

Final Version



The Kingston Declaration of the New International Financial Economic Architecture Colloquium

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As representatives of the Council for World Mission Caribbean and European Region Member Bodies¹ we have convened in Kingston Jamaica from 25-29 January 2017 to reflect upon the critical challenges of pervasive economic, social and ecological injustice, widespread poverty and inequality which continue to devastate countries and communities within our Regions and the rest of the world.

This Colloquium is the first in a series of three on the Economy of Life – the ordering of our world that all may have life in its fullness (John 10:10). Our gathering deliberated upon and affirmed the challenges highlighted in the Sao Paulo statement. We engaged with a number of presentations on the subjects concerned, discussed and debated and undertook exposure to local community projects working in the areas of our theme.

The context of the inauguration of President Trump and the British vote to leave the European Union shaped our conversation. They function as examples of democratically expressed anxieties which are leading to the development of policies which we believe will lead to extensive and further exclusion and oppression. We are conscious that such policy changes often fall most heavily on vulnerable groups.

We commit and covenant together in advocacy, self-critique, and self-development. The work we do shall be evidence based, grass roots informed, prophetically inspired, and ecumenically supported. This is a journey to which we joyfully and whole heartedly commit.

In all we do, we look to Jesus who spoke so often about money, was never complacent concerning economics and does not desire us to be complacent about the economics of our age.

Affirmation of the Sao Paulo statement

The Sao Paulo Statement which arises from a global ecumenical conference on a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) 'seeks to engage the proponents of diverse proposals and solutions, set criteria and a framework and develop a plan of action towards constructing just, caring and sustaining global and economic structure.

Having received and reflected critically upon the overall message of the statement, we welcome the theological, socio-political and economic affirmations contained therein. The colloquium further recognized that within our contexts particular attention must be paid to the exploitation of natural resources; unjust tax and trade arrangements; land-grabbing; systems of indebtedness and the ongoing consequences of slavery. All of these perpetuate grinding poverty, economic hardship and ecological destruction.

¹ CWM member churches present: Congregational Federation; Guyana Congregational Union; Presbyterian Church of Wales; United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands; Union of Welsh Independents; United Reformed Church. Also present: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Suriname.

Actions

The members of this colloquium have determined to undertake the following actions:

Self awareness

- Understanding our context is key to appropriate responses
- We should map the emergence of policies (national and transnational) that marginalize sectors of society
- Combating the rise of forms of nationalism that undermine the Christian conviction that all human lives are infinitely valuable.
- We must talk openly and deeply about the ongoing consequences of Empire and its past injustices, particularly slavery, and the question of reparation must be addressed.

Policy Development

- Review of our denominational investment policies
- Development of environmental policies, sustainability, use of church property
- Developing appropriate schemes, e.g. microfinance, that work to intervene into or eradicate poverty, the development of local markets

External engagement

- Identifying relevant NGO partners to work alongside.
- Advocacy towards government
- Mobilization of local community in advocacy
- Cascading of our learning towards church members engaged in local, regional, and national government that they may act with knowledge of the system.
- We as churches must be at the forefront of just and legitimate protest against social, political, ecological, financial, economical injustices against God's creation
- Empowerment through training and capacity building.

Communication

- Building denominational and social cohesion to mobilize our common resources towards a new financial and economic architecture.
- Sharing the statistics and stories to which we have been exposed, to open eyes and hearts to the degradation and dehumanization of poverty.
- Developing a common vocabulary in which we can communicate around social and economic justice
- Communication to wide audiences from school children to government officials, in appropriate language

Common Action

- Create a simple network to enable communication of action and sharing of files, and work between members of the colloquium.
- Sharing our stories of implementation, and existing work, towards the eradication of poverty and ecological injustice

Self-Education

- We do not understand enough about either the existing economic architecture or new alternatives and must work to increase our understanding.
- We will explore alternative mechanisms of exchange.
- We will explore the particular impact of poverty on groups typically disenfranchised in our societies (including, but not limited to, disabled persons, sexual minorities, and refugees)
- The impact of patriarchy and its intersections must further be explored and challenged.
- We will imagine and interrogate the possibility of a New International Financial and Economic Architecture.

Epilogue

We have heard and been moved by stories of struggle. Struggle creates hope. That we care enough to struggle gives us hope. 'Hope is God's gift to battered, broken, disappointed and dispirited people, giving us the will to go on, to be able to say: "Yes, we can" when everything says "No"'.² Hope is participatory, and engenders solidarity. Our hope is in God, and is born in God.

Nehemiah was disturbed to the point of distress by the experience of his homeland. His vulnerability and human suffering caused a powerful man of his day to let him go, to give him resources enough for a contextual solution to a problem created by the battles of Empires. Our love for one another, and the pain it causes to see our neighbour in pain can mobilise the resources of the present age.

Our existing economic architecture is intricately intertwined. This enmeshing began in Empire, in the period of resource extraction founded upon the labour of slaves. This colloquium brings us face to face with the colonial relationships of the past and the modern forms of slavery that arise in the Empire of the present. We commit to intentional engagement with each other, and across our regions, that is both honest and fully open to hear.

We have recognized that our churches are moved quickly to poverty alleviation, but that we must move not only towards poverty intervention, but to desire and seek poverty eradication. It is not enough even 'to teach a human being to fish' if the water in which it swims is polluted, and the pond has been land grabbed by the wealthy. We must cease to be complicit in subsistence.

There are radical alternative currencies we will wish to explore. There is also the radical availability of CASH: Compassion, Association, Selflessness and Heart. This CASH can be a mechanism to shape our service.

² Rev Dr Collin I. Cowan, address to NIFEA Colloquium, 'A Theological Perspective on Poverty Eradication', 26th January 2017.

We affirm that the value of a human being is not determined by their wealth or their economic activity. We assert that wealth is not always created by hard work or honest means. We believe that inequality is itself a challenge to kingdom values and desire a structure that requires all the wealthy to be contributing to the good of the whole of society. We are scandalised that the wealth of the world's 8 richest men is equivalent to the earnings of the 3.6 billion poorest persons in the world, equivalent to half the world's population. We hear again Jesus forcing us to choose between Caesar and God in the ordering of our money. We cannot affirm the accumulation of wealth as an end to be desired, we must desire an 'Economy of Life' that desires life in all its fullness for all God's creation.

A loud voice is speaking to us from heaven. It says to us "Now God's home is with human beings! God will live with them and they shall be God's people; God will be with them as their God.... One day, the old things will have disappeared. And the one who sits on the throne says, 'And now, I make all things new'". (Revelation 21.3-5, paraphrased)