

A. Workshop Four - Theology of Inclusion and Disability

Preamble

We recognize and affirm that all are created in the image of God. We affirm that God's providence is for all and in God there is no discrimination. We affirm that the church is a community of all believers that opens her doors to whoever will come.

Theology of inclusion must be seen as theology of inclusiveness as inclusion presupposes acceptance from one who has already been in the main stream who determines the fate of others who is to be included. Inclusiveness displays the right of any and all to existence and the right to access the grace of God.

The Bible in St. John 3:16 records for "God so loved the world that He gave His only Begotten Son that who ever believes in Him should not perish but have ever lasting life". The message of the gospel is for one and all without any discrimination. People with disability and those without are all part of the world that God so loved and gave His only Begotten Son to.

Recalling with disheartenment that the 9th General Assembly in Maputo, Mozambique made resolutions on disability issues that have not been given their due consideration in the last 5 years;

We therefore remind and recommend the following to AACC, NCCS, member Churches and individual members of our churches: -

1. Giftedness:-People with disability are themselves a gift to the Church as they are part of the world that God gave His only Begotten Son to. For the Church to promote inclusiveness of disability in a practical way is not an option nor a favour but the character of Christ and His Church.
2. Member Churches must be encouraged to develop or adopt a curriculum on disability in our Theological Institutes and Colleges to prepare and to effectively equip Pastors who are key influential members of the community to become agents of change.
3. Member Churches must ensure that persons with disability in a policy and practical way are given opportunity to participate fully in the worship and praise of God by providing communication facilities and physical access such as ramps and other similar solution needs in our churches that will make for effective inclusiveness.
4. AACC to set up Bible study group to come up with materials on the issue concerning disability which when produced shall be used in our primary and secondary schools with a view to ensuring that principles of inclusiveness of different abilities as part of God's creation are made aware to our children in those schools.
5. AACC to give prominent discourse on disability issues and concerns during Assemblies to create positive awareness on our individual and corporate roles as agents of positive change.

6. Member churches send a full delegate who is a disabled person to our assembly to demonstrate in a practical term the churches commitment to the inclusiveness of disability and to provide equal opportunity for persons with disability to participate in the assembly. By so doing the church and the AACC will be displaying practical action of awareness creation among other beneficial consequences.
7. AACC to involve persons with disability in the planning and execution of the planned programmes in future Assembly. They should be involved in all processes to avoid the experience encountered during this assembly on the allocation of hall of meeting without adequate facilities for persons with disability.
8. People with disability suffer from low self esteem and internalized oppression occasioned by hostile attitude of the community. We therefore recommend that AACC in collaboration with EDAN to develop programmes to give exposure and training opportunities to increase the experience and confidence of people with disability.
9. Language is the means of communication. It could evoke emotions when words are not appropriately used. We use words at times that promote stigmatization, celebrate stereotyping and extol segregation which in turn dehumanizes and erodes dignity - words which are found in most translations of the Bible in our local languages. We therefore recommend as follows:-
 - 9.1 That church leaders should be sensitive to the feelings and emotions of different people within their congregations. The use of languages - words and phrases that expresses prejudice and promotes or perpetuates negative stereotypes should be discouraged and disallowed in our churches.
 - 9.2 That Bible translators should be encouraged to avoid using languages, words and phrases that stereotype and promote discrimination to make for a theology of inclusiveness.
10. The act of using healings to discriminate the faith of people with disabilities has a negative impact on the spirituality of people with disabilities. Many have left the Church because they were pushed into the front of queues for healing. If they are not healed, then they are told they have no faith. This brings utter distraught to the people with disability and further perpetuates negative stereotype of disabilities as a curse. We recommend that National Council of Churches check this seeming recklessness and human rights abuse.
11. We recommend that AACC, NCCS and member churches as they promote theology of inclusiveness and theology of reconstruction should not lose the sight of the theology of salvation which is central to the Christian faith.
12. We affirm that persons with disability are created by God with rights to existence, education, health, social services and participate fully in the overall community life

of any human collectivity. They may need our support but they do not deserve to be pitted.