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**PRESS RELEASE: [For Immediate Release]**

## **YOUNG CHRISTIANS NETWORK CALLS ON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO RESIGN TO AVOID FURTHER SCANDALOUS EMBARRASSMENT!**

The Young Christians Network-Ghana (YOCNET-GH) is a coalition of young Christian professionals from various denominations and in diverse fields such as Academia, Accountancy, Arts, Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Governance, Journalism, Medicine, Engineering, Banking, Marketing, Security and Law, among many others focused on promoting excellence in public service.

We have noted with grave concern the recent revelations regarding the construction of the National Cathedral. As Christians who do not have any objection in principle to the construction of the Cathedral, we are equally worried about the blatant lies, deception and misinformation that has characterized the manner in which the affairs of this project have been handled from its inception till date.

Our nation stands at a crossroad on a very pertinent national discourse which quite surprisingly, has been greeted with so much loud silence from voices that hitherto, sought to serve as the conscience of the nation. These controversies have been fueled by the rather obscure manner in which the affairs National Cathedral has been handled by the Government, led by the National Cathedral Secretariat at the Office of the President and most importantly, the Board of Trustees of this project. One would have thought that with Ghana being branded as a religious nation, a project of this nature and magnitude will be spared the usual plethora of scandals associated with Government initiatives.

We find it hard to believe that a project that was supposed to be a symbol of Praise and Glory to the Lord God Almighty, has been fraught with avoidable controversies, leading to a situation where the names and integrity of highly respected Men and Women who have laboured in the vineyard of the Lord for decades, have been brought into disrepute, shame, humiliation, public ridicule and opprobrium.

At the launching of the National Cathedral Fundraising Campaign on Friday, December 28, 2018, President Nana Addo-Dankwa Akufo-Addo made it clear that the project is in fulfillment of a personal pledge he made to God before coming President. This was at a time many Ghanaians kept raising questions about the priority, cost and location of the project.

In response to concerns about the role of the State in the construction of the Cathedral, a former General Secretary of the Christian Council, Rev. Dr. Opuni Frimpong and the venerable Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, who later became a member of the Board of Trustees, made emphatic statements that government was not funding the National Cathedral and wondered why Ghanaians should argue over a project which is not sponsored by the tax payers' money. The statements from the President and these leading Men of God, seemed to have allayed the fears of Ghanaians until another set of unpacked confusion erupted.

It has now become abundantly clear, that the State is actively pumping hundreds of millions of Ghana Cedis into the National Cathedral Project and we wish to state a few facts in that regard:

- a. On October 29, 2020, the Finance Minister, Ken Ofori-Atta, acting on a request by the Chief of Staff, Akosua Frema Opere, authorized the release of a gargantuan GHC 142,762,500 (the equivalent of US\$ 25 Million) as “Seed Money for the National Cathedral.
- b. Again, on the instructions of the Chief of Staff, through the Minister of Finance, by a letter dated March 31, 2022, the Controller and Accountant General was authorized to release a whopping GHC25,000,000 (Twenty-Five Million Ghana Cedis), the equivalent of US\$ 3 Million as additional seed money for the construction of the National Cathedral.
- c. That notwithstanding, we are aware that another 32 Million Ghana Cedis (the equivalent of US\$ 4 Million) of the tax payers’ money has been from the Office of the President to David Adjaye & Associates for consultancy services on the National Cathedral.
- d. It is important to note that the State also contributed to the National Cathedral projects through the free allocation of 14 acres of prime land at Ridge, valued at Millions of Dollars; including the cost of demolishing pre-existing public buildings, some of which were constructed barely 2 years ago and the cost of resettling Government and Private offices and residential facilities.

We are deeply saddened by these revelations, especially when the President and respected leading advocates for the National Cathedral made it clear that State funds would not be used in the construction of the project. In the light of these blatant and shameless deceptions and to the effect that State funds have actually been allocated to the project, we are of the firm belief that Ghanaians deserve some explanations to a number of begging questions:

1. Is the National Cathedral a State project or the President’s personal project/pledge? If it is a personal pledge / project, why did the Government allocate free prime lands for the project? If it is a State project, why did the Government and especially Members of the Board of Trustees create the impression from the initial stages that it was a private facility being championed by a coalition of churches without government funding? In effect, who owns the National Cathedral?
2. How much did it cost the State to pull down all the pre-existing Government and private buildings at the site and who paid for that cost and how much has the State spent so far in renting or building new facilities for the Government and Private institutions and individuals who previously occupied portions of the allocated land?
3. What is the real cost of the National Cathedral and was there any form of Parliamentary approval granted to warrant the release of several millions of Ghana Cedis for the project?
4. Was there a thorough competitive and open tender process to select the Architect/Consultant for this project or it was sole-sourced? Was the Architect/Consultant properly qualified to work in Ghana at the time he was awarded the contract? Was there a Parliamentary approval and or agreement sanctioning the award of the contract and subsequent payments to the Architect/Consultant?

As we speak, this government is currently struggling to commit resources to far more important national issues such as the;

- a. payment of caterers of the School Feeding Programme
- b. payment of Allowances for National Service Personnel
- c. payment of Salaries of NABCO Personnel
- d. payment of service providers under the National Health Insurance Scheme
- e. resettlement of the victims of the Appiate explosion, just to mention.

However, a seemingly broke government has found a way of dolling out money for the construction of the National Cathedral in a bizzare and shady manner which makes complete mockery of our

procurement laws and the settled argument of seeking prior Parliamentary approvals for international contracts and making expenditure from the Consolidated Fund.

It is worth mentioning that every Member of the Board of Trustees is an accomplished individual and leader in their own rights and they have built a lot of credibility for themselves through years of hardwork, toil and unimaginable sacrifice. It is for this same reason that we find their loud silence and inaction on these disturbing trends very worrying and questionable. Are these Trustees wholly at peace with their conscience in the face of all the deception, lies, decadence and confusion surrounding the construction of the National Cathedral?

**Apostle Prof. Opoku Onyinah, Archbishop Charles Palmer-Buckle, Most Rev. Bishop Justice Ofei Akrofi, Rt. Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey Most Rev T. K. Awotwi Pratt, Rev Prof Cephas Omenyo, Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams, Rev. Dr. Joyce Aryee, Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, Rev. Eastwood Anaba, Rev Victor Kusi-Boateng and Rev Dr Frimpong Manso; who are Members of the Board of Trustees of the National Cathedral, are our Church Leaders; they have been our spiritual leaders, mentors, icons and people we have looked up to for years. As a result, we are of the view that these respected men and women should not allow their hard-won reputation to be tainted and dragged in the mud with the litany of questionable payments from the Consolidated Fund in the name of the National Cathedral.**

We also wish to draw the attention of the Consultants for the National Cathedral in the United States of America; **Cary Summers, President & CEO of the Nehemiah Group and Anthony J. Lynch, President of the Lynch Pinnacle Group** to the worrying developments emanating from the utterly opaque and sordid ways and means being deployed in the State-funding of the National Cathedral. We equally urge the US Representatives to take a cue from the mindboggling revelations of arbitrary payments from the Consolidated Fund to cater for expenditure on the National Cathedral and advice themselves accordingly. It will be a shame to see the reputation of such internationally recognized men soiled as a result of the deliberate actions of the Government to dabble in a grand deception.

We wish to urge these accomplished men and women of integrity not allow such a scandal which has legal, moral and even criminal ramifications to tarnish their image and find themselves on the wrong side of history, since posterity will not forgive them for tacitly endorsing such shenanigans in a project that was supposed to honour God but has been fraught with embarrassing scandals and controversies.

It is in that same spirit that we make a clarion call to the Members of the Board of Trustees, as a matter of principle and clean conscience, to **RESIGN** from their respective positions on the Board and publicly distance themselves from all the scandals surrounding this project. We also wish to call on the Parliament of Ghana and the Special Prosecutor to institute a special enquiry into the affairs of the National Cathedral Secretariat, the Office of the President, the Ministry of Finance and the Controller and Accountant General's Department for their various roles in the authorization and disbursement of State funds relative to the National Cathedral project.

Once again, to the Members of the Board of Trustees, we wish to remind the Members of the Board of Trustees that there is no glory in associating with a project tainted with lies, fraud and riddled with so much acrimony and confusion. **SAVE YOUR INTEGRITY NOW!**

**SIGNED:**

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