

## The ABLI Forum Declaration, 2010

We are a gathering of leaders, women and men, from across Africa and its Diaspora, called to positions of leadership in the church, business and politics. From the South and North, from the East and West, from across the great confessions and denominations of Christian tradition, we have been drawn together in Addis Ababa by our love for Jesus Christ and the revelation of His life, His wisdom and His Good News of salvation given us in the Holy Bible.

We have gathered to meditate on the Scriptures as they relate to the great opportunities and challenges of leadership in Africa in 2010. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God which contains the resources of wisdom and truth that above all else guide humankind to fruitful, abundant and righteous living. We believe in the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ, our Servant King, whose life is revealed in Scripture, a life that provides a vision of the common good that is founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love.

Yet, we confess that in Africa, the Holy Bible has not always been used for the common good. At times, the Bible has been misinterpreted in order to facilitate and justify exploitative behaviour and attitudes based on one group's superiority over another. At times also, the Bible has been wielded by those who seek to present an outward image of righteousness, whilst in reality behaving unjustly and lacking grace or mercy.

However, we recognize also that the Bible and its message of personal spiritual transformation has been central to the positive development of Africa. In education, in poverty alleviation, in reconciliation, in the development of democracy and good governance, the Bible and the God it reveals has brought transformation to entire nations. We believe that the life and teachings of Jesus Christ - as revealed in Scripture, in which he embraced all, including those deemed outcasts and judged by many as sinners, giving hope to all - is as relevant to Africa today as it has been at any time in history.

We prayerfully affirm both the significance and the authority of the democratic institutions now taking root in Africa and the role and responsibilities of those called to lead them. We acknowledge our responsibilities in this respect, and commit ourselves to the challenge of transforming Africa for the common good and in ways that affirm God's glory and love for all his children.

*Therefore, our belief in the ultimate authority of Scripture and the transforming power of Jesus Christ, leads us to the following conclusions in three areas of particular focus:*

**Poverty and Social Exclusion** God's original purpose for His creation and people does not include poverty. Poverty is an affront to God's purpose for the world. Therefore, we are committed to the alleviation of poverty by the dual channels of sharing God's word and fulfilling our responsibility to act directly on behalf of the poor. He created us equal, but injustice has divided us. Therefore, we recognize our calling to partner with the poor, and with institutions, particularly governmental bodies and civil society, to create just and equitable societies.

**Good Governance** When the fathers of African liberation met at the pan-African Manchester Congress in 1945, their declaration identified the spiritual realm as an essential ingredient to justice and good governance. As the Bible calls us to, we confess and repent of our failures to embody transparency, accountability, and integrity in the face of the moral and social death that corruption produces. Rather than pointing fingers, we commit to reforming our ways as churches and to seek the renewal of the family, public leadership, and society through the strengthening of transparency, accountability and integrity within the church, civil service, the private sector, and public offices.

**Leadership and Reconciliation** Cognizant of the overwhelming percentage of young people in Africa, we reject the marginalization of children and youth, their ideas and their leadership abilities. In the context of respect for elders, we commit to a mentoring of young leaders that springs from deep-rooted values. Moreover, given the examples of the Scriptures, we note that key elements of leadership include personal moral integrity, moral discernment and the proper stewardship of people and resources. God has commissioned us to be agents of reconciliation in Africa - agents responsive to cultural differences. Our proclamation is this: that by prayer and love, we will nurture relationships of understanding among antagonists. We believe in the healing power of God for the nations. We believe in the restoration of harmony within and across borders and among ethnic groups.

(signed) \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_