

Introduction

Setri Nyomi

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”
(Lk 4.18-19)

The theme of the 24th general council (Accra 2004), “That All may have Life in Fullness”, has been a rallying point as we look back at the work of the Alliance over the last seven years and prepare for new directions in the years that lie ahead. It has been particularly helpful in focusing two themes that have figured prominently in the life of the Alliance since the 23rd general council (Debrecen 1997): the study on mission and the process of covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth. In this issue of *Reformed World*, the mission study planning group and the covenanting taskforce report on their work so far.

The policy of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches is set by its member churches assembled in general council. These texts on mission and covenanting are offered to our churches and their delegates, as well as to other readers and Accra participants, as food for thought, part of the preparatory materials for our Accra discussions.

Together in mission

What is offered in these pages regarding the mission study is a summary of where we are today. The regional mission consultations have shown that our churches are ready to learn from one another in identifying new directions at the cutting edge of mission today – directions that take our different social and cultural contexts very seriously. Our resolve to do mission in Christ’s way – to bring good news to all, especially the poor and the downtrodden, in the power of the Holy Spirit’s anointing – is meaningful only when we understand God’s mission as people-centred and not merely church-centred.

The mission study began in 2001 and has just completed its first phase. It is not a final stopping point. To the contrary, it invites us to raise new questions and engage together in new reflections on our mission. From the beginning, however, it has been linked with the longer process of covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth that was initiated in Debrecen.

Covenanting for justice in the economy and the earth

The 23rd general council recognized that economic injustice worldwide – in particular the impoverishment inflicted on the global south – and the massive

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and growing destruction of our environment were closely linked and together threaten us all. It called WARC member churches to a *processus confessionis*: progressive recognition, education and confession regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction.

In this *Reformed World* the taskforce that has guided the covenanting for justice process reports on the work done by the Alliance and its member churches since 1997. The reports from the Buenos Aires and London Colney forums show what representatives of some Alliance churches in the south and north have been able to say together in response to the Debrecen call.

As we prepare ourselves for Accra and for new levels of being called together into confession, commitment and common action against the “bad news” that spells suffering and injustice for a large part of the world, and for many in our own constituency, we are invited to reflect on these texts and to consider what God is calling us to be and do today. This is at heart a spiritual exercise – not just an economic, environmental or political analysis. Our reflections on our world and our reactions to these texts can be key building blocks for what we say together in Accra as we seek to break chains of injustice and mediate life in fullness for all.

In both our mission study and covenanting for justice process, the Alliance family is challenged to do mission in Christ’s way. I invite all our churches in the run-up to the general council to reflect on these texts and to respond to them, both in writing to our secretariat and through what their delegates say and do in Accra, so that together we may take real, practical steps forward. It is my hope and prayer that these reports will be sources of renewal as we commit ourselves to new levels of engagement in the mission to which we have been called.