

**AACC General Secretary's Keynote Address at the 35th General Assembly of the
Liberia Council of Churches delivered on 31st May 2025 at the Baptist Theological
Seminary, Paynesville, Liberia**

Theme: *“Reconciliation: Acknowledging the past, accepting the present and
adjusting for the Future with True Healing” (C.f., Eph.5:14-16).*

Greetings

Your Excellency, Dr. Samuel B. Reeves, Jr., President, Liberia Council of Churches,
Your Excellency and brother in service, Rev. Wleh Tor, General Secretary of LCC,
Esteemed Church Leaders here present,
Eminent Delegates here present,
Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Allow me to bring you fraternal greetings from the All Africa Conference of Churches. The AACC values greatly the membership and partnership with the Liberia Council of Churches and its members. I take this moment to acknowledge and celebrate the work of the Council of Churches in Liberia in promoting peace, justice, and reconciliation. As a national embodiment of churches, the Liberia Council of Churches has the mandate and task to work on behalf of its many members, to champion unity of the churches and the socio-economic and religious transformation of Liberia. Collective collaboration brings desired transformation, both socially, economically, and spiritually.

It is, therefore, my distinguished honor to express my gratitude for the invitation to address this 35th General Assembly of the LCC. General Assemblies are important gatherings which steer the council in celebrating together, building communion and setting the direction.

Introduction

This year, you have chosen to focus on reconciliation. That is a very rich concept which demands action. When reconciliation is done successfully, it changes lives of all involved. It is a pertinent national and ecclesiastical requirement, to usher into a desired future of Liberia. We cannot overemphasize the importance of reconciliation

as a pathway for Liberia to undergo true social, economic and spiritual transformation. The call to reconciliation releases our energy and opens our minds and hearts to acknowledge the past, critically and honestly appraise what we have in the present, and make bold decisions how we proceed into what our desired future.

The Theme

Your focus is on three aspects of reconciliation. **Acknowledging the past. Accepting the present. Adjusting to the future.** But all these should be done **“with true healing.”** What a noble task and wish! And you take the biblical reflection from Ephesians 5:14-16. *Therefore, it says,*

*“Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”*

Be careful, then, how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. (NIV)

We are implored by the prophet, today, that we need to very urgently awake – get up! rise from the dead, and let Christ shine on us. It means the Lord sees us as sleepers. Sleepers do not know what is going on around them; they do not work; they do not argue; they cannot defend themselves and anything can be done to them without their knowledge. Even worse, he says we are like dead people. We need to rise from the dead. Dead people are even worse than sleepers; they are useless; they do not breathe and anything you want to do to them you can do. He, however, promises that, when we wake up, when we rise from the dead condition, Jesus will shine on us. We shall see light. We shall see what is going on around us.

The second aspect of the text is to implore us to live wisely. There are so many things we do in life which are so unwise, and I will mention some of them. We are called to be wise.

The third call is to redeem the time. What does it actually mean? It means to use every second we have, every opportunity available to us, to do something for ourselves and for our nation.

Time is the only commodity we cannot save or keep. It goes, whether we like it or not. If it goes, it cannot be recovered. Meaning, we need to make sure we use our time wisely, being productive in these evil days.

Acknowledging the Past

Let me start by congratulating you, the people of this great and oldest nation of Africa, for the one more peaceful election you recently had. I congratulate you because in many African countries, elections end with confusion, violence and divisions which take many years to reconcile, if ever. I have gratefully noted the emphasis of the President of the Republic of Liberia to seek and enforce transparency and accountability in governance, to continue granting the population freedom of participation and expression, and to promote unity and justice. These are necessary tenets that provide feasible environment that leads to sustainable investment and development. The commitment of your government to peace and stability in Liberia is also shared by the churches. But peaceful political environments and stable societies, particularly in countries with long history of political and social conflicts like Liberia inevitably require true reconciliation.

In order to develop, Liberia needs to acknowledge its past. To reconcile itself with its painful and also positive past. I have taken time to read about your history. It is written to show the momentous epochs and episodes which are in the context of evils of slavery, movements, strives among people, etc. It is filled with history of military rules which were so brutal and troubling. The troubles between different ethnic groups are covering all epochs of your history. Some of you here have been part of the struggles and all of you have been affected by the incredibly conflictual political and social upheavals. I now understand why Liberians always talk about the next election all the time.

Reflecting on the past is an act of transformative thinking which I regard as crucial for a sustainable future. The past consists of the history of mistakes in decision-making that we must avoid, the positive values and practices that we should uphold, and very good memories we must cherish. We very much fall into temptation of remembering only the bad episodes, not the many, probably more good episodes. Reflecting on the past implies that the church embraces transformative thinking as a strategy to achieve national development. Transformation in this context means that the church has a pastoral and prophetic voice to ridicule her people not to hold on to memories, beliefs, and practices that have not worked in the past, but to transform them to have an enlightened future.

You need to acknowledge the history of corruption and mismanagement of the economy, which led to some of your former leaders to be deposed and even jailed. You need to acknowledge the past of denominational conflicts due to different origins

of missionaries to Liberia. You need to acknowledge the fact of endless economic struggles which are keeping many of our people under the poverty line.

At the same time, it is important to not only look at the troubles and mistakes. Liberia has had tremendous resilience and heroism to address its issues. Acknowledge the leadership of the churches and government from local to national levels. The troubled people of Liberia have always never given up. They have had wonderful leaders who face the challenges in the community head-on. They love their country. They love their churches. They work tirelessly to develop their people. And you know how big are the steps you have successfully taken to where you are now in comparison with the past.

From AACC, we cannot ever forget the memorable Liberian leader, Rev. Cannon Burgess Curr, the 4th General Secretary of AACC. He was such a courageous and astute leader that led the AACC through enormously difficult times, taking a stand against apartheid regime in Southern Africa to the extent that he was expelled from Kenya because he refused to compromise his ethical leadership. I know you have had many. As we look back at troublesome, non-ethical leaders in the past, let us see also the “cloud of witnesses” in the history, who can be an inspiration to all of us as we reflect and analyze the present. Get up from the sleep of thinking that there have never been positive lessons in history. Let us arise and live in light of their wisdom and courage.

Accepting the Present

This is the part that has given me a lot of thinking. Do we really want to accept the present? What do we mean by accept? I take it to mean to recognize and analyze critically, not to live in denial. But what is the present situation we want to accept? Arise and let us not cheat ourselves. Let us get up from sleep. There are those who do not see their situation as dire, and even the little things they can do for themselves they do not do, always waiting for someone to help. Rather than recognizing their potential and taking the action which, they can, they stay in sleep and think it is God who wants them to stay even surrounded by trash. They cannot even dig a pit latrine and always wait for handouts from abroad. Arise! Get up! Move!

The present is full of contradictions. As fewer and fewer people are getting richer, the majority of the people are falling into poverty and despair. Our analysis should help us indeed accept the reality of the status quo but most important to reject it and work in hope for a better future.

The young people of Africa are tired of the present state of affairs. That is why their dream is to leave the country, even if they die in the sea trying to cross to where they

think life is better. Arise, young people, nobody welcomes you in their countries, you will be deported if you survive the perilous journey. And if you stay, you will be in a condition of slaves, which Liberia was created to solve.

Let us get out sleep and recognize that the present is still male-dominated. Even after you had the first female elected president in the continent, women and girls are still suffering all kinds of abuse and harassment. There are still some sleepers, almost dead people who in this age, rape little girls and beat their wives. These are simply stupid, thinking just being male makes you wiser or more powerful.

Let us see how the present is starkly divided between rural and urban living, with urban people having more and rural areas living in destitution. Let the light of Christ shine on us to feel pain as many children cannot go to school of good quality, and many have to stay hungry the whole day. Are we in sleep when we see many children on the streets of our cities, begging and even roaming around with no idea of the future? Is it wise or deep sleep when couples continue to get more babies when they know they cannot feed adequately the ones they have, simply hoping for some help from somewhere?

One of the things which angers most is the way we are so dead, that we accept corruption as not only tolerated, but expected! We do sometimes pray for our people to get positions where they would enrich themselves through corruption, and then complain when we are forced to give bribes ourselves. Awake, sleeper!

I want to end this list of evils of these days, by calling upon you to completely see the absurdity, the stupidity of tribalism. The present in Africa is plagued by the sin of tribalism. Looking at conflicts in most African countries at the moment, Ethiopia, Rwanda genocide, Burundi unease, unending and frustrating war in South Sudan and Sudan, unending war in Democratic Republic of Congo, and many more have their basis in tribalism. I read that even Liberia, you are equally tribalistic, after nearly three centuries as a single nation. This is STUPIDITY which makes Africa suffer. Africans after each other. Even slave trade was mainly because of tribalism, the winning tribe selling the losing one to unknown foreigners. Are we still thinking in tribal terms, even in churches and think we are wise?

I think, we need to accept the inadequacy of the present as a starting point and inspiration for adjustment for the future.

Adjusting for The Future in True Healing

Appraising and accepting the present is inevitable, but adjusting for the future is our opportunity and calling. The apostle Paul quotes a prophetic call to rise from sleep, to wake up and stand up and act fast. The days are evil, he says. But we must not waste opportunities; that is, we must redeem the time. If we want to reach a desired future, we need to be transformed by Christ who gives us light. We must shun darkness which engulfs us so that we do not see the reality of the world around us.

It takes transformation of spirit and mind to seek the desired future. Since the present is inadequate, we need to work in the spirit of the AACC young people's campaign: AFRICA: MY HOME. MY FUTURE. A future we want is which embraces the shared values of justice, equity, and respect for human dignity. While we take responsibility for our current and past mistakes, we should not get stuck in helplessness and guilt, or blaming others who caused them. We need a future characterized by forgiveness and reconciliation from the tragedies of the past as we saw in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

It is a future free of human rights violations. A future where no woman fears sexual based violence or harassment, including the madness of wife battering in the name of culture. A future which has turned the page on female genital mutilation, which basically means slushing genitals of our girls in the name of culture and denying them God-intended enjoyment of life, forever. It is a future where we arise from the sleep of defending destructive and undignified cultural practices and work for the dignity of all humanity. It is a future where the world is relieved from ecological destruction for the sake of the present exploitation of resources.

We need a future where no child is denied access to quality education. A future where young people will love to live and thrive in their own African countries. A future where we look upon each other as Africans and help each other out, rather than always looking at "BIG BROTHER" abroad, who does not even think we are truly human of equal dignity with them. We need a future where we will be proud of our countries, and defend them, rather than talking down about them. A future where no one goes to bed hungry or cannot afford adequate nutrition.

Conclusion

We are ready to rise from sleep and let Christ's light to shine on us. When the light of the Lord shines in us, we have access to spiritual wisdom. Our lives are guided by this wisdom, enabling us to live with confidence and engage in compassionate

conversations. We are called to walk wisely by following the path that Christ walked while on earth. Christ walked with certainty and transformed lives because He fully relied on God's wisdom. The wisdom of God reveals the will of God, His intent, and the purpose for which we exist. Based on the theme for this assembly, I assert that true healing can be achieved when there are authentic discussions on how we should walk as a nation towards the journey of recovery and restoration. Authentic deliberation on how the church is going to collectively work towards reconciliation, transformation, and development is necessary. The church represented by the eminent delegates here is not immune to challenges facing this country. And so, there should be advocacy for the poor and the vulnerable population, service to humanity, and collaboration for national development.

May Africa rise from slumber and sleep. May Liberia rise and shine with the light of Christ. May we all be filled with divine wisdom to work for our development without being bogged down by hearts full of pain and desire for revenge. But we desire true reconciliation and moving together, without wasting any time.

Let me end by reiterating the African Patriotism campaign: AFRICA. MY HOME. MY FUTURE. In all African contexts, there are differences in social conditions. But every family is committed to its home. Even the poorest family, when their roof is leaking, they do not move to the neighbor with a better house. They fix the roof. We agree that in Liberia, and all of Africa, our roof is leaking. Too much corruption, nepotism, poverty, diseases, and underdevelopment. But the solution is not to run to a neighbor with a better house. We must fix our roof.

AFRICA. MY HOME. MY FUTURE.

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki.

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