



"Reformation – Eine Welt und Gerechter Friede"

Presentation Climate Justice in the Context of Just Peace

in der Sitzung der 15. Landessynode am 8. Juli 2016

Introduction

"Each generation has its challenges and its chances"

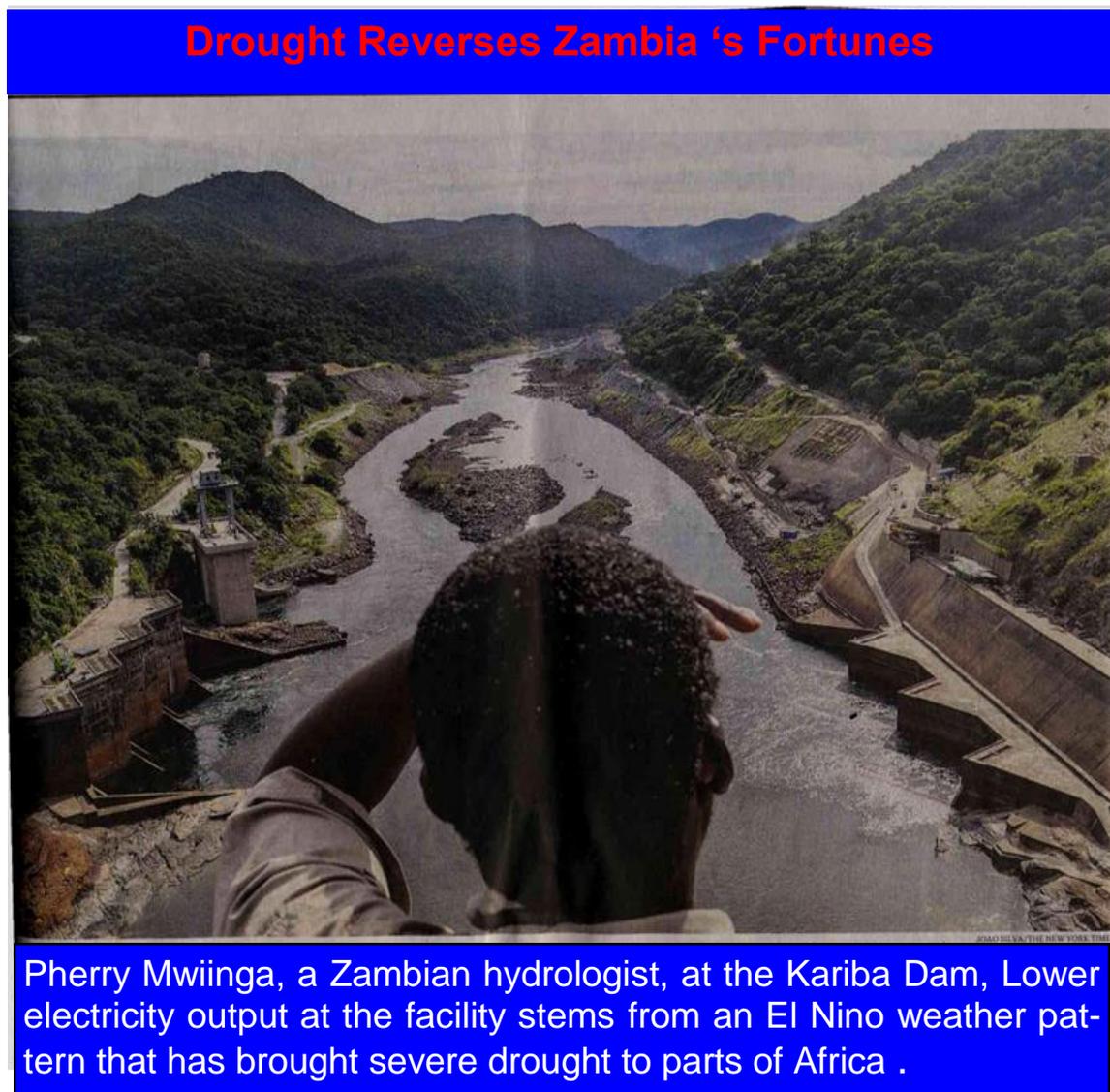
"You basically have two choices. One choice is to assume the worst, and then you can be guaranteed that it will happen. The other is to assume that there is hope for change, and then it's possible that by acting you will help effect change. So you've got two choices. One guarantees that the worst will happen. The other leaves open the possibility that things might be better. Given those two choices, a rational person doesn't hesitate." - Noam Chomsky. This quote represents my view of how we as men and women of faith can approach climate justice in the context of just peace.

May I begin by thanking the Synod of Wuttemberg for inviting me to speak at this Focus Day whose theme is "Reformation – One World and Just Peace". The world leaders in their assessment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) acknowledged that a lot has been achieved and more than one billion people lifted out of poverty (2015 MDGs assessment report). On the other hand, the report clearly illustrates that we are far from ending extreme poverty which was goal number one. Accepting the gaps between in the MDGs results, world leaders adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, with the Theme "*End poverty, fight inequality and injustice and tackle climate change*" and they committed themselves to the statement that "*no one shall be left out*". These seventeen SDGs are perhaps more comprehensive than ever compared with the UN Development Decades targets and the eight MDGs. They also unlike their predecessor address climate change which is a factor impacting all nations and people irrespective of class, nationality, gender, faith etc.

The theme of the Synod does indeed recognize the prerequisite for another "reformation" in the world if we have to experience climate justice and just peace and become one world which is united as opposed to the current divided one. This time the "reformation" in my view is not only in the realm of faith and religious structures but in our values, ways of ordering our lives and relating to one another and creation/earth. The concept of "Just peace" was debated during the World Council of Churches (WCC) Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). At that time and even now this concept of just peace juxtaposed with just war was contested by a number of people. Without engaging in this debate, I will use the concept in line with the Jamaica Ecumenical Call to Just Peace which states: "*Just peace embodies a fundamental shift in our ethical practice. It implies a different framework of analysis and criteria for action. The call indicates some implications for the life and witness of the church*". According to Psalms 85:10, both peace and justice must be pursued and not one at the cost of the other. Below are some basic reasons why the church must work for climate justice and seek just peace if we endeavor to have one world. The phrase climate justice assumes there is climate injustice which there is indeed as the earth is groaning as illustrated by the picture below on the state of the Kariba dam where water levels have reduced drastically.

1. SIGNS OF THE TIME: TIME FOR CHANGE

The few reflections that I am about to share with you begin with a brief overview of what I term as the signs of the time which compel us to seek change and to multiply our efforts to secure climate justice. This is followed by a short section on the intersection between climate justice and just peace; and then I conclude my presentation with a few remarks. I am aware that the German Churches are more engaged than many others on working on the two themes more than we from the African context especially within the ecumenical movement. Therefore I see my encounter and time with you as one of dialogue and learning on these important processes within the world and not really sharing new ideas.



The above picture which appeared on the front page of *International New York Times* on the 13th April, 2016, is an indication of the climate changes that many a community is experiencing all over the world to-day. In most countries and some communities it is droughts, for others it is hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, floods etc.; leaving individuals and families devastated with loss of property and lives. This phenomenon is not confined to one geographical region, nation or people rather, it is occurring all over the globe at different times.

1.1 Economic Growth versus Climate Justice and Just Peace

Acute inequality exists between the rich and the poor which is one of the drivers of climate injustice, conflict and insecurity. The issue of chronic concentration of wealth in the hands of a few has

not been fully addressed. Moreover, the concept of economic growth without limits remains prevalent for most policy makers, practitioners and continues to undermine the search for climate justice and just peace. As a matter of fact poverty amidst wealth, growing inequality is the irony of growth; because the world has never been wealthier than it is now and yet it has also never been as unequal as it currently is. Without addressing issues of equitable production, consumption and distribution of goods and services at various levels when planning our economies gender injustice, poverty, exclusion, marginalization, conflict and climate injustice will persist.

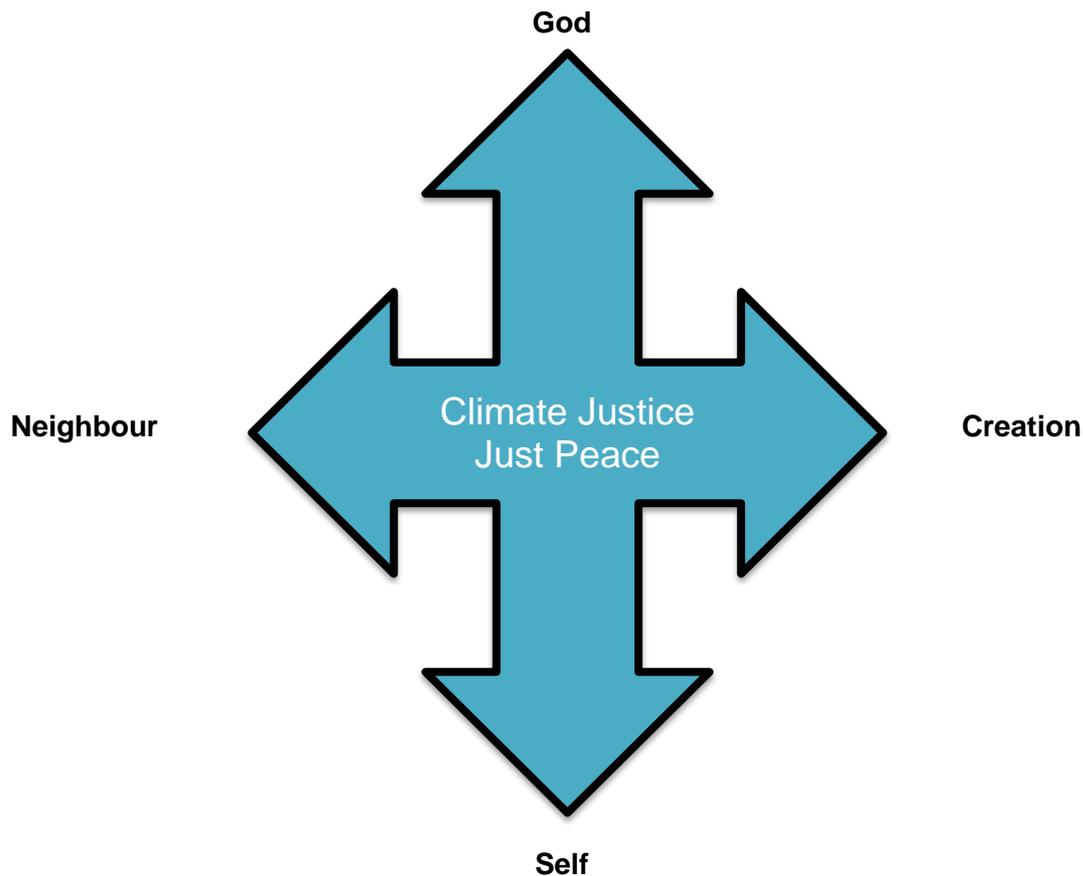
1.2 Conflicts, Displacement and Vulnerability

Our world is characterized by conflicts and divisions of varied magnitudes and impact. Because of religious inspired conflicts, racism and negative ethnicity, economic deprivation, hunger and militarization of many a society in the guise of peace and security and "war against terror" among others, millions of people are now forced to flee or migrate. Climate change for example, lack of pasture and water is also contributing to migration and flow of refugees in search of livelihoods. The Zambian example where the water levels have sank and the consequent drought in southern Africa and other parts of Africa has witnessed movement of people through insecure routes such as the Sahel desert, and Mediterranean Sea in search of peace and livelihood. Religious inspired conflicts tend to negatively affect Inter-Faith relations. Religious extremism sometimes manifested in terrorism may perhaps be the single most threat to peace and security. In the process of war on terror environment is also negatively affected besides loss of human life.

Without just peace and climate justice as a basis for stability and stable living conflict resolution mechanisms are inadequate to stop the forced movement of people as insecurity is a crucial push factor.

1.3 The Intersection between Climate Justice and Just Peace

As people of faith we acknowledge that the earth belongs to God and we use it and are stewards and custodians for posterity. Theology of life and especially the Indigenous People, help us remember the interconnectedness of life and maintenance of the web of life the need to restore and renew God's creation and its biodiversity. Creation story in the book of Genesis provides a narrative of the beauty that all humanity would want to experience and which God bequeathed us. Unfortunately we have polluted the earth to the extent that we risk destroying all forms life unless we change. In John 14:24 we learn that peace is God's gift to us and ensuring that just peace is sustained is both a journey and a process. Just peace is predicated on humanity being at peace with God, with creation, with the neighbor and with themselves. When these four dimensions of peace are functional then we can claim to have peace and integrity of creation.



The cross is a symbol of the intersection of just peace and climate justice. It also symbolizes the suffering, pain and wounded nature of our relationships with God, with the one another and with creation. Equally important is that the cross is a sign of hope, new life for the people of faith. Therefore according to the statement by Religious and Faith Leaders to the Paris COP summit in December 2015, "*caring for the Earth is our shared responsibility*". As people of faith and institutions we are challenged to transform chaos caused by human abuse of the earth; to be stewards of creation that engage in responsible economic development paradigms and sharing of resources. Just peace or sustainable peace and security begin with myself and therefore with us in relation to God and the other including our interaction with the earth/creation. But if as persons we are insecure and in conflict, how then can we share what we do not have and experience. As Christians sustainable or just peace comes through the resurrected Christ who transforms our lives because of His love for all nations and all people.

Whilst the cross gives us a bearing as Christians in our work of promoting climate justice and just peace, our efforts stand better chances of making leaps when we engage in interfaith collaboration, work with governments and with people of good will.

1.4 An ethic and value system

The young generation that forms the majority of the world in many parts to-day require a value and ethical system that will protect the earth and assets in perpetuity; a system that will provide hope in a desperate and hopeless world. In order to inspire and encourage hope, there has to be a vision which in this context is to enable people and the young generation to embrace the paradigm of climate justice and to have the courage to journey together towards just peace. As we celebrate 500 hundred years of "reformation – one world", the question we ask is how shall we restore social values across the globe that affirms climate justice and just peace? There may be need to unlearn certain things from our narratives such as endless exploitation of resources and re-socialize and grow a society with dignity and integrity. Transformation and an ethical value system that is the basis for climate justice in the context of just peace is only possible when we can face the reality of our context and accept the calling to re-discover together our identity as people created in God's

image. In this case our narrative of climate justice in the context of just peace has to be one of liberation of those in the margins and in the center of power and decision making. It is liberation that enables us to engage public policy to review and transform our education system in terms of providing quality and enhancing and sustaining life for all. A value and ethical system that undergirds a leadership of men and women committed to a re-ordering of society so that all have space and can contribute their diverse gifts for the common good. A leadership that facilitates an understanding that: *"I am because you are and you are because I am"*. A visionary leadership that advocates promotion of climate justice and just peace processes, strategies and mechanisms that should inculcate a change of heart and mind as we aspire to create a new culture.

Conclusion

I began by indicating that each generation has its challenges and chances. The challenge of our generation is to walk and work together for climate justice and just peace. The chances we have are that time and challenges cannot allow us to wait or sit back. Already the journey has started and we must join because climate justice is a matter of life and death. We have a chance to work and walk in new ways with each other more than ever, in order to create a movement of hope in restoring a web of life for all because we all are affected. Our chance is also to bring the moral, ethical and spiritual imperative to bear in the process of journeying towards climate justice and just peace. Additionally, we have a chance to mediate, advocate as key players with others for transformative, accountable and credible relationships between different communities and nations of the world. We have the possibility to identify and become centers of influence in climate justice as a contributory factor to just peace; where justice is not shortchanged with charity; and as *Micah 6:8 states: And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God* -NIV. Our mediating role gives us a chance to create platforms and spaces for diverse voices to interact and engage with the aim of overcoming divisions and building a house of nationalities – one world for all God's people where justice and peace reign and where the earth no longer groans but provides our sustenance and for generations to come.

The courage to engage with a credible, authentic voice on climate justice and just peace amongst multiple actors in the global arena is perhaps our biggest challenge in the 21st century ecumenicity. Thus our ecumenical spirituality must not be bound by narrow and tradition-bound religious, ecclesial and dogmatic frameworks. Rather, it must be revitalized to embrace a prophetic posture for climate justice and just peace for all.

This Synod as part of the ecumenical movement can together with the world wide church family affirm the rationale for "the World Council of Churches, as an expression of the worldwide Christian fellowship, call on churches everywhere to walk together, to view their common life, their journey of faith, as a part of this pilgrimage of justice and peace, and to join together with others in celebrating life and to develop concrete steps for transforming injustices and violence. Together we continue to pray: "God of life, lead us to justice and peace!"

Let us move together to rebuild, restore and reclaim a life giving and life empowering world where all live in dignity, peace and justice. This is because we believe there is hope for change – for climate justice and just peace.

Agnes Regina Abuom
P.O. Box 10488 00100
Nairobi, Kenya
25th May 2016