



# World Communion of Reformed Churches

## Message from the Uniting General Council 2010 Grand Rapids, United States

**Called to communion, committed to justice**



Communion cup of fellowship, unity, togetherness

### **God gathered us**

In Grand Rapids, Michigan, we gathered in hope, from the world-wide family of Reformed Churches, representing 230 denominations and 80 million believers, bound to God and to one another through our baptism and called into unity as disciples of Jesus Christ. We united in praise of God.

Yet we lamented the absence of 71 sisters and brothers from around the world who should have been with us but were prevented from sharing our fellowship because they were denied visas to enter the USA.

Confessing our past divisions, and rejoicing that, by the grace and forgiveness of God, we are not bound by our past, we participated in the birth to the World Communion of Reformed Churches, a testimony to our thirst for unity.

We, in all our diversity, acknowledged with thanksgiving our opportunity to meet in the traditional territory of the Odawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi Native American peoples. Despite a history of devastation and loss, in which the Church was complicit, they extended to us a gracious welcome and gave honour to those visiting their land. Through the drum, dance, and song of their culture, we listened to their confession of Christ. There were those among us who heard echoes of their own stories. Their witness called us to confess how we too are broken and in need of healing. Our understanding of mission was challenged to accept different ways of expressing our faith. And we were inspired and filled with hope by their longing to share their distinctive insights into the faith we share as we seek reconciliation as peoples of God, the Creator.

We sought the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as we continue our journey together.



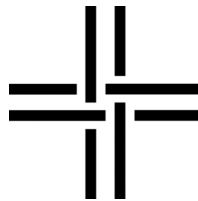
## Confessional Identity

### **God's word addresses us**

We were moved by the Word of God which came to us in many ways as we explored our theme: "making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph 4:3) It came through our worship in music, dance, drama and sermon; through dialogue and conversation as we found connections across cultures; through reading and studying the Scriptures together.

We heard and were touched by how the overflowing communal nature of God draws us into communion with God, with one another and with all creation. We celebrated this communion at the Lord's table. We recognised that this communion is for the sake of the world's transformation. We heard that our identity as God's people commits us to the work of God's justice.

In the face of the global divide between rich and poor, and the suffering of the earth, we heard the Gospel of reconciling love and prepared ourselves to respond in joyful hope.



## Woven together for greater strength

### **We respond to God's Word**

Called to communion and committed to justice:

- We pray for those living in divided communities who long for reconciliation; for those whose voices go unheard, whose gifts are not valued, whose humanity is not respected; those subjected to humiliation and violence; those under oppression and persecution:

We pray for the earth, the water and the air as they suffer from human exploitation of natural resources, and for all those who suffer from the devastating effects of climate change. (Rom 8.21-22)

Called to communion and committed to justice:

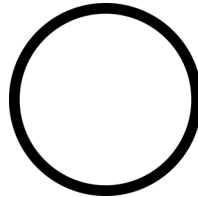
- We give thanks to God for the rich experience of being in communion in the World Communion of Reformed Churches and of being drawn together as partners in God's mission to the world.

Called to communion and committed to justice:

- We have come to recognise in the youth among us a new fire for ecumenism and we commit ourselves to work together in this new communion as equals, remembering that God values and welcomes people of every age:
- We promise our children that we will listen to them, honour their questions and celebrate their voices, understanding that they are part of the church of today with gifts that enrich the family of God.
- We will strive to care and be fair to every generation and to all of God's creation, listening to God's instruction like children, so that we might all be partners in God's plan for unity in the world and the kingdom to come.

We, in all our diversity, will seek to equip one another to participate in the mission of the triune God in ways:

- that strengthen our spirituality and worship as the means by which our communion is nourished, refreshed and renewed
- that strengthen our sense of being united in one church family, including a commitment to gender equality and to respect for the environment,
- that strengthen our passion for justice, including in the global economy and in the creation of reconciled communities.



A circle of unity with justice for all

**We are sent into the world by God**

We are sent out in peace, ordained and non-ordained alike, equals in the priesthood of Christ and in the unity of the Spirit, to love and serve the Lord, called to communion and committed to justice.



## Message for children

We were invited by God for a meeting with new friends in Michigan, USA, for a church family party.

God knows your name and our names and that's what makes us a family. That's why God invited us to a big family meeting in Grand Rapids to get to know each other better. The family members came from all over the world!

It was a shame that 71 family members couldn't come to the party. They were not allowed to cross the borders into the United States. It made us sad and mad so we thought about them a lot while we were together and we prayed for them.

As in every family there have been problems between sisters and brothers, and aunties and uncles, and parents and children, and cousins too. But one of our wise uncles welcomed us with a smile and told us stories about the first peoples who lived here and about our family history and he said "some things have gone terribly wrong in the past because you didn't know how to listen and how to share. But now I will reach out to you and I hope you to me, and let's do better in the future." You should have seen his face when he said this to us. It made us believe that we really can!

We had meals together, and lots of good food. We sang songs and danced together, the young ones and the old ones in our family. We even ate at Jesus' table. And God said "Oh, I LOVE this family!!"

The family members laughed and cried and sang and prayed together early and late every day. It was really cool!

Some people told us about bad things that have happened in their neighbourhoods, so we prayed for them and for the earth, and the air, and the water, and the animals, and everything that God has created.

It was so wonderful that we would have liked to stay at the party ALL the time. But we had to say good-bye and return to our own homes. Some of the family members will go home to fancy places. Others will go home to places where there is war and hunger. It's so unfair! Even though we know that God will go with us to all places, there is a need for something more - that's what this family is for!

Before we said good-bye we made promises to each other, saying "I will not forget you. I will listen to you. You will be my friend. I will be fair to you, care about what happens to you, and if you need me I will be there for you. We will work together for everyone in our church family and for all other families too!"

And when it was really time to say good-bye we hugged each other. In all of the hugs we felt the touch of our loving God who invited us to this party and reminded us that we are family. This is the story I want to tell you. Can you imagine what this was like? This is our family, the family we are called to be.