

## **MODERATOR'S REPORT TO THE 21<sup>ST</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY – APRIL 2015**

### **Salutation**

Rev. Fathers in God, distinguished commissioners and delegates to the 21<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, invited guests and friends of the PCEA fraternity, ladies and gentlemen. I greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, praise the Lord!!

This is a unique and momentous occasion in the history of the PCEA, as we witness change of leadership, signifying an end of an era, and the beginning on a new one.

### **Gratitudes**

It is said that everything that has a beginning also has an end, and certainly a journey that began 6 years ago in April 2009, when I first took over office as the Moderator of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, ends today. It has been a journey with a lot of ups, but downs too; a lot of successes, and challenges that are part of everyday life. I have witnessed the evolution of the Church over the years, with many blessings and at times painful adjustments having to take place. All these are necessary adjustments that at times come with change. I have witnessed the hand of the Lord guiding and protecting me throughout this journey.

It is only true to note that I have not walked through this journey alone. I have enjoyed overwhelming support from the Office of the General Assembly Secretariat, for which I am grateful. I am greatly indebted to our fathers in God, our past Moderators for your wise counsel, your availability and friendship and unfailing loyalty to serve God in this Church. I would like to thank you, Rev. Festus Gitonga; the retiring Secretary General for your wisdom and knowledge and firmness in dealing with constitutional matters that have kept the Church moving on the right track. You have also been a close friend and colleague in God's vineyard. Rev. Thegu Mutahi, the Deputy Secretary General has been of immense help in many Church matters but particularly with regard to the appointment and training and Personnel Committees. Mr. Amon Nderi, the Honorary Treasurer has provided invaluable support in leadership and Management in Church Financial Resources. I cannot forget the Heads of Department, Regional Coordinators and all supportive staff, God bless you.

I thank all the members of the clergy, wherever you serve, for the love of our Church, and in their tireless work in shepherding the Lord's flock. To the Church elders, I extend great thanks you for your commitment and devotion. To Presbyteries, parishes, congregations, and various Church groupings, receive my heartfelt appreciation. My thanks also go to my brothers and sisters in the Lord from other religious denominations, including their leadership, for regularly joining with us not only to worship, but to share experiences and take a common stand on issues affecting our people both in religion and State.

Lastly, I thank my family for their overwhelming support and confidence in me over the years. May I thank you for being my friends companion, my number one supporter. I could not ask more of you, but instead remain grateful for all you have done, that I may succeed.

During my tenure, I have made several reports to the General Assembly, and to the General Administration Committee. As I conclude my second term as Moderator of the General Assembly, I would like to highlight some of the experiences I have observed, and which I hope will contribute to the development and growth of the church and the nation;

## 1. The Universal Church

The church is the body of Christ. As such it is a sacred institution, requiring maximum respect from all. The church of the apostles as recorded in the book of Acts of Apostles had a deep sense of fellowship among themselves. They were willing to learn from one another, willing to share their joys and problems. The people who entered into fellowship with one another were people who grew loving one another. They shared life together because the church exists in time and space.

Real community means sharing time, sharing meals, sharing priorities, sharing the level of our economic well-being, and sharing testimonies. This can only work well in the local level rather than on the top.

I have however noted that some individuals continue to use religion to exploit others of their wealth, time, and emotions. Indeed this has been witnessed in reality and media. I have also noted that in the inter-faith religious fora, some of the clergy are driven by selfish interests. This is not right, and I urge the various umbrella bodies in the religious sector to take keen note and deal with such amalgamations.

And like Bridget Willard stated, that Church is not only a building. The church is what you do. Church is who you are. Church is the human outworking of the person of Jesus Christ. Let's not only go to Church, let's be the church. Let's be worth emulating, let us serve as examples of true living as committed Christians.

## 2. Engagements

During the last one year, I am happy to report that I have travelled extensively within and outside the country. I am a witness that the Church has continued to grow in leaps and bounds. In summary, the 20<sup>th</sup> GA activities and programs that have been undertaken by the office of the Moderator are as follows:

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|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Regional visits | Church dedications          | School invitation in thanksgiving |
| • Invitations     | Laying of foundation stones | Fundraising Nendeni area visits   |
| • Funerals        | Parish subdivisions         | Ministers' weddings               |
| • Weddings        | Presbytery subdivisions     | Graduations                       |
| • Conventions,    | Travels                     |                                   |

The Church has continued to grow and this is evidenced by the dedication of a total of 104 Church buildings, creation of new 16 parishes, and 5 new presbyteries. There are other new subdivisions on the way.

### 3. Church and Society

Since time in memorial, the Church and state have always been inseparable. This has been the case despite the many hiccups that may be present between the two institutions on matters of principle. Indeed this is often the case, since the church should, at all times, play her rightful role as the conscience of a nation.

The church therefore takes pride when the state is moving in the right direction. Following the election violence in 2008, the church engaged in massive activities to bring about national reconciliation National unity coalition government, care and resettlement of IDPs, Community healing and the overall transition to the new dispensation. Over the last 6 years, much has taken place.

The Church champions the reviews of the National Constitution for many decades. The Church is happy that Kenyans finally gave themselves the new Constitution. However the Church raised concern on certain pertinent issues such as provision of education, in relation to sponsorship and the institution of marriage. Other issues including taxation regime. In relation to economic sustainability freedom of worship and extensive bill of rights in relation to overall national good have continued to draw our attention for more reforms.

Kenyans also witnessed a smooth transfer of power from the 3<sup>rd</sup> President to the current President of the Republic of Kenya, this after peaceful elections on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

On the economic front, we continue to witness astronomical growth of the nation. Roads infrastructure continues to open many parts of our country to higher economic productivity. Standard gauge railway alongside LAPSET project are underway; massive electrification of homesteads combined with cheaper prices of fuel and increased supply of clean water and to more Kenyans are impressive and commendable development. I therefore remain optimistic that the future of our country is even brighter.

The development of human capital will be key towards this achievement and realization of vision 2030 so as to derive maximum benefit. The church on her part should actively participate towards realization of this vision particularly focusing on the social pillar. The social pillar is critical in molding the character of the citizen, since character and proper societal values create a stable nation.

Discovery of enormous mineral resources is great for economic prosperity, however mineral resource in Africa has been experienced in other countries has generated conflict around sharing and distribution of the wealth thereby created. It is my suggestion that the government should have Proper legal frame work, community participation, and the investment into the future will go a long way to ensure benefits are enjoyed by both present and future generations alongside ensuring lasting peace and stability. The church on its part will have to facilitate community empowerment and participation. Special effort must be put in place to ensure value and wealth are retained rather than exporting them in exchange of hard cash.

I also urge the state not to lose focus on matters of security. We've witnessed a lot of challenges in the recent past, including acts of terror, and attacks on innocent people in such places Westgate, Lamu, Mpeketoni, Witu, Mandera, Kapendo and many more. Some of these attacks seem to be driven by radical

religious leanings which have the potential to divide Kenyan along, religious, ethnic and social economic lines. we've also witnessed action on the part of the state to protect her people, including enactment of the relevant security laws. Kenya is evolving into a better democratic nation where the rule of law, effective participation of people in governance and accountable government should be the order of the day.

#### **4. Institution of the Family**

A big challenge facing the contemporary society today is the shakeup of the family unit. This challenge is real and cannot be wished away. Cases of domestic violence have been on the rise and could get worse if left unchecked. Increasing cases of suicide of young people homicide, divorce and separation are symptomatic of a sick society. This is the case both within the Christian Church and society in general. This also applies to the clergy and elders alike. It is the high time that the church tackles this issue seriously. The question keeps on being raised as to whether or not time has come for the church to allow divorce.

We must face this issue prayerfully and with due diligence in seeking the root cause so as to address it satisfactorily. Unless the church addresses herself to this very troubling reality of family breakup, we shall witness unprecedented upheavals in the social order. The church must lead the way in seeking a lasting solution to this social problem. I suggest, as one of the ways forward, that the parishes come up with couple's forums so that they are properly mentored and counseled on family life, and also share experiences. Some of the congregations are already taking this approach, and is highly commendable. However this as it may be, research indicates that the rate of divorce in Kenya especially among Christian would be reduced by 5 percent if couples are subjected to adequate premarital counseling. Marriage enrichment through seminars workshop and counseling would also go along way in strengthening the institution of marriage and family.

The media must take responsibility for promoting and molding positive family values in their content. Family itself must provide a conducive environment for the formation and nurture of the young one into responsible adult.

It is clear that the family is the basic and primary institution of the socialization of the child hence the saying that charity begins at home. The other important institution is the school where learning is tailor made to add value to the child socialization through obtaining knowledge skills values that mold/ shape the life and the character of the child. As a church we can add faith based value to the school environment by way of promoting school chaplaincy ministry to school, program of pastoral instructions in primary school, enriching guidance and counseling in school, promotion of student groups, clubs and movement. Supporting teachings of CRE and developing CRE teaching resources. Participation in the administration and management of learning institution through boards, committee, councils and PTA etc. with the above in mind this can be a fertile ground for shaping the lives of young people in line with Christian value and world view.

## **5. ICT**

Following the passing of Resolution 6293 on the use of ICT in the managerial operations of the church and in ministry, I am happy to note that the church has been actively present on social media, electronic money transfers, and websites, among other modern ICT supported communication methods. It's noteworthy that we held the last two GACs on paperless platform, and this is the first paperless G.A meeting ever held in the history of our Church.

While this is commendable, I urge the church to adopt ICT more, especially in the area of ministering to our brothers and sisters in the diaspora. The Church must increase the use of mobile telephony for preaching, teaching, evangelizing, and counseling to facilitate the promotion of Christian formation, mentorship and discipleship. And it is both the cheapest and most efficient mode of ministry delivery today as it is customize to meet the ministerial needs of diverse audiences it can be personalized and can simultaneously reach local and global audience. It is my observation that training in this area is lacking. And therefore must be provided to our workers as a matter of highest priority, if at all the church will minister effectively to the majority of our population both in contemporary and future generations and our theological institutions, university and seminary must champion this cause.

## **6. Presbyterian University of East Africa.**

The church sponsored Presbyterian University of East Africa has been slowly and painfully rising to become a global institution of academic excellence. No doubt, several challenges have been evident, especially the financial aspect. However, am glad that recently inaugurated University Council is keen to open a new page into prosperity. May I therefore urge the Church to continue nurturing this important institution, and provide constant guidance. May I also revisit the commitment earlier made by the church through the presbyteries that they will each sponsor at least 10 students to PUEA per academic year. I urge that this be implemented to the letter.

It's important to note the future of any nation lies in the human capital of its citizens. So is the case with any other institution. And therefore it follows that the success of PUEA should be at the heart of this church. The future of our church lies with this institution; the legacy this church bestows on generation after generation must be through PUEA, for that is the institution that is best able to research and document events surrounding our church. I pray that each and every member of this church takes ownership in the success of our university. The university at the moment is working towards the attainment of a charter. Let us pray and support the institution towards a fully-fledged status.

## **7. Chaplaincy**

I have taken note that the church's arm of Chaplaincy has been active over the period, in the church sponsored institutions, including Secondary schools, Colleges, Hospitals, uniformed services, correctional Institutions or even the University. This is very commendable. In the same breath, I urge our members to be on the lookout and ensure the sponsored Institutions are managed in the right manner for the benefit of members and public in general.

I further urge the Church to seriously look into the matter of Chaplaincy, not as a secondary matter but a primary one. This is because there have been cases where the ministers attached to such institutions quickly request for transfers soon after reporting to the centers claiming not to have been specially trained for Chaplaincy, or where the head office does the transfers to deal with shortage of clergy in parishes. We should therefore relook into the issue of re-instating the tent-making ministry and also specialized training for those who would be Chaplains.

## **8. Church Constitution**

There is still need to overhaul the Church Practice and Procedure Manual to be alive to the changes that have been taking place over time. We have adequately discussed this issue in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> GA meetings. Time for action should be sooner rather than later.

## **9. Theological Seminary**

The idea of establishing a Seminary has been alive, with pilot trainings taking place at the PCEA Lay Training & Conference Centre. While I appreciate this development, I still have a dream of establishment of PCEA Theological Seminary to offer refresher courses for our clergy, and keep constant Theological dialogue in full reality of societal changes over time, besides ensuring a sense of uniformity in our approach to the practice of worship.

## **10. Partnerships**

The church continues to build a strong partnership base both as a singular institution, and through its departments and other levels, including presbyteries, parishes and congregations. I single out and congratulate PCMF for partnering with Ghana, Burundi, Zimbabwe, South Sudan, Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda, and South Africa to form the Pan Africa Presbyterian Fellowship. I further congratulate Rev. Peter Kania for having been elected the President of the fellowship.

I further thank the Moderator of Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and his team, for having visited the Church this year, as a way of cementing continued Partnership with Ireland. The teams from the Presbyterian Churches in USA, Korea, and Scotland have also been our guests in the last few months.

I continue to encourage local Partnerships within the PCEA fraternity between Presbyteries, Parishes, Congregation Church groups or even individual Church members. May I appeal to all Christians especially those endowed to extra miles and support ministry and mission work beyond their context.

## **11. Investments**

I thank the parishes and Presbyteries for their effort in remitting their cess allocations. They have enabled the Head Office operate optimally, and undertake several projects to sustain the Church financially.

However, I think the church has dragged her feet in coming up with a sound financial management and investments policy to guide her in the critical matter of finances. Over the period, the church has

experienced, drastic decline in revenue and operations of our projects rising court cases touching on land and financial obligations, among other concerns.

If these issues are not addressed once and for all, the church shall continue to limp financially for a long time to come. We will also not be in a position to identify emerging opportunities and taking advantage of them. Case in point is the church land in Lodwar, Maralal, and others, where a prime piece of land at the centre of the town has been grabbed. Although the church has a right to fight over this land, it's worth noting that the primary cause has been the land lying idle, and thus attracting a lot of people with intention to grab.

The church has to take a deliberate move to liquidate some of the assets in order to offset the crippling debts on her shoulders. She could then invest in higher revenue earnings ventures.

## **12. Human Capital**

Besides the evident growth of the church, there has been growth too in the area of personnel, including the clergy. There has however continued to be shortage of the clergy to serve in all the parishes and other church institutions. Some have been deposed, others have gone for further studies, retirement, while others have been promoted to higher glory.

There are also instances where some parishes have been unable to ordain enough elders to serve the church, with some members being openly reluctant. We need to get to the root cause of some on these cases.

I therefore urge the church to have a proactive Human Resource framework that is able to identify some of these gaps and address them accordingly. The framework should also address itself to issues of training of clergy, laity and other support staff. It's therefore important that the Church ensures there is adequate capacity to manage such growth, including well trained and adequate personnel, clergy.

May I suggest the matter of revisiting the position of the executive Secretary General has now become inevitable. The concern here is that the continuity of leadership at the churches executive level suffers from the disruption of limited tenure of office. Church business is adversely affected when important resolutions passed are not implemented in time owing to the nature of operations in the current setting.

The yawning gap between the rapid growth of the church structure and the recruitment of clergy require radical but urgent measures to address it. More clergy could be obtained by running a crash program for belief duration in order to meet immediate needs where many stations have been left vacant

## **14. Other Observations**

During my tenure of office, I have had opportunities to interact with many people across the social divide. I visited all corners of our country and beyond. I visited Turkana County, Tana River, Siaya, Marsabit, Uasin Gishu and many others. Some of the challenges I came across were, food, clothing, shelter, medical care, children who need care, education, some people who have great need for building a worship place,

children orphanages and many others. This reminded me of Mathew 9:35-38, where the Bible says, “When he saw the crowds he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.” With all the above challenges in mind, I urge the church to come up with more innovative ways to find long-lasting solutions, and partner with other institutions such as the state and other well-wishers on the same. I am aware of the good work the youth is doing with Timothy program, alongside what the Woman’s Guild is doing. This is very commendable and should be encouraged.

## **CONCLUSION**

As I conclude my report, I thank the Almighty God for His goodness and mercy upon the Church and myself, for the last 6 years of my servant leadership as Moderator of the General Assembly. I thank all of you members of PCEA fraternity for showing confidence in Office of the General Assembly Secretariat during this period, and constantly supporting us.

I will continue to serve the Church of Christ as the lord will lead and pray that the Almighty showers the incoming G.A officials with wisdom and strength to shepherd His flock.

Thank you and God bless you.



**RT. REV. DAVID RIITHO GATHANJU**  
**MODERATOR – 20<sup>TH</sup> G.A.**