



AFREG I
ABUJA, NIGERIA
JULY 25-28, 2006



*Only the best
is good enough
for Africa.*

Dr. Kwegir Aggrey

AFREG 1 Abuja Declaration

From July 25 to 28, 2006, about 200 Christian women and men representing church and public sector leadership from 27 African countries and from the African Diaspora in the United States of America met in the first African Forum on Religion and Government (AFREG I). There were other participants from the United States and Iraq. The forum was held in Abuja, Nigeria. We are grateful to God for the presence, encouragement and challenging words of His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and His Excellency President Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi and his wife Madam First Lady Denise Bucumi Nkurunziza.

The atmosphere surrounding AFREG I was very clear; the time has come for change in Africa. The current state of affairs in Africa is characterized by:

- being the wealthiest continent in terms of natural resources and yet having the poorest people on planet earth.
- being known as incurably religious people and yet having a serious lack of authentic spirituality, morality and integrity in all spheres of life (in church and society).
- the threat of religious intolerance and conflicts to peace and stability in Africa.
- the identity crisis in which African values and Western values are often confused.
- the need to strengthen the proactivity of the church vis-à-vis issues of development, governance and justice.

In response to the above realities, we as representatives of African leadership, expressed our deep sense of dissatisfaction for the current realities on the continent, and resolved to make the necessary contributions for positive change on the continent. We engaged in prayer, critical reflection, and discussed necessary action plans. Given our general agreement that the African challenge is primarily one of leadership, our deliberations were guided by the following purpose and objectives:

PURPOSE

To build a movement of African leaders of integrity who are committed to transforming Africa into a First World continent (a continent characterized by excellence) shaped by God-centred values.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop deep spirituality among African leaders that is God-centred and relevant to the African context.
- Develop a moral vision for Africa based on deeply personalized spiritual values.
- Develop a framework for Africa's development that is holistic.
- Develop a framework for freedom of religion in Africa that ensures a democratic environment characterized by peace and stability.

We are gravely concerned about the gap between what we profess and our actions vis-à-vis what is happening on the continent and have a passion to do something about it. Inspired by the keynote address of Dr. Delanyo Adadevoh, and other presenters, the participants (including government Ministers, Parliamentarians, Judges, Church leaders, Traditional Rulers and other community leaders) took on the challenge of working towards a movement of African leaders of integrity who are committed to making a difference in Africa by being salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16).

SIGNS OF HOPE AND COMMON CONCERNS

As participants reflected on the situation on the continent, we had cause to celebrate many signs of hope. The signs of hope include Christians responding to the calling to be in active politics with the value of integrity, and the commitment to making a difference. The Church is also emerging as the key platform for peace and reconciliation in all spheres of life. The African Union is taking initiatives that hold great promise for Africa's development. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has provided a common economic plan for Africa's development. The African Peer Review Mechanism also promotes integrity in leadership and governance in Africa.

We are grateful to God for the key role played by H. E. President Olusegun Obasanjo in making the vision of AFREG I a reality. We are also grateful to God for the full participation of H. E. President Nkurunziza. His testimonies regarding steps that he is personally taking towards integrity, justice, peace and development in Burundi are inspiring signs of hope.

We also shared common concerns about the challenges that face the continent. We noted that Africa has suffered much from settling for mindsets that prevent her from moving forward. Africa needs to move beyond these mindsets to those that are closer to the will of God. Thus there is a critical need to pursue shifts in mindset from:

- mediocrity to excellence; “only the best is good enough for Africa.”¹
- corruption to integrity.
- lack of confidence and initiative to confident, original and constructive creativity.
- limited supply mindset to abundance mindset.
- ethnocentrism to inter-ethnic communality.
- exclusivity on the basis of gender to inclusivity

¹ This is a famous quote from Dr. Kwegir Aggrey, first African Vice Principal of Achimota College, Ghana.

- and partnership in development.
- favouritism to meritocracy.
 - mindset of intervention and fatalism to the principle of sowing and reaping.
 - the tendency to adjust to the *status quo* to change leadership.
 - consumption to production mindset.
 - focus on raw material production to value added product economies.
 - ignorance to knowledge of the true value of Africa's resources.
 - under-utilisation to maximization of African resources for development.
 - charity dependence to fair business mindset.
 - dependence mindset to responsible interdependence.
 - self serving leadership to sacrificial leadership.

VALUES

Participants agree that change and transformation is very necessary, very urgent, and possible to achieve in Africa through the power of God. Such change is not merely cosmetic. It ought to be radical beginning from the changes which take place in the lives of individuals who form the churches and Christian communities, and is expressed in how the individuals become the salt and light of our communities and nations. We agree that the desired change will be possible when the following values are embraced:

- God-centredness
- Sacredness of human life
- Positive self-identity
- Personal and public integrity
- Ubuntu²
- Freedom and human rights
- Community

² *Ubuntu* describes a wholesome person who has integrity, moral values, and compassion, and can relate constructively in community. It is an African concept particularly found among the Nguni (Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Baswati) and other people of southern Africa.

- Sacrificial service
- Dignity of labour
- Responsible interdependence
- Justice for all
- Excellence

COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS

These call for some direct commitments on the part of leaders at various levels.

1. As participants in AFREG I, we commit ourselves to

- disseminate in our various constituencies the vision, objectives and passion of AFREG including the declaration and action points.
- promote a spirit of oneness and cooperation between Africans on the continent and the Africans in the Diaspora.
- foster a climate of working with people of other faiths in order to have peaceful communities that will enable us to address the many challenges facing the continent without compromising our faith.

2. We commit ourselves to, and call upon African churches to commit themselves to

- more proactive and collective leadership in addressing holistically the issues of development, governance and justice.
- foster Christian unity on the continent and move beyond divisions that have plagued churches and church organizations.
- sponsor and insist on the development of theologies that speak from and to African expressions of Christianity.

- develop theologies and ministries that liberate Africans from spiritual superstition, deception and oppression.
- promote global missions from Africa as a move from being a missionary receiving to a missionary sending continent.
- include issues of leadership, development and governance at all levels of church education, paying particular attention to mentoring and empowering women and youth.
- encourage those who are called to engage in public politics and help in the building of their capacity to do so with the highest level of integrity as models to the entire society.
- utilize the gifts of all members without discrimination on the basis of gender or age.
- engage in activities that combat HIV/AIDS.

3. We commit ourselves to, and call on all leaders of African Governments to

- put the needs of the citizens of the nations first, and to seek the welfare of the nation rather than their own benefits.
- commit themselves to accountability and the eradication of corruption.
- partner with churches for the development of our communities.
- commit more resources to the education, health and food security of their peoples.
- ensure the independence of the judiciary.

- foster communities in which people of different faiths live together with mutual respect.
- develop and involve women in leadership at all levels.
- develop a positive sense of African identity as well as bridge the communication gaps among the Anglophone, Lusaphone, Francophone and Arab African countries by promoting one African language as an official language of Africa.³
- sponsor and/or partner with institutions engaged in combating HIV/AIDS.

4. We commit ourselves to, and call on all African Christians in leadership and in Government to commit themselves to

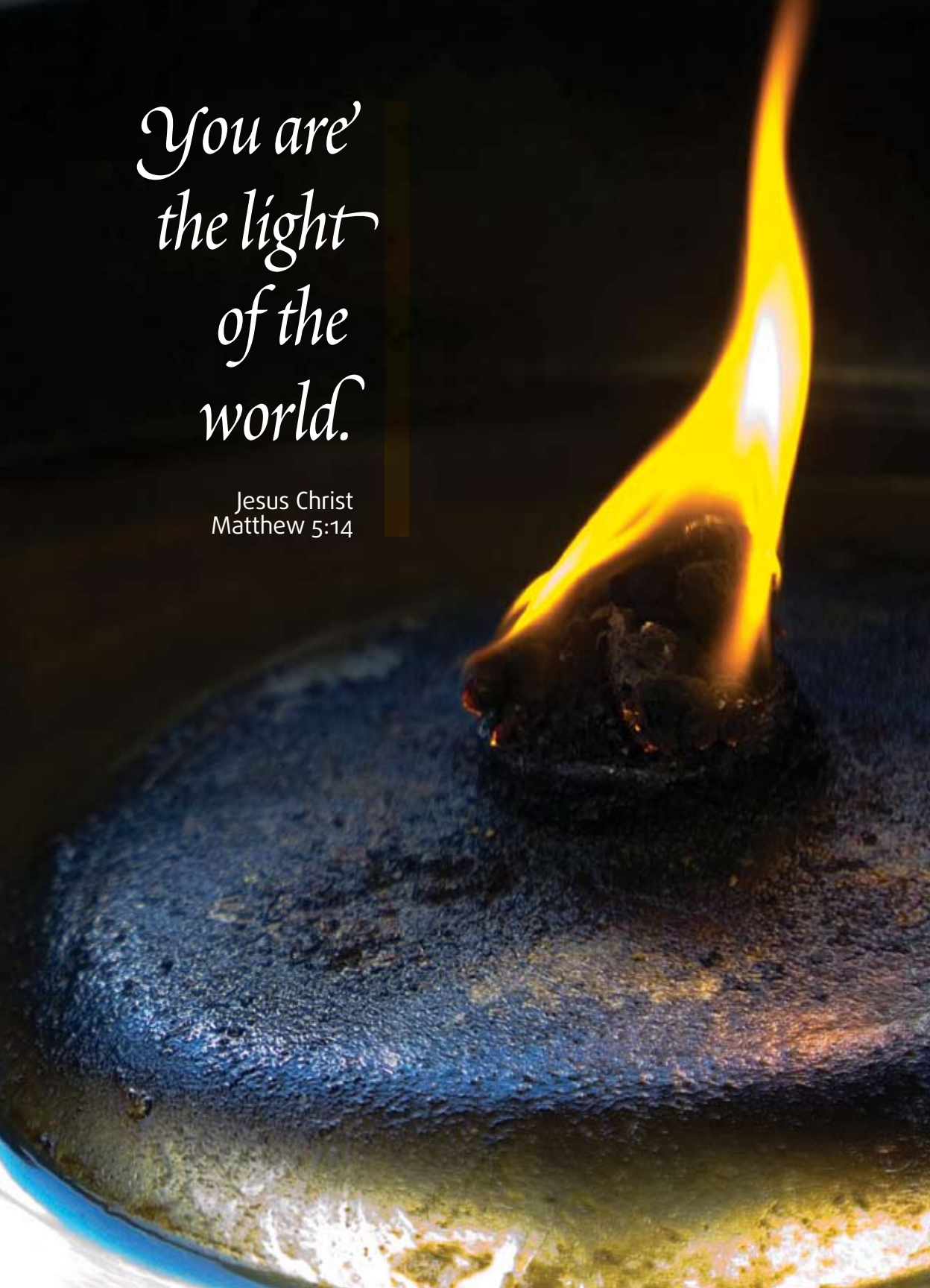
- excellence and integrity in how they carry out their responsibilities.
- act as role models to other politicians as well as other Christians aspiring to become politicians.
- be principled when they have to be pragmatic and to avoid the absolutist trap.
- invest wisely where it matters for the development of their communities and nations.

We acknowledge that God is at work in Africa creating something new. Our commitments are best carried out in the spirit of prayer and dependence on God. Believing that God is with us, and the Holy Spirit empowers us, we in AFREG I assert that transformation can and will happen in Africa. We are committed to doing our part to bring this transformation about. **With God, all things are possible!**

³ *Kiswahili* has been approved by the African Union as an official African language. African leaders need to implement policies that will ensure the learning and usage of *Kiswahili* or a preferred alternative across the continent.

*You are'
the light
of the
world.*

Jesus Christ
Matthew 5:14



ACTION PLAN

The church in Africa in all its manifestations needs to be transformed by God into something new that will be at the forefront as an instrument for transformation. Africa has enormous potential and urgently needs a new breed of courageous and visionary leaders of integrity who are able to lead transformation in all spheres of society.

The following action points are recommended to help develop a **Moral Vision** providing a holistic (affecting every sphere of life) framework for Africa's development based on moral values and ensuring a democratic environment characterized by peace and stability.

The church needs to strengthen its mission to include evangelism and discipleship in which lives are transformed. Transformed individuals are God's instruments for transforming communities as their leadership makes a difference politically and socially. We are called to go and make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20) and to be salt and light in communities (Matthew 5:13-16).

To this end, the following actions are recommended in line with the themes addressed at AFREG I, particularly in the seminars and discussion groups:

1. Christian Responsibility in Politics

Promote a positive view of politics as a vocation to which God calls His selected servants.

- God calls many Africans with integrity into active public political engagement. People of faith need positive view of politics so it can be viewed as a vocation to which God does call His people.

- It will be necessary to develop and utilize a critically examined theology of politics and the state as a theoretical framework for good political leadership. Such a theology of politics and theology of the state is needed to provide the theoretical framework, which informs good political leadership.
- Support political leaders with integrity through prayers, encouragement and partnership. Churches should be committed to supporting political leaders with integrity through prayers, encouragement and partnership for transformation, rather than view them as persons from whom they expect special favors.
- Encourage Christian political leaders to be principle-centered in their leadership. Christian political leaders will do well to practice principled pragmatism as opposed to opportunistic pragmatism and/or the absolutist trap.
- Encourage current leaders to move into mentoring new emerging leaders. Current African leadership should learn to move on into new mentoring roles instead of clinging to power beyond their usefulness. They can use their mentoring roles to groom new leaders. The biblical models of Moses mentoring Joshua, Paul mentoring Timothy, etc. are helpful here to foster good leadership succession.

2. Moral Vision

Develop and articulate moral values that will characterize the “Universal African Citizen.”

- These moral values should place God at the center, build confidence, promote respect for African culture, and encourage a pan-African outlook.

- The church should develop a theology on moral vision that
 - helps Africa return to what God wanted her to be in the first place, before the fall.
 - is under-girded by biblical conviction.
 - is based on the biblical values of forgiveness, kindness, etc.
 - serves as a resource for destroying spiritual and psychological strongholds that are hindering Africa's development.
- The church should exercise leadership in promoting a morality where the private life of leaders in society is consistent with their public lives.

3. Leadership and Democratic Sustenance in Africa

Promote the value of democracy in leadership and governance in Africa.

There must be a strong resolve to condemn and detest any form of corruption on the African continent. The church should serve as a good platform for harnessing and encouraging potential members, who are so called, to respond to the vocation of public political engagement as well as provide prayer, support, training, and capacity building.

4. Transformational Leadership in Africa

Develop and promote transformational leadership which reverses the perception of leadership in Africa as corrupt, self-serving and unable to deal with the challenges that have plagued the continent.

Transformational Leadership should

- Be values-based leadership that is operating at all

levels of community, and deals with issues that matter most to the continent.

- Appraise the African culture to promote those aspects which are life-enhancing and discard those which are harmful and destructive to life.
- Lead to transformation in the media such that reporting on Africa is accurate, positive, inspiring and constructive.

5. Individual Rights and Development in Africa

Churches and individual Christians need to develop the capacity to organize themselves for involvement in the formulation and defense of laws that affect individual rights.

- The church should promote legal literacy giving special attention to laws affecting the rights of women, children and marginalized groups.
- In the process of signing and ratifying international treaties and conventions affecting individual rights, steps should be taken at different levels to be sensitive to our national context and interests. National interests should also be prioritized above selfish personal ambitions.

6. Ethics, Integrity and Government in Africa

Establish accountability structures to ensure that leaders operate with integrity and deliver on their promises.

- Urge governments and churches to set up peer review structures, mechanisms, and departments to foster ethics and integrity.
- Establish methods of recognizing and affirming persons with integrity so as to create and publicize role models.

7. Leadership and Development

Ensure leadership development promotes a culture of excellence at individual, church, corporate and government levels.

- Churches should take responsibility for developing leaders for various sectors of society (professional, business, corporate, government, etc.).
- Encourage churches to allocate resources to develop leadership skills of their members.
- Theological institutions should incorporate leadership and development studies in their curricula.

8. Church and Development

The church should be at the forefront for fostering and advocating development issues.

The church should

- Create an environment in which on-going learning takes place for sharing best practices, needs and resources for development.
- Encourage and promote Christian schools for quality education, values formation and propagation.
- Empower their youth (including those on university campuses) and foster fellowship and nurturing opportunities that enhance their Christian unity.
- Promote quality transformational discipleship to maximize the church's role in teaching development and Africa's global mission initiatives.

9. Education and Development

Families, churches, businesses and governments should prioritize the funding of education and ensure it is relevant to the needs of the continent and capable of empowering students to think and apply themselves to the transformation of their environment.

- Favorable working conditions and adequate up-to-date facilities and equipment should be ensured in all educational institutions.
- Functional and adult literacy on leadership and developmental issues such as agriculture in the rural areas should be done in local languages.

10. Economics, Religion and Development

Establish micro-finance initiatives for building entrepreneurship and community participation in development.

- Encourage investment in capacity building which will lead to increased productivity.
- Establish economic initiatives to empower church members to be economically independent.
- Encourage research into viable income generation and economic empowerment activities.
- Devote substantial resources to empower church members to be economically independent, thereby reducing poverty in Africa.
- Establish investment opportunities in which Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora find themselves as true partners.

11. Gender and Development

Provide equal opportunities for male and female to contribute to governance and development.

- Recognize and support women as community leaders and as development agents.
- Develop a clear vision for gender and development that is rooted in Africa not just mirroring what is happening elsewhere in the world.
- Churches should develop policies which ensure active participation of women in development activities and decision making.
- In view of gender being critical to good governance and development, a paradigm shift is needed, where both male and female have equal opportunities at every level (home, school, church, marketplace, etc.).
- The church and communities should affirm women and acknowledge their role in development projects.
- The church and communities should create opportunities to mentor young people towards their gender sensitive personal development.
- Create conducive working environments, which would enable women to empower themselves in their contexts.

12. Reconciliation between Africans and Africans in the Diaspora and Development

Africans and Africans in the Diaspora should move from exclusivity to inclusivity which overcomes past differences as well as tribalism and other forms of discrimination.

- People of African descent on the continent and in the African Diaspora need to recapture their belonging

together in the development of Africa. This should be captured in language use as well. The pronouns “We” and “Us” are preferable to more exclusive use of pronouns.

To fulfill this desire, there is a real need to engage in true repentance and steps towards reconciliation. AFREG I was a forum during which Africans on the continent offered such repentance, affirming that this needs to be done in different communities. At the same time, AFREG I recognizes that a complete repentance and moving forward will include all sides of the triangle (the African Diaspora, Africans currently living on the continent, and descendants of the slave trade in Europe and North America).

Good models of repentance are portrayed in Leviticus 26:39-42, Nehemiah 1, and Daniel 9:1-18. Following these examples we can identify with past generations in their sins.

- There is a need to use the media, educational tools, and exchanges to break the myths that both communities have acquired.
- There is need for intentionality in developing steps towards reconciliation.

13. Freedom of Religion

Africa needs to embrace a concept of freedom that promotes the acceptance of all people as fellow human beings irrespective of race, tribe, religion and other ideological persuasions.

- All national constitutions in Africa should provide freedom of religion that allows people the freedom to choose their religion without coercion, manipulation

or force. People should be free to share their religious and other persuasions with others in so far as they do not use any form of coercion, manipulation or force.

- Freedom of worship is a God-given right for all individuals and it is enshrined in many African constitutions. The freedom to propagate our faith leads to a renewed commitment to evangelism.
- There is a need for education in order to move beyond misunderstandings of the different religions on the continent and be committed to understanding, respecting and cooperating with one another in promoting development on the continent.

14. Peace, Stability and Development

Teach and build a culture of peaceful co-existence where individuals exercise their freewill in the choice of their religions and political affiliations.

- The Church must model peace.
- There is need for teaching and building a culture of tolerance—tolerance of ethnic, political and religious differences. This will be a vehicle by which Africa can rise above how people with vested interests use religious and ethnic sentiments against one another.
- Maintain peace and cooperation with other religions in the development of communities, nations and the continent.



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