



COMMUNIQUE



BY THE CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF GHANA AND THE GHANA PENTECOSTAL AND CHARISMATIC COUNCIL, ISSUED IN ACCRA, 8TH JUNE, 2016

Dearly Beloved citizens and men and women of goodwill resident in Ghana: We, the members of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) send you our warmest greetings of peace and love. We believe that the joy of the Risen Lord still remains with you and continues to fill you with hope.

DELIBERATIONS OF THE 2016 JOINT MEETING

We have just concluded our first Joint Meeting following our partnership agreement at the Osu Ebenezer Presbyterian Church on Wednesday, June 8, 2016. During the time we prayed and discussed issues of both Church and national importance. At the end of our meeting, we deem it appropriate as Christian leaders of our land to bring the following pertinent issues affecting our nation and the church to the attention of our Government and our citizens so that we can all participate in the process of addressing them together as one united and peaceful people.

CCG and GPCC Partnership

The Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) have realised the need to strengthen the prophetic voice of the church. This we believe will go a long way to address the many socio-cultural, economic, political, cultural, leadership and religious challenges confronting the nation and the church. The two bodies have therefore signed a memorandum of understanding to partner each other in the work of Christ. The partnership will afford the two councils, among others, the opportunity to work closely on church and state issues. It will also address ways and means of achieving close co-operation on issues such as education, health, religious and social matters. We shall facilitate joint programs for pastors, generational and different age groups for member to build the capacity of Christians in a way beneficial to their lives and the development of the nation. Issues relating to religious practices and excesses will be tackled together by the partnership to inject decorum and sanity into the religious landscape. These ecumenical relations do not in any way hamper the programs of the individual councils or their identities. It is mainly to create a unified voice to champion the cause of the church and the people of Ghana.

Urban Based Christianity

We are worried about what we see as the urbanization of Christianity to the utmost neglect of missions in remote areas and hinterlands of the country. Numerous churches have sprung up in urban areas and almost all huge Christian activities take place in cities. Beautiful churches and temples are being built all over the cities, while those in rural area are so dilapidated that they pass for death traps. During Christmas and New Year festivities, churches raise huge billboards advertising events which are all concentrated in the capital, with large congregation turnouts which gives a false impression that more souls are being won for Christ. We as Christians should note the demographics of the country, majority of the people live in the rural areas. It is imperative for us to reach out to these people just as the early missionaries reached out to the remotest parts of society to spread the gospel. There is the need for outreach programs and events targeted at the rural folks as we seek to spread the word of God and win more souls for Christ. A concerted effort must also be made to address what has now become known as death trap church buildings in our rural areas.

Threats against Religious Leaders

We strongly condemn attacks on religious leaders most especially from politicians who are quick to rain all manner of abusive language simply because they believe the message of the leaders is not in their interest. There seems to be a deliberate attempt to silence wisdom in the country. Religious and opinion leaders are vehemently attacked verbally and in some instances threats are made on their lives. Knowledgeable and forward thinking citizens are now afraid to speak for fear of being tagged as belonging to a political camp and their names dragged in the mud for simply speaking wisdom into the lives of Ghanaians. These do not auger well for the development of Ghana. We therefore call on the police to act swiftly to deal with threats on the lives of religious leaders and any other Ghanaian that faces threats of any kind.

Exploitation by some Men Of God

We equally condemn the activities of some self-acclaimed men of God who prey on the gullibility of a large section of the society with the exhibition of religious prowess. Exploitation is not and has never been part of Christianity, it is evil. There is the urgent need for all religious bodies in Ghana to come together to agree on self-regulation as one of the means to address this problem.

Elections and National Security

Political impunity, violence, intimidation, outright intolerance and deep polarization have characterised the current political landscape. It is extremely distressing that some Ghanaians spurred on by their political affiliations are willing to maim and kill in the name of winning or retaining power. Hate speech, abusive language and calculated attempts to instigate party followers towards an unjust and violent cause dominate the mainstream media, social media and other forms of communication. This is not what the pioneers of democracy envisaged when they sought to move Ghana from years of military rule to democracy. We all deserve peaceful, free and fair elections and no one is going to do that for us. We must therefore put the nation first and not a political party or a politician.

We firmly believe it is time for church leaders to begin calling to order politicians who are our members. On several occasions, we have had politicians go on the media, insult, instigate unrest, attack anyone who dares express divergent opinions, and the next Sunday they are hailed in church and given front seats. The church must make them aware that their actions are not in line with national peace and stability and the faith they profess. There will be no church building or the peace to attend church services if their utterances throw Ghana into a state of anarchy and instability. Religious leaders must become more courageous to advice and even rebuke members, whose actions have the potential to disrupt the peace and stability of the country. Ghana is the only country we have and the unity and stability that we currently enjoy should not be sacrificed on the altar of political expediency and ambition.

We have also keenly observed issues relating to the Electoral Commission and we are deeply concerned about what seem to be entrenched positions often taken by some political parties against some decisions of the EC, whilst the ruling party is almost always in support of the EC's decisions, the main opposition is almost always in disagreement with the commission. The EC has the primary responsibility to conduct free, fair, transparent and credible elections in Ghana. The political parties must therefore work together with the EC to ensure that it executes its role in the interest of the state. We are also calling on the EC as a matter of urgency to implement the ruling of the Supreme Court regarding the fate of persons that registered with National Health Insurance Cards and thereby clean the voters register. The divergent views on the interpretation of the ruling of the Supreme Court has the potential of throwing the entire election timetable into disarray. We are also urging the security agencies to uphold the law irrespective of which side of the political divide an offender may come from.

Further to this, the issue of a National Identity Card and a single national database platform for all forms of national identification is long overdue in Ghana and must be tackled and completed within the shortest possible time if the controversy surrounding a credible national electoral roll has to be addressed once and for all. We are therefore calling on government and all relevant stakeholders to show commitment to resourcing the National Identification Authority (NIA) to revive and complete the data capture processes suspended a few years ago in the remaining regions and issue cards to all Ghanaians as a matter of national priority.

Food Security

Food security continues to be a very worrying issue in the country. Most staple foods are produced seasonally with accompanying wide price variations in the course of a year. The recent rise in the prices of staple foodstuffs such as cassava, plantain and others are all as a result of our inability to process, preserve and store them when they are in glut. The Ghanaian farmer is now confronted with a constant dilemma of producing too much leading to losses as a result of limited market while producing little means there would not be enough income. For instance, water melon farmers at Nsawam and surrounding communities have produced so much that market prices have dropped as a result of supply outstripping demand. The farmers are currently left with no hope of even recovering their capital. The time has come for the country to stop paying lip service to post-harvest processing. We therefore appeal to the government to follow up with pragmatic policies and programmes to transform the agriculture sector to address some of the issues that threaten the food security of the country.

Labor Agitations

The trend of labor unrest, industrial actions, and demonstrations has seemingly become a norm in the country's labor sector. From teachers threatening a strike to demand their allowances due, nurses demonstrating to have their appointments after training, and Judicial Service Staff Association of Ghana (JUSSAG) bringing the justice system to a standstill, these agitations are stifling productivity in Ghana especially in the public sector. It turns out in most cases that negotiations with government have stalled. Government seems to be sending a message to workers that the best way to achieve a settlement is to go on strike or demonstrate because in most of these cases the aggrieved parties have succeeded where negotiations failed by resorting to industrial action. When doctors strike, people needlessly lose their lives, when JUSSAG strikes justice is unduly delayed, when teachers go on strike our students suffer. Government must, as a matter of urgency, act to ensure that workers' agitations do not get to such a stage before it commits to an amicable solution. In this connection, the necessary constitutional and legal reforms should be implemented so that the single spine pay policy can effectively work as envisaged. An unstable labour front is counterproductive because it is poor Ghanaians who suffer needlessly.

Public Accounts Committee and Graft

The Auditor General's report being reviewed by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has uncovered several incidences of corruption in many areas of the public sector, right from the level of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to that of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). While the state increases taxes and the cost of its services to raise enough funds to run the country, huge amounts of money are being siphoned in dubious orchestrations in the public sector. Recent revelations of over Six Hundred Thousand Cedis (GHS600,000) unaccounted for by MMDAs and the unquestioned ballooning of the USD40 million Achimota-Ofankor road project to USD120 million are all signs that the nation is not achieving the targets of bringing corruption to the barest minimum as enshrined in the National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP). This is fuelled by what could be perceived as the lack of political will to bring perpetrators to justice.

The PAC, for instance, has over the years complained about the loss of state resources, which were uncovered by the Auditor General's report. And yet those accused to be involved in the corrupt practices have not been brought to justice. It is now a mantra that one can steal from the public purse and when caught, one is either removed from post or asked to refund the money, which does not serve as an effective deterrence. The political, administrative, economic and social costs of corruption are grave to recount here. This notwithstanding, government's inability to effectively combat the canker of corruption has led to the poor citizen being overtaxed and government borrowing to meet statutory obligations. We, therefore, urge the government to prosecute state fund looters to send a clear message that corruption will not and cannot be tolerated because corruption is a crime. In this connection, the effective implementation of the NACAP is paramount.

Conclusion

It is our fervent prayer that the peace, unity and harmony, which we currently enjoy in Ghana, are protected and enhanced by our positive utterances and actions. We must endeavour to prioritise Ghana in all our actions and refrain from acts which have the tendency to plunge our

motherland into a state of confusion and anarchy. Let us all work hard together in our various capacities to build a prosperous, united and healthy nation.

We pray that the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

God bless our homeland Ghana and make our nation great and strong!

SIGNED:

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