

# The Gulf Churches Declaration 2018

*Whereas the Marrakesh Declaration of 2016 affirmed values of tolerance, equality and justice for non-Muslim minorities in Muslim majority nations, we seek to support these values in the Arabian Peninsula.*

## **1. Who We Are**

*We the undersigned, represent the estimated 4 million Christians who live in the countries of the Arabian peninsula. The Christian Church in this region is international, transient, worshipping in multiple languages and traditions. Our worship centres are for many the only spiritual home from home. Churches provide worship and also recreation and cultural activities.*

*The Gulf Churches Fellowship represents five global families of the Christian faith including Anglicans, Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Protestants. We identify our core tasks as*

- i) Growing in our ecumenical relationships with one another.*
- ii) Engaging in Christian-Muslim Dialogue,*
- iii) Seeking collaborative relationships with our respective host governments.*
- iv) Developing strategies to meet the needs of our fellow migrants.*

## **2. Affirmation**

*We commend governing authorities that enable Christians to fulfil their calling as worshippers of the one true God. We celebrate the Marrakesh Declaration in which esteemed Muslim scholars and leaders called for "just treatment of religious minorities in Muslim Majority countries and to raise awareness as to their rights".*

*We rejoice that many of the countries in our region provide constitutional rights for the freedom of worship for non-Muslims. We note, however, the diversity in our*

region when it comes to the issue of freedom to worship. We will welcome the implementation of the Marrakesh call for the rights of all Christians to worship.

Across the Arabian peninsula, Christians gather to worship faithfully and with devotion. Their instruction from Scripture is that "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except for that which God has established" (Romans 13:1). Worshippers are told to encourage "one another on toward love and good deeds. Do not give up meeting together . . . but instead encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

### **3. Call**

- a) *We call on all Christians to be faithful in their worship of the one true God and to be obedient in fulfilling their duties as residents by loving God and loving their neighbours.*
- b) *We therefore call on the Church in the GCC to be ecumenically proactive in seeking positive encounters with the Islamic community through educational collaboration and acts of community service.*
- c) *We call on the Church in the GCC to work with governments in meeting the needs of workers. This is a Scriptural imperative which is also reflected in the values held by faithful Muslims.*

*"The Lord, your God ... defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing."  
(Deuteronomy 10:17-19)*

*Jesus said: "Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40)*

*Christians cannot ignore and be indifferent to the plight of those who are in need within our own communities. We call on Churches to speak for them, educate them, and provide practical care.*

- d) *We encourage Christians to engage creatively with relevant authorities on shared communal interests and concerns.*
- e) *We promote acceptance of others and tolerance among the people living in the region*

#### 4. Challenges

Recognising our shared human values with the Islamic community we urge Muslim authorities to:

- a) Enable all Christians to be faithful in their worship of the one true God by ensuring provision of sufficient land for church buildings to serve the Christian community, and by providing a legal framework and practical mechanisms necessary to the functioning of churches, including availability of Bibles and other worship material.
- b) Provide a collaborative platform in which the needs of guest workers will be heard and addressed. We look to develop relationships of trust that will enable us to work for justice together under the sponsorship system, and to provide hope for those who are crippled by debt and burdened by worries.
- c) Facilitate positive encounters between members of our faith communities which will promote the climate of "knowing each other" better, recognising that intolerance is the fruit of ignorance. We seek the abiding fruit of tolerance, understanding and friendship.

Signed in Abu Dhabi, UAE, January 16, 2018

+ Pans Hinson  
+ Micaela Pappas  
+ Bartholomew Jussif  
+ Metropolitan Ghottas Hazzin  
Rev. Amanuel Ghareeb.  
Ae