

***The Conference received the following statement from the Latin American and Caribbean representatives:***

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord'. Luke 4:18-19

Meeting together, 28 brothers and sisters from Latin American and Caribbean countries, region of the world called Abya Yala by our ancestors, and as part of the Global Baptist Peace Conference, before the Lord of history, this conference and the world

WE DECLARE our commitment to peace to continue to struggle for liberty, a historical legacy of our Baptist forefathers and mothers. Liberty, which to be real has as a necessary condition the justice that God's Shalom brings, that is full life.

Because of this, we ask the Lord:

To bless the efforts for peace that churches and Christian organizations, our muslim brothers and sisters and other religions of the world.

To bless the spirit and letter, as much as the practice of the Charter of Earth of the United Nations.

To bless the work done by the nations to reach the goals of Development of the Millennium, to the end of diminishing hunger and poverty of the world, also the eradication of the cause that makes those evils inevitable.

At the same time, WE DEPLORE:

The attack to life that as a national and world system and structure does the savage capitalism.

The industry of armaments that nurtures militarism in the world causing wars and violence.

The unjust distribution of natural resources and the riches of people.

The unjust privatization of science and technology now in the hands of the powerful countries

The use of political power to favor the economical interests of particular groups in certain countries and international relations.

The racism of drugs and the ideological tyranny that power-groups inflict controlling the communication media such as the written press and TV.

We firmly demand:

The end of the economic embargo that for 50 years the U.S.A. has imposed on our sister Republic of Cuba, an embargo that has hampered seriously the development of a social system that aims its autonomy.

That the indictments against the five Cubans jailed in U.S.A. are dropped taking into account the many acts of sabotage and assaults to the Cuban population were developing measures of prevention.

Respect for the interests of life and culture of indigenous and afro descendent peoples, and particularly the economic and political processes actually in course in Bolivia and Equator.

We also express our support to the Alternativa Bolivariana for the Americas (ALBA) because it is a project of integration that promotes the peace of the people. We resist those who try to obstruct it.

At the same time we ask the Lord to intervene in the process of justice and peace of sister countries of Colombia, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Finally we share the dream of beginning a process that will foster a Latin American and Caribbean fellowship in unity towards peace. We count on the support of the young people in the churches.

With faith in God, giver of life, lover of peace with justice and liberator of victims, we affirm the declaration of his glory. Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

***The Conference received the following statement from the Italian Baptist Union:***

As participants in the World Baptist Peace Conference, we address:

- a) Baptist denominations throughout the world, the local churches and other Christian sister churches and ask you to pray for Palestinians and Israelis. As "intercede" means "walk in the midst" we ask the churches to "walk in the midst" of these peoples, being by prayer an

instrument of reconciliation building bridges of communication between the two conflicting sides. We aim to work for that time when the two nations will inevitably live side by side. The time is coming, and must be met urgently, when God will open up a pathway in human blindness which leads to the enemy's house not to tear it down but to build it up, not to make war but to live in peace.

- We thus encourage those churches who are already supporting projects to host in their own countries groups of Israeli and Palestinian young people, that they may have safe places in which to listen to each other's hurt, wounds and hopes.
- We encourage delegations from local churches to visit Israel and Palestine not out of respect for stones but for people. The sort of pilgrimage which builds up faith and hope is meeting with the survivors and victims on both sides, to hear their stories, and to share our sympathy and solidarity with those who build bridges in the midst of diversity.
- We ask you to pray for those Christians, especially Protestants who are a minority even among the Christians in Palestine and Israel.

b) The international community asking them to:

- speed up aid and make sure that aid sent reaches the victims
- defend human rights which are too often violated especially by the wrong use of weapons against the civil population
- promote a realistic political solution along the lines of "two peoples, two nations".

Finally, we promise before God to oppose every form of anti-Semitism fuelled by this war as well as declare unequivocally that the life of a Palestinian is worth the same as the life of an Israeli, an Italian, an American.

We declare that the God of compassion in whom we believe is a God of hope even in the midst of life's blind alleys.

***The Conference received the following statement from the Revd Dr Jesurathnam about the Dalits in India:***

Indian society is stratified along hierarchical and discriminatory grounds on the basis of a peculiar and heinous system known as the caste system, which is the world's longest surviving hierarchy. The worst effects of this caste system are experienced in the most appalling ways by certain communities, who in the present context prefer to be known as 'Dalits' but were previously known as the 'untouchables'. Caste discrimination against the Dalits continues despite the legal abolition of 'untouchability' and manifests itself in the form of social and cultural marginalisation, economic exploitation, political repression and psychological subjugation. Ironically Indian Christians and Churches are no exception to the discrimination against the Dalits who constitute the majority of Indian Christianity.

Various peaceful attempts, both secular and religious, have emerged over the years to address the issue of Dalit discrimination. These have led to the following developments in post-independent India:

- a) The self-assertion of Dalits of their own identities.
- b) Religious conversions as an expression of Dalit resistance.
- c) The growing consciousness of Dalit dignity and rights.
- d) Collaborative efforts by various Dalit communities towards participation in socio-political processes at both national and local levels.

Despite Dalits being tolerant and making their just cry in a most acceptable, polite and peaceful manner, the non-Dalits or oppressors of the Dalits continue to inflict injury on the psyche of the Dalits, so it is important for the Dalits to be more assertive and adopt certain ways in which they achieve the goal of their own liberation and emancipation from the evil of the caste system.

While the above mentioned task is not easy it is our hope as Dalit Christians that, being God our helper, we can move towards our goal. The entire process is to redefine what is justice and peace in such a civil conflict, a kind of civil war in the minds of millions of Dalits, who are the majority of the Christian Church in India. I would appreciate the gathering of Global Baptist Peace Conference in Rome, Italy in 2009 to take note of this situation and pray for us.

***The Conference received the following statement from the Asian and Australian representatives calling for a remembrance of particular situations of conflict and need:***

- We remember the Tamil people in Sri Lanka caught in the crossfire of armed conflict between Government troops and the Tamil Tigers.
- We remember the Christians in Orissa, India who suffer persecution and discrimination because of their faith.
- We remember those locked in inter-religious conflict in Southern Thailand and the Philippines.
- We remember those in Victoria, Australia who mourn the loss of loved ones' lives and the destruction of their homes in the bush fires that have ravaged that state this week.
- We remember the people of Burma who live in constant fear and who has been forcibly relocated from their homes and villages.

***The Conference received the following statement from Carl Cann about the gift of creation:***

God created one cell with the propensity for all of evolution and conferred upon it the quality of life. That one cell was placed in water on planet earth. Life evolved as a water dance between earth and sky. God's peace is like still water that reflects the beauty of our differences. We implore, with all our hearts, that the storms of conflict cease, so that the water calms and we can see ourselves again.

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