



Conference on World Mission and Evangelism

Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship

8-13 March 2018 – Arusha, Tanzania

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Gathering Service

Welcome Greetings by Dr Agnes Abuom

(Moderator Central Committee, World Council of Churches)

Brothers and Sisters, I greet you in the name of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. I take this opportunity on behalf of the World Council of Churches to thank the Presiding Bishop Dr Fredrick O. Shoo, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania for graciously accepting to host this historic and watershed World Conference on Mission and Evangelism. Thank you for providing free and safe space to engage, shape, discern and define future direction for mission thinking and practice. Now that the church in Tanzania has welcomed and allowed us to operate within its space, I take this opportunity to welcome all of us ... Karibuni!

The CWME conference on *“Moving in the Spirit: called to Transforming Discipleship”* is situated within the broader and global WCC celebration of its 70th anniversary by the ecumenical fellowship of churches. We will engage therefore with the theme of this conference within the backdrop of celebration, commemoration and lament. We look back with gratitude to the Almighty God for the vision of our ecumenical men and women ancestors; their commitment, courage and determination to pursue the call for unity of the church and unity of humankind at a time in history when the world was divided and ravaged by war, inhabited by fractured communities and broken relationships. Simply put, a society characterized by desperation and hopelessness. We are also aware that the 70 years are grounded in the pillar of mission which forms one of the foundation stones of the WCC.

The CWME conference coming back to Africa after 60 years – from Achimota to Arusha, is also an affirmation of and a station in our pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. We will during this conference revisit the wounds including wounds related to mission history and current experiences as expressed by the signs of the time. We are indeed aware and concerned about the changing global, regional and national contexts that are increasingly volatile and uncertain. Indeed challenges facing the global human community have become more: For example, dislocation and displacement of communities due to conflicts and climate change; growing inequality between a few super rich and millions of poor people; growing populism, nationalism, individualism, xenophobia and racism. Our context and its attendant challenges demand that mission and discipleship transforms lives and communities to accept and respect the dignity of God’s image in every human being; and that no one is excluded from the processes of a sustainable, peaceful, just and prosperous world. It is a context where we will celebrate our gifts as we hear positive actions of how mission and transformative discipleship seeks to provide a counter narrative to the dominant oppressive one. We will celebrate together mission interventions and stories of people as subjects and not objects of mission strategies. It is our hope that this conference will offer opportunities to critically inquire whether mission strategies are unconsciously colluding and making peace with structures and forces of death or affirming the good news to the poor.

Brothers and Sisters, you are welcome to Arusha in East Africa the bedrock of the famous *“East African Revival”*, whose spirit we believe, will inspire the deliberations and spirituality of the conference. It is our hope and prayer that by the power of the Holy Spirit, the vibrancy and rich African, women and indigenous people’s spiritualities, we shall be bold to embrace a new dawn, new ideas and break down the barriers as we build bridges to journey together as transforming disciples in fragile, fractured, volatile and hostile contexts. You are all welcome to arise up to the drum beats of a new moment and frontiers in history as we walk side by side embracing the move of the Holy Spirit; and as we accept to take on the mantle of transforming discipleship. Welcome to sit under the Acacia Tree as you consult and discern the will of God!