

**An Ecumenical Faith Stance Against Global Empire
For A Liberated Earth Community
Manila, the Philippines, July 15-16, 2006**

It is widely and commonly recognized that the global empire is a reality of the 21st century that must be reckoned with. There is ongoing debate - political, academic and theological - on the nature of this global reality and on how to respond to it.

Particularly, faith communities are seeking to discern the signs of the times in the context of the global reality in order to take faith stances and actions. A number of theological and interfaith discussions, as well as academic and political discussions, have taken up this problem.

The 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (2004), in both its Accra Confession and its Mission Report, called for a faith stance and action with regard to the global empire. The 9th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (2006) constantly referred to the reality of the global empire in its deliberations.

In this context there is an acute need to articulate a theological stance, which will enhance the ecumenical movement among the faith communities as well as meet the challenges of the global empire. In ecumenical circles, there is increasing interest in the deepening of theological and political discussions on the issue, along with cross-fertilizing among the regional and ecumenical discussions. This is based on the understanding that the issue of the global empire is not only a core theological issue but also a major political question.

In order to support the faith communities in their stance and action, the movement needs to catalyze and facilitate an ecumenical process of global theological reflection, discussion and debate on the global empire among concerned theologians and religious people.

For this reason and as one of the follow-up actions for living out the Accra Confession, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches organized a consultation on "Theological Analysis and Action on Global Empire Today" from 13 to 15 July 2006 in Manila, the Philippines. Seventeen theologians from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America participated, and two invited theologians from Latin America who could not participate physically, sent a valuable paper for the consultation.

The following statement is a result of the theological analysis and reflection that took place at the consultation. It is hoped that this initiative will undergird and support the ecumenical movement throughout the world, enhancing discussions among global ecumenical organizations as well as regional and local ecumenical movements.

I. Signs of the Times: Empire on the Rise

The most outstanding sign of our times is the suffering and cries of human persons and other living beings throughout the world, as their victimization proceeds in a systematic and unprecedented manner under the global US empire/market regime. At the beginning of the 21st century, all living beings in the cosmos are threatened with death and destruction. Their groaning echoes throughout the universe and is joined by the Spirit's groaning. As expressed in Romans 8.2, the existing powers and principalities of this world - with a

comprehensive destructiveness in the form of the global empire – are “causing creation to groan, in bondage, waiting for its liberation”.

The brutal atrocities committed in the course of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have revealed the true nature of the global empire, which has taken arbitrary, unilateral military actions against the people of these countries. The global empire's obvious purpose is to expand its territorial borders in pursuit of regional hegemony and its control of oil as an economic resource, consolidating the interests of the neoliberal global market. These wars are also a new form of religious crusade, justified through religious language and theological claims.

In the Philippines, where this theological consultation is being held, we have heard numerous personal reports about the country's return to murders, abductions, disappearances and incarcerations of political dissenters, among them priests and pastors who lived out their faith and prophetic ministry. This resurgence of terror mirrors the Martial Law years and is currently compounded by the illegitimacy of the current government and its unabashed subservience to the dictates of the US empire. Those who dare to defy the empire that has enslaved and impoverished their people are being viciously suppressed. They form part of a worldwide resistance against the neoliberal ideology and imperial domination of the United States, which has officially termed the Philippines its second front in the war on terror and made it the linchpin of its geopolitical project in the Asia-Pacific region. The Philippines was the very first overseas colony of the US empire, handed over by the fading Spanish empire to the rising US Empire amidst one of the bloodiest anti-colonial liberation struggles in history. This longest-running liberation movement in Asia continues its struggle, unique in its affinity with a mass-based Christian movement that is inspired by liberation theology.

Against Cuba, the decades-old US economic embargo has been reinforced in an attempt to stop all relationships with that country, including contacts with and support for Cuba's Christian churches and the Cuban Council of Churches. Enormous economic, social, political, military and ideological pressure continues to be exerted in order to destroy the viability of a society that refuses to comply with the dictates of empire.

North Korea's economy, already weakened by the ravages of neoliberal globalization, has been pushed to the brink by the US trade embargo and economic sanctions. As a result millions suffer from hunger and malnutrition, leading to a scandalously high incidence of child mortality and a massive flood of economic refugees.

Refusing to hold bilateral talks or to normalize relations with North Korea, the US has demonized the country, naming it part of the “axis of evil” in hopes of forcing a regime change. This has only provoked North Korea to go nuclear, in turn heightening tensions and fuelling the arms race in North East Asia.

Under its “defense transformation programme”, the US is now turning North East Asia into a major platform for its regional and global imperial military operations. The US-Japan alliance has been redefined to organize the Japanese self-defence forces under the effective command and control of the United States, accelerating Japan's remilitarization. In this process, the domestic political forces that wish to glorify Japan's imperial past are gaining ground, putting the country on a collision course with its Asian neighbours who have suffered Japanese colonization and aggression. The US bases in Korea are being consolidated for “strategic flexibility” to allow pre-emptive attack on North Korea and military operations anywhere in the “arc of instability”.

A new militarization is also in process in the European Union (EU). European “battle groups” are being developed in order to interfere everywhere in the world to secure economic interests, particularly the access to natural resources and strategic raw materials, as well as to protect “free trade”. This was concretely written into the treaty on a new European Constitution. Although the French and Dutch people defeated this neoliberal, militaristic constitution, governments are busy trying to revive it, as a legal foundation for the building of a sub-empire.

The US is developing new systems of weapons of mass destruction and generating high-tech and nuclear weapons. This operation along with strategies for cyber warfare and the unrestrained use of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear first strike, is seriously eroding and imperilling the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime and disregarding the fundamental prohibition against nuclear first strikes.

The “war on terror” has led to a series of draconian laws and legally sanctioned repressive measures within the United States and in many other countries that effectively condone torture, arbitrary detention and deprivation of liberty, summary deportations, extraordinary rendition and violations of a wide range of other political and civil rights. This has effectively undermined both practice and principles of the human rights regime and the rule of law. One visible impact of empire has been the inviolability of human rights.

The very nature of the imperial project requires access to the world’s natural resources of oil, natural gas, minerals, water and forest resources. Empire is based on the appropriation of riches from the dominated countries for the benefit of the power centre. The empire is reaching out to establish unilateral control over natural resources around the world, even if this means going to war or destabilising legitimately elected governments. Instruments such as the World Bank and other international financial mechanisms are being used to “liberalize” resource-extraction policies for the absolute benefit of the large transnational corporations serving the empire, with minimal benefits to the resource-endowed nations.

In countries, such as Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines and the Sudan, resource extraction is undermining development. Poverty is intensified as a result of the privatization policies, which siphon profits out of these countries. Human rights are violated as people are forcibly removed from their land; working conditions are poor; environmental degradation and pollution are aggravated by a lack of control or corporate accountability, and many of these situations are giving rise to local armed conflicts.

There is a rise in religious fundamentalism within Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and other religions. The empire uses religions to justify and provide the ideology of war. This religious dimension has led to an intensification of violent conflicts fuelled by theological justifications and invoking divine purpose.

Western Christianity has been closely related to empire since Roman days. Since then it has spread throughout the world, and now it is being used to provide ideological legitimization for today’s empire. Globalized Christendom and the “crusades” it embarks upon today are symbiotically intertwined with global capital and the power of the global empire. In its triumphalistic pursuits, it discounts if not condemns all other religious faiths and cultures. The indigenous religions of many communities are destroyed and Islam is vilified.

The convergence of Christian religion with Western modernity has destroyed the religious and cultural life of peoples and their communities throughout the world. The powers and principalities of the global market and empire are being baptised by these theological distortions of “Christianity”, which promote religious conflicts and bigotry globally.

The Christian religion of empire treats others as “gentiles” to be conquered, as the “evil empire” to be destroyed or as the “axis of evil” to be eradicated from the earth. The empire claims that the “goodness” of the empire must overcome these “evils”. Its false messianic spirit is imbued with the demonic.

These false claims destroy the integrity of faith(s), and radically erode the identity of Christian faith in Jesus Christ. As the spirit of empire penetrates souls, the power of global empire possesses the bodies of all living beings. Lord of its domain, it builds temples for the global market to serve Mammon.

In the name of peace and security, the global empire is exercising “omnipotent” power through its military weapons systems of mass destruction and its intensive, totalistic warfare. Already, wars such as the Crusades, the conquest of the Americas, and the colonial wars against the racial and ethnic peoples in Asia and Africa have caused massive victimization of peoples. This historical process of systematic, massive conquest and destruction of people and the earth has extended into modern times. World Wars I and II, the US atomic bombing of the Korean and Japanese peoples, the US Cold Wars against the Korean and Vietnamese people, and the Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq wars against those people and their communities have evolved into total wars of omnicide. Current developments by the empire in global militarization threaten the total destruction of earth as a living abode. The nature of war has been radically transformed into limitless war in time and space under the geo-politics of global empire. But the omnipotent power of empire can never obtain “total security”. Its absolute power through modern military technocracy – omnicidal weapons systems and the claim of omnipotent power – constitutes a tyranny over all living beings.

The ravages of the neoliberal market economy, driven by the insatiable quest for profits, have led to massive ecological destruction, climate change, and the daily extinction of animal, plant and fish species, diminishing the earth’s life-giving bio-diversity. The contamination and exhaustion of sources of potable water, the pollution of the oceans and the destruction of rain forests threaten our habitat and the life of Mother Earth.

Patriarchy and empire are inextricably interwoven. Today we see, in addition to the complex oppression of women through the ideology and practise of imperial patriarchy, the vicious use of rape and violence against women as a military tactic of domination in the wars in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq, among others. Such brutal military aggression against women and girls is one of the signs of a deep and pervasive system of domination that extends to all dimensions of human life.

The gender ideology of patriarchy is pivotal in all domination hierarchies in human society and in the communities of all living beings. These hierarchies are driven by, express and reinforce the gender ideology, as well as the racist ideology of global white power and the class ideology of transnational corporate elite. Manifested in all spheres of life, these ideologies converge and become especially visible in the global market and the geopolitics of the global empire.

II. Hope Arising in the Midst of Empire

The people of Brazil, Venezuela, Uruguay and Bolivia, as well as Argentina and Chile, have chosen governments and opted for economic policies in resistance to the US empire. New forms of Latin American solidarity are emerging as people rise up to take control of their own resources, affirm their identity and pursue policies of economic justice, explicitly rejecting the dictates of the global neoliberal market economy and US cultural hegemony.

The people of Afghanistan and Iraq, amid rampant violence and the intense suffering of innocent citizens are resisting the occupation and imperial domination of their land. The Palestinian people continue their decades-long resistance against Israeli occupation, unmasking the link between the US imperial project of geopolitical control over the oil-rich Middle East and the Israeli expansionist project and exclusion of the Palestinians.

In Nepal the people's movement successfully dismantled the empire-backed monarchical despot and reclaimed the right to chart their own political future. In South Korea there is growing, organized resistance by the people against the US bases and the "flexibility" doctrine, and renewed, intensified calls for the investigation of US wartime atrocities. In Okinawa, the people's sustained non-violent struggle against US bases succeeded in 2005 in forcing the US and the Japanese Government to abandon the offshore base.

Around the globe we see a resurgent peace movement and new and growing civil society actions for peace and justice. There is an inspiring rise in peoples' resistance everywhere including within the US. The hegemony of fear has not quashed the spirit of freedom of the people, who in various parts of the world are gaining strength from each other's stories and examples.

If the rise of the global empire is the defining sign of our times, it is counter-posed by people's visions of a civilization of convivial life of all living beings. These visions are rooted in people's experiences of suffering and struggle, which contain revitalized wisdom from their philosophical, cultural and religious traditions of past and present. Buddhist wisdom to overcome greed, Hindu Dharma of the cosmos, Confucian wisdom of Li/Ki, Taoist wisdom of the Way (Tao), Islamic wisdom of Justice, and many African, Asian, Native American and Pacific original peoples' cultural and religious wisdom provide reservoirs for the foundation of visions of a new civilization.

Such visions will be antithetical to the global empire, to Western modernity and to global Christendom. They will open ways to a civilizational and cultural "evolution" or "mutation", in which perhaps the vision of Jesus against Pax Romana may be fused and integrated. Such movements are signs of hope, rising among the communities of people in solidarity with all living beings.

This convergence of visions of life in the midst of suffering and struggle by all living beings against the global empire, is a definite alternative to the technocratic convergence of science and technology backed by the power and greed of the global regime of empire/market.

Empire is now firmly on the ecumenical agenda as a major concern leading to discussion, reflection and in some cases action. The ecumenical engagement is deepening and widening with increased theological, prophetic and spiritual discernment. Specifically, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Council for World Mission, the World Student Christian Movement, the United Church of Canada, and the World Council of Churches have all committed themselves to address the problem of empire from various perspectives. The Lutheran World Federation and other worldwide organisations have also entered into processes of engagement with global economic injustice and hegemony.

Reflecting this widespread concern, ecumenical consultations on empire have been held in Africa, Asia, Latin America and also in the USA.

III. Global Empire: Critical Analysis and Reflection

The use of the word "empire" in relation to US power was once controversial, more or less restricted to left-wing critiques of US hegemony. But now in the mainstream media and political discourse the concept of "empire" and "Pax Americana" are mentioned frequently and prominently.

Discourse on the Global Empire

Essentially, the use of the term "American empire" or "US empire" is an attempt to express the concept that the United States is no longer merely an exceptional super, hyper or hegemonic power. The shift in terminology from dominance to hegemony to "empire" is significant, above all because it highlights the classic concept of direct political control by an imperial centre. It is a question of indefinite dominance.

The US is by circumstance and design an emergent global empire, the first in the history of the world. In the last decade, the US has consolidated its Cold War-era, far-flung military base system into a new global imperial system. Driven by a triumphalistic ideology, an exaggerated sense of threat and a self-serving military role, this juggernaut is tightening its grip on much of the world. Imperial domination expands by co-opting and pressurising national, regional and international government structures around the world as well as interacting with the owners and managers of transnational corporations and mass media.

The Project of Global Empire

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 there have been strong claims based on a new US-dominated power structure, including celebrations of a so-called "unipolar moment" and assertions that the US is "the indispensable nation".

The report of the Project for the New American Century, entitled *Rebuilding America's Defences: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*, published in September 2000, says:

"The U.S. is the world's only superpower, combining pre-eminent military power, global technological leadership and the world's largest economy... America's grand strategy should aim to preserve and extend this advantageous position as far into the future as possible".

The Military Doctrines of the Empire

It is officially claimed that the United States has no rival and is militarily dominant around the world. Its goal is not combating rivals but maintaining its imperial position and maintaining imperial order. Planning for imperial wars is different from planning for conventional wars. The maximum amount of force can and should be used as quickly as possible for psychological impact, to demonstrate that the empire cannot be challenged with impunity. Imperial wars end but imperial garrisons must be left in place for decades to ensure order and stability. Finally, the imperial strategy focuses on preventing the emergence of powerful hostile challengers to the empire, by war if necessary, but by imperial assimilation if possible.

The official policy of the USA is called the "transformation of the military establishment". When pressed on the meaning of "transformation", Pentagon officials speak of replacing the "threat-based strategy" that long governed US military planning, with what they describe as a "capabilities-based approach". This means that the defence department will no longer organize its forces to counter specific military threats posed by clearly identifiable enemies, but will acquire the capability to defeat any conceivable type of attack mounted by any imaginable adversary at any time - from now to the distant future. Put differently, it is a mandate for the pursuit of permanent military superiority.

The war aims of the USA have been radically changed, according to official documents. Wars are fought by the USA not just to defeat the enemy but for "regime change" and "occupation" – thus expanding the empire.

The classified Nuclear Posture Review of the US (details of which appeared in the media in March 2002, revealing the Pentagon's ambitious nuclear battle plans), redefines the role of nuclear weapons as fundamental to US defence policy. It places new emphasis on the utility of nuclear weapons in US military doctrine and strategy, and changes the very notion of deterrence. "First use" and "first strike" are writ large on the nuclear agenda of the US. The readiness of the US to use nuclear weapons "in the event of surprising military developments" is ominous in the context of the War on Terror with its changing and expanding aims and targets.

The constant threat of war, now turned into a veritable state of permanent war, the hype about security and the promise of lasting peace are often constructed and maintained by the empire for its own survival. The defence budget of many countries is controlled or influenced, if not dictated, by the empire. The empire claims the right to intervene in any country at any time, with no particular enemy in mind. Unconditional access to space and to the use of military bases, technologies and facilities that the empire has in different countries across the world, especially in Korea, Japan and the Philippines, show the extent of its military hegemonic power. According to reliable sources of information, the Pentagon has military connections or alliances with 130 countries around the world and 800 -1,000 (perhaps more) military bases and installations worldwide.

The Ideology of the Empire

The most conspicuous and salient feature of the empire's approach to international affairs is its universalistic and monopolistic claims.

The empire uses "democracy" as an umbrella term for the kind of political regime that it would like to see installed all over the world. Bringing democracy to countries that do not yet have it is claimed as the defining purpose of US foreign policy. For the US, democracies abroad are regimes that support or follow its dictates.

The United States, "sustained by faith in the principle of liberty and the value of a free society", also has "unparalleled responsibilities, obligations and opportunities" beyond its borders, states the National Security Strategy of the USA 2002. It calls for possessing such overwhelming military power as to discourage any other power from challenging US hegemony or developing weapons of mass destruction. It overturns the old doctrine of deterrence and containment. Committing the US to a much-expanded understanding of security, it argues that the US must reserve the right to act pre-emptively and unilaterally against potentially threatening states or organizations. The US claims that it uses its power for good and has a selfless purpose. The Strategy also reflects the belief that global security and liberal order are based on the US – that "indispensable nation" – wielding power as the global empire.

The cultural hegemony of empire, what some call US "soft power" is a slow yet sure way of making people accept the role, function and reality of the empire as indispensable, normative and ideal. The minds of the subjects (most nations, peoples, individuals, institutions, governments) of the empire are made to believe and confess that there is no alternative (TINA) to the empire. Homogenization of cultures, traditions, values, lifestyles and the spread of triumphalistic Christianity can be identified as ways of extending the empire in all directions in global society. The emergence of religious fundamentalism can also be seen as linked to the empire. Technology and the media also are turned to its own advantage to perpetuate the values of the global empire.

Economics of the Empire

The empire has two faces: global militarization and neoliberal capitalist globalization. These are interrelated, as economic domination and military rule are inextricably joined. The military forces of the empire act as the “global cop” to maintain the order and security of the global market.

The US has declared in the *National Security Strategy of the U.S.A. (NSS 2002)* that it will “use this moment of opportunity”, i.e., the war on terrorism to bring democracy, development, the free market and free trade to every corner of the globe. The economic agenda that will follow the flag in the quest of what is called “a better world” is clearly spelt out. It is claimed that the concept of “free trade” arose as a moral principle even before it became a pillar of economics. It is further claimed that “the twenty-first century will be an era of great promise. Globalization – the process of accelerating economic, technological, cultural and political integration – is bringing citizens from all continents together. A growing number of nations around the world have embraced American core values of democratic governance, free market economics and respect for fundamental human rights”.

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The implication is clear. There is an integral relationship between American-style free market economics and American security in the world. Globalization and imperial security go together. Global capitalism and enforced militarily (if necessary) are integral to empire building. Having achieved a “pre-eminence not enjoyed by even the greatest empires of the past”, the US is focused on using its power globally, through both military and market intervention. America’s War on Terror or “war for freedom” is at one with the expansionary goals of the market - open invasion in some places, open markets everywhere.

메모 [U2]: reference

Global Sovereignty of the Empire

The “National Defense Strategy 2005” states that the most important strategic objectives of national security are to defend the US from direct attack and then to secure strategic access and retain “global freedom of action”.

There is virtual rejection of international law and multilateral institutions and mechanisms. The Defense Strategy document states, “Our strength as a nation state will continue to be challenged by those who employ a strategy of the weak using international forums, judicial processes and terrorism”. Here international forums, judicial processes and terrorism are equated. Proponents of international law are equated with terrorists.

It is officially claimed that Washington would not be reluctant to send its forces into other states that, in its opinion, “do not exercise their sovereignty responsibly” or “use the principle of sovereignty as a shield behind which they claim to be free to engage in activities that pose enormous threats to their citizens, or the rest of the international community”.

The strategy of preventive war (pre-emption) is closely bound up with the new vitality of the “hegemonic international law nihilism” that is exhibited by the present US administration. It is rooted in the idea that only the USA will be entitled to global sovereignty in the future world order. This notion of global sovereignty means that the USA will lay down international rules (e.g. through the formation of alliances or blocs), determine what constitutes a crisis (a state of emergency), distinguish between friend and foe and make the resulting decision on the use of force. Only the USA is competent to use force anywhere in the world. This is one of the pillars of the new grand strategy, which is exemplified above all else by the concept of an exclusive right to preventive military intervention all over the world. Commitments to international alliances, and in particular to the United Nations, are rejected as constituting a restriction of the freedom of the US to act. By military might the global empire wants to assert global sovereignty and maintain global freedom of action.

IV. Theology in the Face of Empire

We offer here, first, a distinctive theological approach to empire, and second, certain key theological affirmations and rejections that need to be lifted up in this time of global empire.

Theological Approach

Our theological approach begins with the Galilean Jesus, who lived at the historic crossroads of empires and cultures. He bore witness to a gospel of life as the critique of all forms of domination at work in empire, and set into history a power for building new communities in the face of empires. The main lines of a theology of the Galilean Jesus can be set forth here in five sections, treating (a) The Witness of the Hebrew Scriptures against Empire, (b) The New Testament Witness to the Galilean Jesus, (c) The Crucifixion of Jesus, (d) The Resurrection, and (e) A New Heaven and New Earth.

메모 [U3]: I think it may be useful to have more clarity in this sentence?

- a. *The New Testament Witness to the Galilean Jesus* - The Jesus of Galilee lived out a gospel of the "reign of God" amid and against the Pax Romana, the imperial domination of his day. Against imperial domination he brought new life, healing souls and bodies wounded by empire, proclaiming and building peace on earth, anticipating the restoration of all creation. To follow Jesus means many things but it surely means nothing less than resisting empire and creating new communities of life amidst it.
- b. *The Crucifixion of Jesus* - Jesus' life and ministry under Pax Romana led to his crucifixion. Jesus' suffering bears witness to how often imperial execution (along with harassment, abusive ridicule, and torture) is imposed upon those who resist the politics and culture of empire. The empire's decision to kill Jesus reveals that the struggle against empire is a life-and-death matter, that Jesus' gospel of life is in fundamental conflict with the death-dealing ways of empire.
- c. *The Resurrection* - Empire did not have the final word. Jesus' embodiment of life, love and justice under empire, and his resurrection by God overcoming the power of empire's death-dealing ways, empowered new communities of life. This "body of Christ" as a community of the Spirit is risen and present among us through the collective body of movements and communities – surviving, resisting and flourishing amid domination.
- d. *A New Heaven and New Earth* - Reading the book of the Revelation of John, through the eyes of the sufferers of empire, we understand the "fall of Babylon" as judgement on all empires of history and as the promise of the New Heaven/New Earth. Empowered by the power of the resurrected Christ in history, we labour for life in inter-religious solidarity:
 - with struggles against empire rising from diverse faith communities world-wide;
 - with movements rising to break the bonds of class, caste and other social structures of exploitation;
 - with coalitions rising within the US and worldwide to end the domination of the US empire – its wars and destruction of world peace;
 - with visions of indigenous peoples rising to restore respect for the earth;
 - with persons rising to break down the patriarchal powers of empire in order to form a gender-just community of women and men;
 - with the people rising to resist racism against communities of colour in every continent;
 - with the new consciousness rising to free peoples everywhere from ensnaring consumerism; and
 - with the work and dreaming rising from peoples everywhere who experiment with new economies and new politics to challenge the ever-new faces and manifestations of global empire.

Theological Affirmations and Rejections

In the face of the present crisis created by US global empire today, we reach for new understandings of the gospel message. In the spirit of the Galilean Jesus who took on Pax Romana, we find it necessary to lift our voice against some prominent features of the current Pax Americana:

1. Concerning Absolute Power

The US global empire today, with a spirit of divine pretension, lays claim to absolute power. In so doing it becomes a force that contravenes the gospel of life revealed in the Galilean Jesus.

We reject US claims to unlimited sovereignty, as seen in its National Security Strategy, its violation of international law with impunity and its unbridled unilateralism.

2. Concerning Imposed Messianic Agendas

The US global empire, with its messianic spirit, its sense of a sacred destiny ("manifest destiny") to save and liberate the world from evil, usurps the saving role of God in the resurrected Christ. The power of the resurrected Christ is not given through any one nation's drive to power over others; it is given, instead, through a confluence of visions and new communities born from many peoples and nations working together toward justice, peace, democracy, dignity and the integrity of all creation.

We reject therefore the theocratic and "Christocratic" aims of many leaders in Washington DC and throughout the US, who seek to build political dominion in the name of Christ and who support or tolerate Pax Americana's imposition of a new Christendom globally.

3. Concerning Imperial Justifications of War

The US global empire claims a right to kill and destroy, assuming that justness and goodness **attach** to Pax Americana. There is a god-like pretension in the empire's posing as righteous dispenser of freedom for all other peoples. We covenant to continue the urgent task of theologically exploring the themes of war and peace, of church and state in the context of empire.

메모 [U4]: are attached/symbiotic? Is a word missing here?

We reject the empire's use of theological and biblical language to justify its wars and other exploitative and oppressive designs. We reject the kind of apocalyptic messianism among Christians that misuses the Book of Revelation and the book of Daniel to justify its imperial violence and destruction of "others".

The new visions for ecumenical strategies and practices, which are offered in the next section, select key themes and dimensions of this theology to give more concrete guidance to the witness of the church amid global empire today.

V. A New Ecumenical Vision: The Peace of Jesus

We affirm another world is possible! This enables us to search for a collective vision of a community of life in justice and peace. The peace of Jesus is not the peace of empire. A new ecumenical vision for a community of life in justice and peace is being born in our day.

New Visions for Peace

In making our contribution to new visions of community of life in justice and peace we recognize that it is grounded in the struggles of the people who are resisting neoliberal globalization and the empire in multi-dimensional, multi-cultural, multi-faith, interdependent and interdisciplinary ways.

Through peace movements around the world, various visions of a peaceful world are taking shape. The beginning of the 21st century saw the emergence of an international civil society consciousness, informed by disillusionment with the current neoliberal economic globalization and empire, and searching for an alternative community of life in justice and peace.

Social movements are important sources for new visions. The World Social Forum (WSF) has become the symbol of this rising international civil society consciousness that seeks to create space for all individuals and organizations seeking and working for justice and peace for life. A new vision of community of life in justice and peace is already growing on a worldwide scale, with initiatives for a "social economy in solidarity".

Cultural and religious heritage: Cultural visions include, for example, *Ubuntu* within the African culture, which reflects a definition of personhood that finds its meaning within the context of a common humanity, sharing in God-given life, dignity, interdependence and a common future. In Asia, major religions have long been reservoirs of wisdom and vision for a world of peace and justice. These are harnessing and nurturing a new cultural and religious heritage of peace.

Neoliberal economic globalization and its military promotion and protection can only be countered by the convergence of visions. A fragmented vision is inadequate to resist and replace this order with an alternative.

This vision must be inclusive of political dimensions with regard to democracy. Democracy is not the market but the people's democracy, which is participatory - with the right of people to decide their own future and to enjoy fundamental political, social, economic and cultural rights as well as the right to life.

Democracy is based on a universal ethic of responsibility and solidarity in which the interdependence of humanity, the biosphere and societies is reflected in responsibility and social contract. Democratic governance, as a process, leads from domination to autonomy in solidarity. In this sense the state can regain legitimacy through responsibility, transparency and participation of peoples; recognition of the existence of the public common good; and promotion of responsible public social expenditure. As such, democratic governance helps to define rules for the economy and gives a social framework to the market.

Democracy is a balanced system of governance, led by rules and institutions for the management of public common goods and services, and to which end global, democratic public institutions and political bodies must be restructured or created.

Global democratic institutions cannot be limited to interstate relations but reflect international civil society participation. The converging multitudes of peoples' movements and visions, *not* the global empire, give rise to the democracy the world needs. As people marching in the streets worldwide have chanted, "*This is what democracy looks like!*"

As a Christian faith community, our vision is informed by our reading of the Bible. Biblical witness to the peace of Jesus against empire provides a key toward reaching the full wisdom of God and the creative inspiration of the Spirit.

Values of a Peace Vision

This vision may be manifested in values of respect for the human being, for life in all its dimensions, and for the life of nature. These are the values of mutual recognition among human beings, including the

recognition of the natural origin of all, and the recognition by human beings of the rest of nature external to them. Its principle is - No one can live, if the other cannot live.

These values challenge the imperial system and on their behalf we are called to resist, to intervene and to transform that system. The common good is the process in which these values confront the empire.

These values are not justified for calculable advantages in terms of utility or of personal interest. Nevertheless, they are the basic values of humanity, without which human life is destroyed, in the most elementary sense of the word.

We are called to be nonconformist and transformative communities, because life is not possible unless we undertake transformation that addresses the roots of injustice.

We search for new community and a new world of peace against empire; therefore we live out peace and justice as a committed/fait community of peace and life:

- with critical analysis;
- with repentance and confession of our complicity;
- with theological clarification and Bible study;
- with peace pedagogy;
- with resistance, joining in the resistance of people against empire;
- with work to build peace in the world from the local to the global; and
- with partnerships of solidarity.

Realizing the New Visions

A process of recognition, education and confession regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction (*processus confessionis*) has led to the Accra Confession (2004) rejecting global neoliberal capitalism and starting a covenanting process for justice in the economy and the earth. In this context the Confession as well as the Mission Report of the Accra General Council identified the global empire of the USA as the violent system pressing through and protecting the mechanisms and structures of capital accumulation at the cost of people's lives and communities at all levels. It is necessary to continue the process of recognition, learning and confessing, addressing the interaction of empire and global capitalism.

How can congregations, churches, ecumenical groups and the ecumenical movement be engaged in this process concretely? Some examples of reflections and processes already have been launched.

Stories Of Ecumenical Witness:

▪ Ecumenical Movement in the Philippines

Since 2002 US President Bush named the Philippines as the second front of the war on terror. The ecumenical movement in the Philippines, discerning the grave signs of the times, has taken an unambiguous position against the war on terror, understanding its nexus with globalization. The National Council of Churches (NCCP), together with the World Council of Churches and Christian Conference of Asia, convened the International Conference on Terrorism in a Globalized World in September 2002. In the Manila covenant, for the first time in the global ecumenical community, the empire was named as the logic behind these seemingly unconnected forces of destruction.

Peace for Life, a new South-South and North-South solidarity network of peace advocates, was created on the mandate of the Manila covenant. Its purpose is to be a global, faith-based movement for peace and justice engaged in building people's solidarity and in mobilizing resistance to the war on terror and

destructive forces of corporate globalization. At its inaugural forum in Davao City, Philippines, in December 2004, on the theme "Christian-Muslim Solidarity in the Era of Empire", it moved ahead further to define its character within the frame of interfaith solidarity. Peace for Life organized an interfaith delegation of Christian and Muslim leaders and activists from different parts of the world to join the international group of protesters against globalization during the 12th WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong, in December 2005.

The NCCP has been very active in mobilising the ecumenical community to confront the overt state tyranny that has been fuelled and funded by the Bush war on terror. The United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the United Methodist Church in the Philippines have been outstanding in their witness and activism against injustices. The Council's mission of solidarity with the landless victims of Hacienda Luisita (small-scale mining communities being evicted by multinational mining interests – victims of environmental destruction and the empire's greed for strategic resources) has strengthened the faith and prophetic witness of church workers. With the support of Peace for Life, the NCCP initiated the WCC-convened Pastoral Ecumenical Delegation Visit to the Philippines (PEDV) in June 2005 to call on the international community to hear the cries of the voiceless. Together with the activist Moro-Christian People's Alliance, it also convened an international solidarity gathering in 2005.

Active participation of the Philippine ecumenical community in social concerns dates back to the dismal days of Martial Law in the 1970s. Christian leaders and activists have continued to be an integral part of the struggle for peace with justice. The resilience and continuous accompaniment of the suffering people's movement for liberation even when faced with ongoing persecution and murder (unprecedented in its brutality) is a significant source of strength and resistance.

▪ **The United Church of Canada (UCC) study: "Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire"**

The United Church of Canada (UCC) has completed a study titled "Living Faithfully in the midst of Empire". This project builds on previous work, study and actions that have focused on deepening the understanding of neoliberal economic globalization and unlimited market capitalism as roots of poverty and ecological destruction. The study also makes linkages to the ecumenical processes of the Accra Confession (WARC) and AGAPE (WCC's programme to develop alternative visions to globalization).

The strength of the UCC's engagement in the study of empire lies in its strong engagement with partner voices and experiences through stories, theological reflection and social analysis. The study contributes to a deeper awareness of empire as a system of global domination and a threat to life and creation, and shows that the present time is critical for discernment of the Gospel. The call to confession acknowledges the church's complicity in empire and challenges the church to responsive transformation based on justice. Critical elements of this work include institutional support and commitment to seeking justice and resisting evil; availability of human and financial resources; ability to work ecumenically wherever possible; and commitment to a partnership model that takes local and global partners' voices and participation seriously.

The challenges that lie ahead include the development of education for justice resources for use by congregations in their reflection and action on empire; continuing to ground the work theologically at all levels; the challenge to the church to live out more fully the transformative change it has called for in the report with respect to social, economic and environmental justice; and continuing to live out the church's commitments to gender and racial justice in all its responses to the challenges of empire.

In this regard, we have been encouraged to note many newly emergent examples of action in resistance against the domination of the global empire and for the building of an alternative world. To mention a few, there are the growing democratic consciousness among peoples of Latin American nations, the strong

citizens' movements against US military bases in Korea and Japan, efforts to address US policies within the United States and efforts for alternatives to neoliberal globalization in Germany. Also emerging are theological movements and mission movements for justice, such as in South Africa and in ecumenical organizations, including the Council for World Mission.

VI. A Call to Struggle Against the Empire

The global empire, with its unprecedented reach, represents a massive threat to life. In the face of this pervasive and death-dealing reality of worldwide hegemony, we are inspired and empowered by Jesus of Galilee to resist empire and to renew communities of life. This new reality has economic, political, social, cultural, religious and spiritual dimensions. It presents life and death challenges for Christians, as the empire uses religion to justify its domination and violence, and makes claims that belong to God alone.

We ask all churches whose missions and peoples have historically been involved in empire building to seriously scrutinize - in partnership with the victims of their imperial past - their structure, teaching, liturgy, funding agencies and policies as well as their political allegiances, in order to repent and reshape their life in all aspects in the spirit of the anti-imperial biblical heritage.

We call upon WARC member churches, congregations and organizations to engage in processes like these, to make connections with social movements and other faith communities in order to resist imperial and capitalist structures in their particular contexts and build up communities of peace for life.

We also ask the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Student Christian Federation and other ecumenical organizations to join in these processes, as they did following the WARC decision at the 23rd General Council in 1997 - embarking on a *processus confessionis* related to global economic injustice.

Throughout the consultation, participants raised the question of how to address the linkage of US and Israel imperialism in the context of the oil-rich Middle East, where it misuses the Bible in a fundamentalist manner and most violently oppresses the Palestinian people. We ask WARC to take up this issue and develop responses in cooperation with other ecumenical organizations.

We acknowledge the disastrous consequences of the domination by empire around the world. The consultation participants were particularly attentive to the dramatic situations in the Philippines and in Palestine. We call on WARC to take up these concerns and develop courageous responses in cooperation with other ecumenical organizations.

List of Participants

Rev. James Buys, South Africa/ Prof. Kim Yong-Bock, Korea/ Dr. Ninan Koshy, India/ Prof. Ulrich Duchrow, Germany/ Rev. Chris Ferguson, Canada/Jerusalem/ Bishop Erme Camba, the Philippines/ Prof. Mark L. Taylor, USA/ Ms. Carmencita Karagdag, the Philippines/ Dr. Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, India/ Rev. Cheryl Dibeela, Botswana/ Mr. Muto Ichiyo, Japan/ Sr. Mary John Mananzan, the Philippines/ Ms. Omega Bula, Canada/ Dr. Keum Jooseop, CWM staff, UK./Korea/ Rev. Dr. Karen Bloomquist, LWF staff, Switzerland/US A/ Prof. Park Seong-Won, WARC staff, Korea/ Rev. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, WARC staff, Switzerland/ Guyana

