

STATEMENT OF THE GLOBAL YOUTH FORUM

We, a hundred and twenty young people representing four continents, 35 countries, from six regions of the Council for World Mission (CWM) gathered in Johannesburg, South Africa, for the first ever CWM Global Youth Forum. We were joyful in our gathering and purposeful in our intent to understand what it means to live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ in the midst of Empire and to reimagine what it means to be Church together. Some of us were present at the CWM Assembly at Jeju Island, South Korea in June 2016 where we learned about doing mission in the context of Empire and felt the need to unpack this in the light of what it means to be young people, often excluded from the decision making of the church.

We believe in fullness of life of all God's creation, anything that seeks to cause disunity amongst humanity is rejected. We believe in fullness of life of all God's creation. Called out from various contexts, representing different nationalities but understanding our common call by Jesus Christ our Lord and savior to be faithful disciples, we recognized that the differences between us are more than national or even cultural. There are forces beyond and above us that have fractured and continues to fracture the planet we live in so much so that the worlds we inhabit are often not the same. The days spent together, in sessions and discussions around the table, at meals and through our experiences together, taught us that the world that we live in is fragmented and broken. Our visits to the Hector Pieterse Memorial and Museum and Nelson Mandela House in Soweto reminded us how imperialism, experienced through racism, colonialism and patriarchy can tear communities apart and break human spirit down. We shared stories from around the globe of the struggles faced by indigenous peoples and those made poor by social and economic structures which often leave them destitute, unable to access land and resources which are rightfully theirs. Natural resources are exploited by the rich for financial gain rather than the mutual benefit of all peoples. We saw how social imbalances result in richer, more powerful groups marginalising and discriminating against those without the status or resources to defend themselves. Refugees and migrants are viewed with suspicion and become targets of hate. Opportunities for growth and development, both personal and communal, remain open only to those in certain class, race or social categories. So often, the most vulnerable in the world contribute the most financially, physically and emotionally to the state of nations, yet they continue to suffer the greatest levels of abuse, neglect and subjugation. Most of all we understood that young people are denied access to quality education, cannot afford it or are crippled by the ensuing debt. These insights have brought us to a point where we cannot simply sit back and allow things to carry on.

We have inherited a world that is not of our own making. We have inherited a planet that is dying, its resources shamelessly stripped by the powerful for their own short term goals of wealth creation. We have inherited wars that are not our own and social structures that have torn us apart, destroying the one world family that God has called us into. We have inherited a desperate and disparate world, and we feel anger against those who have placed us into this situation that is not of our own making. Yet we commit that we will not leave the world as we have found it.

Jesus, in his life and ministry, calls all of creation into flourishing. To embrace His life giving spirit is to resist the forces of death. We name Empire as that which denies the flourishing of life in all its diversity. We name Empire as that beast which appears attractive and attempts to seduce us, but which needs to be unmasked and called out for the demonic evil that it is. We name Empire as sinful and reject it as death dealing. Instead we turn to the God of life, the love of the son and the hope of the Holy Spirit.

We understand that a commitment to the God of Life is a commitment to all of life. We therefore commit ourselves to the practice of a spirituality of eco-just relationships that seeks to heal the brokenness of the earth and the brokenness of humanity. We commit ourselves, as individuals and communities, to stand in solidarity with those who are broken and to be healers in the midst of

brokenness, recognizing both our own brokenness as well as our own complicity in that which breaks.

We understand that a commitment to the love of Christ means that we must work to dismantle all that seeks to prevent this love from reaching all of humanity. This means facing the struggle against injustice in all its forms and places with strength and courage.

We recognize that our commitment to Jesus means that we cannot be neutral in the midst of what is happening around us, but that we are called to take sides with Jesus. We affirm that the Jesus we believe in stands on the margins and with the most vulnerable people. This is the stand that we choose to take.

We understand that our commitment to the hope that the Holy Spirit offers calls us into subversive action in the world. It calls us to resistance. We recognize that the Holy Spirit calls us to comfort the mournful and discomfort those who are comfortable. We recognize this as an active and participatory resistance to Empire.

We commit to living out these affirmations by:

- **fulfilling our need to be informed**

We need to ask ‘why?’ and constantly critically reflect on the answers we receive! Being informed is crucial in tackling both issues that concern ourselves and our fellow global brothers and sisters. Knowledge is needed in order for us to be able to make informed decisions and to identify actions that need to be taken.

- **using principles of communication and respect to unify ourselves**

Words and language are important. Unity through communication and respect is essential because the world is extremely diverse in many ways such as race, gender identity, traditions and culture. It’s very important that we are conscious of the words and language that we are using when speaking about and to each other make sure that our intended message is clear. We need to be aware of the de-sensitizing nature of our media and culture and proactively resist this.

- **having a voice in our local churches and communities**

On a local community level, we have identified that having a platform for young people to voice their views within our local contexts are needed in order for issues that are important to us to be discussed and properly addressed. Young people have crucial insights, gifts and talents to offer in shaping the Church to serve God’s call. As such, we need to be actively involved in all aspects of Church Life; leading worship, preaching, praying, pastoral care, outreach, social justice, everything! We believe that this will have a positive impact on the wider Church community because young people are both the present and future of the Church.

- **acting, not just thinking or talking, taking responsibility for our present and future generation by being daring, defiant and determined**

We as young people need to take responsibility for our present and future both in and outside Church by using the audacity of our youth to be daring in the face of difficult struggles, defiant against systems and structures which fail to serve their purposes and determined to make a real difference in the world around us. These qualities are required

because positive change is often hard to achieve. Such action can also involve some serious risks and consequences.

- **accepting that there is no neutral ground in building the Kingdom of God**

We can either do something or do nothing. Being quiet and doing nothing is to be complicit in the injustices of Empire. Complacency means sticking with the status quo. We must take clear and significant action to challenge the issues and concerns which Empire brings to us and those around us.

- **praying, loving and serving**

We will continue to love one another, seeking to share experiences from our different countries, cultures and contexts, learning and growing together through our struggle against Empire around the globe. Throughout all of this, we will continue to look to God as the source, guide and goal of all that is. We move forward in the sure and certain hope that when we obey God's call to justice, all will be well.