**Pastoral Letter**

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Chile, meeting as Synod in Pirque, in the Santiago Metropolitan Region, from January 17 to 19, 2020, affirming our identity as part of the Body of Christ and our concern for the situation facing our country, conscious of the missional challenges and pastoral accompaniment to which we are called, having as our reference Sacred Scriptures, hereby express our pastoral voice to the people of Chile:

*You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?* (Mt 5:13).

The gospel makes clear that the task facing the Lord’s people is fraught with difficulties, challenges, sadness, joy and great need. We are invited to be the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World in all times and places, as testimony to being part of the Body of Christ. Being the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World is imperative in the reality in which we live. The Gospel of Matthew reflects the daily need felt by Judeo-Christian society to let the Gospel shine in the darkness and injustice experienced under Roman rule. Still today, salt and light are ingredients that every society, church and family need to give life meaning.

In Chile, as well as in other countries in the region, social processes are underway where diverse groups are denouncing injustice and fear. There are demands for change, for concrete signs that our society is moving toward justice, where truth and the rule of law serve as guideposts for personal, social and civic relationships, and for a world that incorporates these values. We ask for God’s Spirit to be born in our midst and to plant in our hearts seeds of peace and hope.

As a country we confront challenges that we have postponed for years, challenges that have left us far away from the harmonious development we as Christians believe in and dream of in accord with Scripture. We see these challenges in our poor quality of life and the deficient conditions confronting broad sectors of society, especially the elderly, those living on pensions, and our young people who seek a better living standard, especially better healthcare, education and job security. Recent events have revealed an unjust society, characterized by alarming levels of corruption and polarization; social divisions have grown massively. We live in communities that have lost their way and can’t even rely on the pastoral accompaniment of religious institutions.

We lament and condemn the violence we have witnessed, as well as the repressive acts carried out by security forces against these protests. We call on all protesters to root their actions in their desire for the common good, remembering that we seek to change an obsolete social model whose time is long gone. Our goal is to build a new social model that embodies our dreams. Destruction and violence are not the way to build a new country. Solidarity and respect must be our hallmarks always, everywhere. Our actions must assure the well-being of the weak, those in need, widows, orphans and strangers. They are the ones that must be always present in our actions and our prayers.

In this context, we confess that our pastoral concern has not been sufficient to respond to the urgent needs that surround us. We have been unable to mobilize the authorities and official institutions to sufficient action. Furthermore, we recognize that these same institutions have been unable to respond to the demands of this moment. We recognize that we are on the brink of fundamental changes to our representative way of government, our pension, healthcare and education systems, and our Constitution.

In Pirque, where we have assembled as the Synod of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Chile, we have elected, for the first time, a woman as our Moderator. This gives us great joy and reinforces our commitment to gender equality, and our respect and recognition of the pastoral ministry of women. Indeed, three of the five members of the newly elected Executive Committee are women, two pastors and one ruling elder.

As the Synod of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Chile, we seed to live and dream into being a new day. We, as part of the Body of Christ, seek a new society and accept the challenge of contributing to change in our country. We will participate in, support, contribute to and vote to approve a new political Constitution for our country that reflects the high values and principles characteristic of modern democratic societies, guaranteeing the rights and responsibilities of all of us who live in and love this nation. In this way we can be salt of the earth and light of the world. In this way, we can proclaim the gospel in our country.

From our roots in the Reformed tradition, we deeply desire to witness the birth of a new nation, a new society built on truth where justice flows like a stream of living water. These are signs of our presence as salt of the earth and light of the world. In the same way, we fervently maintain and defend the dignity of all persons, created in the image and likeness of God, as a visible sign that we are walking into new life in Christ Jesus.

Pastor Pastor

Jacqueline Troncoso D. Patricio Ávila

Moderator of the Synod Executive Secretary of the Synod

Pirque, Metropolitan Region, Santiago, January 19, 2020.