APBF Commitment to Holistic Transformation 2021

APBF Leaders' Summit 2021

August 18-20, 2021

Preamble

The Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF) Leaders' Summit held in virtual mode from 18th to 20th August 2021 brought together leaders from among the 65 APBF member Conventions from 22 countries of Asia Pacific regions representing 22 nations that include over 33,000 local churches around the Asia Pacific region and is part of the 47 million Baptist among the Baptist World Alliance spread in 126 nations worldwide with 241 member bodies.

The objectives of the APBF Leaders' Summit were:

1. To refresh and renew commitment to the APBF Mission and reignite our commitment to the Mission.
2. To share and learn from each other various successful contemporary methods of Integral Mission.
3. To encourage, network and collaborate with each other.
4. To look afresh at the strategic approach and envision the mission of God through a Holistic Transformation strategy.
5. To renew our commitment to "tirelessly pursue the call of Jesus in Matt. 28:19-20".

The Summit envisioned the mission of God through a Holistic Transformation strategy.
The strategy seeks to guide APBF and its members as we serve the cause of the Kingdom of God among the thousands of unreached and vulnerable peoples of our region. The emphasis of the Summit is to discover and celebrate expressions of mission that bring the whole of life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ; being encouraged to serve with compassion as high impact, life changing servants.

The Summit also **coincided** with the Covid-19 pandemic that struck the globe and most harshly the Asia Pacific region with the virulent Delta variant. We express our deep sadness at the thousands that have died including hundreds of pastors. The APBF expresses its condolences to the families of more than 220 Baptist pastors who succumbed to Covid-19. APBF also is concerned about the millions affected by the impacts of this pandemic – affecting and leaving deep scars on the fabric of the physical, economic, emotional, and social aspects of all.

The Summit also takes note of the situation in Myanmar due to the political upheaval that has impacted the lives of civilians. The situation raises serious security concerns around access to basic needs, human rights and freedom which is added to the plight of people affected by COVID-19.

The political situation in Afghanistan also raises a concern as it may push back the years of work in development and lay waste of the resources invested in peace building and governance. Notwithstanding the serious impact on the rights and freedoms of ethnicity, political opinion, religion and gender particularly of women and girls and their education.

The Summit calls the attention of the church and the world to these acts of outrage against human beings made in the image of the Creator.

We believe God grieves for the lost souls of the unevangelized peoples. He grieves for the many thousands who died and the many millions who have been affected by all these and because of the evil alliance of injustice and apathy.

We are also commissioned to fulfill the God-given mandates to love Him and our neighbour, care for creation, and seek to bring to salvation all those who are yet to hear the Gospel in obedience to the Greatest Commandment and the Great Commission.

We affirm that God stands on the side of Justice and identifies himself with the poor and proclaims that he desires that none perish and all be saved. God calls us to all to lament these deaths as he grieves for them and engages in compassionate mission and ministry.

We understand that as Baptists, we are called to have passion for God and passion for people. that our identity as a faith family is to be servants, shepherds and stewards.

We also recognize that the Asia Pacific region:

- has 73% (5,621) of Asia's people groups who have not encountered or heard the Gospel and are unreached, and 60% of the population (2.8 billion) lives among such unreached people groups.
- contains over 61% of the world population in the most vast and diverse, and disaster-prone terrain.
- Is inhabited by the world's most diverse people groups. Asia Pacific people are also religiously diverse and deeply pious. Christians, however, are still a minority group and many are oppressed and persecuted.
- Has many political and economic challenges, including severe violations of human rights.

We realize and agree that these conditions require a long-term holistic response by the Church to engage effectively with diverse histories, ethnicities, and cultures to manifest God's reign over the Asia Pacific region.

Our confessions

We confess that too often we have failed to live a life worthy of the gospel.

We recognize that the most critical social task for the church in our generation is to offer a compelling alternative to the systems and unjust imbalances in the world order and the misplaced values of its consumer culture. We need to create a counter-culture coalition of compassion.

We recognize that our identity is based on a biblical calling to lead transformation in all aspects of life and society, based on the Gospel of Christ, bringing the whole Gospel to achieve a holistic impact in our communities and also to the unreached, unengaged, and marginalized peoples of the world.

We confess that too often the church has pursued wealth, success, status and influence and at times sadly, it has also to be recognized that the institutional church has become aligned with the powerful.

We confess that in a world of conflict and ethnic tension we have often failed to build bridges. We are called to work for reconciliation between ethnically divided communities, between rich and poor, between the oppressors and the oppressed. We acknowledge the command to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Holistic Transformation

We, therefore, understand that the grace of God is the heartbeat of Holistic Mission and transformation. That it calls us to adopt an incarnational approach in our mission. Holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is the living of God's mission; the *missio dei,* today.

"It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world we betray the word of God, which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship, and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task. We call one another back to the centrality of Jesus Christ". (Micah Declaration on Integral Mission, September 2001)

We accept that the church is not merely an institution or organization, but a community of Christ followers that embody the values of the kingdom.

We identify with the poor, through the eyes of Jesus who, as he looked on the crowds, had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

We affirm that Holistic mission is planting and enabling local churches to transform the communities of which they are an integral part. Churches as caring and inclusive communities are at the heart of what it means to do an integral mission.

We declare the unique position and presence of ourselves as the church among those that are unreached, vulnerable, and marginalized, to be part of the mission of God (*missio dei*), to restore all things under His Lordship.

We uphold that the Church is the way God has chosen to carry out his work in the world. When Christians and churches carry out holistic transformation, the results can bring a wonderful transformation in people's lives.

A call to action and commitment - Holistic Transformation Strategy

In consonance with the Micah Declaration on Integral Mission and the Cape Town commitment of Lausanne, and based on the deliberations of the APBF Leaders' Summit:

We, thus adopt and commit to the strategic approach of the Asia Pacific Holistic Transformation Strategy (APHTS) to realize the vision of a flourishing church and a flourishing community.

We concur that APHTS is biblically based, Kingdom focused, life-transforming Gospel of the message of the cross. It is a strategy that seeks to proclaim the whole Gospel to the whole world. It is a Holistic approach to transforming lives in Asia Pacific through the increased presence, engagement, and capacity of the local church among her neighbours. It is an approach that combines word and deed, proclamation, and demonstration, saying, doing and being. It seeks to bring together church and community. Its goal is to strengthen church in community. And strengthen community together with the church. As envisioned in the vision of Isaiah 65, we see transformation in communities as families move beyond survival. The thirsty drink clean water, the hungry have food, children learn, the enslaved are free, the hopeless find peace with God.

We agree to work together towards the Holistic Transformation strategy of APBF as one opportunity for collaboration for the sake of the poor and the gospel.

We call upon our churches to fulfill both the great commission and the greatest commandment with a renewed commitment to "tirelessly pursue the call of Jesus in Matt. 28:19-20"; a mission that models Jesus in his 'sentness'.

We call for a paradigm of mission that is holistic. An understanding of the work of Christ through the cross and resurrection that is for the redemption and renewal of all creation. We are part of God's overarching story where He is already at work and we participate in that work. We will maintain our commitment to a proclamation of the gospel that moves toward healing, reconciliation, and wholeness.

We call for a renewed emphasis for integral discipleship based on the foundation of the Lordship of Christ over all of life and that involves the responsible and sustainable use of the resources of God's creation and the exercise of the prophetic ministry of the church in society. The Church needs a unified global voice to respond to the damage caused to both human beings and the environment.

We commit to solidarity in our movement; to network, collaborate and co-operate to face together the challenges of this time with faith and courage. We will move away from token partnerships among us to genuine solidarity with each other, and the people we serve addressing their spiritual and concrete human needs. To be bearers of hope in a community of despair, to be torchbearers and a beacon of light in the midst of darkness and be the gatekeepers of justice raising a voice for the voiceless and vulnerable.

We commit ourselves to regular prayer to enable us to do what the Lord requires of us: to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

We pray,

Lord, "Turn our hearts and minds to your ways of just and gentle peace; open our eyes to see you in all acts of compassionate care. Strengthen our hearts to step out in solidarity with your suffering people and hold us all in your unfailing love. We ask in the name of Jesus Christ who emptied himself of all but love, in order to bring life in all its fullness" (Council of World Mission).

Conclusion & Commitment:

Now, therefore, we the APBF constituent Convention leaders
assembled virtually at the APBF Leaders' Summit,
solemnly commit ourselves to;
work together strategically with the approaches envisioned in
the Asia Pacific Holistic Transformation Strategy (APHTS)
for Transforming Lives in Christ across the Asia Pacific,
through inspiring and equipping Baptists by
collaborating, networking, training and serving
in obedience to the Great Commission
and Great Commandment
of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
so, help us Lord.
Amen.

Members of the Drafting Committee: *Mr. Bijoy A. Sangma, (Chair), Mr. Anthony Sell, Dr. Rachael Tan, Mrs. Elissa Macpherson, Mr. Roshan Mendis, Rev. Ardi Wiriadinata, and Rev. Dr. Vee Tetseo, General Secretary, APBF, Ex-officio Member.*

The APBF Commitment to Holistic Transformation 2021 was unanimously adopted and committed to on 20th August 2021 by leaders from APBF member Conventions from 22 countries of Asia Pacific regions, present at the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation (APBF) Leaders' Summit held in virtual mode from 18th to 20th August 2021.

The Executive committee of APBF that met in Manila from 29th-30th January 2024, fully embraced this commitment to Holistic Transformation within the vision statement of Asia Pacific Baptist Federation and as its future missional emphasis in the strategic approach of its ministries.