

ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

THE MAPUTO COVENANT

Preamble

The All Africa Conference of Churches is a fellowship of 172 member Churches and Christian Councils in 43 African countries working, not as an entity separated from the world, but as God's instrument for God's reconciling and renewing mission in and for the world and all aspects of life.

After much biblical reflection, prayerful searching, theological conversation, and relying on the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, the AACC members and their partners meeting in Maputo, Mozambique from 7-12 December, 2008 hereby resolved to STEP FORTH IN FAITH, covenanting themselves as follows:

Covenant One: Moral Regeneration In The Continent

We recognize that Africa is in deep moral decay which manifests in the abuse of human rights, abuse of family life, violence, materialism, corruption, war, to mention but a few. Our values, institutions and ways of living have been influenced by a warped world view of individualism rather than the African primal world view of community.

We observe the media has played a positive role in the behavioral change of our people, we are also aware that it has been a key driver of immorality both at personal and public levels. We realize that prosperity theology and other theologies that breed greed have been legitimized and moral decay sustained in Africa. These dangerous trends challenge the Church to therefore rise as a moral regenerator and mobilize resources to empower individuals and the broader society for transformation.

Response

We **pledge**, in view of God's mercy, to offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy, and pleasing to God as our spiritual act of worship.

We **commit** ourselves to instituting hope and redefining morality as experienced in the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:43).

We **commit** ourselves to engage the mass media for responsible journalism that respects the context of the African people while still playing its role in society.

Africa, step forth in faith!

Covenant Two: Youth and Children in the Renewal of Africa

We recognize that the wisdom of the old and the strength of the youth and children are required for God's mission in Africa. But we also realize that current mission environments in many of our churches do not bode well in allowing the youth and children to participate in God's mission to redeem a broken and sinful world. Apparently, African youth and children are battling with the

challenges brought by a highly technological world, human trafficking, drugs, HIV/Aids, violence in wars, etc. In addressing the problems of the continent, we must decide to live with a sense of collective responsibility, humbly dismantling the ecclesiastical structures that have long excluded the youth from the mission in the church. Together with the youth, the churches can take responsibility for the present and future renewal of the *ecclesia* and the entire continent.

Response

We **acknowledge** God's endowments on the youth and children regardless of their age or status in life.

We **affirm** the youth and children as veritable partners in God's mission in the renewal of Africa.

We **commit** ourselves to the dismantling of the ecclesiastical structures that have long excluded the young from mission in the church and society.

We **commit** ourselves to youth and children empowerment for effective leadership through capacity building, African education systems and curriculum, youth innovation and entrepreneurship.

Africa, step forth in faith!

Covenant Three: Urban Mission

With urbanization in Africa comes the drumbeat of the city; a city with a new community: migrants, refugees, the jobless and the homeless. It is a community that has its own characteristics, concerns, and points of convergence which challenge the missional identity of the Church as well as demand a new missional paradigm. As an "open market" place, African urban contexts have become ecological and ideological battlegrounds where a new sense of Christian community with ecumenical connections is a missional imperative. The churches are fundamentally challenged to understand the nature of the urban context and the imperativeness of different expressions of missions within it.

Response:

We therefore

Affirm the Christian faith as a world-formative movement that can transform our cities.

Commit ourselves to a shared vision of basic values of love and justice and to working with God and other people in the urban mission.

Seek to create space for one another in the divided city;

Accept the reality of poverty in the urban context and pledge to combat it.

Resolve to be an inclusive community for the migrants and refugees using available resources for the transformation of the city.

Africa, step forth in faith!

Covenant Four: Entrenching Human Rights

We believe that the advancement of God's kingdom is a trumpet call to work towards peace, good governance and the entrenchment of human rights in Africa. Yet, Africa continues to be plagued by political turmoil, ethnic and tribal conflicts and civil and religious factions. In some cases, education and democratic processes are not respected, nor are they used to liberate and empower people.

Response

In view of the above,

We **declare** that man and woman were created in God's image and likeness and in Christ they have life in fullness (John 10: 10).

We **affirm** that human rights are given by God and they are inviolable and inalienable.

We **call** on Christians and churches to take responsibility for protecting human rights for a just, peaceful and equitable society.

We **commit** ourselves to creating space to confront past and current injustices in church and the society as well as to theologize on human rights as the foundation for the dignity of African people all over the world.

Africa, step forth in faith!

Covenant Five: Political and Economic Liberation

We **observe** that the ecumenical journey of the AACC from 1958 to 2008 has witnessed institutional and political liberation in Africa. However, with the prevailing forces of globalization, Africa experiences a new form of oppression with crippling economic burden through unjust international relations, trade and hopeless foreign debts. African people live in abject poverty in the midst of extreme riches. Economics does not seem to have a human face anymore. Therefore the call of the Yaoundé General Assembly of the AACC for the reconstruction of Africa remains valid.

Response

We **confess** our complicity in the political and economic oppression of our people.

We **call** on the governments in Africa to adopt economic policies that focus on people rather than on production and profits.

We **call** for a change in world view knowing that the world has enough for human needs, but not enough for human greed.

We **affirm** that sharing is the key to human happiness. This is a call to deepen our spirituality.

Africa, step forth in faith!

Covenant Six: Spirituality and Environment

We **observe** that the AACC first made the call to the church to address environment concerns in 1987 at the Lome Assembly. Since then, it has been treating the deepening ecological crisis as an ideological debate, something to worry about but for future action. This is a gamble the Church can no longer afford to engage in since whole communities of God especially in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) are threatened by climate change; it is an urgent call for action to save lives. We believe that addressing the ecological crisis is not simply about tree planting, proper disposal of plastic materials and reducing our carbon print; it is about our worldview, our identity, our morality; our spirituality.

Response

We **declare** that the call to stewardship is a call to establish faithful and healthy relationship with the rest of creation.

We **affirm** that earth keeping is a crucial dimension of the Church's mission and we need to confess of the times when the Church has been unfaithful in this mandate or at worst, acted and taught against this mission.

We **recognize** and **commit** ourselves to the need to challenge certain aspects of Christian traditions and practices that encourage ecological degeneration.

Africa, step forth in faith!

Covenant Seven: Global Pan-African Solidarity

We **recognize** that there is a shared history of the struggles for economic, political, social and ecological justice among all nations and persons in the African continent; that similarly structured struggles currently continue to call for a pan-African approach; and that the struggles in the continent have a direct linkage to the welfare and dignity of Africans in the diaspora.

We further recognize that the reconstruction of the African continent, its history and future is founded on African authenticity of its development paradigm and initiatives such as the Lagos Plan of Action and NEPAD.

We therefore aspire to see the people and nations of Africa speak in one voice; seek to amicably find solutions to situations facing their people; hold each other accountable; share opportunities to better the welfare and protect the dignity of the African people.

Response

We therefore:-

Affirm unity of purpose and responsibility for the dignity of the African people among the African nations.

Commend the AU to offer leadership in uniting the African voice through the expedition of joint programmes including NEPAD and APRM.

Commit to promote a united approach in combating issues touching on the African agenda.

Commit to work as the African church to authenticate the gospel to the African context and needs.

Commit to reach out to the Diaspora and work with them to uphold and protect the dignity of the African person.

Africa, step forth in faith!

Covenant Eight: The Church, Human Health and HIV and AIDS

Human health and HIV and AIDS are crucial issues in Africa. People living with HIV and AIDS and disability are being stigmatized and marginalized even in the Church. We **recognize** that the church is HIV+, that HIV & AIDS is sexuality and trans-generational issue that requires holistic healing. Believing every person has the right to abundance of life which God offers in Jesus Christ (John 10:10),

Response:

We **affirm** that all persons, infected or affected, are equal in the eyes of God;

We **acknowledge** that people with disability are made in the image of God;

We **commit** ourselves to providing a healing and positive environment for the stigmatized and the marginalized people;

We **recognize** that a comprehensive and holistic approach to the prevention and treatment of HIV & AIDS and other diseases is vital for effective management and commit ourselves to communicating and mainstreaming of HIV & AIDS in the church and society;

We **call** on churches to redefine their theologies of healing and train pastors and church members for effective healing ministry;

Africa, step forth in faith!

Covenant Nine: Women as Agents of Reconciliation and peace

Recognizing that all people are made in the image of God, that women are the first educators and socializers in the family and society, critical catalysts for peace and reconciliation, and have the highest representation in the church; we believe that church and society have an obligation to protect and respect and uphold the dignity of women.

Response:

Furthermore we,

affirm the role of mothers as custodians and nurturers of life and **condemn** all forms of violence or abuse against women;

recognize and celebrate the resilience and purposefulness of women in propelling the development of families, communities, nations and the entire continent;

Commit ourselves to proclaiming the message of equal yet complementary roles played by different genders (Gen.1:26);

Commit ourselves to harnessing and supporting peace building and reconciliation mechanisms, networks and skills by women for early warning and management of existing conflicts.

Africa, Step Forth In Faith!

In this document, covenant is understood as a call to common action through which the member churches of AACC and their partners seek to show what it means to live under God's influence and direction in Africa.