WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ARE HERE

In a divided and polarized world, we as representatives of two communions, World Methodist Council and the Organization of African Instituted Churches have met at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, from 25th to 27th September, drawn by a common urgency and commitment to offer the message of God’s transforming love and hope for Africa and the world. We believe that the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ has the ability to provide the world with life in its fullness (John 10:10).

We believe that the Holy Spirit has brought us together following our commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ and transformation of our world, expressed in the scriptures. We are finding that in each other there are points of commonality in the founding of our traditions and on these we want to build our mutual recognition and collaboration. We confess our sin of having ignored or at times undermined one another.

Our communions are witnesses that through this statement of intent we are working towards overcoming the centuries old ignoring of each other. Now we the two world communions that adhere jointly to a common statement of intent. In addition, we rejoice in the fresh and new ways in which our two traditions can with vigor, trust and confidence work in realizing a deeper communion towards the full visible unity of the Church and to make manifest the growth in communion, which has already been experienced during the time we have been together.

WHAT WE AFFIRM TOGETHER

Experiencing a deep sense of our commonality:

We re-affirm the centrality of the scriptures, as the true and inspired word of God. We commit ourselves to share, learn from each other and celebrate the word of God for the healing and liberation of our continent and the world.

We affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ calls for personal and social holiness, which manifests itself in the struggle for overcoming all forms of injustice, oppression and exploitation, which will lead to the restoration of God’s image to all people.
We affirm through our discernment that the Holy Spirit uses one another’s ministries, culture, worship, church life and community life, in order to transform Africa for the transformation of the world.

We affirm that our journey should be guided first, by understanding each other and then moving from mistrust to mutual trust: We should always begin from the perspective of recognition and not from the point of view of suspicion in order to strengthen what is held in common, whilst respecting the differences that exist amongst us. We celebrate the opportunity given to us to know one another and to explore creative ways of relating to one another more constructively in response to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ that we may be one (John 17:21).

We have resolved that the method of collaborative ministry on matters of common concern and interest is a fruitful means of recognizing each other’s gifts, strength and mission to the world. This process means that we will concentrate on both our points of strength and agreement rather than differences. We are convinced that we should apply this method to bring about collaboration and unity with other faith traditions going forward.

We realize that our commitment to one another will need to be expressed at different levels that are interrelated with each other. We recognize the place of local collaborative ecumenism as it is lively and lead to transformation. In other cases, seeking to collaborate will force us to face our theological differences. In such instances, we shall opt for unity and relationships than division.

**What we want to do together**

Our churches face similar challenges in communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ in a rapidly secularizing and polarized society. We express our common commitment to proclaiming the good news of salvation, through Jesus Christ.

We feel the challenge to witness to God’s liberating grace in ways which provoke and convey the hope and grace of the gospel.

We also believe that the world is in need of the message of God’s liberating grace. Therefore we commit to stand together to offer the message that God’s salvation is for human beings and the rest of creation.

In all these ways, we wish to make more visible our common witness, in worship and service, on our journey towards visible unity, walking, praying and working together.

**Next Steps**

We commit to meeting annually to continue building and reviewing our journey.

We propose to share theological training opportunities and programmes, to develop a range of resources, in various forms, written and visual, to be used in all aspects of church life and theological education.
We are finding new ways to work for abundant life as we address the following social ills or challenges such as unaccountable governance in Africa in global policy and processes, gender-based violence, ecological degradation, migration, poverty and inequality. Therefore, we commit to encouraging our churches to collaborate in this endeavor.

Conclusion

We thank God for the opportunity to experience the fellowship of our communions in this new way. We are grateful for the generous hospitality offered to us by the University of KwaZulu-Natal which has enabled us to move forward together on our journey, inspired and energized to proclaim anew the good news of God’s liberating grace.

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The University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.
South Africa