



**LIVING GOD  
RENEW AND  
TRANSFORM US**

**World Communion of Reformed Churches**

Called to communion, committed to justice

## **MESSAGE FROM THE WOMEN'S PRE-COUNCIL TO THE WCRC GENERAL COUNCIL**

*Living God—in a World of Violence—Renew and Transform Us*

We, women of the Reformed churches, from every region of the world, met together in the Women's Pre-Council, prior to the General Council, from June 26-28, 2017, in Leipzig, Germany. To the General Council theme, "Living God renew and transform us" we have added "in a world of violence." The gravity of the many injustices (eg. economic/social/ecological/gender) that are present in the church and the world impact women's lives in every context.

In the stories we heard of countless women, in our own stories, in our songs, and in our prayers our witness of women's experiences of exclusion and violence in church and society evoked pain and anguish. We call out the scourge of violence which now impacts over 70% (UNODC 2014 report on Human Trafficking) of women and girls globally. Infanticide - Female Genital Mutilation - Child Brides - Honour Killings - Intimate Partner Violence - Human Trafficking - Sexual Exploitation - Rape -Workplace Sexual Violence - Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women - HIV Sexual Violence to women and girls - are examples of the many types of violence against women and girls.

In our conversations we remembered that the member churches of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Accra in 2004 confessed: "We reject any form of injustice which destroys right relations—gender, race, class, disability, or caste." Yet the stories and statistics we shared in this Pre-Council continue to speak of lives and relationships destroyed by multiple forms of gender-based violence. These are often intensified by intersections of race, class, disability, age, caste and sexual orientation.

By failing to acknowledge this violence in our midst, our churches sin and have contributed to women's pain. Present in our church structures, our interpretation of Scripture, and our theologies are the patterns of domination and submission which have normalized a culture of violence in our societies. We come away from this Women's Pre-Council filled with a deep sense of urgency. We are clear that the voices of our sisters who die daily from suppression of life and meaning must be heard.

As we name injustice to women and girls across the globe, we come face-to-face with injustice to women within our own reformed churches. In 2010 the Uniting General Council agreed to "promote the ordination of women and work toward a time when the ordination of women will be binding on the Communion." We celebrate that some churches have responded to this call but more is needed.

This is a *kairos* moment. On the occasion of the commemoration of the Reformation, the time has come to adopt "A Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination." This declaration



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pledges the churches of the WCRC to welcome into ordained ministry women who experience that call to ministry as a fulfillment of their baptismal vows. (Workbook, General Council 2017).

### **Conclusion**

We Reformed women of faith anointed by the Spirit commit ourselves to work to end all violence against women and girls. We exhort all in the Communion to join with us in our commitment.

We bring the following recommendations in alignment with the foregoing:

#### **The Communion's Attention to Gender Justice**

- That this General Council confess that violence against women in all its forms is sin.
- That the WCRC's Executive Committee and General Secretary develop a Gender Justice Policy that delineates issues of gender-based violence within church and society by 2019. It shall include an action plan for the implementation of the policy and accountability metrics, working closely with the regional councils of the WCRC.
- That the WCRC join with its ecumenical partners in approaching the UN Commission on the Status of Women, urging a renewed dialogue and response to all forms of gender-based violence.

#### **The Communion's Attention to Equal Partnership: Ordination of Women**

- That the WCRC adopt "A Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination."
- That the WCRC Executive Committee open a space of discernment with member churches that do not presently ordain women. They shall develop principles and an action plan by which the pledge of "A Declaration of Faith on Women's Ordination" will be realized prior to the next General Council in 2024.