

DECLARATION BY MANI CONTINENTAL CONSULTATION

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

MARCH 7-11, 2016

Five hundred and sixty delegates from more than fifty countries gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 7 to 11 March 2016 for the third consultation of the Movement for African National Initiatives (MANI). The consultation took place in the African Union Centre where heads of African states and their representatives meet to deal with issues affecting the African continent. Significantly, Ethiopia also represents Africa's early and unbroken connection with the Gospel of Jesus Christ (e.g. Acts 8:27-39). As stated in the consultation theme, "Hearing and obeying God in times like these", we placed ourselves alongside the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 to hear what the Spirit of God is saying to his church in Africa regarding our mission in this world.

Church and Mission

We heard that God dearly loves us and is preparing us as the bride of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. He has called and equipped us to minister his love and proclaim his salvation to our communities, our continent and the nations of the world. As head of the church, Jesus wants us to be a movement rather than a monument, a mall or a military force. As his followers we will face opposition and persecution, but he promises to sustain us if we remain faithful to him and committed to his calling. We were delighted to hear about amazing progress in fulfilling our mission in this world, as we use the gifts God has entrusted to us.

As representatives of the Church in Africa we were called to repentance as we heard that we have grown cold in our love for, and commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. We have allowed our faith and our morals to become compromised; we are more concerned about position, honour and comfort than being prepared to suffer for Him. We were reminded of the "cries from the ground" (Gen. 4:10) as a result of us not valuing fellow human beings, of allowing the disintegration of families, our neglect and abuse of children, our failure to preserve justice and our disregard for nature. As leaders in church and mission we have often placed our own needs before that of the ones entrusted to our care (Ezek. 34). We have neglected the relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

We commit ourselves to God's standards for his church and embrace the biblical challenge to make disciples of all nations. Toward this end, we commit ourselves to multiply healthy, Christ-honouring churches in every place and among every kind of people on the continent and beyond.

Islam

The rise of militant Islamism has brought death, destruction and displacement to many African communities, particularly affecting Christians in West and East Africa. The Church in Africa has a critical role to play in nurturing the widows, orphans, displaced persons and others who have been subjected to intense suffering and loss. We are also obliged to reconsider our response to Islam and in particular the deliberate targeting of Christians with a clear commitment to political and religious domination - in Africa as in other parts of the world. We are called to reach out in love to those who do not yet know Jesus as Lord and Saviour, including those responsible for such atrocities. We commit ourselves to remain faithful to Jesus Christ as our Lord, even when this may require the ultimate price.

Globalization

Globalization is deeply affecting African society. Remarkable improvements in our access to information, communication and new technologies open up amazing new opportunities for conveying the Gospel to every African community and to all the nations of the world. We accept the challenge to explore, harness and develop new technologies, products and networks. Our consultation was enriched by the presence of global partners and mission leaders from other parts of the world. We remain committed to the unity of the church of Jesus Christ and of our mission in this world.

Globalization also brings serious challenges to the Church in Africa and our mission. It serves as effective carrier of products, services and values that cannot be reconciled with the Bible and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It often contributes to the marginalization of much of what is valuable to the Church in Africa and our mission.

We remain committed to bringing the Gospel in the idiom, heart language and cultural context of every community. We will enhance indigenous expressions of faith and strengthen African initiatives in our mission endeavours. This applies to our work on the continent as well as to our special role in spreading the Gospel in the rest of the world.

Migration

In recent decades the African continent, as many other parts of the world, has witnessed the migration of large numbers of people. This has brought hundreds of thousands of people from other faith traditions - especially Islam and Buddhism - right onto the doorstep of churches in Africa. We realize that we have been slow in our response to these amazing opportunities and commit ourselves to explore and develop effective ways of reaching out to them.

There has also been a migration of millions of Africans into other parts of the world. A significant proportion of these share our commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, though they may not yet fully appreciate or utilize the opportunity this offers for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ where they find themselves. We commit ourselves to actively seek the transformation of the African diaspora into an effective mission force.

Special Emphases

Going North

There is great need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ in North Africa, the Middle East and Europe, once the heart of Christendom. At the 2011 MANI consultation we clearly heard God's call to "Go North". We rejoice over advances already made and hear again God's mandate and invitation to increase our efforts and focus.

Discipleship

We acknowledge that in our churches and our mission we have not fully obeyed the clear commission of our Lord Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations (Mat. 28:19-20). We rejoice over disciple-making movements on our continent, particularly in areas facing persecution for our faith. We commit ourselves to a life of discipleship, disciple-making and pursuing the increase of disciple-making movements.

Emerging Young Leaders

A vibrant group of young leaders enriched our MANI consultation, challenging us to mentor the youths

in our churches and communities and to provide them with opportunities for service and development in our ministries and mission.

Women

Women delegates reminded us of God's special calling and gifts to his daughters. We acknowledge the amazing work that women have done in helping establish and expand the kingdom of God in Africa and beyond. We realize that the effective mission of the Church in Africa requires the full participation of women on all levels and therefore commit ourselves to create more ministry and leadership opportunities to women.

Children

We were challenged to value and respect children as full human beings, who are here today and now, not waiting to happen tomorrow. We commit ourselves to recognize their gifts, talents, capacity and potential and deliberately include them in our plans to redeem God's creation back to Him. This is also their calling and act of reasonable service.

Prayer and Intercession

Leading up to, and during the consultation there was concentrated prayer and intercession. Our meeting was characterized by an emphasis on a prayerful openness to hear from God. He has called us to greater devotion to him, assuring us that he will use the church in Africa as his instrument to reach Africa and the rest of the world, knowing that the advance of his kingdom does not come by power or might, but by his Spirit (Zech. 4:6). There was special significance in filling the facilities of the African Union Centre with the prayers and petitions of the Church in Africa going out from there in our commitment to world mission.

Orality

The great majority of those unreached by the Gospel of Jesus Christ will only hear and be able to respond if it comes to them through oral means such as story, music, art, drama, proverbs and rituals. Even literate people often prefer oral media. We open ourselves to grow in our understanding of, and practical use of oral communication, especially in our mission work.

The Persecuted Church

It is clear that the persecution of Christians - in Africa as in the rest of the world - is increasing. We acknowledge that we need to do much more to prepare the church to face persecution, to adequately support those most deeply affected, especially those who recently came to faith in Jesus Christ.

Biblical Entrepreneurship

The dire need for food, employment and ethical leadership challenges the Church in Africa to engage in biblical entrepreneurship. This will provide godly models and a basis for sustainable living in our communities, churches and our mission. We commit ourselves to becoming better stewards of what God has entrusted to us and better witnesses in the marketplace.

Media

We are aware of the power of media in our communities, its dangers and its potential value for the church and our mission. We need guidance and help from Christians specializing in media and technology. We will identify some of our members, particularly younger ones, for special training and ministry in these fields.

National Initiatives

Our name, MANI, emphasizes the importance of national initiatives in mobilizing the church in Africa to reach the least evangelized - in Africa and beyond - with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves to obtain accurate information about the unfinished task, to the effective communication of this information, as well as to strengthen our national efforts to see healthy, multiplying churches in every community.

Conclusion

We have come to Addis Ababa to open ourselves to hear what God is saying to us regarding his mission in and from the African continent. God has reassured us of his love for us as his church and has inspired us to recommit ourselves to his mission in this world. As Ethiopia reminds us of Africa's earliest response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the faithful preservation of our faith throughout the centuries, we want to erect a spiritual memorial to declare that the Church in Africa will not rest until the whole world is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

From Addis to everywhere ... until Jesus comes.

Maranatha!