

## CONCEPT NOTE

### ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES

### 7<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL THEOLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM

#### *Freedom of Belief and Persecution in Africa Today*

5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2026

NAIROBI – KENYA

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND / CONTEXT

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC -CETA), through its Theology and Interfaith Relations unit is committed to providing a platform for constructive conversations about addressing contextual theologies in Africa. AACC has been holding annual theological symposia since October 2019 to present, in accompaniment to its member churches, to deconstruct and reconstruct theology in response to the contextual theologies. Since then, the 2019 symposium addressed critical areas of misleading theologies by identifying features of misleading theologies to be articulated in the future symposia. A series of symposia took place annually addressing thematic areas of Complexities of Theologies of Wealth and Prosperity (on 23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> November, 2020), Controversies about Theologies of Health and Healing (on 22<sup>nd</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> November, 2021), Addressing Contextual Theologies of Power and Authority in African Churches (on 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022) and The Role of Governments' Regulation on Churches and Religious Institutions (on October 28<sup>th</sup> -1<sup>st</sup> November 2024). Last year's annual theological symposium was held from 6<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> October 2025 with the theme: African Churches on Israel and Palestine. This year's symposium will be held from 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2026 with the theme; ***Freedom of Belief and Persecution in Africa Today.***

#### 2.0 RATIONALE

The freedom of belief, and Religious persecutions are deeply intertwined and a lived experience even today. For example, the rapid spread and growth of a movement characterized by zeal for the proclamation of the Gospel and living the teachings of Jesus Christ, became a new religion (Christianity) within the Roman Empire. This was quickly followed by denial of freedom of belief and martyrdom<sup>1</sup>. Despite co-existence of people of different faiths in the world through the centuries, religious communities and people(s) have faced curtailed freedom of belief and persecution in different forms.

Currently some of the African Christians as well as non-Christians minorities are been subjected to various forms of persecutions threatening right to life, truncated freedom to

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<sup>1</sup> St. Paul followed Christians who had flee Jerusalem to Damascus to persecute them (Acts of Apostles chapters 8 & 9). Persecutions continued up to A.D 313 and during the Edicts of Milan, Emperor Constantine the great decreed Christianity freedom of worship in the empire.

practice their beliefs especially because of political, cultural and religious antagonism from extremist groups, restrictive laws, and conflicts resulting to religious violence, radicalization, fundamentalism and extremism.

In many African countries' freedom of belief and persecution is marked by stories of discrimination, oppression and marginalization, destruction of churches and/or places of worship, abductions of believers and even deaths, curtailed freedom of belief and phobia in communities. This promotes AACC to host 7<sup>th</sup> annual theological symposium, inviting theologians, church leaders, scholars and victims living these experiences into a conversation that will explore African Churches response to issues freedom of belief and persecution.

**Key questions this symposium will seek to answer are;**

- a) What are the factors contributing to the persecution and curtailing freedom of belief in Africa?
- b) What are the biblical hermeneutical justifications authenticating theology of freedom of belief and persecutions?
- c) What are the African Christianity theological perspectives on freedom of belief and persecution?
- d) What are the political and religious interests perpetuating a culture of anti-Christian and religious minorities groups violence?
- e) What is the role of governments in protecting and safeguarding freedom of worship in Africa today?

**3.0 OBJECTIVES**

- To provide a platform for constructive conversations on Freedom of Belief and Persecution in Africa Today.
- To bring together up to 100 participants including theologians, church leaders, scholars' and victims to explore African Churches responses to issues freedom of belief and persecution.
- To Publish the symposium papers/articles in to a book series addressing contextual theologies in Africa today.

**4.0 Thematic Focus Topics**

- a) Historical accounts on freedom of belief and persecution.
- b) Biblical hermeneutical approaches informing theology of freedom of belief and persecution.
- c) African Theological perspectives on persecution and freedom of belief.

- d) Political and Religious factors perpetuating a culture of anti-Christian and religious minorities groups violence.
- e) Role of governments in protecting and safeguarding freedom of worship.

### **5.0 TARGET**

This symposium will target 100 participants composed of church leaders, leading theologians, victims experiencing persecutions and Africans in diaspora who may be interested. A few partners and people of other faiths interested in the topic.

### **6.0 METHODOLOGY**

The methodology to be used will include paper presentation, panel discussions, plenary discussions, group discussions, case studies and sharing of perspectives. Sharing with be in person or/and short videos/clips where applicable.

### **7.0 IMMEDIATE AND SHORT-TERM EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Enhance understanding of the African churches on freedom of belief and persecution.
- Examine various biblical hermeneutical approaches informing theology of belief and persecution.
- Analyzed contextual theologies of freedom of belief and religious persecution.
- Propose ways to address political and religious factors perpetuating a culture of anti-Christian and religious minority group violence.
- Specified Roles of governments in protecting and safeguarding freedom of worship.
- Published the symposium papers/articles in to a book series addressing contextual theologies in Africa in which the link to the publications will be circulated widely within the AACC networks.

### **8.0 SPEAKERS**

Speakers will be identified and selected from the list of applicants who will have submitted abstracts as per the symposium requirements (*requirements will be published together with the symposium advert at: [www.aacc-ceta.org](http://www.aacc-ceta.org)*). We intend to benefit from the expertise of church leaders, professional, theologians and lecturers in theological schools across Africa and beyond. Speakers will be selected from their areas of theological expertise and experiences. They will be notified on time preferably during the 1<sup>st</sup> week of the month of June 2026.

### **9.0 DATES AND VENUE**

This symposium is planned to take place for **3 days in October 2026** with the arrivals on **5<sup>th</sup> October 2026** and departures **on 09<sup>th</sup> October 2026b** in Nairobi, Kenya at the Desmond Tutu Hotel and Conference Centre.

### **10.0 COSTS**

Interested participants are encouraged to contribute towards the Symposium through travel costs and conference fees (accommodation and meals).

### 11.0 DEADLINE

The deadline for submission of the Application form is **15<sup>th</sup> May 2026**. The form can be filled online through the following link: [www.aacc-ceta.org](http://www.aacc-ceta.org) (*Application forms to be uploaded in due time*). PDF or MS-Word version of the application can be sent upon request. **Due to limited space, final decision on applications will be communicated on or before 30<sup>th</sup> May 2026.**

### 12.0 SELECTION PROCESS

For maximized participation, the criteria for selection will include the following among others:

- Church leaders and non-church leaders
- Theologians and Theology/Religious Studies experts
- Age mix intergeneration balance
- Regional balances
- Financial possibilities
- Gender equity