



Ἦν α μὴ ἡ σχίσμα ἐν τῷ σώματι, ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐτὸ
ὑπὲρ ἀλλήλων μεριμνήσει τὰ μέλη· ἐλ ηἰ εἴτ
ε πάσχει ἐν μέλος, συμπάσχει πάντα τὰ
μέλη, εἴτε δοξάζεται ἐν μέλος, συγχαίρει
ἐ πάντα τὰ μέλη.

(Πρὸς Κορινθίους Α' 12: 25-26)

لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ انشِقَاقٌ فِي الْجَسَدِ، بَلْ تَهْتَمُّ الْأَعْضَاءُ اهْتِمَامًا وَاحِدًا بَعْضُهَا لِبَعْضٍ. فَإِنْ كَانَ عُضْوٌ وَاحِدٌ يَتَأَلَّمُ، فَجَمِيعُ الْأَعْضَاءِ
تَتَأَلَّمُ مَعَهُ. وَإِنْ كَانَ عُضْوٌ وَاحِدٌ يُكْرَمُ، فَجَمِيعُ الْأَعْضَاءِ تَفْرَحُ مَعَهُ.
(رِسَالَةُ بُؤْسِنِ الرَّسُولِ الْأُولَى إِلَى أَهْلِ كُورِنْثُوسَ 26-25:12)

There should be no schism in the body,
but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*;
or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.

(1 Corinthians 12:25-26)

Ninth day of May of the year 2017

To our sisters and brothers in Christ facing persecution and martyrdom,

We greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We write to you as Christians living in the United States where we do not face immediate danger of persecution and martyrdom in living our faith as do you. We write as Christians troubled not only by the persecution of our fellow believers and other religious communities, but also by the attempts of some seeking to eradicate Christian communities in what can only be named genocide. We write as Christians conscious in the midst of our confessional diversity, seeking to heed more faithfully the teachings of our Lord and the exhortation of Saint Paul in a perfect manner. Still, the divisions will be healed

only as we “care for one another,” recognizing the suffering of those who proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord in the Holy Spirit.

And therefore, we write as those who desire to express our care for you in the time of your travail. You know firsthand the experience of the Apostle Paul who addresses the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 4:8-10):

We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed— always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

This is in accordance with the teaching of our Lord who teaches that there will be those who believe the persecution of His Church will be of service to God. Lamenting your sorrow and pain, we give glory to God in these days that you, despite being hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down, have maintained your faith in the Cross and Resurrection of our Savior. That you continue to fight the good fight and endure, we are thankful, for the witness of those who suffer for the sake of righteousness has always been the most powerful testimony to those who as yet do not believe. Your steadfastness is also an inspiration to our fellow believers who may be tempted to complacency in the absence of an external threat.

We also heed the words of the Apostle James (Iakovos) (James 2:15-17):

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

You exhibit your faithfulness to the Lord amidst persecution and martyrdom, but we, who do not face the same trials, exhibit our faith by our concern for you. In Christ Jesus we seek actively to lessen your pain and suffering because of our love for you, and we do this so that working together here and throughout the world, that which divides us may be overcome. In this, our own faith may be strengthened by what we may learn from you and your steadfast commitment in time of trial.

Of course, first we pray: that the heavy burden will be lifted, and that those who seek to do you harm will repent. We are very aware that over the last several years, violence and other forms of persecution have continually increased throughout the world: in the Middle East and parts of Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Turkey and Iran, Africa, Asia, and our hearts ache to learn of new sufferings among our fellow believers each day. We pray that the torment of violence and war will come to an end, and you will be able to serve the Lord in peace and dignity. We pray that the Spirit of God will move the peoples of the world to reject genocide, prejudice, religious bigotry, and

violence as a means to address grievances and political conflict, or as a tenet of religious doctrine, and to respect the sacredness of God's creation of humanity in His image and likeness.

Our prayer leads us to inform the peoples of the world and our own respective communities about the plight of our sisters and brothers who suffer, and we are committed to raising awareness among all through the media and all available means, for we believe the goodness of all humanity will demand the respect of human life and dignity, and the freedom of religious expression.

We are committed to advocating the relief of the plight of our sisters and brothers under persecution with civil and political authorities at all levels of government, and seek to convince religious leaders of all faith traditions that action on your behalf is a benefit for all humankind. We encourage our leaders and those with influence to "come and see" the conditions by which fellow human beings are being mistreated.

Our prayer and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord lead us, of course, to his service, and we commit ourselves and those with us to fulfilling the new commandment of love in our daily lives and in preparation for that time when every knee shall bow, and the peoples of the earth shall be judged. We confess that your cries have too often fallen on deaf ears; and, for too long governments and the international community have failed to protect the most vulnerable in their hour of need. Therefore, we shall seek the means of feeding those who hunger, clothe those who are naked, give drink to those who thirst, and bring aid to those who are sick, and in every way possible meet the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of those made destitute by the affliction of persecution, and of the violation of human rights and legal protections. This we pray will be accomplished by our support of agencies and churches already now assisting you as they are able, as well as relief and development efforts within your own communities.

In closing, we turn our attention to and draw strength from the many blessings of Holy Week, and recommit ourselves to the Cross, the only path that leads to the Resurrection. While our hearts are distressed over the recent massacre against Egypt's Christians, we remain steadfast and respond to the darkness plaguing the world by proclaiming in one voice: Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη! المسيح قام! احقا قام! Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

Presidents of Christian Churches Together

Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski – Catholic Family

Rev. Gary Walter – Evangelical/Pentecostal Family

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian – Orthodox Family

Rev. Samuel C. Tolbert, Jr. – Historic African American Family

Rev. David Guthrie – Historic Protestant Family

Rev. Carlos L. Malavé – CCT Executive Director

This letter was originally written by participants at the Christian Churches Together Forum on the Persecuted Church, held on March 1-2, 2017 in Newark, NJ and adopted by the Steering Committee of Christian Churches Together in the U.S.A on April 11, 2017. Christian Churches Together is the broadest fellowship of churches working towards Christian unity in the United States.

Correspondence, media inquiries or questions may be directed to:

Christian Churches Together in the USA
Att. Rev. Carlos L. Malavé
P.O. Box 43743 Louisville KY 40253
Email: cctintheusa@gmail.com

CCT Participants Communion and Organizations

American Baptist Churches, USA	Orthodox Church in America
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	Polish National Catholic Church
Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch	Reformed Church in America
Armenian Orthodox Church in America	Sojourners
Assyrian Church of the East	The Assyrian Church of the East
Bread for the World	The Episcopal Church
Bruderhof Community	The Evangelical Covenant Church
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	The Korean Presbyterian Church in America
Christian Reformed Church in NA	The Presbyterian Church USA
Church of God Ministries (Anderson, IN)	The Salvation Army
Church of the Brethren	The United Methodist
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship	The Vineyard USA
Coptic Orthodox Church	The Wesleyan Church
Evangelical Covenant Church	United Church of Christ
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	US Conference of Catholic Bishops
Evangelicals for Social Action	World Vision
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	
Habitat for Humanity International	
International Council of Community Churches	
International Justice Mission	
International Pentecostal Holiness Church	
Mennonite Church USA	
Moravian Church	
National Baptist Convention of America	
National Baptist Convention, USA	
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference	