We also cannot ignore the deepening of the Palestine-Israel conflict as well as other conflicts around the world.

What is the urgent prophetic response?

We, as the WCRC, are called to respond in new ways to the signs of the times in this new day, 2014. We are called to faith in God, faithfulness to the Word of God, and action according to the principles laid out in the Accra Confession. We recognize that the present social and economic crisis and the state of endless war constitute a crisis of faith and therefore needs a response of faith to witness to the God of Life.

We are called to repentance and confession for the ways in which we each have been complicit in the inequalities and injustices which we have named in this document.

We commit ourselves to openness to the challenges of the Accra Confession itself as new crises arise and call for new understandings of our own prophetic faithfulness.

We commit ourselves to liberation and resistance against all forms of domination.

We commit to work together with partners and social movements with whom we walk this journey of justice.

We commit to deep listening to voices on the margins and those we have silenced, as well as to the voice of the Spirit as she speaks to us through other religious communities.

And therefore we commend to the WCRC body, in its entirety, these action areas:

- Critical reading of scripture and creative resources for congregations to witness to the God of Life
- Caste
- Climate change
- Gender and sexuality
- Human trafficking
- Immigration and migration
- The New International Financial and Economic Architecture
- Racism
- The theology of enough

The World Communion of Reformed Churches Area Councils commit to the following:

From ACRC:

Based on the regional meeting in Nairobi, what is our priority, how do we want to do it, how might this play out at a global level?

- Diverse African spirituality to be embraced
- *Ubuntu* concept to be encouraged. "I am because we are" as our optic framework
- How do we bring an economy of life in the midst of an economy of death?
- *Ubuntu* undergirds spirituality of being together, sharing and it is from there that we can move and offer something towards Accra.
- The groans of death from Kitwe are affirmed after all these years and they have become worse....
- *Ubuntu* is an alternative to the global context.
- Other regions may have the same ethos and we are humble about that.
- Issues of rape, racism, patriarchy, etc. have been shaped by economies of death but the African concept of *Ubuntu* addresses every injustice that Accra has addressed.
- *Ubuntu* deals with inclusivity, eco-justice, etc.
- *Ubuntu* will not stand alone but can be connected with indigenous spiritualities as found in Asia and South America.
- *Ubuntu* as a vision that challenges all injustices
- It links with *koinonia*, *shalom* from Biblical spirituality and indigenous spirituality.
- We need to teach about Ubuntu even among Africans
- Link this with Oikotree as one avenue to teach about this to Africans and all other continents.
- Link it with other concepts that deal with humanity in totality
- In a quest to live out *Ubuntu*, we also hope that in the General Council in 2017 our churches will have equal representation of men and women.

From AIPRAL:

- For "processes to educate and encourage all member churches to include the Accra Confession in their books of confessions or catechism"
- For the placement of "the principles of the Accra Confession in public forums such as world banks, governments and other international organizations"
- To "participate [in] and support community efforts that build economic, cultural and political alternatives that place human dignity and care of the environment at the forefront"
- To "make stronger alliances with our sister 'northern churches' to develop new economic systems that give God honour and glory for the welfare of all of God's people."

From CANAAC:

As the Caribbean and North American Council, we are challenged by the deep differences between the two parts of the council: North America and the Caribbean. Additionally, there is a great divide in the economic and cultural histories and the current realities of our member churches.

We need to build relationships between the two parts of the region, as well as within each. This also includes building awareness in the US & Canada of issues of empire and colonization, along with current issues of trade agreements and policies.

Information related to Accra can be disseminated to the North American churches, including:

- Cuba and the trade embargo

- DR & Haiti
- Empire & colonization descriptions
- Hispanic communities within the NA churches
- Race and racial tensions
- Issues related to the Military Industrial Complex
- Immigration/migration—education, action
- Gender and economic inequality
- Climate change

How do we come to realize that we are all vulnerable? In the US there are also victims of empire?

Human trafficking

This is an issue that affects both parts of our region; thus, this is a major consideration in which we can work together:

- Finding stories about human trafficking
- Participating in “Broken for You” — a Lenten resource being developed

The “Slavery Footprint”—look at what we purchase and how many slaves it took to produce.

From Europe:

- We work together with CEC (CCME) in our advocacy work (bureau in Brussels). We are not working on special ‘reformed’ actions or advocacy but try to strengthen reformed networks relating to some issues.
- We will suggest to the council of WCRC Europe to organize a consultation on human trafficking

From NEAAC:

- Further study into the workings of empire in Asian context in hope of contributing to the global discussion.
- Promoting inter-religious work at the ground level to work together with other religious groups against economic and ecological injustices.