



MANI 2011 DECLARATION

Preamble

A total of 614 participants from 60 countries gathered in Abuja Nigeria from 5 to 9 September 2011 for the consultation of the Movement for African National Initiatives. The Nigerian church welcomed and hosted participants in this second MANI consultation, following on from the African Millennial Consultation in Jerusalem (2001) and the first MANI consultation in Nairobi (2006). Through worship, devotions, drama, testimonies, presentations, group meetings and informal conversations we explored the blessings, challenges, and opportunities faced by the mission of the African church.

Blessings

At the beginning of time God **created** the African continent with all its beauty, diversity and wealth. He filled it with plants and animals, and with human beings shaped after his image. From Genesis to Revelation, Africans participated in the unfolding of the **biblical story**. Often the continent provided safety and nourishment for others, even briefly for our Saviour Jesus Christ. A man from Africa helped carry the Master's cross, Africans were present at Pentecost, shared in the rapid spread of Christianity, and played a major role in the shaping of Orthodox Christianity in the centuries that followed.

Since the Middle Ages, **other continents** bought from Africa the strongest men and women they could find in the market, and used them as slaves to help grow their agriculture and their civilisations. They exported to Africa alcoholic drink and arms and ammunition. All these things caused immeasurable pain which still haunts the continent; but it did thrust Africans into many other parts of the world.

In recent centuries Africa has again opened her heart to the **Gospel of Jesus Christ** and allowed its message to penetrate our homes and communities. We give glory to God for enabling African Christianity to burst into bloom and to start bearing fruit of its own. God is opening our eyes to discover the value and unique characteristics of this fruit, as well as its place in the unfolding of His mission to all the people of the world.

We acknowledge and appreciate the contribution of **Christians from outside** the continent in the past and present to the establishment and growth of the African church. This is part of the many blessings God has given us.

The African church exists in communities facing serious **challenges**, often more than communities in other parts of the world. These challenges present the church with new **opportunities** for sharing God's Good News.

We believe God has sufficiently prepared and endowed the African church for **taking the Gospel** to every part of our continent and of the world.

Challenges and Opportunities

1. Spreading the Gospel
2. Church and Mission
3. Expanding God's Kingdom
4. Women
5. Migration
6. Poverty and Resources
7. Media
8. The Rising Generation

1. Spreading the Gospel

An estimated 970 **least-reached people groups** in Africa do not yet have a viable indigenous Christian fellowship in their midst. The majority of these are in a **belt** stretching from Senegal in the West to Somalia in the East of the continent. Here, where Christianity of the South engages Islam of the North, the missionary task of the church is usually the hardest, and the greatest sacrifices are required. The African church is uniquely positioned to spread the sweet fragrance of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15) in these areas and to ensure the expansion of the Body of Christ to North Africa, where it once was so strong, and from there to the Middle East, Europe and beyond. We have heard God's command to the African church to "**Go North**" and we commit ourselves to obey.

We appreciate the hard work already done to **gather data** about unreached people and the most effective response of the church. More work is needed in this task and we are willing to assist in this important task of scouting the land (Num. 13) and exploring what needs to be done (Neh. 2).

We heard the Macedonian **call** from the church in Europe, invitations from Colombia and opportunities in many other parts of the world where God opens doors for the expansion of his kingdom.

2. Church and Mission

God sent his Son to save this earth and through Him and his Spirit sends his followers to bless and transform the world. The **church exists for mission** and we will honour and expand her capacity to do so. We acknowledge the important role of mission agencies and training institutions helping the church faithfully and efficiently accomplish its mission.

Jesus Christ said that the **unity of his Body** will be the basis of our witness to the world (John 17:21-23). We confess that we have often failed our Master in this respect and we commit ourselves to avoid competition and duplication where it is not absolutely unavoidable, increasing our efforts towards greater cooperation in the planning and execution of our mission.

God ordains, calls, and equips **leaders for his church**. The responsibility of providing leadership to the mission of the church cannot and should not be delegated. We will use all means at our disposal to ensure that the leaders of the African church not only buy into the mission vision, but lead by example. In all of this we will follow Jesus Christ who set the example of humble, serving, and empowering leadership (Mat. 20:25-28), and of delegating to his chosen helpers and teaching them by doing the work with them.

There are compelling reasons for the church in every nation to work towards an integrated **national initiative** for God's mission. We have seen this strategy work in many parts of the continent and will exert ourselves to have it established and working effectively in Africa's

nations. We acknowledge the important role that MANI has played in this regard and encourage its leadership to continue and increase its efforts.

3. Expansion of God's Kingdom

The missionary task of the church should be bathed in **prayer**. We learn this from the example of Jesus (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; John 17), from his commands to the disciples (Mat. 6:5-13; 9:37-38), and from the practice of the early church (Acts 4:23-31; 13:1-3; Eph. 1:3-23). In recent years God has woken the global church up to the challenge and privilege of united prayer. It has pleased Him to let the African church play a leading role in this, and we reaffirm our commitment to this calling. God specially assigns his Spirit to guide us in our prayers and transform them into expressions of his own design and power (Rom. 8:27-28; Eph. 6:16-20).

Where the Word of God enters hearts, homes and communities, the Spirit establishes new fellowships of Christ-followers. Thus **church planting is** the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit who directs and deploys as He knows best. From the history of the church we learn that the Spirit often uses persecution, natural disasters, political upheaval, as well as specially equipped pioneers, to steer his church towards areas with a deep need for the transforming work of the Gospel. We are witnessing many of these things in our own towns, particularly in the Muslim world, and therefore we open ourselves to hear and obey what the Spirit says to his Church.

A central element in the Great Commission, which sadly is often undervalued, is Jesus' clear command to **disciple** the nations (Mat. 28:19): to nurture them and not to be content with winning converts. The purpose and standard of this task are beautifully stated in Eph. 4:13, namely that we should attain to the stature of the fullness of Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves to let the character of Christ grow in us individually and corporately, and from that basis to develop and implement a process of discipling new believers and the fellowships in which they meet. Through effective discipling God will bring about the fulfillment of his word through Habakkuk 2:14, that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

4. Women

Women are the custodians of life, and the heart of family and community; yet they are so often despised and maltreated. Sadly, the African church has not always done better than average, despite the fact that women play such an indispensable role in all that African churches do. We will follow the example of our Lord Jesus who reached out to women and included them in His ministry. In Christ there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.

We express our deep appreciation to our sisters of all ages for what they have done and are doing to expand the kingdom of God in Africa and the world. We thank them for raising new generations of Christ followers. We thank them for building and playing their irreplaceable role in the church of God. We thank them for helping the church reach out to women and men who do not yet know the Saviour who loved and died for them.

5. Migration

We are witnessing unprecedented levels of people moving on, from, and into the African continent. A large proportion of these find their way into cities in Africa and in many other parts of the world where they gradually, but often dramatically, change the social landscape. We were excited, for example, to hear about the presence of close to a million Chinese in Africa and of the vibrant churches in all parts of the world where Africans form a significant proportion of the membership and leadership.

Within these migrant communities we find great needs as well as great opportunities for the Gospel. We will encourage the African church to help the poor, destitute, orphaned, homeless, and the stranger, and through our hospitality draw them to Christ who is the source of compassion and life.

6. Poverty and Resources

Africa has sufficient resources for all her people, or rather, because she has such abundance, there has, since ancient times, been so much conflict for control of those resources. There is a huge disparity between rich and poor on the continent, and between the continent and the rest of the world. In recent decades these gaps have even increased.

We acknowledge the fact that as churches, as nations, and as a continent, we are blessed, and this gives us the privilege and responsibility of biblical stewardship. We will honour God in our response to the poor and the destitute. We will develop a lifestyle of generosity, develop creative and efficient models of care, and generally handle God's resources in a way that honours Him and draws others to Him. Because God gave his best to save the world, we will strive to live in such a way that we can increase our material investment in the expansion of God's kingdom.

7. The Media

We recognize that the majority of our people among the least reached people groups still belong to the oral culture – they don't read or write. Traditional media, such as forms of storytelling and visual arts, have definitely become effective means of communicating the gospel and discipling believers from such cultures. Similarly, modern media, as active agents of change, are impacting the lives of many people, especially the African youth who are the majority in our continent. Modern media such as print, radio, television, internet, and other social forms of media, can be used to prepare those who have not yet heard or responded to the Gospel, because these media often bypass barriers and prejudices to the Gospel. They can also be used very effectively in the task of discipleship and other forms of training.

Because of the sophistication and cost of modern media, it is important that church, mission, and media leaders work together to develop a strategy for their most effective use. We will work together to increase the use of the media to fill our continent and earth with the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

8. The rising generation – younger people

The African continent has the youngest population, with about 47% of its people being under the age of 18. If we add those in their twenties, young people are the great majority of our society. Recent events in North Africa show the power the rising generation has on the politics and the future of our world.

Children and youth were central in the rapid expansion of the African church in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, we run the risk of losing them because they are often neglected in the ministry of the church and increasingly exposed to secular influences, values, and practices which conflict with the Christian message and lifestyle.

Jesus declared and demonstrated the important place of children in his kingdom (e.g. Mat. 18). The experience of the church confirms that children and youth are very receptive to the Gospel

and once they have accepted it they usually boldly integrate it into their lives and share it with whoever they come in contact with.

Lord, we want to ask the rising generation – our young people – to forgive us for not affirming their important role and for not sufficiently nurturing their leadership. Help us do better as we go on from here.

Shalom, Salam, Peace, Paix, Paz