



Pacific Conference of Churches

“THE CRY TO SING THE LORD’S SONG IN OCEANIA”¹

The Oceania [Pacific] Churches’ Declaration

August 6th - 13th 2010

Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand.

PREAMBLE

On the occasion of the Fourth Pacific Church Leaders Meeting, held in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, we the Leaders of the Pacific Conference of Churches acknowledge the hospitality of Te Aka Puaho (Maori Synod) and the Pacific Islands Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, the generosity of the Pacific Leadership Programme and the contributions of other delegates including the representatives of the Global Ecumenical Network on Migration.

The time has come for the Churches in Oceania to “sing a new song”; to discern and proclaim afresh of God to ourselves, our people, our *whenua*² and our governments. We looked at migration as our main theme from the perspectives of ecumenism, climate change, governance and human rights, HIV and AIDS, and women and youth. We the church leaders hereby reemphasise Christian teachings about family.

Our *whare*³, the household of God in Oceania, has four main pillars:

1. An acknowledgement that God has called us to this moment in our ecumenical history to discover anew what God is saying to us and to our people in Oceania.
2. A call to all in Oceania – churches, civil societies and governments - to reform and strengthen the bonds of solidarity and fellowship.
3. Our moral and ethical responsibility to shape the region of Oceania to be more and more what God wants it to be.

¹ Psalm 137. The term “Oceania” was first used in 1831. Its most substantial meaning was Rev. Dr. Tuwera’s definition in the document “*The Call to Reflection and Action to the Churches in Oceania*” by the Ecumenical Pioneers and the Youth in April 2010, in Oceania. It is used here to refer to the context and people of the region of the word commonly known as the Pacific. This shift from Pacific to Oceania is made to indicate identity and selfhood of people and nations in this region of the world and their commitment to be actively engaged in the work of the worldwide ecumenical movement.

² This refers to traditions, land and culture of the Maori people in Aotearoa. Its corresponding terms in Oceania include *Vanua* and *Fenua*.

³ This is the Maori term for “house”. The corresponding terms in Oceania include *fale* and *vale*.

4. The need for us as Churches to recapture our regional responsibility to partner and accompany political leaders on key moral and ethical issues that underpin the changes that our region of Oceania faces today.

As church leaders of the Pacific Conference of Churches, our call is basically one: for churches, civil society groups, traditional communities, traditional leaders and governments to revisit our identity as peoples of Oceania.

We the Church Leaders:

1. Acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus Christ even before we are called into being; it is for this reason that we as church leaders met in these past few days to discern and discuss the key issues our region faces;
2. Hear and feel the cry of the Maori people in Aotearoa New Zealand for greater connection and association with Oceania as a basis of our common identity as people of Oceania. As the *Tangata Whenua* (Maori People) struggle to sing their own song of justice, we call on our churches in Oceania to ensure the meaningful participation of and solidarity action on the needs of the Te Aka Puaho (Maori Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand).
3. Call for a fundamental and urgent rethinking of who we are in Oceania on the following key areas:
 - 3.1 The ecumenical vision taking into account a redefinition of ecumenism in our Oceania and key aspects of sufficiency, wholeness, inclusivity and reconciliation.
 - 3.2 Development models, driven by a 'more is better' principle that gives rise to poverty and inequality, exploitation and devastation of the environment and natural resources.
 - 3.3 Governance and leadership models that give rise to corruption, division and unhealthy competition among people of Oceania.⁴
4. Call for a renewed focus on the notion of self-determination as a key human rights issue in our region of Oceania. We recognise the overarching nature of human rights in Oceanic societies and we understand that human rights need to take account of religious and moral values that we hold as churches, and the cultural norms that govern our people over centuries.
5. Stand in solidarity with all migrant communities from Oceania, recognising the socio- cultural and economic challenges they face. We therefore call for greater recognition and protection of migrant

⁴ Health issues are also part of the need to rethink the governance and leadership models operating in Oceania today.

communities in Oceania, Australia and Aotearoa. Furthermore, we call for the Pacific Conference of Churches Secretariat to coordinate and facilitate research and advocacy initiatives on these issues at national, regional and international levels.

6. Call on our churches and governments in Oceania to address the resettlement of populations, as a pressing moral and ethical issue where the church, traditional and political leaders need to take responsibility and leadership. We reaffirm the calls made in the 2009 Moana Declaration that we:
 - 6.1 Reaffirm the issue of resettlement of populations due to climate change as a critical issue of our time;
 - 6.2 Engage in dialogue and discussions between churches, traditional leaders and governments on resettlement;
 - 6.3 Network and advocate for a regional and international agreement on resettlement for the protection of the rights of 'forced climate migrants';
 - 6.4 Forge partnerships between churches, traditional leaders and governments on mitigation and adaptation needs of our communities.
7. Mindful of the cultural and traditional values of Oceania, we call for the inclusion of gender policies in our Churches in Oceania and recognise that such policies must be premised on the religious, moral values of our communities.
8. Recognise that God's mission includes women and youth and therefore, we call on our communities of faith to allow more meaningful and active participation of women and youth in the mission of the church. We endorse and commit to the statement; 'Call to Reflection and Action' to the churches in Oceania of the intergenerational encounter between the ecumenical pioneers and youth.
9. Encourage our churches and the PCC secretariat to ensure that youths of migrant churches, particularly those in Aotearoa and Australia are included in regional youth activities that foster ecumenical relations, share and deepen historical memory and foster our regional identity as people of Oceania.
10. Affirm that our response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic lies in the heart at what it means to be a Christian. We acknowledge the statement in the report of the Commission on AIDS in the Pacific calling for the continued partnership of churches with all stakeholders, especially at the national level.

11. Affirm our commitments to the 2004 Nadi Declaration, at the 2007 PCLM, to implement the SPATS⁵ curriculum on HIV and AIDS and in the Resolution of the 9th PCC General Assembly, for a concerted response to HIV and AIDS in Oceania. We commit ourselves to equipping our ministers to engage meaningfully and practically with this issue. We accept our Christian responsibility to share hope and love through our acceptance and care of people living with HIV and AIDS.

12. Commit to the aforementioned responsibilities and to ensure their careful and effective implementation in our churches.

August 13, 2010

Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand

⁵ South Pacific Association of Theological Schools