

**DREAMING A DIFFERENT WORLD TOGETHER**  
**Joint Declaration of the**  
**Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa and the Evangelical Reformed Church in**  
**Germany**

*Together, from North and South, discerning the signs of our times, we hear the cries of people and see the wounds of creation.*

We are shocked by stories of injustice worldwide and disturbed by accounts of ecological destruction. We are moved by experiences of oppression, violence and being violated; experiences of exclusion and marginalization, often of minorities; experiences of human trafficking and modern-day slavery; experiences of vulnerability and neglect, lack of education, employment, protection, health, dignity, more often than not the experiences of women and children. We listen to warnings of climate change, prophecies of local disasters, dangers to air and sea; we hear accounts of coral reefs that are lost and deserts that grow, of the atmosphere that is polluted and snow that disappears. We are told of threats to the future of our children and our children's children. We receive reports about lack of clean water and abuse of natural resources. We see the devastation of militarism and violence and war. We read studies about unfair trade and out-of-control finance and deepening poverty that disturb us. We learn about statistics describing our time and our realities and they shame us.

Behind much of these, we observe in our world a coming together of economic, cultural, political and military power into a spirit of domination that seems to lord it over all and everything. We experience this presence in a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed – the worship of money, goods and possessions; in a spirit that lacks compassionate justice and shows contemptuous disregard for the household of life and the gifts of creation. We recognize this spirit of our time in an all-encompassing way of life that serves, protects and defends the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while willing to sacrifice humanity and creation. We even hear proclaimed today a gospel of consumerism, supported by powerful propaganda and believed and followed by many, religiously spreading and justifying this spirit of our time. We sense the seductive power of idolatry, the danger of losing our soul.

Therefore we lament – with the cries of all afflicted people and the wounds of the suffering creation.

*Together, from North and South, we are comforted by the gospel, by the common faith we share and the common tradition in which we stand, by God's Word and Spirit.*

We are comforted by the knowledge that our world belongs to God; by the assurances that we do not belong to ourselves; by the promises that Jesus Christ is Lord – and we proclaim these convictions as central to our faith and tradition.

We remember the voices of our mothers and fathers, denying that there could be areas of our life in which we do not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords, areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him. We recall their witness when faced with the realities and the spirit of their times, with the lordless powers and ideologies of their day, with the challenges and temptations of their moments in history.

We confess with them that God has revealed Godself as the One who wishes to bring about justice and true peace on earth; that in a world full of injustice and enmity God is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged and that God calls the church to follow God in this; that God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that God

frees the prisoners and restores sight to the blind; that God supports the downtrodden, protects the strangers, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering; that God wishes to teach the people of God to do what is good and to seek the right.

With them we are convinced that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the church, belonging to God, should stand where God stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the Church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Together we are inspired by these convictions in our broken world today; together we resist the ideology that there is no alternative, and together we reject the spirit of idolatry with its disdain for the household of life and the gifts of creation.

*Together, from North and South, we heed the call of God's Word and Spirit, the claim of this gospel on us, today.*

We declare that Jesus Christ is God's assurance of forgiveness and God's mighty claim upon our whole life; that through Him we receive joyful deliverance from the godless powers of this world for free and grateful service to God's creatures in our common world, today.

We remember together the instruction of God's law, teaching us to seek justice, compassion and truth; the voices of the prophets, warning us to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God; the visions proclaimed in worship and praise, inspiring us to long for the day when justice and peace embrace; the many accounts of salvation, exodus, liberation from bondage, filled with promises of God's saving presence – we remember this even today.

We continue to believe that since we are not our own our whole life should be spent in the cultivation of righteousness, also in our common world, today.

We feel inspired by those voices who taught us that true piety and love of righteousness belong together; that worship and justice cannot be separated; that God is truly known where humanity flourishes; that we recognize as if in a mirror both God's image and our own flesh in the poor, the despised and the furthest strangers in the world. We believe that all this remains true in our deeply divided and unjust world, today.

We recall those teachers who professed creation to be the theatre of God's glory, moving us to contemplation and wonder, to gratitude and respect, to stewardship, vocation and responsibility – also in our threatened world, today.

We remain mindful that together we live in communion – as members of Christ and partakers of his gifts, and thus members of one another, bound to employ our gifts readily and cheerfully for the well-being of the other.

We still acknowledge that being baptized in Christ's name and into his body, we are called to his ministry of priest, king and prophet – as priests to receive and proclaim Christ's justification and to share in his service, his care, his compassion and his intercession for the world; as kings to share in Christ's struggle against the powers, his sanctification of the world

and his victory over all forms of sin and destruction; as prophets to publicly proclaim Christ's truth, his truth of reconciliation and justice, his truth that sets people free.

Together, we are moved by these memories and this claim on our life.

*From South and North, together in communion, we dream a different world.*

Being claimed by Christ, we long together for his reign of justice and peace, for his presence and his salvation – for freedom from these disturbing realities, these harsh inequalities, this cultural domination, this abysmal disparity, this injustice, this destruction; we dream of God's promises of shalom. We cry and plead, we sigh and pray together for our broken and threatened world.

Praying, we commit ourselves together to care for God's creatures and God's creation; to work with all who seek for alternative ways – those with insight and knowledge, those with special gifts and opportunities, those in positions of leadership and responsibility; not to seek for simple answers; not to close our ears to the stories of those who are afflicted; not to close our minds to the knowledge of those in science and research; not to close our eyes for the realities all around us, both near and far; not to close our fists in selfish greed; not to close our hearts when we encounter the suffering and the wounds; not to close our hands in abdication of what is in our power to do in order to make a difference – treasuring energy, protecting biodiversity, resisting desertification, saving water, preventing pollution, respecting God's work, marveling in God's creation, celebrating the wonderful web of life, God's rich and abundant household of belonging.

Committing ourselves, we covenant to believe, to love, to hope together; to find new ways of being obedient, new ways of creating communities of life and witness in our shared world; to talk and learn together; to search and seek solutions together; to raise our own awareness; to see with new eyes; to turn and to change; to mitigate causes and adapt to new life-styles; to live in solidarity with victims; to speak for those without voice; to remember those easily forgotten. We covenant to heed the call to prophetic action, to struggle and strive, to face and expose, to challenge and critique, to analyze and plan, to reframe and refuse. We covenant to cultivate and nurture a spirituality of resistance and a lifestyle of discipleship – as witnesses to God's compassionate justice, dreaming a different world.