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8 July 2009

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Statement released by the President and General Secretary of WARC

Five hundred years ago this Friday, July 10, John Calvin was born in Noyon, France. The Reformed family is commemorating this, not so much to create a Calvin cult or even to hail him as a “perfect saint”. Calvin certainly was not perfect, and it is against the grain of Reformed Christians to foster personality cults. John Calvin himself would insist “Soli Deo Gloria” – “Only to God be the Glory”.

We commemorate this day in a spirit of gratitude to God for how what Calvin did has inspired a movement of people committed to living faithfully for God in different contexts, and how his legacy continues to inspire us to be true to God in responding faithfully to current challenges.

In our world today, many are hurting because of injustice in the economy long before the current meltdown in the financial markets. This has indeed been further aggravated by the financial crisis and job losses in many countries while those who benefited from the system before continue to be bailed out. To this Calvin stated “A fair distribution can become reality if the rich do not greedily swallow up whatsoever they can get together; if they do not rake up on every side what belongs to others to satisfy their greed...”(Calvin’s Commentary on Exodus 16:19.)

In our world today where humanity is blatantly ignoring the environment and in fact destroying God’s creation, Calvin’s words can be instructive: “Whoever owns a piece of land, should harvest the fruits in such a way that the soil does not suffer any damage...as God’s stewards...If we follow this line, nobody will behave immoderately and destroy through misuse what God wishes to preserve”. (Calvin’s Commentary on Genesis 2.15)

In our world today where even within the church there are so many divisions and many church leaders and Christians do not take seriously the call to Christian unity, we are reminded by Calvin “Each time we read the word ‘one’, let us be reminded that it is used emphatically. Christ cannot be divided. Faith cannot be rent. There are not various baptisms, but one, which is common to all. God cannot be torn into different parts... Faith and baptism, and God the Father and Christ, ought to unite us...” (Calvin’s commentary on Ephesians 4:5)

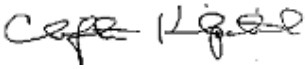
John Calvin wrote these commentaries in the 16th century. They continue to be relevant today. That is the legacy for which we thank God. It is our hope that inspired by this, we who live in the 21st century will also be faithful to God in our commitment to Christian unity, to confronting the forces of evil and injustice in society, and to doing everything we can to be God's agents of transformation, making a difference in our communities.

We take this opportunity to greet all who are organising activities and worship services this week-end (July 10 – 12, 2009). May God bless you as you commemorate this jubilee. We take this opportunity to greet those who have had some activities earlier this year, or are planning to engage in jubilee activities later this year.

We would also like to thank all those people and congregations who made it a point to give a special Birthday gift in the form of financial resources with which the World Alliance of Reformed Churches can continue to be faithful to God in carrying out mandates that are in part inspired by the life and ministry of John Calvin. For those who want to follow this good example, please visit the WARC website (www.warc.ch) and go to "Calvin and WARC". You can also find more information on www.calvin.org.

As we commemorate 500 years after the birth of Calvin, may all our actions and responses to global and community challenges today give glory to God.

Soli Deo Gloria!



Rev. Dr Clifton Kirkpatrick
President



Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi
General Secretary