Reformed Mission in an Age of World Christianity

Ideas for the 21st Century

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Foreword

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"Reformed Mission in an Age of World Christianity." This was the theme that drew women and men to the conference organized at Calvin College just before the June 2010 Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. In a sense, one can interpret this theme as raising questions such as, What is God calling the Reformed family of churches to do that is relevant in the world today? As Reformed Christians, how do we understand God's mission for our days? How can we be effective agents of God's transforming mission in an age when Christianity is found all over the world?

The speakers and participants in this preconference had a "feast" as key Reformed leaders addressed these issues and as they discussed related topics in smaller groups. The papers captured in this volume demonstrate just a fraction of the rich array of insights that emerged through this conference. They formed a true prelude to the birth of the World Communion of Reformed Churches—a communion that gathers the largest body of Reformed churches in the world. Through the WCRC, Reformed churches continue to be stimulated toward realizing God's mission today.

The DNA of Reformed Christians links our justification with our sanctification. Once liberated by our Lord Jesus Christ and justified by faith, we are called to live out that faith in gratitude to God through ways that make a difference in the world. This belief inspires us to respond to God's mission, both presenting the good news of salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ and being God's agents of transformation in society.

Commitment to justice in a world filled with injustice is one important aspect of the mission to which we have been called. It is no wonder that the preconference "Reformed Christians in an Age of World Christi-
anity” had a number of its speakers making reference to covenanting for justice in the world. The Accra Confession developed in 2004—a gift of one of the antecedents of the World Communion of Reformed Churches—was a key reference for a number of speakers and in a number of discussions and debates.

Given the broken world in which Christianity lives, we cannot ignore the suffering, insecurity, conflicts, destruction, and many other ways in which the forces of death continue to hold many communities captive. Engaging in mission that makes a difference is not simply an option we can take or leave at human pleasure. The life of obedience in following God’s mission calls us to a different reality.

The June preconference and the papers captured in this volume constitute an important resource that will equip Reformed Christians and others to take seriously God’s mission in the world today, in a manner that is relevant to addressing contemporary issues.

On behalf of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, I express my gratitude to the Calvin College centers and institutes that organized this preconference, and to all whose papers are contained in this volume. My gratitude extends to Professor Shirley Roels, who was one of the first to make contact with the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council and arrange the preconference in close proximity with the Uniting General Council. We are grateful for all who played different roles in making the conference and its impact a reality.

We commend this volume to all who read it. It is our hope that it will be instrumental in inspiring Christians to take up God’s mission and be God’s agents for transformation wherever they are found.

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