

PCEA 19th General Assembly: Applying Knowledge for Reconstruction and Development in Mission

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Salutation and Acceptance

Rev Fathers in God; distinguished commissioners and delegates to the 19th General Assembly; invited Guests and friends of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, ladies and gentlemen, I bring you warm Christian greetings this Easter Season from me and my family – praise the Lord.

I am humbled beyond words for both the awesome responsibility bestowed upon me and the confidence you have shown in electing me to be your Moderator of the 19th General Assembly. I am delighted by the confidence you have shown in me and I am humbled by the awesome responsibility that this high office requires. The one thing that gives me comfort is that the Lord who calls is the one who equips and I therefore have full confidence that the Lord who has called me to this ministry at this time will indeed equip me for the task ahead. I appreciate that I cannot do it alone and I must rely wholly on the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in this regard I greatly covet your prayers, your encouragement and your support.

The church is the means through which we serve Christ here on earth. The steadfast devotion and commitment of my fellow ministers; elders as well as the general membership of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa remains adorable. Indeed it is this corporate devotion that has seen the PCEA continue to grow in the midst of very difficult circumstances and for which I thank God. It is my prayer that this sense of devotion will continue to grow as we face the challenges facing us in the 21st Century.

In taking up my new responsibilities as the Moderator of the 19th G.A, I appreciate that I am not coming to fill a vacuum – rather, I am coming to build on what my predecessors have built knowing too well that the foundation – which is Jesus Christ has already been laid and none other can be laid. Allow me to take this time and pass a vote of thanks and recognition of my predecessors who have passed the baton of leadership to day. I thank God for the contributions made by the missionaries who brought the gospel to our land and helped in the

establishment of the PCEA; I wish to recognize the contributions made by the first generation Christians in this country who helped propagate the gospel in very difficult circumstances. They were mocked and despised but they moved on with the cause of the gospel – and for their courage, we are here today. I wish to recognize the role played by our fathers in God – those departed and those who are with us here today.

Every change of leadership signifies a new beginning in one way or the other. When Moses handed over the baton of leadership to Joshua, there was a dawn of a new era. In handing over the leadership of the PCEA today, we are saying that a new era has dawned. This calls for greater sacrifice and commitment on all of us. The journey ahead is not in any way easy but our faith in God will see us through and make us succeed. Today marks a new chapter in the history of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa. Join me as we make ourselves available to be used by God in addressing the challenges of this new millennium. As we continue awaiting the second coming of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, let us recall the words of saint Paul that his coming is now nearer than when we first believed.

The Theme: Hosea 4:6

After seeking the Lord on the task ahead, I was led to the Old Testament scripture on the prophecy of Hosea chapter 4 verses 6:

“... My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge...”

I am convinced that the message of Hosea is as relevant today as it was in the 8th Century. When we look around, there is evidence of destruction everywhere. Ignorance continues to take its toll on our people. The church cannot sit back and watch this unfolding scenario in silence. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa must continue asserting its divine and historical position as the conscience of the nation and we must be involved in the setting up of the national agenda rather than being reduced to mere reactionaries. The Church must re-emphasize her duo mandate of being the prophetic voice as well as her pastoral role of pasturing God’s flock.

 ***The need for unity***

The phrase “my people” in the Hosea text represents unity. The Lord is calling upon us to be united. We have been called upon to be in the leadership of the church at a time when our people are deeply divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. We have witnessed divisions in this country never experienced in the existence of Kenya as a sovereign nation. We have seen our people divided particularly on political issues and the post election violence witnessed in January 2008 is still fresh in our minds; the smell of smoke from the burning fires of the post election violence is still in our nostrils – indeed, the fire is still smoldering and the cry of anguish and neglect can still be heard from the internally Displaced persons still out there in the cold.

Even when we have fallen so low, let us be comforted by the opening statement of our theme: *my people!* The Lord still counted the Israelites as “my people” even when they had forsaken him. In this statement are both an affirmation and an invitation.

Unity must go beyond denominational differences. The Presbyterian Church of East Africa cannot afford to isolate herself from the rest of Christendom but must enhance her existing partnerships. These partnerships include the ecumenical movements as well as other church organizations. We must continue to make our presence felt in the NCKK; the WCRC; WCC and other Christian organizations and use their networks to enhance our mission. Our partnership with PC USA (with particular reference to the Out Reach Foundation) needs special mention. Other partnerships including: Church of Scotland; PC Canada PC; Northern Ireland and Presbyterian Church in Korea. We must continue with these partnerships while charting new ones particularly within Africa as well as Europe and Asia. We are a church that has a very rich heritage which we must use to form new working relationships. The need for us to send out missionaries is evident and we need to rise up to the challenge.

The Presbyterian Church of East Africa must rise up to the challenge of unity and I believe that with God on our side, we are up to the task of reconstruction, development and progress.

Destruction everywhere

Destruction is everywhere evident. Our people have been destroyed. Poverty has continued to take its toll on our people. The pangs of hunger

continue to afflict us and our grain reserves are empty. HIV/AIDS pandemic has continued to wreck havoc and many homesteads have been turned into cemeteries and all that is left is a trail of orphaned children with no one to look after them. As we enter the 19th General Assembly, we must be open to the reality of destruction that is evident all around us. We cannot sit back and assume that the problem is not with us. We must step up our campaign against these forces of destruction that have continued to inhibit our growth. We must reconstruct and develop ourselves.

That the world has become a global village is no longer in question. This being the case, we can no longer assume to be insulated against its effects – both good and bad. The effects of global warming and climate change are here with us. The erratic weather conditions leading to prolonged drought; famine and unpredictable weather patterns can attest to this. At least 46 rivers and streams in various parts of Kenya have dried up and the existing ones are fast drying up. Experts have raised warning on the depreciating snow levels in Africa's two highest mountains that form part of the geographical coverage of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa namely Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania Mission Presbytery and Mt Kenya in the greater Mt Kenya and Eastern regions. The biggest river in the country –namely River Tana has not been spared and considering the number of livelihoods that are directly dependant on this river, there is need for all to take action and save our environment. Time does not allow me to go into details of all the areas of environmental concern but it would be unfair not to mention the gravity of the destruction of our forests and especially the Mau complex. While we thank the government for the efforts it is making we cannot help to express our disappointment at the apparent government inaction in conserving the Mau forest.

Let us do what we can with what we have. Undertaking the Annual Tree Planting exercise in the second week of May pursuant to Pwani GAC Resolution **5997** is greatly encouraged.

Brothers and sisters, we must apply knowledge and save ourselves and our future generations from destruction. We must rise up to the challenge of reconstruction and development as we engage in holistic mission.

 ***Lack everywhere***

Fellow commissioners and delegates to this august house, it will serve us well to realize that the single most daunting challenge facing humanity in the 21st century is ***inadequate leadership capacity at varying levels***. This inadequacy is not just in the political field as we have witnessed in this country over the last year but also calls for us as a church to check this inadequacy in our own quarters.

We are in dire need of a leadership that has an enlightened perspective, moral integrity, selflessness and unwavering patriotism. The society we live in is looking up to the church to offer this kind of leadership and we cannot afford to sit back without addressing this pertinent issue. As Africa grapples with inadequate leadership capacity, we cannot fail to point out that more than anything else, the brain-drain experienced in the last half of the 20th Century and which continues to this day has had a major contribution to the current sorry state of affairs we find ourselves in. While we cannot wish away the reality that this world has become a global village, brain-drain is largely skewed to the disadvantage of Africa and the third world. It is only by addressing this lack of leadership capacity that we can give hope to the present and future generations. On this issue of brain drain, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa is a victim and must therefore be more vocal in its advocacy for policy change in government in order to check this imbalance. In the mean time, we need to continue supporting our people in the Diaspora.

We can only address this lack by raising the bar on leadership. The church must lead the way in this area by creating a contemporary leadership regime that is both relevant and responsive. We cannot afford to lead by remote control but must engage those we lead.

Equipped Leadership: The devotion and commitment of Church members remains a key pillar in the success of this church. I must recognize once again this commitment. While every member plays an important role in the overall mission of the church, allow me to mention in particular the role played by our ministers; evangelists and our elders.

In order to enhance service delivery, we need to ensure that our ministers continue to receive quality and relevant training that prepares them for the challenges at hand. We thank God for the many institutions of higher learning that offer theological training. In order to compliment their efforts and work towards unified approach to doctrine and ministry in general, I recommend that

we think of establishment of a seminary in which those who graduate in theology are trained in practical ministry with particular emphasis on Presbyterianism. This will ensure continuation of our rich heritage of decency and order as expressed by St. Paul in 1Cor 14:40 [let all things be done decently and in order. KJV] and which has left an indelible mark in the history of the Reformed Tradition. Having upgraded the pastoral institute to Presbyterian College and now Presbyterian University, the need for a Presbyterian Seminary is evident.

While the proposed seminary will take care of the clergy, the Lay training and conference centre needs to be upgraded so as to enhance the training of evangelists and elders. The evangelists' training needs to be taken to the next level. This will involve offering degree programs in mission and evangelism. The role of the Evangelist must then be clearly defined so as to address the current scenario where the Evangelists' position is largely seen as "prequalification to ordained ministry". It will also serve as a training centre for ministers specifically called to serve in our Nendeni areas.

The elders' role in the mission of the church cannot be overlooked. In order to keep them abreast of the changing nature of pastoral ministry to which they are called, they need regular refresher courses at least once every five years. The programs at the Lay Training will compliment the immeasurable role played by the Theological Education by Extension.

Knowledge: The key to reconstruction and progress

We are destroyed for lack of knowledge! Knowledge here must go beyond awareness of the facts to the application of the same. As I have noted earlier in this address, we have been called to serve at a time when our people are faced with destruction due to ignorance. At the political front, our people face destruction from the very politicians that they have elected; at the moral front, we are being destroyed through increased immorality; the policies in place have continued to increase poverty while the gaping gap between "the haves" and "the have nots" is ever widening. Knowledge will save us, knowledge will save our nation, and knowledge will save this church! This knowledge must come with a willingness and commitment to apply it.

Technology: We are living in a technological age. While shunning the negative effects that come with this technological advance, for example internet

pornography which need to be seriously addressed, we must also make use of available technology to advance the mission of the church. It is sad to note that while we are in the 21st century, our modus operandi remains largely in the 20th century. The church must arise and make use of appropriate and modern technology. Coupled with technology is the issue of time management and availability of information in real time. We must therefore put mechanisms in place to make use of computer and internet technology to make timely information available at all levels of operation. We must make ensure that the church website is regularly updated and access to information made easier. Communication in our presbyteries and parishes must be defined by utilization of internet, email, and website which are possible by the mere access to a computer. The internet virtual center the government plans to install in villages across Kenya is a step in this direction which the church should take advantage of.

The church has continued to grow and this is evidenced by the continued subdivision of presbyteries. This growth has not come with its share of challenges. In order to enhance both representation and participation in church meetings at the national level, there is need to address this challenge. This will improve quality of debate and overall productivity of the meetings.

And talking of technology, you don't have to wait for the Moderatorial visit in order to get in touch with me. I am only a mouse click away! Welcome to my website: www.pceamoderator.org

New Strategy: The challenges of the new century require a change of strategy on our part. We need to contextualize theology to reflect our dynamic cultures. The gospel must remain relevant in a changing culture. The effectiveness of media in enhancing communication cannot be overemphasized. We must not shy away from using the media as a tool for mission. The mission of the church is making Christ known and we must use every available means towards this end. Knowledge must be made available by all means.

Our mission work in the East African community needs a change of strategy if we are to continue being relevant particularly in light of the integration of the East African Community. We all recognize the slow pace of church growth in Tanzania and Uganda. In order to spur growth, it is necessary to explore the possibility of establishing a special Mission region to take care of the Kenyan coast; Tanzania; Uganda and the greater East African Region. The Lord who has called us at this

time will equip us with what it takes to tackle the challenges at hand – but we must make ourselves available.

Research: The Presbyterian University of E.A remains a major milestone in the development of our church. We must make use of this facility as a tool for enhancing knowledge that will take this church to the next level in its mission. To this end, we encourage the university to set up a research unit that will ensure that the church remains relevant in this changing culture. The rich heritage of this church needs to be archived in a central place where it is both accessible and secure. We must explore the possibility of establishing an archive at the University.

While theology remains key to the establishment of the university, training of medical personnel must be given due priority. This is in line with our mission to provide quality and specialized medical care through our already established facilities at Kikuyu, TumuTumu and Chogoria Hospitals as well as the many other satellite clinics. The idea of turning Kikuyu Hospital into a University Hospital with campuses at TumuTumu and Chogoria must be given serious consideration. And while thinking on the expansion programs for the University, upgrading Rubate Teachers College to offer degree programs in Education should not be overlooked.

Applying knowledge in Mission: Success in mission from the days of Christ to the present has required facilitation and human intervention. It is necessary for me to remind all of us here present that the upsurge of missionary activities in the 19th century, while being the work of the Holy Spirit, was also a result of the industrial revolution. We need men and women who must rise up and support the work of mission using their resources. It is important for us to remember that the Presbyterian Church of East Africa traces its origin to the businessmen and directors of the Imperial British East Africa Company in conjunction with youth of the Church of Scotland Mission. Our Business men and women and professionals in various fields must be engaged in mission. Dr. David Livingston's 3C concept of mission namely: Civilization; Christianity and Commerce must be revisited and contextualized to address 21st century challenges. This is in the light of economic empowerment in the African Renaissance based on African cultural and philosophical expression and shaped by the gospel. We must once again pursue Henry Venn's vision of a self – supporting, self – governing and self – propagating church, which sadly in the 21st Century is still far from being achieved. However,

we must not do this in isolation but rather in partnership with the whole body of Christ in the context of mutual interdependence.

In order to have our people fully involved in mission work, we must of necessity ensure that they are economically empowered. While our church groups' at all organizational levels have recorded tremendous growth, the same cannot be said of their individual members. It is in this regard that we must recognize and encourage the initiative taken by some PCMF committees at various levels to form savings and credit societies in order to boost the financial empowerment of the men. We encourage all our members to take necessary steps to empower themselves. In particular, we encourage our membership to make use of government initiatives such as the Youth Development Fund as well as the Women Development Fund. With a church membership that is financially empowered, there will be greater support for mission work with particular emphasis on social responsibility at all church levels.

All said and done, prayer must remain central in our mission strategy. To this end, the contribution of the outgoing moderator with emphasis on intercession cannot be overemphasized. In order to enhance this, it is necessary to strengthen the mission and evangelism committees at all church levels so that the gift of intercession for spiritual health can be properly used in the church.

Conclusion and way forward

Distinguished commissioners, delegates, brothers and sisters in the Lord, the task at hand is great and calls for even greater sacrifice and commitment on our part. In order for us to achieve our goal of applied knowledge for reconstruction and development in mission, I suggest that we do the following:

- ***Rededicate ourselves to God***: We cannot make it alone; we need to rededicate ourselves to God and re-affirm our commitment to him. We must own our church and be determined to continue supporting the mission at hand.
- ***Consolidate our financial base***: The last 6 years have witnessed unprecedented investment by our church. We thank the outgoing officials for this effort. The gains made by these investments must be consolidated

by ensuring that the facilities acquired are serviceable so that they can be used to finance the mission of the church.

- **Strategic Management:** In many instances, our overall effort has been diluted because we have often been pulling in different directions rather than pulling together. In order for all our efforts to be harmonized, we need to have a strategic plan that will help us be more focused in our operations as we engage in mission.

I believe that with applied knowledge; with rededication and commitment; with God on our side, we shall succeed in our mission. I leave you with the words of F. Douglas, an American ex-slave who had this to say:

“Our destiny is largely in our own hands, if we find we shall have to seek, if we succeed in the race for life, it must be by our energies. Others may clear the road, but we must go forward or be left behind in the race of life. If we remain ignorant, the intelligent of others will do but very little for us, if we are foolish, the knowledge/wisdom of others will not guide us.”

May the Lord bless you and keep you. Amen