



Letter to Churches in the DRC Family
from
The meeting of General Secretaries, Lusaka, 1-3 July 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters

On 1-3 July 2015 the General Secretaries of the following churches have met in Lusaka: Dutch Reformed Church, Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, , Reformed Church in Africa, Dutch Reformed Church in Botswana, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Nkhoma Synod), Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, Reformed Church in Zambia, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (Harare Synod), Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (Mphatso Synod), Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (Tumbini Synod), Igreja Reformada em Mozambique (Synod Nova), as well as the executive officers of Commission for Witness (DRC Family Cape Region), Partners in Mission (DRC Free State) and NetACT. (Representatives of NKST Nigeria, RCEA Kenia and RC Swaziland were unfortunately not present)

It was with great gratitude and joy that we rediscovered our family ties as sister churches. It was indeed a historical meeting! We celebrated our shared history and our shared Reformed identity. We reflected on our calling to discern our missional identity in an ever-changing context. We listened to the stories of the different churches and realised how much we need each other. We committed ourselves to take hands in many practical facets of our joint calling in the Southern African context, where borders became perforated and our countries increasingly interdependent.

We identified some of the most urgent challenges we face:

- Unpacking of “being Reformed”: new ways of communicating our Biblical (Reformed) identity amidst the identity struggles (traditional vs modernity, between generations, being “dutchy” or “penty”, reactive vs proactive, black consciousness, African and global, being dislocated, etc.)

- Discernment of contextual changes and challenges in our region: church-state relationships, poverty, economy, ecology, renaissance of religions like Islam, Buddhism, etc.
- Different, emerging spiritualities: Prosperity Gospel, healing, miracles, signs, prophecies, etc.
- Relevant theological training: contextual, missional, leadership (moral values, power and status, servanthood, empowering vs “in-powering”), public theology, church and community development, etc.
- How to deal with sensitive issues on which we may differ: sexual identities, role of women in office, bio-ethical questions, re-emerging racism, human dignity, etc.

We committed ourselves to the formation of a forum/communion where executive officers (general secretaries) of the different churches will meet regularly. For this purpose, we envisage the formulation of a memorandum of understanding that will include:

- A statement on our shared history, our shared identity and shared calling within a shared African context
- The goals of the forum: joint reflection on different challenges, disseminating information, facilitating meaningful networks, partnerships, joint projects and programmes, mutual assistance, praying together, etc.
- Establishing a cost effective and functional administrative and information centre and coordinating structures.
- Agreement on basic values: respecting independence of church structures, mutuality, trust, consensus, accountability, etc.
- Some practical goals

Practical matters that will remain on the immediate agenda:

- Theological training and networking with NetACT
- Joint participation in regional and international ecumenical bodies and programs
- Development of literature for the ministry in the respective contexts
- Effective communication
- Celebration of 500 years since Reformation in 2017 (generic catechism, new church history of our region, etc.)
- Discussion of issues like xenophobia, ministry to migrants, racism, encountering radical Islam, economy and ecology, poverty, healing, etc.

Our prayer is that all the sister churches will appreciate our unity in Christ. May we, as sister churches, continuously pray for one another as we are all facing many challenges May we find ways of working together in enhancing the Kingdom of God in our region.

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now ... And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit

of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.” (Philippians 1:3-11)

May God bless you!

Charles Juro (RCZ, Zimbabwe)

Kobus Gerber (DRC, South Africa)

Kobus Odendaal (CFW DRC Family, Cape Region)

William Zulu (RCZ, Zambia)

Kovilan Moodley (RCA, South Africa)

Dawid Kuyler (URCSA, South Africa)

Vasco Kachipapa (CCAP, Nkhoma, Malawi)

Timoteo Fabiao (IRM, Mozambique)

Gabriel Maratachibota (IRM, Mozambique)

Carlos Erbarde (IRM, Mozambique)

Libias Boloma (CCAP Harare, Zimbabwe)

Andries Hoffman (DRCA, South Africa)

Kgosi D Tlhowe (DRC, Botswana)

Jurgens Hendriks (NetACT)

Gideon van der Watt (Partners in Mission, DRC Free State, South Africa)

Lusaka

3 July 2015