

RESOURCE BOOK

WCC 10th Assembly

Busan, 2013



**World Council
of Churches**

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Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit

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Foreword

Olav Fykse Tveit

General Secretary, World Council of Churches

An assembly of the World Council of Churches occasions not only fellowship and celebration, prayer and worship. It also calls for serious religious reflection on the needs of the world, the role of ecumenical Christianity, and the recent achievements and future aims of ecumenical Christian engagement.

In advance of the WCC's 10th Assembly, this *Resource Book* is meant to facilitate deep reflection on all aspects of ecumenical work today. It presents many of the most important current documents from the Council, its programmes and commissions, and its work with ecumenical partners.

This collection offers a great harvest but also an invitation to join in the feast.

I call your attention particularly to the first documents, signal gifts to the world church. The convergence statement on *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* is an ambitious attempt to rethink what it means to be Christians together today. The work of two decades, it represents not only the first convergence statement in a generation; it also offers a shared yet rich theological vision of our life together as a communion that extends God's own mission in the world. Second, *Together towards Life* is the first new mission affirmation in 25 years, and it too presents a compelling new vision of Christian mission, its rootedness in God and its role in the up-building of the reign of God today.

In fact, here you will find a full range of work to inform and propel the deliberations of the assembly and the future programmatic work of the WCC. They include major work from commissions and partnerships, such as those mentioned above and the "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World." They include a document that stems from directives from the last assembly, in Porto Alegre, namely, the *Ecumenical Call to Just Peace*, along with reports on the WCC's conversations with Pentecostals, Christian world communions, and the Roman Catholic Church, and the final call of the Poverty, Wealth and Ecology programme. Major rethinking of *diakonia*, economy, and theological education round out the volume.

Many of these topics and documents will also figure in the 21 Ecumenical Conversations that take place in the assembly, as well as in plenary presentations. Readers should also be aware of other concurrent publications that are available to aid in understanding and assessing the recent and current work of the council:

- *A Faith That Does Justice: The Journey of the World Council of Churches from Porto Alegre to Busan*
- *Building Peace on Earth: Report of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation*
- *Just Peace Companion*, second edition
- *Receiving One Another in the Name of Christ: Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Ninth Report: 2007–2012*
- *Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa: Impact Assessment, 2002–2009*

Part I
Resources from the Programmes

The Church: Towards a Common Vision

Faith and Order Commission, Penang/ Malaysia 2012

What can we say together about the Church of the Triune God in order to grow in communion, to struggle together for justice and peace in the world, and to overcome together our past and present divisions? A major ecumenical publishing event, The Church: Towards a Common Vision attempts to answer that question. It represents the work of theologians from the widest range of Christian traditions and cultures. It addresses first the Church's mission, unity and being in the Trinitarian life of God. It then addresses our growth in communion and the call to life in and for the world.

Preface

The convergence text *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* belongs to the biblical vision of Christian unity: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

The primary purpose of the Commission on Faith and Order is “to serve the churches as they call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe” (2012 bylaws).

The goal of this mutual calling to visible unity necessarily entails a mutual recognition of each other as churches, as true expressions of what the Creed calls the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.” Yet in the abnormal situation of ecclesial division, the churches’ reflection on the nature and mission of the Church has given rise to the suspicion that the various confessional ecclesiologies are not only divergent from one another but also irreconcilable. Hence agreement on ecclesiology has long been identified as the most elemental theological objective in the quest for Christian unity. This second convergence text of Faith and Order follows from the first, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), and the official responses to it, which identified key

areas in ecclesiology for further study;¹ it follows as well from the ecclesiological questions raised in the study text *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* (2011).

For twenty years, the delegated representatives of the Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic churches in a World Conference on Faith and Order (1993), three Plenary Commissions of Faith and Order (1996, 2004, 2009), eighteen meetings of the Standing Commission, and countless drafting meetings have sought to uncover a global, multilateral and ecumenical vision of the nature, purpose, and mission of the Church. The churches have responded critically and constructively to two earlier stages on the way to a common statement. The Commission on Faith and Order responds to the churches with *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, its common—or convergence—statement on ecclesiology. The convergence reached in *The Church* represents an extraordinary ecumenical achievement.

There are at least two distinct, but deeply interrelated, objectives in sending *The Church* to the churches for study and official response. The first is renewal. As a multilateral ecumenical text, *The Church* cannot be identified exclusively with any one ecclesiological tradition. In the long process from 1993–2012, the theological expressions and ecclesial experiences of many churches have been brought together in such a way that the churches reading this text may find themselves challenged to live more fully the ecclesial life; others may find in it aspects of ecclesial life and understanding which have been neglected or forgotten; others may find themselves strengthened and affirmed. As Christians experience life-long growth into Christ, they will find themselves drawing closer to one another, and living into the biblical image of the one body: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

The second objective is theological agreement on the Church. Perhaps even more important than the convergence achieved by Faith and Order in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* was the official response process that followed. The six published volumes of responses manifested the varying levels of documented convergences among the churches themselves on the key questions around baptism, eucharist and ministry. The effects of the ecclesial convergence surfaced by *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* toward Christian unity are well documented and ongoing. The responses to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* will not only evaluate the convergence reached by Faith and Order but also reflect the level of convergence on ecclesiology among the churches. Just as the convergence on baptism in the responses to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* gave rise to a fresh impetus toward mutual recognition of baptism, similar ecclesial convergence on ecclesiology will play a vital role in the

1. Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*. Faith and Order Paper No. 149. WCC: Geneva, 1990, 147–51.

mutual recognition between the churches as they call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship.

“Ecclesial responses” for the Commission on Faith and Order includes the churches that are members of the Commission and the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches. It is also hoped that those churches that are new to the ecumenical movement will accept the invitation to study and comment on the text. The Commission also welcomes responses from ecclesial bodies, such as national and regional councils of churches and the Christian World Communions, whose official dialogues among themselves have contributed so much to the convergence reflected in *The Church*. The specific questions posed by Faith and Order to the churches to guide their response process are found at the end of the Introduction to *The Church*. The questions for study and response are theological, practical, and pastoral. The Commission requests that official responses be sent to the Faith and Order secretariat at the World Council of Churches no later than 31 December 2015.

As this text was two decades in the making, we express our thanks to those on whose shoulders, prayers and theological gifts this text stands: the Faith and Order commissioners, the churches and theologians who responded to *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* (1998) and *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (2005), members of the Faith and Order secretariat, and our own predecessors as moderators and directors of the Commission on Faith and Order.

Canon John Gibaut

Director

Commission on Faith and Order

Metropolitan Dr Vasilios

of Constantia-Ammochostos

Moderator

Commission on Faith and Order

Introduction

“Thy will be done” are words that countless believers from all Christian churches pray every day. Jesus himself prayed similar words in the garden of Gethsemane shortly before his arrest (cf. Matt. 26:39-42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). In John’s gospel, moreover, he revealed his will for the Church when he prayed to the Father that all of his disciples be one, so that the world may believe (cf. John 17:21). To pray that the Lord’s will be done thus necessarily requires a wholehearted endeavour to embrace his will for and gift of unity. The present text—*The Church: Towards a Common Vision*—addresses what many consider to be the most difficult issues facing the churches in overcoming any remaining obstacles to their living out the Lord’s gift of communion: our understanding of the nature of the Church itself. The great importance of that gift and goal highlights the significance of the issues to be treated in the pages that follow.

Our aim is to offer a convergence text, that is, a text which, while not expressing full consensus on all the issues considered, is much more than simply an instrument

to stimulate further study. Rather, the following pages express how far Christian communities have come in their common understanding of the Church, showing the progress that has been made and indicating work that still needs to be done. The present text has been elaborated by the Faith and Order Commission, whose aim, like that of the World Council of Churches as a whole, is to serve the churches as they “call one another to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.”¹ Such visible unity finds a most eloquent expression in the celebration of the eucharist, which glorifies the Triune God and enables the Church to participate in the mission of God for the transformation and salvation of the world. The present statement makes use of the responses of the churches to Faith and Order’s work on ecclesiology in recent years as well as earlier ecumenical documents which have sought convergence through common reflection upon God’s Word, in the hope that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Lord’s gift of unity can be fully realized. Thus it is the result of dialogue at the multilateral level, especially the responses of the churches to *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, of the suggestions offered by the meeting of the Faith and Order plenary commission held in Crete in 2009 and of the contributions of the Orthodox consultation held in Cyprus in 2011. In addition, the text draws upon the progress registered in many bilateral dialogues that have taken up the theme of “Church” in recent decades.²

We hope that *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* will serve the churches in three ways: (1) by providing a synthesis of the results of ecumenical dialogue about important ecclesiological themes in recent decades; (2) by inviting them to appraise the results of this dialogue—confirming positive achievements, pointing out deficiencies and/or indicating areas that have not received sufficient attention; and (3) by providing an occasion for the churches to reflect upon their own understanding of the Lord’s will so as to grow towards greater unity (cf. Eph. 4:12-16). Hopefully, such a process of information, reaction and growth, by confirming, enriching and challenging all of the churches, will make a substantial contribution and even enable some decisive steps towards the full realization of unity.

There is a structure to this text, based on the ecclesiological issues that we are addressing. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* opens with a chapter exploring how the Christian community finds its origin in the mission of God for the saving transformation of the world. The Church is essentially missionary, and unity is essentially related to this mission. The second chapter sets out the salient features of an understanding of the Church as Communion, gathering the results of much com-

1. L. N. Rivera-Pagán, ed., *God in Your Grace: Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 2007, 448.

2. For more details about this process, see the historical note which appears at the end of the text.

mon reflection both about how Scripture and subsequent tradition relate the Church to God and some of the consequences of this relation for the life and structure of the Church. The third chapter focuses upon the growth of the Church as the pilgrim people moving towards the kingdom of God, especially upon several difficult ecclesiological questions that have divided the churches in the past. It registers the progress towards greater convergence about some of these issues and clarifies points about which churches may need to seek further convergence. The fourth chapter develops several significant ways in which the Church relates to the world as a sign and agent of God's love, such as proclaiming Christ within an interreligious context, witnessing to the moral values of the Gospel and responding to human suffering and need.

The many official responses to Faith and Order's *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, of 1982, showed that the process of reception that follows the publication of a convergence text can prove to be just as important as that which led to its production.³ So as to serve as an instrument for genuine dialogue about ecclesiology to which all may make a significant contribution, the churches are urgently requested not only to give serious consideration to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* but also to submit an official response to the Faith and Order Commission, in the light of the following questions:

- To what extent does this text reflect the ecclesiological understanding of your church?
- To what extent does this text offer a basis for growth in unity among the churches?
- What adaptations or renewal in the life of your church does this statement challenge your church to work for?
- How far is your church able to form closer relationships in life and mission with those churches which can acknowledge in a positive way the account of the Church described in this statement?
- What aspects of the life of the Church could call for further discussion and what advice could your church offer for the on-going work by Faith and Order in the area of ecclesiology?

In addition to these general questions, readers will find, printed in italics and interspersed throughout the text, paragraphs about specific issues where divisions remain. These questions are intended to stimulate reflection and encourage further agreement among the churches on the path to unity.

3. M. Thurian, ed., *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" Text*, Geneva, World Council of Churches, vols. I-VI, 1986–1988; *Baptism, Eucharist. and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*, Geneva, WCC, 1990.

I. God's Mission and the Unity of the Church

A. The Church in the Design of God

1. The Christian understanding of the Church and its mission is rooted in the vision of God's great design (or "economy") for all creation: The "kingdom" which was both promised by and manifested in Jesus Christ. According to the Bible, man and woman were created in God's image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), so bearing an inherent capacity for communion (in Greek *koinonia*) with God and with one another. God's purpose in creation was thwarted by human sin and disobedience (cf. Gen. 3-4; Rom. 1:18-3:20), which damaged the relationship between God, human beings and the created order. But God persisted in faithfulness despite human sin and error. The dynamic history of God's restoration of *koinonia* found its irreversible achievement in the incarnation and paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. The Church, as the body of Christ, acts by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue his life-giving mission in prophetic and compassionate ministry and so participates in God's work of healing a broken world. Communion, whose source is the very life of the Holy Trinity, is both the gift by which the Church lives and, at the same time, the gift that God calls the Church to offer to a wounded and divided humanity in hope of reconciliation and healing.

2. During his earthly ministry, "Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds he had compassion for them" (Matt. 9:35-36). The Church takes its mandate from the act and promise of Christ himself, who not only proclaimed the kingdom of God in word and deed but also called men and women and sent them out, empowered by the Holy Spirit (John 20:19-23). The Acts of the Apostles tell us that the last words Jesus addressed to the apostles before his ascension into heaven were: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Each of the four gospels closes with a missionary mandate; Matthew recounts: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age'" (Matt. 28:18-20; see also Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45-49; John 20:19-21). This command by Jesus already hints at what he wanted his Church to be in order to carry out this mission. It was to be a community of witness, proclaiming the kingdom which Jesus had first proclaimed, inviting human beings from all nations to saving faith. It was to be a community of worship, initiating new members by baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. It was to be a community of discipleship, in which the apostles, by proclaiming the Word, baptizing and celebrating the Lord's Supper, were to guide new believers to observe all that Jesus himself had commanded.

3. The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the morning of Pentecost for the purpose of equipping them to begin the mission entrusted to them (cf. Acts 2:1-41). God's plan to save the world (sometimes referred to with the Latin expression *missio Dei* or "the mission of God"), is carried out through the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This saving activity of the Holy Trinity is essential to an adequate understanding of the Church. As the Faith and Order study document *Confessing the One Faith* pointed out: "Christians believe and confess with the Creed that there is an indissoluble link between the work of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit and the *reality* of the Church. This is the testimony of the Scriptures. The origin of the Church is rooted in the plan of the Triune God for humankind's salvation."¹

4. Jesus described his ministry as preaching the good news to the poor, releasing the captives, giving sight to the blind, liberating the oppressed and proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord (cf. Luke 4:18-19, quoting Is. 61:1-2). "The mission of the Church ensues from the nature of the Church as the body of Christ, sharing in the ministry of Christ as Mediator between God and his creation. At the heart of the Church's vocation in the world is the proclamation of the kingdom of God inaugurated in Jesus the Lord, crucified and risen. Through its internal life of eucharistic worship, thanksgiving, intercessory prayer, through planning for mission and evangelism, through a daily life-style of solidarity with the poor, through advocacy even to confrontation with the powers that oppress human beings, the churches are trying to fulfil this evangelistic vocation."²

B. The Mission of the Church in History

5. Since these origins, the Church has always been dedicated to proclaiming in word and deed the good news of salvation in Christ, celebrating the sacraments, especially the eucharist, and forming Christian communities. This effort has sometimes encountered bitter resistance; it has sometimes been hindered by opponents or even betrayed by the sinfulness of the messengers. In spite of such difficulties, this proclamation has produced great fruit (cf. Mark 4:8, 20, 26-32).

6. One challenge for the Church has been how to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in a way that awakens a response in the different contexts, languages and cultures of the people who hear that proclamation. Saint Paul's preaching of Christ in the Areopagus at Athens (Acts 17:22-34), making use of local beliefs and literature, illustrates how the very first generation of Christians attempted to share the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection, drawing upon and, when necessary, transforming, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the cultural heritage of their listeners and serving as a

1. *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as It Is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Geneva-Eugene, WCC- Wipf & Stock, 2010, §216.

2. "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation," §6, in J. Matthey, ed., *You Are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 2005, 8.

leaven to foster the well-being of the society in which they lived. Over the centuries, Christians have witnessed to the Gospel within ever increasing horizons, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). Often their witness to Jesus resulted in martyrdom, but it also led to the spread of the faith and to the establishment of the Church in every corner of the earth. At times, the cultural and religious heritage of those to whom the Gospel was proclaimed was not given the respect it deserved, as when those engaging in evangelization were complicit in imperialistic colonization, which pillaged and even exterminated peoples unable to defend themselves from more powerful invading nations. Notwithstanding such tragic events, God's grace, more powerful than human sinfulness, was able to raise up true disciples and friends of Christ in many lands and establish the Church within the rich variety of many cultures. Such diversity within the unity of the one Christian community was understood by some early writers as an expression of the beauty which Scripture attributes to the bride of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:27 and Rev. 21:2).³ Today believers from churches which once welcomed foreign missionaries have been able to come to the assistance of churches by whose agency they first heard the Gospel.⁴

7. Today the proclamation of the kingdom of God continues throughout the world within rapidly changing circumstances. Some developments are particularly challenging to the Church's mission and self-understanding. The widely diffused awareness of religious pluralism challenges Christians to deepen their reflection about the relation between the proclamation that Jesus is the one and only Saviour of the world, on the one hand, and the claims of other faiths, on the other. The development of means of communication challenges the churches to seek new ways to proclaim the Gospel and to establish and maintain Christian communities. The "emerging churches," which propose a new way of being the Church, challenge other churches to find ways of responding to today's needs and interests in ways which are faithful to what has been received from the beginning. The advance of a global secular culture challenges the Church with a situation in which many question the very possibility of faith, believing that human life is sufficient unto itself, without any reference to God. In some places, the Church faces the challenge of a radical decline in membership and is perceived by many as no longer relevant to their lives, leading those who still believe to speak of the need for a re-evangelization. All churches share the task of evangelization in the face of these challenges and others that may arise within particular contexts.

3. See, for example, Augustine, "Ennarrationes in Psalmos," 44, 24–25, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina* 36, 509–510.

4. Such solidarity of mutual assistance is to be clearly distinguished from proselytism, which wrongly considers other Christian communities as a legitimate field for conversion.

C. The Importance of Unity

8. The importance of Christian unity to the mission and nature of the Church was already evident in the New Testament. In Acts 15 and Galatians 1-2, it is clear that the mission to the Gentiles gave birth to tensions and threatened to create divisions between Christians. In a way, the contemporary ecumenical movement is reliving the experience of that first council of Jerusalem. The present text is an invitation to the leaders, theologians and faithful of all churches to seek the unity for which Jesus prayed on the eve before he offered his life for the salvation of the world (cf. John 17:21).

9. Visible unity requires that churches be able to recognize in one another the authentic presence of what the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople (381) calls the “one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church.” This recognition, in turn, may in some instances depend upon changes in doctrine, practice and ministry within any given community. This represents a significant challenge for churches in their journey towards unity.

10. Currently, some identify the Church of Christ exclusively with their own community, while others would acknowledge in communities other than their own a real but incomplete presence of the elements which make up the Church. Others have joined into various types of covenant relationships, which sometimes include the sharing of worship. Some believe that the Church of Christ is located in all communities that present a convincing claim to be Christian, while others maintain that Christ’s church is invisible and cannot be adequately identified during this earthly pilgrimage.⁵

Fundamental Issues on the Way to Unity

Ever since the Toronto Declaration of 1950, the WCC has challenged the churches to “recognize that the membership of the church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body.” Moreover, mutual regard between churches and their members has been profoundly encouraged and advanced by ecumenical encounter. Nevertheless, differences on some basic questions remain and need to be faced together: “How can we identify the Church which the creed calls one, holy, catholic and apostolic?” “What is God’s will for the unity of this Church?” “What do we need to do to put God’s will into practice?” This text has been written in order to assist the churches as they reflect upon such questions, seeking common answers.”⁶

5. Cf. the Anglican-Lutheran report “Growth in Communion,” in J. Gros, FSC, T.F. Best and L. F. Fuchs, SA, eds., *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005*, Geneva-Grand Rapids, WCC- Eerdmans, 2007, 375–425, which refers to important Anglican-Lutheran regional covenants (Meissen, Reuilly, Waterloo, etc.).

6. Thus the present text hopes to build upon the unity statement of the Porto Alegre General Assembly of the World Council of Churches entitled “Called to Be One Church,” whose subtitle is “An Invitation to the Churches to Renew Their Commitment to the Search for Unity and to Deepen Their Dialogue,” in *Growth in Agreement III*, 606–610. See “Final Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC,” Section III, 12-21, in *ER 55.1* (January 2003), 7–8.

II. The Church of the Triune God

A. Discerning God's Will for the Church

11. All Christians share the conviction that Scripture is normative, therefore the biblical witness provides an irreplaceable source for acquiring greater agreement about the Church. Although the New Testament provides no systematic ecclesiology, it does offer accounts of the faith of the early communities, of their worship and practice of discipleship, of various roles of service and leadership, as well as images and metaphors used to express the identity of the Church. Subsequent interpretation within the Church, seeking always to be faithful to biblical teaching, has produced an additional wealth of ecclesiological insights over the course of history. The same Holy Spirit who guided the earliest communities in producing the inspired biblical text continues, from generation to generation, to guide later followers of Jesus as they strive to be faithful to the Gospel. This is what is understood by the "living Tradition" of the Church.¹ The great importance of Tradition has been acknowledged by most communities, but they vary in assessing how its authority relates to that of Scripture

12. A wide variety of ecclesiological insights can be found in the various books of the New Testament and in subsequent Tradition. The New Testament canon, by embracing this plurality, testifies to its compatibility with the unity of the Church, though without denying the limits to legitimate diversity.² Legitimate diversity is not accidental to the life of the Christian community but is rather an aspect of its catholicity, a quality that reflects the fact that it is part of the Father's design that salvation in Christ be incarnational and thus "take flesh" among the various peoples to whom the Gospel is proclaimed. An adequate approach to the mystery of the Church requires the use and interaction of a wide range of images and insights (people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, vine, flock, bride, household, soldiers, friends and so forth). The present text seeks to draw upon the richness of the biblical witness, along with insights from the Tradition.

1. As the fourth World Conference on Faith and Order pointed out in its report "Scripture, Tradition and Traditions," "By the Tradition is meant the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, Christ himself present in the life of the Church. By tradition is meant the traditionary process. The term traditions is used . . . to indicate both the diversity of forms of expression and also what we call confessional traditions." P. C. Roger and L. Vischer (eds.), *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order : Montreal 1963*, London, SCM Press, 1964, 50. See also *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*, Geneva, WCC, 1998, §§14-37, pages 14-26.

2. This theme will be taken up in §§28-30 below.

B. The Church of the Triune God as *Koinonia*

The Initiative of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

13. The Church is called into being by the God who “so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life” (John 3:16) and who sent the Holy Spirit to lead these believers into all truth, reminding them of all that Jesus taught (cf. John 14:26). In the Church, through life and unity of the Church. This quest presupposes that communion is not simply the union of existing churches in their current form. The noun *koinonia* (communion, participation, fellowship, sharing), which derives from a verb meaning “to have something in common,” “to share,” “to participate,” “to have part in” or “to act together,” appears in passages recounting the sharing in the Lord’s Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17), the reconciliation of Paul with Peter, James and John (cf. Gal. 2:7-10), the collection for the poor (cf. Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:3-4) and the experience and witness of the Church (cf. Acts 2:42-45). As a divinely established communion, the Church belongs to God and does not exist for itself. It is by its very nature missionary, called and sent to witness in its own life to that communion which God intends for all humanity and for all creation in the kingdom.

14. The Church is centred and grounded in the Gospel, the proclamation of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, Son of the Father. This is reflected in the New Testament affirmation, “You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Pet. 1:23). Through the preaching of the Gospel (cf. Rom. 10:14-18) and under the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3), human beings come to saving faith and, by sacramental means, are incorporated into the body of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:23). Some communities, following this teaching, would call the Church *creatura evangelii* or “creature of the Gospel.”³ A defining aspect of the Church’s life is the Holy Spirit, believers are united with Jesus Christ and, thereby share a living relationship with the Father, who speaks to them and calls forth their trustful response. The biblical notion of *koinonia* has become central in the ecumenical quest for a common understanding of the to be a community that hears and proclaims the word of God. The Church draws life from the Gospel and discovers ever anew the direction for her journey.

3. See the section “The Church as ‘Creature of the Gospel’” in Lutheran- Roman Catholic Dialogue, “Church and Justification,” in J. Gros, FSC, H. Meyer and W. G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, Geneva-Grand Rapids, WCC-Eerdmans, 2000, 495–98, which refers to Martin Luther’s use of this expression in WA 2, 430, 6–7: “*Ecclesia enim creatura est evangelii*.” Some bilateral dialogues have used the Latin *creatura verbi* to express this same idea: see the section “Two Conceptions of the Church” (§§94–113), which describes the Church as “*creatura verbi*” and “sacrament of grace” in the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, “Towards a Common Understanding of the Church,” in *Growth in Agreement II*, 801–5. See also the statement “Called to Be the One Church,” cf. ch. 1n.6 above.

15. The response of Mary, the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), to the angel's message at the annunciation, "Let it be done with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), has been seen as a symbol of and model for the Church and the individual Christian. The Faith and Order study document *Church and World* (1990) noted that Mary is "an important example for all who seek to understand the full dimensions of life in Christian community" in that she receives and responds to the Word of God (Luke 1:26-38); shares the joy of the good news with Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55); meditates, suffers and strives to understand the events of the birth and childhood of Jesus (Matt. 2:13-23; Luke 2:19, 41-51); seeks to comprehend the full implications of discipleship (Mark 3:31-35; Lk 18:19-20); stands by him under the cross and accompanies his body to the tomb (Matt. 27:55-61; John 19:25-27) and waits with the disciples and receives with them the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4).⁴

16. Christ prayed to the Father to send the Spirit on his disciples to guide them into all truth (John 15:26, 16:13), and it is the Spirit who not only bestows faith and other charisms upon individual believers but also equips the Church with its essential gifts, qualities and order. The Holy Spirit nourishes and enlivens the body of Christ through the living voice of the preached Gospel, through sacramental communion, especially in the Eucharist, and through ministries of service.

The Prophetic, Priestly and Royal People of God

17. In the call of Abraham, God was choosing for himself a holy people. The prophets frequently recalled this election and vocation in the following powerful formulation: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 37:27; echoed in 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:10). The covenant with Israel marked a decisive moment in the unfolding realization of the plan of salvation. Christians believe that in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit, God established the new covenant for the purpose of uniting all human beings with himself and with one another. There is a genuine newness in the covenant initiated by Christ and yet the Church remains, in God's design, profoundly related to the people of the first covenant, to whom God will always remain faithful (cf. Rom. 11:11-36).

18. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel are journeying towards the fulfilment of the promise that in Abraham all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. All those who turn to Christ find this promise fulfilled in him, when, on the cross, he broke down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (cf. Eph. 2:14). The Church is a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet. 2:9-10). While

4. See the Faith and Order report *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, 64. See also the report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ," *Growth in Agreement III*, 82-112; and the report of the Groupe des Dombes, *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints (1997-1998)*, Mahwah, N.J., Paulist Press, 2002.

acknowledging the unique priesthood of Jesus Christ, whose one sacrifice institutes the new covenant (cf. Heb. 9:15), believers are called to express by their lives the fact that they have been named a “royal priesthood,” offering themselves “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom. 12:1). Every Christian receives gifts of the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the Church and for his or her part in the mission of Christ. These gifts are given for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:11-13) and place obligations of responsibility and mutual accountability on every individual and local community and on the Church as a whole at every level of its life. Strengthened by the Spirit, Christians are called to live out their discipleship in a variety of forms of service.

19. The whole people of God is called to be a prophetic people, bearing witness to God’s word; a priestly people, offering the sacrifice of a life lived in discipleship; and a royal people, serving as instruments for the establishment of God’s reign. All members of the Church share in this vocation. In calling and sending the Twelve, Jesus laid foundations for the leadership of the community of his disciples in their on-going proclamation of the kingdom. Faithful to his example, from the earliest times some believers were chosen under the guidance of the Spirit and given specific authority and responsibility. Ordained ministers “assemble and build up the Body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry.”⁵ All members of the body, ordained and lay, are interrelated members of God’s priestly people. Ordained ministers remind the community of its dependence on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its unity and mission, even as they understand their own ministry as dependent on him. At the same time, they can fulfil their calling only in and for the Church; they need its recognition, support and encouragement.

20. There is widespread agreement among churches of different traditions about the vital place of ministry. This was succinctly expressed in the Faith and Order document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), which stated that “the Church has never been without persons holding specific authority and responsibility,” noting that, “Jesus chose and sent the disciples to be witnesses of the kingdom.”⁶ The mission which Jesus entrusted to the eleven in Matthew 28 entails “a ministry of word, sacrament and oversight given by Christ to the Church to be carried out by some of its members for the good of all. This triple function of the ministry equips the Church for its mission in the world.”⁷ Agreed statements are making it clear that the royal

5. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Geneva, WCC, 1982, section on Ministry, §13.

6. *Ibid.*, section on Ministry, §9.

7. Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, “Towards a Common Understanding of the Church,” §132, in *Growth in Agreement II*, 810. See also the Lutheran-Roman Catholic report “Ministry in the Church,” §17, in H. Meyer and L. Vischer (eds.), *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, Ramsey-Geneva, Paulist-WCC, 1984, 252-253: “The New Testament shows how there emerged from among the ministries a special ministry which

priesthood of the whole people of God (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9) and a special ordained ministry are both important aspects of the church, and not to be seen as mutually exclusive alternatives. At the same time, churches differ about who is competent to make final decisions for the community; for some that task is restricted to the ordained, while others see the laity as having a role in such decisions.

Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit

21. Christ is the abiding head of his body the Church, guiding, purifying and healing it (cf. Eph. 5:26). At the same time, he is intimately united to it, giving life to the whole in the Spirit (Rom. 12:5; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12). Faith in Christ is fundamental to membership of the body (Rom. 10:9). According to the understanding of most traditions, it is also through the rites or sacraments of initiation that human beings become members of Christ and in the Lord's Supper their participation in his body (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16) is renewed again and again. The Holy Spirit confers manifold gifts upon the members and brings forth their unity for the building up of the body (cf. Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-30). He renews their hearts, equipping and calling them to good works,⁸ thus enabling them to serve the Lord in furthering the kingdom in the world. Thus the image of "body of Christ," though explicitly and primarily referring the Church to Christ, also deeply implies a relation to the Holy Spirit, as witnessed to throughout the entire New Testament. A vivid example of this is the account of the descent of tongues of fire upon the disciples gathered in the upper room on the morning of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-4). By the power of the Holy Spirit believers grow into "a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21-22), into a "spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5). Filled with the Holy Spirit, they are called to lead a life worthy of their calling in worship, witness and service, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Eph. 4:1-3). The Holy Spirit enlivens and equips the Church to play its role in proclaiming and bringing about that general transformation for which all creation groans (cf. Rom. 8:22-23).

The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church

22. Since the time of the second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381, most Christians have included in their liturgies the creed which professes the Church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These attributes, which are not separate from

was understood as standing in the succession of the apostles sent by Christ. Such a special ministry proved to be necessary for the sake of leadership in the communities. One can, therefore, say that according to the New Testament the 'special ministry' established by Jesus Christ through the calling and sending of the apostles 'was essential then—it is essential in all times and circumstances.'" The Methodist-Roman Catholic "Toward a Statement on the Church" affirms that "the church has always needed a God-given ministry," cf. *Growth in Agreement II*, 588, §29.

8. Cf. the *Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000, §15.

one another but which inform one another and are mutually interrelated, are God's gifts to the Church which believers, in all their human frailty, are constantly called to actualize.

- The Church is one because God is one (cf. John 17:11; 1 Tim. 2:5). In consequence, the apostolic faith is one; the new life in Christ is one; the hope of the Church is one.⁹ Jesus prayed that all his disciples be one so that the world might believe (cf. John 17:20-21) and sent the Spirit to form them into one body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-13). Current divisions within and between the churches stand in contrast to this oneness; "these must be overcome through the Spirit's gifts of faith, hope, and love so that separation and exclusion do not have the last word."¹⁰ Yet, in spite of all divisions, all the churches understand themselves as founded in the one Gospel (cf. Gal. 1:5-9), and they are united in many features of their lives (cf. Eph. 4:4-7).

- The Church is holy because God is holy (cf. Is. 6:3; Lev. 11:44-45). Jesus "loved the Church and gave himself up for her in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word...so that she may be holy and without blemish." (5:25b-27). The essential holiness of the Church is witnessed to in every generation by holy men and women and by the holy words and actions the Church proclaims and performs in the name of God, the All Holy. Nevertheless, sin, which contradicts this holiness and runs counter to the Church's true nature and vocation, has again and again disfigured the lives of believers. For this reason, part of the holiness of the Church is its ministry of continually calling people to repentance, renewal and reform.

- The Church is catholic because of the abundant goodness of God "who desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Through the life-giving power of God, the Church's mission transcends all barriers and proclaims the Gospel to all peoples. Where the whole mystery of Christ is present, there too is the Church catholic (cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrneans*, 6), as in the celebration of the eucharist. The essential catholicity of the Church is undermined when cultural and other differences are allowed to develop into division. Christians are called to remove all obstacles to the embodiment of this fullness of truth and life bestowed upon the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- The Church is apostolic because the Father sent the Son to establish it. The Son, in turn, chose and sent the apostles and prophets, empowered with the gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, to serve as its foundation and to oversee its mission (cf. Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14; and Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* 42). The Christian community is called to be ever faithful to these apostolic origins; infidelity in worship, witness or service contradicts the Church's apostolicity. Apostolic

9. Cf. "Called to Be the One Church," §5, in *Growth in Agreement III*, 607.

10. Ibid.

succession in ministry, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is intended to serve the apostolicity of the Church.¹¹

23. In the light of the previous paragraphs (13-22), it is clear that the Church is not merely the sum of individual believers among themselves. The Church is fundamentally a communion in the Triune God and, at the same time, a communion whose members partake together in the life and mission of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4), who, as Trinity, is the source and focus of all communions. Thus the Church is both a divine and a human reality.

24. While it is a common affirmation that the Church is a meeting place between the divine and the human, churches nonetheless have different sensitivities or even contrasting convictions concerning the way in which the Holy Spirit's activity in the Church is related to institutional structures or ministerial order. Some see certain essential aspects of the Church's order as willed and instituted by Christ himself for all time; therefore, in faithfulness to the Gospel, Christians would have no authority fundamentally to alter this divinely instituted structure. Some affirm that the ordering of the Church according to God's calling can take more than one form while others affirm that no single institutional order can be attributed to the will of God. Some hold that faithfulness to the Gospel may at times require a break in institutional continuity, while others insist that such faithfulness can be maintained by resolving difficulties without breaks which lead to separation.

How Continuity and Change in the Church Relate to God's Will

Through their patient encounter, in a spirit of mutual respect and attention, many churches have come to a deeper understanding of these differing sensitivities and convictions regarding continuity and change in the Church. In that deeper understanding, it becomes clear that the same intent—to obey God's will for the ordering of the Church—may, in some, inspire commitment to continuity and, in others, commitment to change. We invite the churches to recognize and honour each other's commitment to seeking the will of God in the ordering of the Church. We further invite them to reflect together about the criteria which are employed in different churches for considering issues about continuity and change. How far are such criteria open to development in the light of the urgent call of Christ to reconciliation (cf. Matt. 5:23-24)? Could this be the time for a new approach?

C. The Church as Sign and Servant of God's Design for the World

25. It is God's design to gather humanity and all of creation into communion under the Lordship of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:10). The Church, as a reflection of the communion

11. The World Council of Churches statement "Called to Be the One Church," §3-7, offers a similar explanation of the creed's profession that the Church is "one, holy, catholic and apostolic." Cf. *Growth in Agreement III*, 607.

of the Triune God, is meant to serve this goal and is called to manifest God's mercy to human beings, helping them to achieve the purpose for which they were created and in which their joy ultimately is found: to praise and glorify God together with all the heavenly hosts. This mission of the Church is fulfilled by its members through the witness of their lives and, when possible, through the open proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. The mission of the Church is to serve this purpose. Since God wills all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4), Christians acknowledge that God reaches out to those who are not explicit members of the Church, in ways that may not be immediately evident to human eyes. While respecting the elements of truth and goodness that can be found in other religions and among those with no religion, the mission of the Church remains that of inviting, through witness and testimony, all men and women to come to know and love Christ Jesus.

26. Some New Testament passages use the term mystery (*mysterion*) to speak both of God's design of salvation in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:9; 3:4-6) and of the intimate relation between Christ and the Church (cf. Eph. 5:32; Col. 1:24-28). This suggests that the Church enjoys a spiritual, transcendent quality which cannot be grasped simply by looking at its visible appearance. The earthly and spiritual dimensions of the Church cannot be separated. The organizational structures of the Christian community need to be seen and evaluated, for good or ill, in the light of God's gifts of salvation in Christ, celebrated in the liturgy. The Church, embodying in its own life the mystery of salvation and the transfiguration of humanity, participates in the mission of Christ to reconcile all things to God and to one another through Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 8:18-25).

27. While there is wide agreement that God established the Church as the privileged means for bringing about his universal design of salvation, some communities believe that this can be suitably expressed by speaking of the "Church as sacrament," while others do not normally use such language or reject it outright. Those who use the expression "Church as sacrament" do so because they understand the Church as an effective sign and means (sometimes described by the word *instrument*) of the communion of human beings with one another through their communion in the Triune God.¹² Those who refrain from employing this expression believe that its use

12. For example, the Catholic bishops at the Second Vatican Council stated that "the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men" (cf. the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1), where the word *instrument* is intended to convey in a positive way the "effectiveness" of the Church. Other Christians who strongly affirm the Church's sacramental nature find inappropriate the use of the word *instrument* in reference to the Christian community. The rather wide reception of the idea that the Church is a sign is witnessed in the World Council of Churches report "The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church" from the Fourth General Assembly of the WCC held at Uppsala in 1968, which stated: "The Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of

could obscure the distinction between the Church as a whole and the individual sacraments and that it may lead one to overlook the sinfulness still present among members of the community. All agree that God is the author of salvation; differences appear concerning the ways in which the various communities understand the nature and role of the Church and its rites in that saving activity.

The Expression, “the Church as Sacrament”

Those who use the expression “the Church as sacrament” do not deny the unique “sacramentality” of the sacraments nor do they deny the frailty of human ministers. Those who reject this expression, on the other hand, do not deny that the Church is an effective sign of God’s presence and action. Might this, therefore, be seen as a question where legitimate differences of formulation are compatible and mutually acceptable?

D. Communion in Unity and Diversity

28. Legitimate diversity in the life of communion is a gift from the Lord. The Holy Spirit bestows a variety of complementary gifts on the faithful for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7). The disciples are called to be fully united (cf. Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37), while respectful of and enriched by their diversities (1 Cor 12:14-26). Cultural and historical factors contribute to the rich diversity within the Church. The Gospel needs to be proclaimed in languages, symbols and images that are relevant to particular times and contexts so as to be lived authentically in each time and place. Legitimate diversity is compromised whenever Christians consider their own cultural expressions of the Gospel as the only authentic ones, to be imposed upon Christians of other cultures.

29. At the same time, unity must not be surrendered. Through shared faith in Christ, expressed in the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments, and lives of service and witness, each local church is in communion with the local churches of all places and all times. A pastoral ministry for the service of unity and the upholding of diversity is one of the important means given to the Church in aiding those with different gifts and perspectives to remain mutually accountable to each other.

30. Issues concerning unity and diversity have been a principal concern since the Church discerned, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, that Gentiles were to be welcomed into communion (cf. Acts 15:1-29; 10:1-11:18). The letter addressed from the meeting in Jerusalem to the Christians in Antioch contains what might be called a fundamental principle governing unity and diversity: “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials” (Acts 15:28). Later, the Ecumenical Councils provided further examples of such “essentials,”

mankind.” Cf. N. Goodall, ed., *The Uppsala Report*, Geneva, WCC, 1968, 17. For the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* see www.vatican.va.

as when, at the first Ecumenical Council (Nicaea, 325), the bishops clearly taught that communion in faith required the affirmation of the divinity of Christ. In more recent times, churches have joined together in enunciating firm ecclesial teachings which express the implications of such foundational doctrine, as in the condemnation of apartheid by many Christian communities.¹³ There are limits to legitimate diversity; when it goes beyond acceptable limits it can be destructive of the gift of unity. Within the Church, heresies and schisms, along with political conflicts and expressions of hatred, have threatened God's gift of communion. Christians are called not only to work untiringly to overcome divisions and heresies but also to preserve and treasure their legitimate differences of liturgy, custom and law and to foster legitimate diversities of spirituality, theological method and formulation in such a way that they contribute to the unity and catholicity of the Church as a whole.¹⁴

Legitimate and Divisive Diversity

Ecumenical dialogue in search of the unity for which Christ prayed has, in large part, been an effort by representatives from various Christian churches to discern, with the

13. "World Council of Churches' Consultation with Member-Churches in South Africa—Cottesloe, Johannesburg, 7–14 December, 1960," in *The Ecumenical Review*, XIII(2), January 1961, 244–250; "Statement on Confessional Integrity," in *In Christ a New Community: The Proceedings of the Sixth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation: Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, June 13–25, 1977*, Geneva, Lutheran World Federation, 1977, 179–80, 210–12; "Resolution on Racism and South Africa," in *Ottawa 82: Proceedings of the 21st General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) Held at Ottawa, Canada, August 17–27, 1982*, Geneva, Offices of the Alliance, 1983, 176–180; The Belhar Confession, www.urcsa.org.za/documents/The%20Belhar%20Confession.pdf.

14. Cf. the World Council of Churches statement "The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling": "Diversities which are rooted in theological traditions, various cultural, ethnic or historical contacts are integral to the nature of communion; yet there are limits to diversity. Diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).... In communion diversities are brought together in harmony as gifts of the Holy Spirit, contributing to the richness and fullness of the church of God." In M. Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly*, Geneva-Grand Rapids, WCC-Eerdmans, 1991, 173. Legitimate diversity is frequently treated in the international bilateral dialogues. The Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, for instance, notes the wide diversity in life of the local churches: "As long as their witness to the one faith remains unimpaired, such diversity is seen not as a deficiency or cause for division, but as a mark of the fullness of the one Spirit who distributes to each according to his will." *The Church of the Triune God: The Cyprus Statement Agreed by the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue 2006*, London, Anglican Communion Office, 2006, 91. See also: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, *Facing Unity*, 1984, §§5–7, 27–30, and especially 31–34, in *Growth in Agreement II*, 445–446, 449–450; Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *The Gift of Authority*, §§26–31, in *Growth in Agreement III*, 68–69; Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue, *Speaking the Truth in Love*, §50, in *Growth in Agreement III*, 154.

help of the Holy Spirit, what is necessary for unity, according to the will of God, and what is properly understood as legitimate diversity. Though all churches have their own procedures for distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate diversity, it is clear that two things are lacking: (a) common criteria, or means of discernment, and (b) such mutually recognized structures as are needed to use these effectively. All churches seek to follow the will of the Lord yet they continue to disagree on some aspects of faith and order and, moreover, on whether such disagreements are Church-divisive or, instead, part of legitimate diversity. We invite the churches to consider: what positive steps can be taken to make common discernment possible?

E. Communion of Local Churches

31. The ecclesiology of communion provides a helpful framework for considering the relation between the local church and the universal Church. Most Christians could agree that the local church is “a community of baptized believers in which the word of God is preached, the apostolic faith confessed, the sacraments are celebrated, the redemptive work of Christ for the world is witnessed to, and a ministry of episkopé exercised by bishops or other ministers in serving the community.”¹⁵ Culture, language and shared history all enter into the very fabric of the local church. At the same time, the Christian community in each place shares with all the other local communities all that is essential to the life of communion. Each local church contains within it the fullness of what it is to be the Church. It is wholly Church, but not the whole Church. Thus, the local church should not be seen in isolation from but in dynamic relation with other local churches. From the beginning communion was maintained between local churches by collections, exchanges of letters, visits, eucharistic hospitality and tangible expressions of solidarity (cf. 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8:1-9; Gal. 2:1-10). From time to time, during the first centuries, local churches assembled to take counsel together. All of these were ways of nurturing interdependence and maintaining communion. This communion of local churches is thus not an optional extra. The universal Church is the communion of all local churches united in faith and worship around the world.¹⁶ It is not merely the sum, federation or juxtaposition of local churches, but all of them together are the same Church present and acting in this world. Catholicity, as described

15. Cf. the report of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, “The Church: Local and Universal,” §15, in *Growth in Agreement II*, 866. “Local” should not be confused with “denominational” in this description.

16. Cf. the unity statements of the New Delhi, Uppsala, and Nairobi assemblies of the World Council of Churches in W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft (ed.), *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961*, London, SCM, 1962, 116-134; N. Goodall (ed.), *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 1968, 11-19; and D. M. Paton (ed.), *Breaking Barriers Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, London-Grand Rapids, SPCK-Eerdmans, 1976, 59-69.

in the baptismal catechesis of Cyril of Jerusalem, refers not simply to geographic extension but also to the manifold variety of local churches and their participation in the fullness of faith and life that unites them in the one *koinonia*.¹⁷

32. Within this shared understanding of the communion of the local churches in the universal Church, differences arise, not only about the geographical extent of the community intended by the expression “local church” but also in relation to the role of bishops. Some churches are convinced that the bishop, as a successor to the apostles, is essential to the structure and reality of the local church. Thus, in a strict sense, the local church is a diocese, comprised of a number of parishes. For others, having developed various forms of self-understanding, the expression “local church” is less common and not defined in reference to the ministry of a bishop. For some of those churches, the local church is simply the congregation of believers gathered in one place to hear the Word and celebrate the Sacraments. Both for those who see the bishop as essential and for those who do not, the expression “local church” has also at times been used to refer to a regional configuration of churches, gathered together in a synodal structure under a presidency. Finally there is not yet agreement about how local, regional and universal levels of ecclesial order relate to one another, although valuable steps in seeking convergence about those relations can be found in both multilateral and bilateral dialogues.¹⁸

The Relationship between Local and Universal Church

Many churches can embrace a shared understanding of the fundamental relationship and communion of local churches within the universal Church. They share the understanding that the presence of Christ, by the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit, is truly manifested in the local church (it is “wholly Church”), and that this very presence of Christ impels the local church to be in communion with the universal Church (it is not “the whole Church”). Where this fundamental agreement is found, the expression “local church” may nonetheless be used in varying ways. In our common quest for closer unity, we invite the churches to seek more precise mutual understanding and agreement in this area: what is the appropriate relation between the various levels

17. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis* 18, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 33, 1044.

18. A good example at the multilateral level is the report of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church “The Church: Local and Universal,” in www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/. Cf. also *Growth in Agreement II*, 862-875. From the bilateral dialogues, see “Ecclesial Communion—Communion of Churches” of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic “Church and Justification,” in *Growth in Agreement II*, 505-512; and especially the Orthodox- Roman Catholic statement on “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority” (2007) at: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20071013_documento-ravenna_en.html.

of life of a fully united Church and what specific ministries of leadership are needed to serve and foster those relations?

III. The Church: Growing in Communion

A. Already but Not Yet

33. The Church is an eschatological reality, already anticipating the kingdom, but not yet its full realization. The Holy Spirit is the principal agent in establishing the kingdom and in guiding the Church so that it can be a servant of God's work in this process. Only as we view the present in the light of the activity of the Holy Spirit, guiding the whole process of salvation history to its final recapitulation in Christ to the glory of the Father, do we begin to grasp something of the mystery of the Church.

34. On the one hand, as the communion of believers held in personal relationship with God, the Church is already the eschatological community God wills. Visible and tangible signs which express that this new life of communion has been effectively realized are: receiving and sharing the faith of the apostles, baptising, breaking and sharing the eucharistic bread, praying with and for one another and for the needs of the world, serving one another in love, participating in each other's joys and sorrows, giving material aid, proclaiming and witnessing to the good news in mission and working together for justice and peace. On the other hand, as an historical reality the Church is made up of human beings who are subject to the conditions of the world. One such condition is change,¹ either positive in the sense of growth and development or negative in the sense of decline and distortion. Other conditions include cultural and historical factors which can have either a positive or a negative impact on the Church's faith, life and witness.

35. As a pilgrim community the Church contends with the reality of sin. Ecumenical dialogue has shown that there are deep, commonly-held convictions behind what have sometimes been seen as conflicting views concerning the relation between the Church's holiness and human sin. There are significant differences in the way in which Christians articulate these common convictions. For some, their tradition affirms that the Church is sinless since, being the body of the sinless Christ, it cannot sin. Others consider that it is appropriate to refer to the Church as sinning, since sin may become systemic so as to affect the institution of the Church itself and, although sin is in contradiction to the true identity of the Church, it is nonetheless real. The different ways in which various communities understand sin itself, whether primarily as moral imperfection or primarily as a break in relationship, as well as whether and how sin may be systemic, can also have an impact upon this question.

36. The Church is the body of Christ; according to his promise, the gates of hell cannot prevail against it (cf. Matt. 16:18). Christ's victory over sin is complete and

1. This condition of change is not meant to obscure the enduring meaning of Jesus Christ and his Gospel: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

irreversible, and by Christ's promise and grace Christians have confidence that the Church will always share in the fruits of that victory. They also share the realization that, in this present age, believers are vulnerable to the power of sin, both individually and collectively. All churches acknowledge the fact of sin among believers and its often grievous impact. All recognize the continual need for Christian self-examination, penitence, conversion (*metanoia*), reconciliation and renewal. Holiness and sin relate to the life of the Church in different and unequal ways. Holiness expresses the Church's identity according to the will of God, while sin stands in contradiction to this identity (cf. Rom. 6 :1-11).

B. Growing in the Essential Elements of Communion: Faith, Sacraments, Ministry

37. The journey towards the full realization of God's gift of communion requires Christian communities to agree about the fundamental aspects of the life of the Church. "The ecclesial elements required for full communion within a visibly united church—the goal of the ecumenical movement—are communion in the fullness of apostolic faith; in sacramental life; in a truly one and mutually recognized ministry; in structures of conciliar relations and decision-making; and in common witness and service in the world."² These attributes serve as a necessary framework for maintaining unity in legitimate diversity. Moreover, the growth of churches towards the unity of the one Church is intimately related to their calling to promote the unity of the whole

2. From "The Church: Local and Universal" (1990), §25, in *Growth in Agreement II*, 868. Paragraphs 10-11 and 28-32 of this text demonstrate with quotations and footnotes the fact that its presentation of communion has been drawn from a wide range of ecumenical dialogues involving Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Orthodox, Reformed and Roman Catholics, as well as several statements on unity adopted at some of the Assemblies of the WCC (cf. footnote 16, ch. 2). The World Council of Churches statement, "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling," enhances the ministerial element by adding the word reconciled to recognized [M. Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly*, Geneva, WCC, 1991, 173]. Similar configurations of the fundamental components of communion appear in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic document "Facing Unity," in *Growth in Agreement II*, 456-477, which presents the church as a community of faith, sacraments and service; and the Methodist-Roman Catholic text "The Apostolic Tradition," in *Growth in Agreement II*, 610-613, which describes the living body of the church in terms of faith, worship and ministry. The classic unity statements from the WCC general assemblies of New Delhi (1960), Nairobi (1975), Canberra (1990) and Porto Alegre (2006) also present the essential qualities of unity, as the following quotation from the last of these may serve to illustrate: "Our churches have affirmed that the unity for which we pray, hope, and work is "a *koinonia* given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation." Such *koinonia* is to be expressed in each place, and through a conciliar relationship of churches in different places," in "Called to Be the One Church," §2, *Growth in Agreement III*, 606-7.

of humanity and of creation, since Christ, who is head of the Church, is the one in whom all are to be reconciled. Dialogue, such as that which accompanied the writing and reception of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, has already registered significant progress in convergence about these essential elements of communion, though less on ministry than on the other two. It is not the intention of the present text to repeat those past achievements but rather to summarize them briefly and to indicate a few of the further steps forward that have been made in recent years.

Faith

38. Regarding the first of these elements, there is widespread agreement that the Church is called to proclaim, in each generation, the faith “once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude v. 3) and to remain steadfast in the teaching first handed on by the apostles. Faith is evoked by the Word of God, inspired by the grace of the Holy Spirit, attested in Scripture and transmitted through the living tradition of the Church. It is confessed in worship, life, service and mission. While it must be interpreted in the context of changing times and places, these interpretations must remain in continuity with the original witness and with its faithful explication throughout the ages. Faith has to be lived out in active response to the challenges of every age and place. It speaks to personal and social situations, including situations of injustice, of the violation of human dignity and of the degradation of creation.

39. Ecumenical dialogue has shown that, on many central aspects of Christian doctrine, there is a great deal that already unites believers.³ In 1991, the study text *Confessing the One Faith* not only succeeded in showing substantial agreement among Christians concerning the meaning of the Nicene Creed professed in the liturgies of most churches. It also explained how the faith of the creed is grounded in Scripture, confessed in the ecumenical symbol and has to be confessed afresh in relation to the challenges of the contemporary world. The intention was not only to help churches recognize fidelity to that faith in themselves and in others but also to provide a credible ecumenical tool for proclaiming the faith today. In 1998, *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* explored the ongoing interpretation of Scripture and Tradition in handing on the faith, noting: “The Holy Spirit inspires and leads the churches each to rethink and reinterpret their tradition in conversation with each other, always aiming to embody the one Tradition in the unity of God’s Church.”⁴ While the churches generally agree

3. See, for example, the chapters “Fundamentals of Our Common Faith: Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity” and “Salvation, Justification, Sanctification” of Walter Kasper’s, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Dialogue*, London-New York, Continuum, 2009, 10–47, which recounts convergence about these topics among Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed and Roman Catholics.

4. *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, Geneva, WCC, 1998, §32. Earlier, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section on Ministry, §34, had noted: “Apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation

as to the importance of Tradition in the generation and subsequent interpretation of scripture, more recent dialogue has tried to understand how the Christian community engages in such interpretation. Many bilateral dialogues have acknowledged that ecclesial interpretation of the contemporary meaning of the Word of God involves the faith experience of the whole people, the insights of theologians, and the discernment of the ordained ministry.⁵ The challenge today is for churches to agree on how these factors work together.

Sacraments

40. Regarding the sacraments, the churches registered a significant degree of approval with the way in which *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982) described the meaning and celebration of baptism and eucharist.⁶ That text also suggested avenues seeking further convergence on what remained the most significant unresolved issues: who may be baptized, the presence of Christ in the eucharist and the relation of the eucharist to Christ's sacrifice on the cross. At the same time, while briefly commenting on chrismation or confirmation, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* did not address the other rites celebrated in many communities and considered by some as sacraments, nor was it designed to take into account the view of those communities who affirm that their vocation does not include the rites of baptism and the eucharist, while affirming that they share in the sacramental life of the Church.

41. The growing convergence among churches in their understanding of baptism may be summarized as follows.⁷ Through Baptism with water in the name

and fresh interpretation of the Gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and the needy, unity among the local Churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each"; in *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry*, Geneva, WCC, 1982.

5. See, for example, the Lutheran-Orthodox statement "Scripture and Tradition," in *Growth in Agreement II*, 224-225; the Methodist-Roman Catholic "The Word of Life," §§62-72, describing the "Agents of Discernment," in *Growth in Agreement I*, 632-634; the Anglican-Roman Catholic "Gift of Authority," in *Growth in Agreement III*, 60-81; the Disciples-Roman Catholic "Receiving and Handing on the Faith: The Mission and Responsibility of the Church," in *Growth in Agreement III*, 121-137; the Methodist-Roman Catholic "Speaking the Truth in Love: Teaching Authority among Catholics and Methodists," in *Growth in Agreement III*, 138-176; and the Reformed-Oriental Orthodox "Report" (2001), §§22-28, describing "Tradition and Holy Scripture" and "The Role of the Theologian in the Christian Community," in *Growth in Agreement III*, 43-44.

6. Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, 39, 55-56.

7. This paragraph recounts the material elaborated under the subtitle "II. The Meaning of Baptism," in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Section on Baptism, §§2-7. Very similar affirmations from four international bilateral dialogues are found in "Common Understanding of Baptism" of W. Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 164-168, as well as in the Faith and Order study text entitled *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, Geneva, WCC, 2011.

of the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Christians are united with Christ and with each other in the Church of every time and place. Baptism is the introduction to and celebration of new life in Christ and of participation in his baptism, life, death and resurrection (cf. Matt. 3:13-17; Rom. 6:3-5). It is “the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3,5) incorporating believers into the body of Christ and enabling them to share in the kingdom of God and the life of the world to come (cf. Eph 2:6). Baptism involves confession of sin, conversion of heart, pardoning, cleansing and sanctification; it consecrates the believer as a member of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Pet. 2:9). Baptism is thus a basic bond of unity. Some churches see the gift of the Holy Spirit as given in a special way through chrismation or confirmation, which is considered by them as one of the sacraments of initiation. The general agreement about baptism has led some who are involved in the ecumenical movement to call for the mutual recognition of baptism.⁸

42. There is a dynamic and profound relation between baptism and the eucharist. The communion into which the newly initiated Christian enters is brought to fuller expression and nourished in the eucharist, which reaffirms baptismal faith and gives grace for the faithful living out of the Christian calling. The progress in agreement about the eucharist registered in ecumenical dialogue may be summarized as follows.⁹ The Lord’s Supper is the celebration in which, gathered around his table, Christians receive the body and blood of Christ. It is a proclamation of the Gospel, a glorification of the Father for everything accomplished in creation, redemption and sanctification (doxologia); a memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus and what was accomplished once for all on the Cross (anamnesis); and an invocation of the Holy Spirit to transform both the elements of bread and wine and the participants themselves (*epiclesis*). Intercession is made for the needs of the Church and the world, the communion of the faithful is again deepened as an anticipation and foretaste of the kingdom to come, impelling them to go out and share Christ’s mission of inaugurating that kingdom even now. St Paul highlights the connection between the Lord’s Supper and the very life of the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:17-33).

43. Just as the confession of faith and baptism are inseparable from a life of service and witness, so too the eucharist demands reconciliation and sharing by all those who are brothers and sisters in the one family of God. “Christians are called in the

8. An example of such mutual recognition of baptism was that achieved by eleven of the sixteen member communities of the Christian Council of Churches in Germany on April 29, 2007, which is recounted at www.ekd.de/english/mutual_recognition_of_baptism.html.

9. This summary draws upon “II. The Meaning of the Eucharist” in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section on Eucharist, §§2-26. For varying degrees of convergence between Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed and Roman Catholics, see “The Eucharist,” in Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 168-90.

eucharist to be in solidarity with the outcast and to become signs of the love of Christ who lived and sacrificed himself for all and now gives himself in the eucharist.... The eucharist brings into the present age a new reality which transforms Christians into the image of Christ and therefore makes them his effective witnesses.”¹⁰ The liturgical renewal among some churches may be seen in part as a reception of the convergences registered in ecumenical dialogue about the sacraments.

44. Different Christian traditions have diverged as to whether baptism, eucharist and other rites should be termed “sacraments” or “ordinances.” The word *sacrament* (used to translate the Greek *mysterion*) indicates that God’s saving work is communicated in the action of the rite, whilst the term ordinance emphasizes that the action of the rite is performed in obedience to Christ’s word and example.¹¹ These two positions have often been seen as mutually opposed. However, as the Faith and Order study text *One Baptism* points out, “Most traditions, whether they use the term ‘sacrament’ or ‘ordinance,’ affirm that these events are both *instrumental* (in that God uses them to bring about a new reality), and *expressive* (of an already-existing reality). Some traditions emphasize the instrumental dimension.... Others emphasize the expressive dimension.”¹² Might this difference then be more one of emphasis than of doctrinal disagreement? These rites express both the “institutional” and “charismatic” aspects of the Church. They are visible, effective actions instituted by Christ and, at the same time, are made effective by the action of the Holy Spirit who, by means of them, equips those who receive the sacraments with a variety of gifts for the edification of the Church and its mission in and for the world.

Sacraments and Ordinances

In the light of the convergences on Baptism and Eucharist and of further reflection upon the historical roots and potential compatibility of the expressions “sacrament” and “ordinance,” the churches are challenged to explore whether they are able to arrive at deeper agreement about that dimension of the life of the Church that involves these rites. Such convergence could lead them to consider several additional questions. Most churches celebrate other rites or sacraments, such as chrismations/confirmations, weddings and ordinations within their liturgies and many also have rites for the forgiveness of sin and the blessing of the sick: to whether baptism, eucharist and other rites should be termed “sacraments” or “ordinances.” The word sacrament may not the number and ecclesial status of these sacraments or ordinances be addressed in ecumenical dialogues? We also

10. From *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section on Ministry, §§24 and 26.

11. The Latin term *sacramentum* denoted the oath that a recruit pronounced upon entering military service and was used by the first major theologian to write in the Latin language, Tertullian (160-220), in reference to baptism.

12. *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, 30.

invite churches to consider whether they can now achieve closer convergence about who may receive baptism and who may preside at the Church's liturgical celebrations? Further, are there ways in which fuller mutual understanding can be established between the churches which celebrate these rites and those Christian communities convinced that the sharing of life in Christ does not require the celebration of sacraments or other rites?

Ministry within the Church

Ordained Ministry

45. All churches affirm the biblical teaching that, unlike the many priests of the Old Covenant (cf. Heb. 7:23), Jesus, our high priest (cf. Heb. 8:10), offered his redeeming sacrifice “once for all” (cf. Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 9:26; 10:10, 12-14). They differ on the implications they draw from these texts. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* noted that ordained ministers “may appropriately be called priests because they fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community.”¹³ In line with that view, some churches hold that ordained ministry stands in a special relationship with the unique priesthood of Christ that it is distinct from, even if related to, that royal priesthood described in 1 Pet. 2:9. These churches believe that some persons are ordained to a particular priestly function through the sacrament of ordination.¹⁴ Others do not consider ordained ministers as “priests,” nor do some understand ordination in sacramental terms. Christians disagree as well over the traditional restriction of ordination to the ministry of word and sacrament to men only.

Ordained Ministry

Ecumenical dialogue has repeatedly shown that issues relating to ordained ministry constitute challenging obstacles on the path to unity. If differences such as those relating to the priesthood of the ordained prohibit full unity, it must continue to be an urgent priority for the churches to discover how they can be overcome.

46. There is no single pattern of ministry in the New Testament, though all churches would look to Scripture in seeking to follow the will of the Lord concerning how ordained ministry is to be understood, ordered and exercised. At times, the Spirit has guided the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs (cf. Acts 6:1-6). Various forms of ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Spirit. Early writers, such as Ignatius of Antioch, insisted upon the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter

13. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section on Ministry, §17.

14. See Anglican-Roman Catholic “Ministry and Ordination” and “Elucidation,” in *Growth in Agreement I*, 78-87; and Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue, “The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church,” in *Growth in Agreement II*, 671-679.

and deacon.¹⁵ This pattern of three related ministries can be seen to have roots in the New Testament; eventually it became the generally accepted pattern and is still considered normative by many churches today. Some churches, since the time of the Reformation, have adopted different patterns of ministry.¹⁶ Among the several means for maintaining related to, the Church's apostolicity, such as the scriptural canon, dogma and liturgical order, ordained ministry has played an important role. Succession in ministry is meant to serve the apostolic continuity of the Church.

47. Almost all Christian communities today have a formal structure of ministry. Frequently this structure is diversified and reflects, more or less explicitly, the threefold pattern of *episkopos-presbyteros-diakonos*. Churches remain divided, however, as to whether or not the "historic episcopate" (meaning bishops ordained in apostolic succession back to the earliest generations of the Church), or the apostolic succession of ordained ministry more generally, is something intended by Christ for his community. Some believe that the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon is a sign of continuing faithfulness to the Gospel and is vital to the apostolic continuity of the Church as a whole.¹⁷ In contrast, others do not view faithfulness to the Gospel as closely bound to succession in ministry, and some are wary of the historic episcopate because they see it as vulnerable to abuse and thus potentially harmful to the well-being of the community. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, for its part, only affirmed that the threefold ministry "may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it."¹⁸

The Threefold Ministry

Given the signs of growing agreement about the place of ordained ministry in the Church, we are led to ask if the churches can achieve a consensus as to whether or not

15. Cf. Ignatius of Antioch's *Letter to the Magnesians* 6 and 13; *Letter to the Trallians* 7; *Letter to the Philadelphians* 4; *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 8.

16. Two insightful accounts of these Reformation developments are the Reformed-Roman Catholic text "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," §§12-63, entitled "Toward a Reconciliation of Memories," in *Growth in Agreement II*, 781-795; and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic text, *The Apostolicity of the Church*, Minneapolis 2006, §§65-164, pages 40-71.

17. On this point, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic "Church and Justification" (1993), §185, states: "There is no contradiction between the doctrine of justification and the idea of an ordained ministry instituted by God and necessary for the church" (*Growth in Agreement II*, 529). Nevertheless, a few paragraphs later, the same text adds: "The difference between the Catholic and the Lutheran views on the theological and ecclesiological evaluation of the episcopate is thus not so radical that a Lutheran rejection or even indifference towards this ministry stands in opposition to the Catholic assertion of its ecclesial indispensability. The question is rather one of a clear gradation in the evaluation of this ministry, which can be and has been described on the Catholic side by predicates such as 'necessary' or 'indispensable', and on the Lutheran side as 'important', 'meaningful' and thus 'desirable'" (§197; (*Growth in Agreement II*, 532).

18. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section on Ministry, §22.

the threefold ministry is part of God's will for the Church in its realization of the unity which God wills.

The Gift of Authority in the Ministry of the Church

48. All authority in the Church comes from her Lord and head, Jesus Christ, whose authority, conveyed with the word *exousia* (power, delegated authority, moral authority, influence; literally “from out of one’s being”) in the New Testament, was exercised in his teaching (cf. Matt. 5:2; Luke 5:3), his performing of miracles (cf. Mark. 1:30-34; Matt. 14:35-36), his exorcisms (cf. Mark 1:27; Luke 4:35-36), his forgiveness of sins (cf. Mark 2:10; Luke 5:4) and his leading the disciples in the ways of salvation (cf. Matt. 16:24). Jesus’ entire ministry was characterized by authority which placed itself at the service of human beings (Mark 1:27; Luke 4:36). Having received “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18), Jesus shared his authority with the apostles (cf. John 20:22). Their successors in the ministry of oversight (*episkopé*) exercised authority in the proclamation of the Gospel, in the celebration of the sacraments, particularly the eucharist, and in the pastoral guidance of believers.¹⁹

49. The distinctive nature of authority in the Church can be understood and exercised correctly only in the light of the authority of its head, the one who was crucified, who “emptied himself” and “obediently accepted even death, death on the cross” (Phil. 2:7-8). This authority is to be understood within Jesus’ eschatological promise to guide the Church to fulfilment in the reign of heaven. Thus, the Church’s authority is different from that of the world. When the disciples sought to exercise power over one another, Jesus corrected them, saying that he came not to be served but to serve, and to offer his life for others (cf. Mark 10:41-45; Luke 22:25). Authority within the Church must be understood as humble service, nourishing and building up the *koinonia* of the Church in faith, life and witness; it is exemplified in Jesus’ action of washing the feet of the disciples (cf. John 13:1-17). It is a service (*diakonia*) of love, without any domination or coercion.

50. Thus, authority in the Church in its various forms and levels, must be distinguished from mere power. This authority comes from God the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit; as such it reflects the holiness of God. The sources of authority recognized in varying degrees by the churches such as Scripture, Tradition, worship, councils and synods, also reflect the holiness of the Triune God. Such authority is recognized wherever the truth which leads to holiness is expressed and the holiness of God is voiced “from the lips of children and infants” (Ps. 8:2; cf. Matt. 21:16). Holiness means a greater authenticity in relationship with God, with

19. This basic description of the authority of Jesus and its sharing with the Church closely paraphrases the description offered by the Orthodox- Roman Catholic Ravenna Statement (2007) concerning “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority,” §12; see above, ch. II, n.18.

others and with all creation. Throughout history the Church has recognized a certain authority in the lives of the saints, in the witness of monasticism and in various ways that groups of believers have lived out and expressed the truth of the gospel. Accordingly, a certain kind of authority may be recognized in the ecumenical dialogues and the agreed statements they produce, when they reflect a common search for and discovery of the truth in love (cf. Eph. 4:15), urge believers to seek the Lord's will for ecclesial communion, and invite on-going metanoia and holiness of life.

51. The authority which Jesus Christ, the one head of the Church, shares with those in ministries of leadership is neither only personal, nor only delegated by the community. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit destined for the service (*diakonia*) of the Church in love. Its exercise includes the participation of the whole community, whose sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) contributes to the overall understanding of God's Word and whose reception of the guidance and teaching of the ordained ministers testifies to the authenticity of that leadership. A relation of mutual love and dialogue unites those who exercise authority and those who are subject to it. As a means of guiding the Christian community in faith, worship and service with the exousia of the crucified and risen Lord, the exercise of authority can call for obedience, but such a call is meant to be welcomed with voluntary cooperation and consent since its aim is to assist believers in growing to full maturity in Christ (cf. Eph. 4:11-16).²⁰ The "sense" for the authentic meaning of the Gospel that is shared by the whole people of God, the insights of those dedicated in a special way to biblical and theological studies, and the guidance of those especially consecrated for the ministry of oversight, all collaborate in the discernment of God's will for the community. Decision-making in the Church seeks and elicits the consensus of all and depends upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, discerned in attentive listening to God's Word and to one another. By the process of active reception over time, the Spirit resolves possible ambiguities in decisions. The ecumenical movement has made it possible for authoritative teaching by some Christian leaders to have an effect beyond the boundaries of their own communities, even now in our current state of division. For example, Archbishop Desmond Tutu's leadership in declaring that "apartheid was too strong to be overcome by a divided Church,"²¹ the initiatives by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to unite Christian leaders in the cause of ecology, the efforts by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI to invite Christians and leaders from other faiths to join together in praying for and promoting peace, and of the influence of Brother Roger Schutz as he inspired countless Christian believers, especially the young, to join together in common worship of the Triune God.

20. Cf. "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority," §§13-14; see above ch. II, n.18.

21. Desmond Tutu, "Towards *Koinonia* in Faith, Life and Witness," in T. Best and G. Gassmann (eds.), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, Geneva, WCC, 1994, 96-97.

Authority in the Church and Its Exercise

Significant steps towards convergence on authority and its exercise have been recorded in various bilateral dialogues.²² Differences continue to exist between churches, however, as to the relative weight to be accorded to the different sources of authority, as to how far and in what ways the Church has the means to arrive at a normative expression of its faith, and as to the role of ordained ministers in providing an authoritative interpretation of revelation. Yet all churches share the urgent concern that the Gospel be preached, interpreted and lived out in the world humbly, but with compelling authority. May not the seeking of ecumenical convergence on the way in which authority is recognized and exercised play a creative role in this missionary endeavour of the churches?

The Ministry of Oversight (Episkopé)

52. The Church, as the body of Christ and the eschatological people of God, is built up by the Holy Spirit through a diversity of gifts or ministries. These gifts may enrich the whole Church, its unity and mission.²³ The faithful exercise of the ministry of *episkopé* under the Gospel by persons chosen and set aside for such ministry is a requirement of fundamental importance for the Church's life and mission. The specific development of structures of *episkopé* varied in different times and places; but all communities, whether episcopally ordered or not, continued to see the need for a ministry of *episkopé*. In every case *episkopé* is in the service of maintaining continuity in apostolic faith and unity of life. In addition to preaching the Word and celebrating the Sacraments, a principal purpose of this ministry is faithfully to safeguard and hand on revealed truth, to hold the local congregations in communion, to give mutual support and to lead in witnessing to the Gospel. Such guidance includes the oversight of the various Christian service organizations dedicated to bettering human life and to the relief of suffering, aspects of the Church's service (*diakonia*) to the world to which we will return in the next chapter. All these functions, summed up in the term *episkopé* or oversight, are exercised by persons who relate to the faithful of their own communities as well as to those who exercise such a ministry in other local communities. This is what it means to affirm that the ministry of oversight, as all ministry in the Church, needs to be exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways.²⁴ These ways of exercise have been succinctly described in *Baptism, Eucharist*

22. See, for example, the Anglican-Roman Catholic report "Authority in the Church," 1976, in *Growth in Agreement I*, 88-105; "Authority in the Church II" in *Growth in Agreement I*, 106-18; "The Gift of Authority," 1998, in *Growth in Agreement III*, 60-81; this is also echoed in §§83-84 of the Methodist-Roman Catholic document "Speaking the Truth in Love: Teaching Authority among Catholics and Methodists," in *Growth in Agreement III*, 163-164.

23. Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section on Ministry, §23.

24. Already at the first world conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne in 1927, the ordering of the churches in "episcopal," "presbyteral" and "congregational" systems was noted and the values

and *Ministry* as follows: "It should be personal, because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the Gospel and to call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness. It should also be collegial, for there is need for a college of ordained ministers sharing in the common task of representing the concerns of the community. Finally, the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry and the community should find expression in a communal dimension where the exercise of the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community's effective participation in the discovery of God's will and the guidance of the Spirit."²⁵

53. One such exercise of oversight reflects that quality of the Church which might be termed "synodality" or "conciliarity." The word *synod* comes from the Greek terms *syn* (with) and *odos* (way) suggesting a "walking together." Both synodality and conciliarity signify that "each member of the Body of Christ, by virtue of baptism, has his or her place and proper responsibility" in the communion of the church.²⁶ Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the whole Church is synodal/ conciliar, at all levels of ecclesial life: local, regional and universal. The quality of synodality or conciliarity reflects the mystery of the trinitarian life of God, and the structures of the Church express this quality so as to actualize the community's life as a communion. In the local Eucharistic community, this quality is experienced in the profound unity in love and truth between the members and their presiding minister. In crucial situations synods have come together to discern the apostolic faith in response to doctrinal or moral dangers or heresies, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to send after his return to the Father (cf. John 16:7.12-14). Ecumenical synods enjoyed the participation of leaders from the entire Church; their decisions were received by all as an acknowledgment of the important service they played in fostering and maintaining communion throughout the Church as a whole.²⁷ The

underlying these three orders were "believed by many to be essential in the order of the Church." In H. N. Bate (ed.), *Faith and Order Proceedings of the World Conference: Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*, London, Student Christian Movement, 1927, 379. Fifty-five years later, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section on Ministry, Commentary on §26, cited this Lausanne text in justification of its affirmation that ordained ministry should be exercised in ways that are personal, collegial and communal.

25. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, section on Ministry, §26.

26. See Orthodox-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, "Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority," §5, which notes that synodality may be taken as synonymous with conciliarity.

27. An "ecumenical" council or synod would be one representing the whole Christian world. The first such council is universally recognized as that held at Nicaea in 325 to affirm the divinity of Christ in response to the new teaching of Arius, which denied the Son's equality with the Father. Churches differ on how many such councils have been held. On ecumenical councils and their authority, see, for example, the Lutheran-Orthodox "Authority in and of the Church: The Ecumenical Councils" (1993), in *Growth in Agreement III*, 12-14; the subsection "Councils and the Declaration of the Faith" of the Disciples-Roman Catholic, "Receiving and Handing on the Faith: The Mission

churches currently have different views and practices about the participation and role of the laity in synods.

The Authority of Ecumenical Councils

While most churches accept the doctrinal definitions of the early Ecumenical Councils as expressive of the teaching of the New Testament, some maintain that all post-biblical doctrinal decisions are open to revision, while others consider some doctrinal definitions to be normative and therefore irreformable expressions of the faith. Has ecumenical dialogue made possible a common assessment of the normativity of the teaching of the early Ecumenical Councils?

54. Wherever the Church comes together to take counsel and make important decisions, there is need for someone to summon and preside over the gathering for the sake of good order and to facilitate the process of promoting, discerning and articulating consensus. Those who preside are always to be at the service of those among whom they preside for the edification of the Church of God, in love and truth. It is the duty of the ones who preside to respect the integrity of local churches, to give voice to the voiceless and to uphold unity in diversity.

55. The word *primacy* refers to the custom and use, already recognized by the first ecumenical councils as an ancient practice, whereby the bishops of Alexandria, Rome and Antioch, and later Jerusalem and Constantinople, exercised a personal ministry of oversight over an area much wider than that of their individual ecclesiastical provinces. Such primatial oversight was not seen as opposed to synodality/conciliarity, which expresses more the collegial service to unity. Historically, forms of primacy have existed at various levels. According to canon 34 of the Apostolic Canons, which is expressive of the Church's self-understanding in the early centuries and is still held in honour by many, though not all, Christians today, the first among the bishops in each nation would only make a decision in agreement with the other bishops and the latter would make no important decision without the agreement of the first.²⁸ Even in the early centuries, the various ministries of primacy were plagued at times by competition between Church leaders. A primacy of decision-making (jurisdiction) and teaching authority, extending to the whole people of God, was gradually claimed by the Bishop of Rome on the basis of the relation of that local church to the apostles Peter and Paul. While acknowledged by many churches in the early centuries, its essential role and manner of exercise were matters of significant controversy. In recent years, the ecumenical movement has helped to create a more conciliatory climate in which a ministry in service to the unity of the whole Church has been discussed.

and Responsibility of the Church," in *Growth in Agreement II*, 125–27; cf. also *Councils and the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, WCC, 1968.

28. This canon can be found at www.newadvent.org/fathers/3820.htm.

56. Partly because of the progress already recorded in bilateral and multilateral dialogues, the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order raised the question “of a universal ministry of Christian unity.”²⁹ In his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II quoted this text when he invited Church leaders and their theologians to “enter into patient and fraternal dialogue” with him concerning this ministry.³⁰ In subsequent discussion, despite continuing areas of disagreement, some members of other churches have expressed an openness to considering how such a ministry might foster the unity of local churches throughout the world and promote, not endanger, the distinctive features of their witness. Given the ecumenical sensitivity of this issue, it is important to distinguish between the essence of a ministry of primacy and any particular ways in which it has been or is currently being exercised. All would agree that any such personal primatial ministry would need to be exercised in communal and collegial ways.

57. There is still much work to be done to arrive at a convergence on this topic. At present Christians do not agree that a universal ministry of primacy is necessary or even desirable, although several bilateral dialogues have acknowledged the value of a ministry in service to the unity of the whole Christian community or even that such a ministry may be included in Christ’s will for his Church.³¹ The lack of agreement is not simply between certain families of churches but exists within some churches. There has been significant ecumenical discussion of New Testament evidence about a ministry serving the wider unity of the Church, such as those of St Peter or of St Paul. Nevertheless, disagreements remain about the significance of their ministries and what they may imply concerning God’s possible intention for some form of ministry in service to the unity and mission of the Church as a whole.

A Universal Ministry of Unity

If, according to the will of Christ, current divisions are overcome, how might a ministry that fosters and promotes the unity of the Church at the universal level be understood and exercised?

29. §31.2 of “Report of Section II: Confessing the One Faith to God’s Glory,” in T. F. Best and G. Gassmann (eds.), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, Geneva, WCC, 1994, 243.

30. John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, London, Catholic Truth Society, 1995, §96. A report entitled “Petrine Ministry” presents a synthesis and analysis of the various ecumenical dialogues which, up to 2001, had taken up the question of a ministry of primacy, as well as the responses given to John Paul’s invitation to dialogue about this ministry. It grouped the central issues under four headings: scriptural foundations, *De iure divino* [whether such a ministry could be based upon God’s will], universal jurisdiction (the exercise of authority or power within the Church), and papal infallibility. This preliminary report can be found in *Information Service*, N. 109 (2002/I-II), 29–42, and shows that the assessment of a “petrine ministry” differs significantly according to the particular tradition to which a Christian community belongs.

31. See the Anglican-Roman Catholic report “The Gift of Authority,” in *Growth in Agreement III*, 60–81, and the Orthodox-Roman Catholic, “The Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church.”

IV. The Church: In and for the World

A. God's Plan for Creation: The Kingdom

58. The reason for the mission of Jesus is succinctly expressed in the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16). Thus the first and foremost attitude of God towards the world is love, for every child, woman and man who has ever become part of human history and, indeed, for the whole of creation. The kingdom of God, which Jesus preached by revealing the Word of God in parables and inaugurated by his mighty deeds, especially by the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, is the final destiny of the whole universe. The Church was intended by God, not for its own sake, but to serve the divine plan for the transformation of the world. Thus, service (*diakonia*) belongs to the very being of the Church. The study document *Church and World* described such service in the following way: "As the body of Christ, the Church participates in the divine mystery. As mystery, it reveals Christ to the world by proclaiming the Gospel, by celebrating the sacraments (which are themselves called 'mysteries'), and by manifesting the newness of life given by him, thus anticipating the Kingdom already present in him."¹

59. The Church's mission in the world is to proclaim to all people, in word and deed, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ (cf. Mk.16:15). Evangelization is thus one of the foremost tasks of the Church in obedience to the command of Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18-20). The Church is called by Christ in the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the Father's reconciliation, healing and transformation of creation. Thus a constitutive aspect of evangelization is the promotion of justice and peace.

60. Today Christians are more aware of the wide array of different religions other than their own and of the positive truths and values they contain.² This occasions Christians to recall those gospel passages in which Jesus himself speaks positively about those who were "foreign" or "others" in relation to his listeners (cf. Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 7:9; 13:28-30). Christians acknowledge religious freedom as one of the fundamental dimensions of human dignity and, in the charity called for by Christ himself, they seek to respect that dignity and to dialogue with others, not only to

1. *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, Chapter III, §21, page 27.

2. On questions relating to this topic, see "Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding" (2006), the result of a study process in response to suggestions made in 2002 at the WCC central committee to the three staff teams on Faith and Order, Inter-religious Relations, and Mission and Evangelism, available at: www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/%20documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory-and-background-%20documents/religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding.html. This statement follows the discussion of the relation between mission and world religions at the conference of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism held in San Antonio in 1989. Because of its relevance to the general themes taken up in this chapter, some mention of interreligious relations will appear in each of its three sections.

share the riches of Christian faith but also to appreciate whatever elements of truth and goodness are present in other religions. In the past, when proclaiming the Gospel to those who had not yet heard it, due respect was not always given to their religions. Evangelization should always be respectful of those who hold other beliefs. Sharing the joyful news of the truth revealed in the New Testament and inviting others to the fullness of life in Christ is an expression of respectful love.³ Within the contemporary context of increased awareness of religious pluralism, the possibility of salvation for those who do not explicitly believe in Christ and the relation between interreligious dialogue and the proclamation that Jesus is Lord have increasingly become topics of reflection and discussion among Christians.

Ecumenical Response to Religious Pluralism

There remain serious disagreements within and between some churches concerning these issues. The New Testament teaches that God wills the salvation of all people (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4) and, at the same time, that Jesus is the one and only saviour of the world (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5 and Acts 4:12). What conclusions may be drawn from these biblical teachings regarding the possibility of salvation for those who do not believe in Christ? Some hold that, in ways known to God, salvation in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit is possible for those who do not explicitly share Christian faith. Others do not see how such a view sufficiently corresponds to biblical passages about the necessity of faith and baptism for salvation. Differences on this question will have an impact upon how one understands and puts into practice the mission of the Church. Within today's context of increased awareness of the vitality of various religions throughout the world, how may the churches arrive at greater convergence about these issues and cooperate more effectively in witnessing to the Gospel in word and deed?

B. The Moral Challenge of the Gospel

61. Christians are called to repent of their sins, to forgive others and to lead sacrificial lives of service: discipleship demands moral commitment. However, as St Paul so emphatically teaches, human beings are justified not through works of the law but by grace through faith (cf. Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:19-21). Thus the Christian community lives within the sphere of divine forgiveness and grace, which calls forth and shapes

3. The "Charta Oecumenica" (2001) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE), §2, states: "We commit ourselves to recognise that every person can freely choose his or her religious and church affiliation as a matter of conscience, which means not inducing anyone to convert through moral pressure or material incentive, but also not hindering anyone from entering into conversion of his or her own free will. See also "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct" of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance, approved on 28 January 2011, and available at: www.oiloumene.org.

the moral life of believers. It is of significant importance for the reestablishment of unity that the two communities whose separation marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation have achieved consensus about the central aspects of the doctrine of justification by faith, the major focus of disagreement at the time of their division.⁴ It is on the basis of faith and grace that moral engagement and common action are possible and should be affirmed as intrinsic to the life and being of the Church.

62. The ethics of Christians as disciples are rooted in God, the creator and revealer, and take shape as the community seeks to understand God's will within the various circumstances of time and place. The Church does not stand in isolation from the moral struggles of humankind as a whole. Together with the adherents of other religions as well as with all persons of good will, Christians must promote not only those individual moral values which are essential to the authentic realization of the human person but also the social values of justice, peace and the protection of the environment, since the message of the Gospel extends to both the personal and the communal aspects of human existence. Thus *koinonia* includes not only the confession of the one faith and celebration of common worship, but also shared moral values, based upon the inspiration and insights of the Gospel. Notwithstanding their current state of division, the churches have come so far in fellowship with one another that they are aware that what one does affects the life of others, and, in consequence, are increasingly conscious of the need to be accountable to each other with respect to their ethical reflections and decisions. As churches engage in mutual questioning and affirmation, they give expression to what they share in Christ.

63. While tensions about moral issues have always been a concern for the Church, in the world of today, philosophical, social and cultural developments have led to the rethinking of many moral norms, causing new conflicts over moral principles and ethical questions to affect the unity of the churches. At the same time, moral questions are related to Christian anthropology, and priority is given to the Gospel in evaluating new developments in moral thinking. Individual Christians and churches sometimes find themselves divided into opposing opinions about what principles of personal or collective morality are in harmony with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Moreover, some believe that moral questions are not of their nature "church-dividing," while others are firmly convinced that they are.

Moral Questions and the Unity of the Church

Ecumenical dialogue at the multilateral and bilateral levels has begun to sketch out some of the parameters of the significance of moral doctrine and practice for Christian

4. See the Lutheran-Roman Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000.

unity.⁵ If present and future ecumenical dialogue is to serve both the mission and the unity of the Church, it is important that this dialogue explicitly address the challenges to convergence represented by contemporary moral issues. We invite the churches to explore these issues in a spirit of mutual attentiveness and support. How might the churches, guided by the Spirit, discern together what it means today to understand and live in fidelity to the teaching and attitude of Jesus? How can the churches, as they engage together in this task of discernment, offer appropriate models of discourse and wise counsel to the societies in which they are called to serve?

C. The Church in Society

64. The world that “God so loved” is scarred with problems and tragedies which cry out for the compassionate engagement of Christians. The source of their passion for the transformation of the world lies in their communion with God in Jesus Christ. They believe that God, who is absolute love, mercy and justice, can work through them, in the power of the Holy Spirit. They live as disciples of the One who cared for the blind, the lame and the leper, who welcomed the poor and the outcast, and who challenged authorities who showed little regard for human dignity or the will of God. The Church needs to help those without power in society to be heard; at times it must become a voice for those who are voiceless. Precisely because of their faith, Christian communities cannot stand idly by in the face of natural disasters which affect their fellow human beings or threats to health such as the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Faith also impels them to work for a just social order, in which the goods of this earth may be shared equitably, the suffering of the poor eased and absolute destitution one day eliminated. The tremendous economic inequalities that plague the human family, such as those in our day that often differentiate the global North from the global South, need to be an abiding concern for all the churches. As followers of the “Prince of Peace,” Christians advocate peace, especially by seeking to overcome the causes of war (principal among which are economic injustice, racism, ethnic and religious hatred, exaggerated nationalism, oppression and the use of violence to resolve differences). Jesus said that he came so that human beings may have life in abundance (cf. John 10:10); his followers acknowledge their responsibility to defend human life and dignity. These are obligations on churches as much as on individual believers. Each context will provide its own clues to discern what is the appropriate Christian response within any particular set of circumstances. Even

5. For example, the Anglican-Roman Catholic statement “Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church,” in *Growth in Agreement II*, 344-370; and the study document of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, “The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions” (1995), in *The Ecumenical Review* 48(2), April 1996, 143-154. For recent work on “Moral Discernment in the Churches” see also Faith and Order Paper 215 (2013) at www.oikoumene.org.

now, divided Christian communities can and do carry out such discernment together and have acted jointly to bring relief to suffering human beings and to help create a society that fosters human dignity.⁶ Christians will seek to promote the values of the kingdom of God by working together with adherents of other religions and even with those of no religious belief.

65. Many historical, cultural and demographic factors condition the relation between Church and state, and between Church and society. Various models of this relation based on contextual circumstances can be legitimate expressions of the Church's catholicity. It is altogether appropriate for believers to play a positive role in civic life. However, Christians have at times colluded with secular authorities in ways that condoned or even abetted sinful and unjust activities. The explicit call of Jesus that his disciples be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (cf. Matt. 5:13-16) has led Christians to engage with political and economic authorities in order to promote the values of the kingdom of God, and to oppose policies and initiatives which contradict them. This entails critically analyzing and exposing unjust structures, and working for their transformation, but also supporting initiatives of the civil authorities that promote justice, peace, the protection of the environment and the care for the poor and the oppressed. In this way Christians are able to stand in the tradition of the prophets who proclaimed God's judgment on all injustice. This will very likely expose them to persecution and suffering. The servanthood of Christ led to the offering of his life on the cross and he himself foretold that his followers should expect a similar fate. The witness (*Martyria*) of the Church will entail, for both individuals and for the community, the way of the cross, even to the point of martyrdom (cf. Matt. 10:16-33).

66. The Church is comprised of all socio-economic classes; both rich and poor are in need of the salvation that only God can provide. After the example of Jesus, the Church is called and empowered in a special way to share the lot of those who suffer and to care for the needy and the marginalized. The Church proclaims the words of hope and comfort of the Gospel, engages in works of compassion and mercy (cf. Luke 4:18-19) and is commissioned to heal and reconcile broken human relationships and to serve God in the ministry of reconciling those divided by hatred or estrangement (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21). Together with all people of goodwill, the Church seeks to care for creation, which groans to share in the freedom of the children of God (cf. Rom. 8:20-22), by opposing the abuse and destruction of the earth and participating in God's healing of broken relationships between creation and humanity.

6. See, for example, the Reformed-Roman Catholic text "The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God," whose second chapter narrates cooperation between these churches concerning aboriginal rights in Canada, apartheid in South Africa and peace in Northern Ireland and whose third chapter describes the patterns of discernment used in each community, in PCPCU, *Information Service* N. 125 (2007/III), 121-38, and Reformed World 57(2/3), June-September 2007, 105-207.

Conclusion

67. The unity of the body of Christ consists in the gift of *koinonia* or communion that God graciously bestows upon human beings. There is a growing consensus that *koinonia*, as communion with the Holy Trinity, is manifested in three interrelated ways: unity in faith, unity in sacramental life, and unity in service (in all its forms, including ministry and mission). The liturgy, especially the celebration of the eucharist, serves as a dynamic paradigm for what such *koinonia* looks like in the present age. In the liturgy, the people of God experience communion with God and fellowship with Christians of all times and places. They gather with their presider, proclaim the Good News, confess their faith, pray, teach and learn, offer praise and thanksgiving, receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, and are sent out in mission.¹ St John Chrysostom spoke about two altars: one in the Church and the other among the poor, the suffering and those in distress.² Strengthened and nourished by the liturgy, the Church must continue the life-giving mission of Christ in prophetic and compassionate ministry to the world and in struggle against every form of injustice and oppression, mistrust and conflict created by human beings.

68. One blessing of the ecumenical movement has been the discovery of the many aspects of discipleship which churches share, even though they do not yet live in full communion. Our brokenness and division contradict Christ's will for the unity of his disciples and hinder the mission of the Church. This is why the restoration of unity between Christians, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is such an urgent task. Growth in communion unfolds within that wider fellowship of believers that extends back into the past and forward into the future to include the entire communion of saints. The final destiny of the Church is to be caught up in the *koinonia*/communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to be part of the new creation, praising and rejoicing in God forever (cf. Rev. 21:1-4; 22:1-5).

69. "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17). The New Testament ends with the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, transformed by the grace of God (cf. Rev. 21:1-22:5). This new cosmos is promised for the end of history but is already present in an anticipatory way even now as the Church, upheld by faith and hope in its pilgrimage through time, calls out in love and worship "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). Christ loves the Church as the bridegroom loves his bride (cf. Eph. 5:25) and, until the wedding feast of the lamb in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Rev. 19:7), shares with her his mission of bringing light and healing to human beings until he comes again in glory.

1. The previous sentences largely repeat and paraphrase the statement from the 9th Forum on Bilateral Dialogues, held in Breklum, Germany, in March 2008. For the statement drawn up by this forum, see *The Ecumenical Review* 61(3), October 2009, 343-347; see also www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/breklum-statement.pdf.

2. St John Chrysostom, Homily 50, 3-4 on Matthew, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 58, 508-509.

Historical Note

The Process Leading to *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*

The World Council of Churches describes itself as “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”¹ This “common calling” impels the churches to seek together convergence and greater consensus on the ecclesiological issues that yet divide them: What is the Church? What is the Church’s role in God’s cosmic design of recapitulation of all things in Jesus Christ?

During the past centuries, the way Christian churches have answered these questions has been marked by the fact that they live and do theology in an abnormal situation of ecclesial division. Therefore it is not surprising that a strong emphasis on ecclesiology—the theological question about the Church—accompanies the history of the modern ecumenical movement.

Thus, the 1927 World Conference on Faith and Order focused on seven theological subjects. One of them was dedicated to the nature of the Church;² a second dealt with the relation between the one Church we confess and the divided churches we experience in history. Based on the churches’ responses to the findings of that meeting,³ the organizers of the 1937 Second World Conference on Faith and Order proposed that the overarching theme for the next World Conference should be “The Church in the Purpose of God.”⁴ While the Second World Conference did not abide specifically with this theme, two of its five sections addressed core ecclesiological issues: “The Church of Christ and the Word of God” and “The Communion of Saints.”⁵ The 1937 World Conference concluded with the conviction that questions about the nature of the Church were at the root of most of the remaining dividing issues.⁶

1. “Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches,” in L. N. Rivera-Pagán (ed.), *God in Your Grace: Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 2007, 448.

2. H. N. Bate (ed.), *Faith and Order : Proceedings of the World Conference—Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*, New York, George H. Doran Co., 1927, esp. 463-466. *Reports of the World Conference on Faith and Order—Lausanne Switzerland August 3 to 21, 1927*, Boston, Faith and Order Secretariat, 1928, 19-24.

3. For a selection of responses, see L. Hodgson (ed.), *Convictions: A Selection from the Responses of the Churches to the Report of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Held at Lausanne in 1927*, London, Student Christian Movement Press, 1934.

4. L. Hodgson (ed.), *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order Held at Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937*, London, Student Christian Movement Press, 1938, 5.

5. *Ibid.*, 228-235, 236-238.

6. Cf. O. Tomkins, *The Church in the Purpose of God: An Introduction to the Work of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, Faith and Order, 1950, 34.

In 1948 the recognition of oneness in Christ gave rise to a fellowship of still divided communions, made manifest in the establishment of the World Council of Churches. The report of that first WCC Assembly stated clearly that despite their oneness in Christ, the churches were fundamentally divided into two mutually inconsistent understandings of the Church, shaped by a more “active” or a more “passive” understanding of the role of the Church in God’s salvation of the world.⁷ It was in this new, complex ecumenical context—in which convergence on a lived Christology was helping the churches to recognize in each other vestiges of the one Church while remaining ecclesially and ecclesologically divided — that the World Council of Churches’ Commission on Faith and Order held its 1952 Third World Conference.

Unsurprisingly once again, the first of the three theological reports prepared for the Third World Conference⁸ was based on a comprehensive exercise of comparative ecumenical ecclesiology. The fruits of this exercise were gathered in the book *The Nature of the Church*,⁹ and this, in turn, was reflected in the second chapter of the Conference’s final report entitled “Christ and His Church.”¹⁰ This was precisely the theme of the study report¹¹ presented, eleven years later, to the Section I of the 1963 Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, called “The Church in the Purpose of God.”¹²

The same emphasis on ecumenical ecclesiology has been demonstrated by the major statements about unity received by the assemblies of the WCC: The 1961 New Delhi statement on the unity of “all in each place”¹³; the 1975 Nairobi statement on the one Church as a conciliar fellowship¹⁴; the 1991 Canberra statement on the

7. Cf. “The Universal Church in God’s Design,” in W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft (ed.), *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches Held at Amsterdam August 22nd to September 4th, 1948*, London, SCM Press Ltd, 1949, 51-57.

8. *The Church: A Report of a Theological Commission of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in Preparation for the Third World Conference on Faith and Order to Be Held at Lund, Sweden in 1952*, London, Faith and Order, 1951.

9. R.N. Flew (ed.), *The Nature of the Church: Papers Presented to the Theological Commission Appointed by the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order*, London, SCM Press, 1952.

10. *Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, Sweden : August 15-28, 1952*, London, Faith and Order, 1952, 7-11.

11. *Christ and the Church: Report of the Theological Commission for the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Geneva, WCC, 1963.

12. P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer (eds.), *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order : Montreal, 1963*, New York, Association Press, 1964, 41-49.

13. W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft (ed.), *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961*, London, SCM Press, 1962, 116.

14. D. M. Paton (ed.), *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975—The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November-10 December, 1975*, London-Grand Rapids, SPCK-Eerdmans, 1976, 60.

unity of the Church as *koinonial* communion¹⁵; and the 2006 Porto Alegre statement “Called to Be the One Church.”¹⁶ All these have been cumulative steps towards convergence and greater consensus on ecclesiology.

Compelled by the ecumenical vision of “all in each place” brought by the Holy Spirit into full visible unity in the apostolic faith, sacramental life, ministry, and mission, the Commission on Faith and Order dedicated a significant amount of its work in the years following the 1961 New Delhi Assembly to a convergence text on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.¹⁷

A significant moment in Faith and Order reflection on ecclesiology was the Fifth World Conference of

1993 at Santiago de Compostela, Spain. A number of factors shaped this World Conference with its theme “Towards *Koinonia* in Faith, Life and Witness.” The first factor was the interpretation of the churches’ responses to *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, with its six published volumes of official responses.¹⁸ The careful analysis of the 186 responses to BEM concluded with a list of several major ecclesiological themes that were requested for further study: The role of the Church in God’s saving purpose; *koinonia*; the Church as a gift of the word of God (*creatura verbi*); the Church as mystery or sacrament of God’s love for the world; the Church as the pilgrim people of God; the Church as prophetic sign and servant of God’s coming kingdom.¹⁹ The second factor shaping the 1993 Conference was the results of the Faith and Order study process “Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today,”²⁰ which demonstrated an encouraging convergence about the entire doctrinal content of the Creed, including what it professes regarding the Church. The third factor was the study process on “The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community,”²¹ which underlined the nature of the Church as sign and instrument of God’s saving design for the world. And fourth were the ecclesiological challenges raised by the conciliar process on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.²² As

15. M. Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly—Canberra, Australia, 7-20 February 1991*, Geneva-Grand Rapids, WCC- Eerdmans, 1991, 172–174.

16. L. N. Rivera-Pagán (ed.), *God, in your Grace: Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, WCC, 2007*, 255–261.

17. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Geneva, WCC, 1982.

18. Cf. *Churches Respond to BEM Geneva*, WCC, 1986–1988, volumes I–VI.

19. Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry, 1982–1990: Report on the Process and Responses*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, 147–151.

20. Cf. *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it Is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Faith and Order Paper 153, Geneva-Eugene, WCC-Wipf & Stock, 2010.

21. Cf. *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*, Faith and Order Paper 151, Geneva, WCC, 1990.

22. “Final Document: Entering into Covenant Solidarity for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of

well, there was new ecumenical momentum created by the growing prominence of communion ecclesiology in the bilateral dialogues. These movements in the 1980s converged in the decision, taken by the Faith and Order Plenary Commission in 1989, to launch a new study on what was then called “The Nature and Mission of the Church—Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology.”²³ The very theme of the Fifth World Conference—“Towards *Koinonia* in Faith, Life and Witness”—reflected all these study processes of the 1980s. While *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* takes its place within this long trajectory of Faith and Order reflection on the Church, fresh impetus was given to this work at the Fifth World Conference in 1993.

After several years of Faith and Order study and dialogue, an initial result of the Ecclesiology study was published in 1998 under the title *The Nature and Purpose of the Church*.²⁴ Its status as a provisional text was expressed in the subtitle: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement. It is a text of six chapters: “The Church of the Triune God,” “The Church in History,” “The Church as *Koinonia* (Communion),” “Life in Communion,” “Service in and for the World,” and “Following Our Calling: From Converging Understandings to Mutual Recognition.” Responses to this text were received from churches, ecumenical organizations, and regional councils of churches, academic institutions and individuals. Many appreciative comments were complemented by some points of constructive criticism. For example, it seemed that *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* needed further integration: how could the theme of the Church as Communion be treated apart from the chapter on the Church of the Triune God? Furthermore, some issues were considered missing: for instance, there was no section on teaching authority and the topic of mission seemed to receive little attention. As well, the World Conference at Santiago had called for a study on “the question of a universal ministry of Christian unity,”²⁵ which was not reflected in the text. Significantly, in his

1995 encyclical letter on commitment to ecumenism, *Ut Unum Sint*, inviting dialogue about the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, Pope John Paul II cited the Faith and Order recommendation from Santiago.²⁶

Creation,” in D.P. Niles (ed.), *Between the Flood and the Rainbow: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, Geneva, WCC, 1992, 164–190; cf. T. F. Best & M. Robra (eds.), *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation, and the Nature of the Church*. Geneva, WCC, 1997.

23. Cf. G. Gassmann, “The Nature and Mission of the Church: Ecumenical Perspectives,” in T. F. Best (ed.), *Faith and Order 1985–1989: The Commission Meeting at Budapest 1989*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, esp. 202–204, 219.

24. *The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Geneva, WCC, 1998.

25. T. F. Best and G. Gassmann (eds.), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Geneva, WCC, 1994, 243.

26. *Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint of the Holy Father, John Paul II, on Commitment to Ecumenism*,

When sufficient time had been allowed for the responses to come in, the commission set out revising its ecclesiology text, producing a new draft entitled *The Nature and Mission of the Church*,²⁷ which was presented to the 2006 WCC Assembly held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Seeking to incorporate the suggestions from the various responses, it comprises four chapters: “The Church of the Triune God,” “The Church in History,” “The Life of Communion in and for the World,” and “In and For the World.” The first chapter integrated much of the biblical material on the nature of the Church as people of God, body of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit, with biblical insights on the church as communion (*koinonia*) and on the mission of the Church as servant of the Kingdom and with the creedal affirmation of the Church as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. The second chapter on history highlighted the problems that afflict the churches in their present division: how can diversity be harmonized with unity and what makes for legitimate diversity? How do the churches understand the local church and how is it related to all other churches? What are the historic and ongoing issues that divide Christians? The third chapter highlighted the elements necessary for communion between the churches, such as apostolic faith, baptism, eucharist, ministry, *episkopé*, councils and synods, with the themes of universal primacy and authority now included. A final chapter more briefly explored the Church’s service to the world in assisting those who suffer, defending the oppressed, witnessing to the moral message of the Gospel, working for justice, peace and the protection of the environment, and generally seeking to promote a human society more in keeping with the values of the Kingdom of God.

This revised text on ecclesiology was also subtitled “A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement,” and it too was sent to the churches for response. Over eighty responses were received, although only around thirty were specifically from the churches. Most of the responses from the churches, academic and ecumenical institutes, and significantly from missionary organizations, expressed satisfaction that the mission of the Church was given greater prominence, even having a place in the title. Other comments were concerned that the use of the two words—nature and mission—would obscure the fact that the Church is by its very nature missionary. To assist the Ecclesiology Working Group in assessing the responses to *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, Faith and Order staff prepared detailed summaries and initial analyses of every response.

Three particularly significant steps were taken in evaluating *The Nature and Mission of the Church*. First, the Plenary Commission of Faith and Order, with its 120 members representing the various churches, held its meeting in Crete in October 2009. This gathering brought together many who were participating in Faith and Order for the first time and the meeting was structured in such a way as to maxi-

Rome, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995, \$89.

27. *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper 198, WCC, Geneva, 2005.

mize the input of the commissioners to the three study projects of Faith and Order, especially the ecclesiology study. A number of plenary sessions assessed *The Nature and Mission of the Church*.²⁸ A major direction from the Plenary Commission was to shorten the text and to make it more contextual, more reflective of the lives of the churches throughout the world, and more accessible to a wider readership. Twelve working groups discussed *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, and produced detailed evaluations on the text.²⁹

Second, in June 2010 at Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, the Faith and Order Standing Commission decided that after a careful examination of the responses to *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, and the evaluations of the text from the meeting of the Plenary Commission in Crete, the time was right to begin a final revision. A drafting committee was appointed with theologians coming from the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Orthodox, and Reformed traditions; the two co-moderators came from the Methodist and Orthodox traditions respectively.

Third, the commission was aware of a significant lacuna in the responses process: There was as yet no substantial response from the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches. Accordingly, a major inter-Orthodox consultation was held Aghia Napa, Cyprus, in the Holy Metropolitanate of Constantia, in March of 2011, which included 40 delegated theologians from ten Eastern Orthodox and three Oriental Orthodox churches. The consultation produced an extensive evaluation of *The Nature and Mission of the Church*. A major suggestion was to integrate more clearly the material on baptism, eucharist and ministry into the presentation of what is essential to the life of the Church. The consultation and its report became a significant component of the next meeting of the Ecclesiology Working Group, and hence played a unique role in the process that led to the new text.

Extensive analysis of the responses continued at the first meeting of the drafting committee in Geneva in late November, 2010. The process was given fresh impetus after the inter-Orthodox consultation in early March, 2011. A meeting of the Ecclesiology Working Group which took place in Columbus, Ohio, USA, later that month produced a new draft version of the text that was presented to the Standing Commission of Faith and Order in Gazzada, Italy, in July 2011. Many comments were received from the commissioners, mostly quite favorable but suggesting that the text needed to emphasize more clearly ways in which progress had been made towards greater convergence, especially on the ministry, and in particular in bilateral agreed statements, as well as recent Faith and Order work, such as the study text *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*.³⁰

28. Cf. John Gibaut (ed.), *Called to Be the One Church: Faith and Order at Crete*, Geneva, WCC, 2012, 147-193.

29. Cf. *ibid.* 207-231.

30. *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, Geneva, WCC, 2011.

This request was addressed by strengthening some of the formulations and supporting them with notes which substantiate the progress achieved towards convergence. Subsequently, another version was prepared by the drafting committee at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in Switzerland, in December 2011. The drafting committee was much aided by reflections coming from staff of the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The resulting text was then submitted to four outside ecumenical experts for a fresh evaluation; their suggestions were evaluated and incorporated by the drafting committee and presented to the Ecclesiology Working Group in a meeting held in Freising, Germany, late March 2012. On the basis of the discussions and reactions to the text at the Freising meeting, the Ecclesiology Working Group arrived at a final draft to be presented to the Faith and Order Standing Commission.

In Penang, Malaysia, on 21 June 2012, the final text was presented to the Standing Commission, which unanimously approved it as a convergence statement with the title *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Thus the present text is not a stage on the way to a further common statement; it is the common statement to which its previous versions—*The Nature and Purpose of the Church* and *The Nature and Mission of the Church*—were directed. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* brings to completion a particular stage of Faith and Order reflection on the Church. The commission believes that its reflection has reached such a level of maturity that it can be identified as a convergence text, that is, a text of the same status and character as the 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. As such, it is being sent to the churches as a common point of reference in order to test or discern their own ecclesiological convergences with one another, and so to serve their further pilgrimage towards the manifestation of that unity for which Christ prayed. The central committee of the World Council of Churches at its meeting in Crete, Greece, in early September, 2012, received *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* and commended it to the member churches for study and formal response.

Together towards Life

Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes

A New WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism

The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) has, since the WCC Porto Alegre Assembly in 2006, been working and contributing toward the construction of a new ecumenical mission affirmation. The new statement will be presented to the WCC 10th assembly at Busan, Korea, in 2013. Since the integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in New Delhi, 1961, there has been only one official WCC position statement on mission and evangelism which was approved by the central committee in 1982, "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation." This new mission affirmation has been unanimously approved by the WCC central committee held in Crete, Greece on 5th of September 2012. It is the aim of this ecumenical discernment to seek vision, concepts and directions for a renewed understanding and practice of mission and evangelism in changing landscapes. It seeks a broad appeal, even wider than WCC member churches and affiliated mission bodies, so that we can commit ourselves together to fullness of life for all, led by the God of Life!

Together towards Life: Introducing the Theme

We believe in the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of all life. God created the whole *oikoumene* in God's image and constantly works in the world to affirm and safeguard life. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Life of the world, the incarnation of God's love for the world (John 3:16).¹ Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10). We believe in God, the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver, who sustains and empowers life and renews the whole creation (Genesis 2:7; John 3:8). A denial of life is a rejection of the God of life. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth. How and where do we discern God's life-giving work that enables us to participate in God's mission today?

1. If not otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit. How important it is to "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22) to become living witnesses to the coming reign of God! From a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Spirit, how do we re-envision God's mission in a changing and diverse world today?

Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do, and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God's grace. How can we reclaim mission as transformative spirituality which is life-affirming?

God did not send the Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us a partial salvation. Rather the gospel is the good news for every part of creation and every aspect of our life and society. It is, therefore, vital to recognize God's mission in a cosmic sense, and to affirm all life, the whole *oikoumene*, as being interconnected in God's web of life. As threats to the future of our planet are evident, what are their implications for our participation in God's mission?

The history of Christian mission has been characterized by conceptions of geographical expansion from a Christian centre to the "un-reached territories", to the ends of the earth. But today we are facing a radically changing ecclesial landscape described as "world Christianity" where the majority of Christians are either living, or have their origins in the global South and East.² Migration has become a worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is re-shaping the Christian landscape. The emergence of strong Pentecostal and charismatic movements from different localities is one of the most noteworthy characteristics of world Christianity today. What are the insights for mission and evangelism—theologies, agendas and practices—of this "shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity"?

Mission has been understood as a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society. Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation. This reversal of roles in terms of envisioning mission has strong biblical foundations because God chose the poor, the foolish and the powerless (1 Corinthians 1:18-31) to further God's mission of justice and peace so that life may flourish. If there is a shift of the mission concept from "mission *to* the margins" to

2. Cf. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009.

“mission *from* the margins”, what then is the distinctive contribution of the people from the margins? And why are their experiences and visions crucial for re-imagining mission and evangelism today?

We are living in a world in which faith in mammon threatens the credibility of the gospel. Market ideology is spreading the propaganda that the global market will save the world through unlimited growth. This myth is a threat not only to economic life but also to the spiritual life of people, and not only to humanity but also to the whole creation. How can we proclaim the good news and values of God’s kingdom in the global market, or win over the spirit of the market? What kind of missional action can the church take in the midst of economic and ecological injustice and crisis on a global scale?

All Christians, churches and congregations are called to be vibrant messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the good news of salvation. Evangelism is a confident but humble sharing of our faith and conviction with other people. Such sharing is a gift to others which announces the love, grace and mercy of God in Christ. It is the inevitable fruit of genuine faith. Therefore, in each generation, the church must renew its commitment to evangelism as an essential part of the way we convey God’s love to the world. How can we proclaim God’s love and justice to a generation living in an individualized, secularized and materialized world?

The church lives in multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts and new communication technology is also bringing the people of the world into a greater awareness of one another’s identities and pursuits. Locally and globally Christians are engaged with people of other religions and cultures in building societies of love, peace and justice. Plurality is a challenge to the churches and serious commitment to inter-faith dialogue and cross-cultural communication is therefore indispensable. What are the ecumenical convictions regarding common witnessing and practising life-giving mission in a world of many religions and cultures?

The church is a gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God. Its mission is to bring new life and announce the loving presence of God in our world. We must participate in God’s mission in unity, overcoming the divisions and tensions that exist among us, so that the world may believe and all may be one (John 17:21). The church, as the communion of Christ’s disciples, must become an inclusive community and exists to bring healing and reconciliation to the world. How can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness? This statement highlights some key developments in understanding the mission of the Holy Spirit within the mission of the Triune God (*missio Dei*) which have emerged through the work of CWME. It does so under four main headings:

Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life

Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins

Spirit of Community: Church on the Move

Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for All

Reflection on such perspectives enables us to embrace dynamism, justice, diversity and transformation as key concepts of mission in changing landscapes today. In response to the questions posed above, we conclude with ten affirmations for mission and evangelism today.

Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life

The Mission of the Spirit

God's Spirit—*ru'ach*—moved over the waters at the beginning (Genesis 1:2), being the source of life and the breath of humankind (Genesis 2:7). In the Hebrew Bible, the Spirit led the people of God—inspiring wisdom (Proverbs 8), empowering prophecy (Isaiah 61:1), stirring life from dry bones (Ezekiel 37), prompting dreams (Joel 2) and bringing renewal as the glory of the Lord in the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1).

The same Spirit of God, which “swept over the face of the waters” in creation, descended on Mary (Luke 1:35) and brought forth Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus at his baptism (Mark 1:10) and commissioned him for his mission (Luke 4:14, 18). Jesus Christ, full of the Spirit of God, died on the cross. He gave up the spirit (John 19:30). In death, in the coldness of the tomb, by the power of the Holy Spirit he was raised to life, the firstborn from the dead (Romans 8:11).

After his resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to his community and sent his disciples in mission: “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21-22). By the gift of the Holy Spirit, “the power from on high”, they were formed into a new community of witness to the hope in Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). In the Spirit of unity, the early church lived together and shared her goods among her members (Acts 2:44-45).

The universality of the Spirit's economy in creation and the particularity of the Spirit's work in redemption have to be understood together as the mission of the Spirit for the new heaven and earth, when God finally will be “all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). The Holy Spirit works in the world often in mysterious and unknown ways beyond our imagination (Luke 1:34-35; John 3:8; Acts 2:16-21).

Biblical witness attests to a variety of understandings of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. One perspective of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission emphasizes the Holy Spirit as fully dependent on Christ, the Paraclete and the one who will come as Counsellor and Advocate only after Christ has gone to the Father. The Holy Spirit is seen as the continuing presence of Christ, his agent to fulfil the task of mission. This understanding leads to a missiology focusing on sending out and going forth. Therefore, a pneumatological focus on Christian mission recognises that mission is essentially christologically based and relates the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation through Jesus Christ.

Another perspective emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Truth” that leads us to the “whole truth” (John 16:13) and blows wherever he/she wills (John

3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos, therefore proclaiming the Holy Spirit as the source of Christ, and the church as the eschatological coming together (*synaxis*) of the people of God in God's kingdom. The second perspective posits that the faithful go forth in peace (in mission) after they have experienced in their eucharistic gathering the eschatological kingdom of God as a glimpse and foretaste of it. Mission as going forth is thus the outcome, rather than the origin of the church, and is called "liturgy after the liturgy."³

What is clear is that by the Spirit we participate in the mission of love that is at the heart of the life of the Trinity. This results in Christian witness which unceasingly proclaims the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ and constantly affirms God's dynamic involvement, through the Holy Spirit, in the whole created world. All who respond to the outpouring of the love of God are invited to join in with the Spirit in the mission of God.

Mission and the Flourishing of Creation

Mission is the overflow of the infinite love of the Triune God. God's mission begins with the act of creation. Creation's life and God's life are entwined. The mission of God's Spirit encompasses us all in an ever-giving act of grace. We are therefore called to move beyond a narrowly human-centred approach and to embrace forms of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created life. We hear the cry of the earth as we listen to the cries of the poor and we know that from its beginning the earth has cried out to God over humanity's injustice (Genesis 4:10).

Mission with creation at its heart is already a positive movement in our churches through campaigns for eco-justice and more sustainable lifestyles and the development of spiritualities that are respectful of the earth. However, we have sometimes forgotten that the whole of creation is included in the reconciled unity towards which we are all called (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). We do not believe that the earth is to be discarded and only souls saved; both the earth and our bodies have to be transformed through the Spirit's grace. As the vision of Isaiah and John's revelation testify, heaven and earth will be made new (Isaiah 11:1-9; 25:6-10; 66:22; Revelation 21:1-4).

Our participation in mission, our being in creation and our practice of the life of the Spirit need to be woven together for they are mutually transformative. We ought not to seek the one without the others. If we do, we will lapse into an individualistic spirituality that leads us to falsely believe we can belong to God without belonging to our neighbour and we will fall into a spirituality that simply makes us feel good while other parts of creation hurt and yearn.

3. Cf. Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective*, Geneva, WCC, 1996. The term was originally coined by Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos and widely publicized by Ion Bria.

We need a new conversion (*metanoia*) in our mission, which invites a new humility in regard to the mission of God's Spirit. We tend to understand and practise mission as something done by humanity *to* others. Instead, humans can participate in communion *with* all of creation in celebrating the work of the Creator. In many ways creation is in mission to humanity, for instance the natural world has a power that can heal the human heart and body. The wisdom literature affirms creation's praise of its Creator (Psalm 19:1-4; 66:1; 96:11-13; 98:4; 100:1; 150:6). The Creator's joy and wonder in creation is one of the sources of our spirituality (Job 38-39).

We want to affirm our spiritual connection with creation, yet the reality is the earth is being polluted and exploited. Consumerism triggers not limitless growth but rather endless exploitation of the earth's resources. Human greed is contributing to global warming and other forms of climate change. If this trend continues and earth is fatally damaged, what can we imagine salvation to be? Humanity cannot be saved alone while the rest of the created world perishes. Eco-justice cannot be separated from salvation, and salvation cannot come without a new humility that respects the needs of all life on earth.

Spiritual Gifts and Discernment

The Holy Spirit gives gifts freely and impartially (1 Corinthians 12:8-10; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11) which are to be shared for the building up of others (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:26) and the reconciliation of the whole creation (Romans 8:19-23). One of the gifts of the Spirit is discernment of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). We discern the Spirit of God wherever life in its fullness is affirmed and in all its dimensions, including liberation of the oppressed, healing and reconciliation of broken communities and the restoration of the creation. We also discern evil spirits wherever forces of death and destruction of life prevail.

The early Christians, like many today, experienced a world of many spirits. The New Testament witnesses to diverse spirits, including evil spirits, "ministering spirits" (i.e. angels, Hebrews 1:14), "principalities" and "powers" (Ephesians 6:12), the beast (Revelation 13:1-7) and other powers—both good and evil. The apostle Paul also testifies to some spiritual struggle (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:4-6) and the injunction to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8). The churches are called to discern the work of the life-giving Spirit sent into the world and to join with the Holy Spirit in bringing about God's reign of justice (Acts 1:6-8). When we have discerned the Holy Spirit's presence, we are called to respond, recognizing that God's Spirit is often subversive, leading us beyond boundaries and surprising us.

Our encounter with the Triune God is inward, personal, and communal but also directs us outward in missionary endeavour. The traditional symbols and titles for the Spirit (such as fire, light, dew, fountain, anointing, healing, melting, warming, solace, comfort, strength, rest, washing, shining) show that the Spirit is familiar with our

lives and connected with all the aspects of relationship, life and creation with which mission is concerned. We are led by the Spirit into various situations and moments, into meeting points with others, into spaces of encounter and into critical locations of human struggle.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom (Isaiah 11:3; Ephesians 1:17) and guides into all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit inspires human cultures and creativity, so it is part of our mission to acknowledge, respect and cooperate with life-giving wisdoms in every culture and context. We regret that mission activity linked with colonization has often denigrated cultures and failed to recognize the wisdom of local people. Local wisdom and culture which is life-affirming is a gift from God's Spirit. We lift up testimonies of peoples whose traditions have been scorned and mocked by theologians and scientists, yet their wisdom offers us the vital and sometimes new orientation that can connect us again with the life of the Spirit in creation, which helps us to consider the ways in which God is revealed in creation.

The claim that the Spirit is with us is not for us to make, but for others to recognize in the life that we lead. The apostle Paul expresses this by encouraging the church to bear the fruits of the Spirit which entail love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, self-control (Galatians 5:23). As we bear these fruits, we hope others will discern the love and power of the Spirit at work.

Transformative Spirituality

Authentic Christian witness is not only in *what* we do in mission but *how* we live out our mission. The church in mission can only be sustained by spiritualities deeply rooted in the Trinity's communion of love. Spirituality gives our lives their deepest meaning. It stimulates, motivates and gives dynamism to life's journey. It is energy for life in its fullness and calls for a commitment to resist all forces, powers and systems which deny, destroy and reduce life.

Mission spirituality is always transformative. Mission spirituality resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work in our economies, our politics, and even our churches. "Our faithfulness to God and God's free gift of life compels us to confront idolatrous assumptions, unjust systems, politics of domination and exploitation in our current world economic order. Economics and economic justice are always matters of faith as they touch the very core of God's will for creation".⁴ Mission spirituality motivates us to serve God's economy of life, not mammon, to share life at God's table rather than satisfy individual greed, to pursue change to a better world while challenging the self-interest of the powerful who desire to maintain the status quo.

4. *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE): A Background Document*, Geneva, WCC, 2005, p.13.

Jesus has told us, “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24, KJV). The policy of unlimited growth through the domination of the global free market is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature. “It makes the false promise that it can save the world through creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance which amounts to idolatry”.⁵ This is a global system of mammon that protects the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of mammon.

Transformation can be understood in the light of the Paschal mystery: “If we have died with Christ, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:11-12). In situations of oppression, discrimination and hurt, the cross of Christ is the power of God for salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18). Even in our time, some have paid with their lives for their Christian witness, reminding us all of the cost of discipleship. The Spirit gives Christians courage to live out their convictions, even in the face of persecution and martyrdom.

The cross calls for repentance in light of misuse of power and use of the wrong kind of power in mission and in the church. “Disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures.”⁶ The Spirit empowers the powerless and challenges the powerful to empty themselves of their privileges for the sake of the disempowered.

Experiencing life in the Spirit is to taste life in its fullness. We are called to witness to a movement towards life, celebrating all that the Spirit continues to call into being, walking in solidarity in order to cross the rivers of despair and anxiety (Psalm 23, Isaiah 43:1-5). Mission provokes in us a renewed awareness that the Holy Spirit meets us and challenges us at all levels of life, and brings newness and change to the places and times of our personal and collective journeys.

The Holy Spirit is present with us as companion, yet never domesticated or “tame”. Among the surprises of the Spirit are the ways in which God works from locations which appear to be on the margins and through people who appear to be excluded.

Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins

God’s purpose for the world is not to create another world, but to re-create what God has already created in love and wisdom. Jesus began his ministry by claiming that to be filled by the Spirit is to liberate the oppressed, to open eyes that are blind, and to

5. *The Accra Confession, Covenanting for Justice: in the Economy and the Earth*, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 2004, §10.

6. Edinburgh 2010, *Common Call*, 2010, § 4.

announce the coming of God's reign (Luke 4:16-18). He went about fulfilling this mission by opting to be with the marginalized people of his time, not out of paternalistic charity but because their situations testified to the sinfulness of the world, and their yearnings for life pointed to God's purposes.

Jesus Christ relates to and embraces those who are most marginalized in society, in order to confront and transform all that denies life. This includes cultures and systems which generate and sustain massive poverty, discrimination and dehumanization, and that exploit or destroy people and the earth. Mission from the margins calls for an understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities. Christian mission has at times been understood and practised in ways which failed to recognize God's alignment with those consistently pushed to the margins. Therefore, mission from the margins invites the church to re-imagine mission as a vocation from God's Spirit who works for a world where the fullness of life is available for all.

Why Margins and Marginalization?

Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized. Such approaches can contribute to oppression and marginalization. Mission from the margins recognizes that being in the centre means having access to systems that lead to one's rights, freedom and individuality being affirmed and respected; living in the margins means exclusion from justice and dignity. Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions.

Marginalized people have God-given gifts that are under-utilized because of disempowerment, and denial of access to opportunities and/or justice. Through struggles in and for life, marginalized people are reservoirs of the active hope, collective resistance, and perseverance that are needed to remain faithful to the promised reign of God.

Because the context of missional activity influences its scope and character, the social location of all engaged in mission work must be taken into account. Missiological reflections need to recognize the different value orientations that shape missional perspectives. The aim of mission is not simply to move people from the margins to centres of power but to confront those who remain the centre by keeping people on the margins. Instead, churches are called to *transform* power structures.

The dominant expressions of mission, in the past and today, have often been directed *at* people on the margins of societies. These have generally viewed those on the margins as recipients and not active agents of missionary activity. Mission expressed in this way has too often been complicit with oppressive and life-denying systems. It has generally aligned with the privileges of the centre and largely failed to challenge economic, social, cultural and political systems which have marginalized some peoples. Mission from the centre is motivated by an attitude of paternalism and a superiority complex. Historically, this has equated Christianity with Western culture and resulted in adverse consequences, including the denial of the full personhood of the victims of such marginalization.

A major common concern of people from the margins is the failure of societies, cultures, civilizations, nations and even churches to honour the dignity and worth of *all* persons. Injustice is at the roots of the inequalities that give rise to marginalization and oppression. God's desire for justice is inextricably linked to God's nature and sovereignty: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords....who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who also loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing" (Deuteronomy 10:17-18). All missional activity must, therefore, safeguard the sacred worth of every human being and of the earth (cf. Isaiah 58).

Mission as Struggle and Resistance

The affirmation of God's mission (*missio Dei*) points to the belief in God as One who acts in history and in creation, in concrete realities of time and contexts, who seeks the fullness of life for the whole earth through justice, peace and reconciliation. Participation in God's ongoing work of liberation and reconciliation by the Holy Spirit, therefore, includes discerning and unmasking the demons that exploit and enslave. For example, this involves deconstructing patriarchal ideologies, upholding the right to self-determination for Indigenous peoples, and challenging the social embeddedness of racism and casteism.

The church's hope is rooted in the promised fulfilment of the reign of God. It entails the restoration of right relationships between God and humanity and all of creation. Even though this vision speaks to an eschatological reality, it deeply energizes and informs our current participation in God's salvific work in this penultimate period.

Participation in God's mission follows the way of Jesus, who came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45); who tears down the mighty and powerful and exalts the lowly (Luke 1:46-55); and whose love is characterized by mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence. It, therefore, requires a commitment to struggle and resist the powers that obstruct the fullness of life that God wills for all, and a willingness to work with all people involved in movements and initiatives committed to the causes of justice, dignity and life.

Mission Seeking Justice and Inclusivity

The good news of God's reign is about the promise of the actualization of a just and inclusive world. Inclusivity fosters just relationships in the community of humanity and creation, with mutual acknowledgement of persons and creation, and mutual respect and sustenance of each one's sacred worth. It also facilitates each one's full participation in the life of the community. Baptism in Christ implies a lifelong commitment to give an account of this hope by overcoming the barriers in order to find a common identity under the sovereignty of God (Galatians 3:27-28). Therefore, discrimination of all types against any human being is unacceptable in the sight of God.

Jesus promises that the last shall be first (Matthew 20:16). To the extent that the church practises radical hospitality to the estranged in society, it demonstrates commitment to embodying the values of the reign of God (Isaiah 58:6). To the extent that it denounces self-centredness as a way of life, it makes space for the reign of God to permeate human existence. To the extent that it renounces violence in its physical, psychological and spiritual manifestations both in personal interactions and in the economic, political, social systems, it testifies to the reign of God at work in the world.

In reality, however, mission, money and political power are strategic partners. Although our theological and missiological talk says a lot about the mission of the church being in solidarity with the poor, sometimes in practice it is much more concerned with being in the centres of power, eating with the rich and lobbying for money to maintain ecclesial bureaucracy. This poses particular challenges to reflect on what is the good news for people who are privileged and powerful.

The church is called to make present God's holy and life-affirming plan for the world revealed in Jesus Christ. It means rejecting values and practices which lead to the destruction of community. Christians are called to acknowledge the sinful nature of all forms of discrimination and transform unjust structures. This call places certain expectations on the church. It must refuse to harbour oppressive forces within its ranks, acting instead as a counter-cultural community. The biblical mandate to the covenant community in both testaments is characterized by the dictum, "It shall not be so among you" (Matthew 20:26, KJV).

Mission as Healing and Wholeness

Actions towards healing and wholeness of life of persons and communities are an important expression of mission. Healing was not only a central feature of Jesus' ministry but also a feature of his call to his followers to continue his work (Matthew 10:1). Healing is also one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9; Acts 3). The Spirit empowers the church for a life-nurturing mission, which includes prayer, pastoral care, and professional health care on the one hand, and prophetic denunciation of the root causes of suffering, transforming structures that dispense injustice and the pursuit of scientific research on the other.

Health is more than physical and/or mental well-being, and healing is not primarily medical. This understanding of health coheres with the biblical-theological tradition of the church, which sees a human being as a multidimensional unity, and the body, soul and mind as interrelated and interdependent. It thus affirms the social, political and ecological dimensions of personhood and wholeness. Health, in the sense of wholeness, is a condition related to God's promise for the end of time, as well as a real possibility in the present.⁷ Wholeness is not a static balance of harmony but rather involves living-in-community with God, people and creation. Individualism and injustice are barriers to community building, and therefore to wholeness. Discrimination on grounds of medical conditions or disability—including HIV and AIDS—is contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. When all the parts of our individual and corporate lives that have been left out are included, and wherever the neglected or marginalized are brought together in love, such that wholeness is experienced, we may discern signs of God's reign on earth.

Societies have tended to see disability or illness as a manifestation of sin or a medical problem to be solved. The medical model has emphasized the correction or cure of what is assumed to be the "deficiency" in the individual. Many who are marginalized, however, do not see themselves as "deficient" or "sick". The Bible recounts many instances where Jesus healed people with various infirmities but, equally importantly, he restored people to their rightful places within the fabric of the community. Healing is more about the restoration of wholeness than about correcting something perceived as defective. To become whole, the parts that have become estranged need to be reclaimed. The fixation on cure is thus a perspective that must be overcome in order to promote the biblical focus. Mission should foster the full participation of people with disabilities and illness in the life of the church and society.

Christian medical mission aims at achieving health for all, in the sense that all people around the globe will have access to quality health care. There are many ways in which churches can be, and are, involved in health and healing in a comprehensive sense. They create or support clinics and mission hospitals; they offer counselling services, care groups and health programmes; local churches can create groups to visit sick congregation members. Healing processes could include praying with and for the sick, confession and forgiveness, the laying-on of hands, anointing with oil, and the use of charismatic spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12). But it must also be noted that inappropriate forms of Christian worship, including triumphalistic healing services in which the healer is glorified at the expense of God, and where false expectations are raised, can deeply harm people. This is not to deny God's miraculous intervention of healing in some cases.

As a community of imperfect people, and as part of a creation groaning in pain and longing for its liberation, the Christian community can be a sign of hope, and an

7. *Healing and Wholeness: The Churches' Role in Health*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, p.6.

expression of the kingdom of God here on earth (Romans 8:22-24). The Holy Spirit works for justice and healing in many ways and is pleased to indwell the particular community which is called to embody Christ's mission.

Spirit of Community: Church on the Move

God's Mission and the Life of the Church

The life of the church arises from the love of the Triune God. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Mission is a response to God's urging love shown in creation and redemption. "God's love invites us" (*Caritas Christi urget nos*). This communion (*koinonia*) opens our hearts and lives to our brothers and sisters in the same movement of sharing God's love (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Living in that love of God, the church is called to become good news for all. The Triune God's overflowing sharing of love is the source of all mission and evangelism.

God's love, manifest in the Holy Spirit, is an inspirational gift to all humanity "in all times and places"⁸ and for all cultures and situations. The powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, revealed in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, initiates us into the fullness of life that is God's gift to each one of us. Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, revealing God's purposes for the world, and empowering and enabling its members to participate in the realization of those purposes.

The church in history has not always existed but, both theologically and empirically, came into being for the sake of mission. It is not possible to separate church and mission in terms of their origin or purpose. To fulfil God's missionary purpose is the church's aim. The relationship between church and mission is very intimate because the same Spirit of Christ who empowers the church in mission is also the life of the church. At the same time as he sent the church into the world, Jesus Christ breathed the Holy Spirit into the church (John 20:19-23). Therefore, the church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. If it does not engage in mission, it ceases to be church.

Starting with God's mission leads to an ecclesiological approach "from below". In this perspective it is not the church that has a mission but rather the mission that has a church. Mission is not a project of expanding churches but of the church embodying God's salvation in this world. Out of this follows a dynamic understanding of the apostolicity of the church: apostolicity is not only safeguarding the faith of the church through the ages but also participating in the apostolate. Thus the churches mainly and foremost need to be missionary churches.

God's Mission and the Church's Unity

Living out our faith in community is an important way of participating in mission. Through baptism, we become sisters and brothers belonging together in Christ

8. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper no.111, 1982, §19.

(Hebrews 10:25). The church is called to be an inclusive community that welcomes all. Through word and deed and in its very being, the church foretastes and witnesses to the vision of the coming reign of God. The church is the *coming together* of the faithful and their *going forth* in peace.

Practically, as well as theologically, mission and unity belong together. In this regard, the integration in 1961 of IMC and WCC was a significant step. This historical experience encourages us to believe that mission and church can come together. This aim, however, is not yet fully accomplished. We have to continue this journey in our century with fresh attempts so that the church becomes truly missionary.

The churches realize today that in many respects they are still not adequate embodiments of God's mission. Sometimes, a sense of separation of mission and church still prevails. The lack of full and real unity in mission still harms the authenticity and credibility of the fulfilment of God's mission in this world. Our Lord prayed "that they may all be one . . . so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). Thus mission and unity are intertwined. Consequently there is the need to open up our reflections on church and unity to an even wider understanding of unity: the unity of humanity and even the cosmic unity of the whole of God's creation.

The highly competitive environment of the free market economy has unfortunately influenced some churches and para-church movements to seek to be "winners" over others. This can even lead to the adoption of aggressive tactics to persuade Christians who already belong to a church to change their denominational allegiance. Seeking numerical growth at all costs is incompatible with the respect for others required of Christian disciples. Jesus became our Christ not through power or money but through his self-emptying (*kenosis*) and death on the cross. This humble understanding of mission does not merely shape our methods, but is the very nature and essence of our faith in Christ. The church is a servant in God's mission and not the master. The missionary church glorifies God in self-emptying love.

The Christian communities in their diversity are called to identify and practise ways of common witness in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, including through mutually respectful and responsible forms of evangelism. Common witness is what the "churches, even while separated, bear together, especially through joint efforts, by manifesting whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already share and experience in common."⁹

The missionary nature of the church also means that there must be a way that churches and para-church structures can be more closely related. The integration of IMC and WCC brought about a new framework for consideration of church unity and mission. While discussions of unity have been very concerned with struc-

9. Thomas F. Best, Günther Gassmann eds., *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela 1993*, Faith and Order Paper no.166, Geneva, WCC, 1994, p.254.

tural questions, mission agencies can represent flexibility and subsidiarity in mission. While para-church movements can find accountability and direction through ecclesial mooring, para-church structures can help churches not to forget their dynamic apostolic character.

The CWME, the direct heir of Edinburgh 1910's initiatives on cooperation and unity, provides a structure for churches and mission agencies to seek ways of expressing and strengthening unity in mission. Being an integral part of the WCC, the CWME has been able to encounter new understandings of mission and unity from Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Indigenous churches from all over the globe. In particular, the context of the WCC has facilitated close working relationships with the Roman Catholic Church. A growing intensity of collaboration with Evangelicals, especially with the Lausanne Movement for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Alliance, has also abundantly contributed to the enrichment of ecumenical theological reflection on mission in unity. Together we share a common concern that the whole church should witness to the whole gospel in the whole world.¹⁰

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of unity, unites people and churches too, to celebrate unity in diversity both proactively and constructively. The Spirit provides both the dynamic context and the resources needed for people to explore differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment in order to grow into an inclusive and mutually responsible community.

God Empowers the Church in Mission

Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, empowering and energizing its members. Thus mission becomes for Christians an urgent inner compulsion (1 Corinthians 9:16), even a test and criterion for authentic life in Christ, rooted in the profound demands of Christ's love, to invite others to share in the fullness of life Jesus came to bring. Participating in God's mission, therefore, should be natural for all Christians and all churches, not only for particular individuals or specialized groups.¹¹

What makes the Christian message of God's abundant love for humanity and all creation credible is our ability to speak with one voice, where possible, and to give common witness and an account of the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). The churches have therefore produced a rich array of common declarations, some of them resulting in uniting or united churches, and of dialogues, seeking to restore the unity of all Christians in one living organism of healing and reconciliation. A

10. Cf. "The Whole Church Taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World: Reflections of the Lausanne Theology Working Group," 2010.

11. *Mission and Evangelism in Unity*, CWME Study Document, 2000, §13.

rediscovery of the work of the Holy Spirit in healing and reconciliation, which is at the heart of today's mission theology, has significant ecumenical implications.¹²

While acknowledging the great importance of “visible” unity among churches, nonetheless unity need not be sought only at the level of organizational structures. From a mission perspective, it is important to discern what helps the cause of God's mission. In other words, unity in mission is the basis for the visible unity of the churches which also has implications for the order of the church. Attempts to achieve unity must be in concert with the biblical call to seek justice. Our call to do justice may sometimes involve breaking false unities that silence and oppress. Genuine unity always entails inclusivity and respect for others.

Today's context of large-scale worldwide migration challenges the churches' commitment to unity in very practical ways. We are told: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2, NIV). Churches can be a place of refuge for migrant communities; they can also be intentional focal points for inter-cultural engagement.¹³ The churches are called to be one to serve God's mission beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries and ought to create multi-cultural ministry and mission as a concrete expression of common witness in diversity. This may entail advocating justice in regard to migration policies and resistance to xenophobia and racism. Women, children, and undocumented workers are often the most vulnerable among migrants in all contexts. But, women are also often at the cutting edge of new migrant ministries.

God's hospitality calls us to move beyond binary notions of culturally dominant groups as hosts, and migrant and minority peoples as guests. Instead, in God's hospitality, God is host and we are all invited by the Spirit to participate with humility and mutuality in God's mission.

Local Congregations: New Initiatives

While cherishing the unity of the Spirit in the one Church, it is also important to honour the ways in which each local congregation is led by the Spirit to respond to their own contextual realities. Today's changed world calls for local congregations to take new initiatives. For example, in the secularizing global north, new forms of contextual mission, such as “new monasticism”, “emerging church”, and “fresh expressions”, have re-defined and re-vitalized churches. Exploring contextual ways of being church can be particularly relevant to young people. Some churches in the global north now meet in pubs, coffee houses, or converted movie theatres. Engaging with church life online is an attractive option for young people thinking in a non-linear, visual, and experiential way.

12. Cf. *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*, in Jacques Matthey ed., *You Are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980–2005*, Geneva, WCC, 2005, pp.90-162.

13. “Report of WCC Consultation on Mission and Ecclesiology of the Migrant Churches, Utrecht, the Netherlands, 16-21 November 2010,” *International Review of Mission*, 100.1., 2011, pp.104–7.

Like the early church in the Book of Acts, local congregations have the privilege of forming a community marked by the presence of the risen Christ. For many people, acceptance or refusal to become members of the church is linked to their positive or negative experience with a local congregation, which can be either a stumbling block or an agent of transformation.¹⁴ Therefore, it is vital that local congregations are constantly renewed and inspired by the Spirit of mission. Local congregations are frontiers and primary agents of mission.

Worship and the Sacraments play a crucial role in the formation of transformative spirituality and mission. Reading the Bible contextually is also a primary resource in enabling local congregations to be messengers and witnesses to God's justice and love. Liturgy in the sanctuary only has full integrity when we live out God's mission in our communities in our daily life. Local congregations are therefore impelled to step out of their comfort zones and cross boundaries for the sake of the mission of God.

More than ever before, local congregations today can play a key role in emphasizing the crossing of cultural and racial boundaries, and affirming cultural difference as a gift of the Spirit. Rather than being perceived as a problem, migration can be seen as offering new possibilities for churches to re-discover themselves afresh. It inspires opportunities for the creation of intercultural and multicultural churches at local level. All churches can create space for different cultural communities to come together; and embrace exciting opportunities for contextual expressions of intercultural mission in our time.

Local congregations can also, as never before, develop global connections. Many inspirational and transformative linkages are being formed between churches that are geographically far apart and located in very different contexts. These offer innovative possibilities but are not without pitfalls. The increasingly popular short-term "mission trips" can help to build partnerships between churches in different parts of the world but in some cases place an intolerable burden on poor local churches, or disregard the existing churches altogether. While there is some danger and caution around such trips, these exposure opportunities in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts can also lead to long-term change when the traveller returns to their home community. The challenge is to find ways of exercising spiritual gifts which build up the whole church in every part (1 Corinthians 12-14).

Advocacy for justice is no longer the sole prerogative of national assemblies and central offices but a form of witness which calls for the engagement of local churches. For example, the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2011) concluded with a plea in the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation that: "Churches must help in identifying the everyday choices that can abuse and promote human rights, gender

14. Christopher Duraisingh ed., *Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures*, Geneva, WCC, 1998, p.54.

justice, climate justice, unity and peace”.¹⁵ Their grounding in everyday life gives local churches both legitimacy and motivation in the struggle for justice and peace.

The church in every geo-political and socio-economic context is called to service (*diakonia*)—to live out the faith and hope of the community of God’s people, witnessing to what God has done in Jesus Christ. Through service the church participates in God’s mission, following the way of its Servant Lord. The church is called to be a diaconal community manifesting the power of service over the power of domination, enabling and nurturing possibilities for life, and witnessing to God’s transforming grace through acts of service that hold forth the promise of God’s reign.¹⁶

As the church discovers more deeply its identity as a missionary community, its outward-looking character finds expression in evangelism.

Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for All

The Call to Evangelize

Witness (*martyria*) takes concrete form in evangelism—the communication of the whole gospel to the whole of humanity in the whole world.¹⁷ Its goal is the salvation of the world and the glory of the Triune God. Evangelism is mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God. It seeks to share this good news with all who have not yet heard it and invites them to an experience of life in Christ.

“Evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him.”¹⁸ At Pentecost, the disciples could not but declare the mighty works of God (Acts 2:4; 4:20). Evangelism, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including “the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship”.¹⁹ While the Holy Spirit calls some to be evangelists (Ephesians 4:11), we all are called to give an account of the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Not only individuals but also the whole church together is called to evangelize (Mark 16:15; 1 Peter 2:9).

Today’s world is marked by excessive assertion of religious identities and persuasions that seem to break and brutalize in the name of God rather than heal and

15. *Glory to God and Peace on Earth: The Message of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation*, WCC, Kingston, Jamaica, 17-25 May 2011, p.2.

16. “*Diakonia* in the Twenty First Century: Theological Perspectives,” WCC Conference on Theology of *Diakonia* in the 21st Century, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2-6 June 2012, p.2.

17. *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee*, WCC, Rolle, Switzerland, 1951, p.66.

18. The Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment*, 2010, Part I, 7(b).

19. Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, No.12, 2007, pp. 489-504.

nurture communities. In such a context, it is important to recognize that proselytism is not a legitimate way of practising evangelism.²⁰ The Holy Spirit chooses to work in partnership with peoples' preaching and demonstration of the good news (cf. Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 4:2-6), but it is only God's Spirit who creates new life and brings about rebirth (John 3:5-8; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6). We acknowledge that evangelism at times has been distorted and lost its credibility because some Christians have forced "conversions" by violent means or the abuse of power. In some contexts, however, accusations of forceful conversions are motivated by the desire of dominant groups to keep the marginalized living with oppressed identities and in dehumanizing conditions.

Evangelism is sharing one's faith and conviction with other people, inviting them to discipleship, whether or not they adhere to other religious traditions. Such sharing is to take place with both confidence and humility, and as an expression of our professed love for our world. If we claim to love God and to love our fellow human beings but fail to share the good news with them urgently and consistently, we deceive ourselves as to the integrity of our love for either God or people. There is no greater gift we can offer to our fellow human beings than to share and or introduce them to the love, grace and mercy of God in Christ.

Evangelism leads to repentance, faith and baptism. Hearing the truth in the face of sin and evil demands a response—positive or negative (John 4:28-29 cf. Mark 10:22). It provokes conversion, involving a change of attitudes, priorities and goals. It results in salvation of the lost, healing of the sick and the liberation of the oppressed and the whole creation.

"Evangelism", while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including "the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship".²¹ In different churches, there are differing understandings of how the Spirit calls us to evangelize in our contexts. For some, evangelism is primarily about leading people to personal conversion through Jesus Christ; for others, evangelism is about being in solidarity and offering Christian witness through presence with oppressed peoples; others again look on evangelism as one component of God's mission. Different Christian traditions denote aspects of mission and evangelism in different ways; however, we can still affirm that the Spirit calls us all towards an understanding of evangelism which is grounded in

20. *Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism*, WCC Central Committee, 1997.

21. It is important to note that not all churches understand evangelism as expressed in the above. The Roman Catholic Church refers to "evangelization" as the *missio ad gentes* [mission to the peoples] directed to those who do not know Christ. In a wider sense, it is used to describe ordinary pastoral work, while the phrase "new evangelization" designates pastoral outreach to those who no longer practise the Christian faith. Cf. *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*.

the life of the local church where worship (*leiturgia*) is inextricably linked to witness (*martyria*), service (*diakonia*) and fellowship (*koinonia*).

Evangelism in Christ's Way

Evangelism is sharing the good news both in word and action. Evangelizing through verbal proclamation or preaching of the gospel (*kerygma*) is profoundly biblical. However, if our words are not consistent with our actions, our evangelism is inauthentic. The combination of verbal declaration and visible action bears witness to God's revelation in Jesus Christ and of his purposes. Evangelism is closely related to unity: The love for one another is a demonstration of the gospel we proclaim (John 13:34-35) while disunity is an embarrassment to the gospel (1 Corinthians 1).

There are historical and contemporary examples of faithful, humble service by Christians, working in their own local contexts, with whom the Spirit has partnered to bring about fullness of life. Also, many Christians who lived and worked as missionaries far away from their own cultural contexts did so with humility, mutuality, and respect; God's Spirit also stirred in those communities to bring about transformation.

Regrettably, sometimes evangelism has been practised in ways which betray rather than incarnate the gospel. Whenever this occurs repentance is in order. Mission in Christ's way involves affirming the dignity and rights of others. We are called to serve others as Christ did (cf. Mark 10:45; Matthew 25:45), without exploitation or any form of allurements.²² In such individualized contexts, it may be possible to confuse evangelism with buying and selling a "product", where *we* decide what aspects Christian life we want to take on. Instead, the Spirit rejects the idea that Jesus' good news for all can be consumed under capitalist terms, and the Spirit calls us to conversion and transformation at a personal level, which leads us to the proclamation of the fullness of life for all.

Authentic evangelism is grounded in humility and respect for all, and flourishes in the context of dialogue. It promotes the message of the gospel, of healing and reconciliation, in word and deed. "There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the message of God's coming reign."²³ Evangelism, therefore, inspires the building of inter-personal and community relationships. Such authentic relationships are often best nourished in local faith communities, and based on local cultural contexts. Christian witness is as much by our presence as by our words. In situations where the public testimony to one's faith is not possible without risking one's life, simply living the gospel may be a powerful alternative.

22. World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, 2011.

23. *The San Antonio Report*, p.26; *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, §34; *Called to One Hope*, p.38.

Aware of tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and varied interpretations of Christian witness, authentic evangelism must always be guided by life-affirming values, as stated in the joint statement on “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct”:

- Rejection of all forms of violence, discrimination and repression by religious and secular authority, including the abuse of power—psychological or social.
- Affirming the freedom of religion to practise and profess faith without any fear of reprisal and or intimidation. Mutual respect and solidarity which promote justice, peace and the common good of all.
- Respect for all people and human cultures, while also discerning the elements in our own cultures, such as patriarchy, racism, casteism etc., that need to be challenged by the gospel.
- Renunciation of false witness and listening in order to understand in mutual respect.
- Ensuring freedom for ongoing discernment by persons and communities as part of decision-making.
- Building relationships with believers of other faiths or no faith to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.²⁴

We live in a world strongly influenced by individualism, secularism and materialism, and other ideologies that challenge the values of the kingdom of God. Although the gospel is ultimately good news for all, it is bad news for the forces which promote falsehood, injustice and oppression. To that extent, evangelism is also a prophetic vocation which involves speaking truth to power in hope and in love (Acts 26:25; Colossians 1:5; Ephesians 4:15). The gospel is liberative and transformative. Its proclamation must involve transformation of societies with a view to creating just and inclusive communities.

Standing against evil or injustice and being prophetic can sometimes be met with suppression and violence, and thus consequently lead to suffering, persecution, and even death. Authentic evangelism involves being vulnerable, following the example of Christ by carrying the cross and emptying oneself (Philippians 2:5-11). Just as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church under Roman persecution, today the pursuit of justice and righteousness makes a powerful witness to Christ. Jesus linked such self-denial with the call to follow him and with eternal salvation (Mark 8:34-38).

Evangelism, Interfaith Dialogue and Christian Presence

In the plurality and complexity of today's world, we encounter people of many different faiths, ideologies and convictions. We believe that the Spirit of Life brings joy and fullness of life. God's Spirit, therefore, can be found in all cultures that affirm life. The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways, and we do not fully understand the workings

24. *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, 2011.

of the Spirit in other faith traditions. We acknowledge that there is inherent value and wisdom in diverse life-giving spiritualities. Therefore, authentic mission makes the “other” a partner in, not an “object” of mission.

Dialogue is a way of affirming our common life and goals in terms of the affirmation of life and the integrity of creation. Dialogue at the religious level is possible only if we begin with the expectation of meeting God who has preceded us and has been present with people within their own contexts.²⁵ God is there before we come (Acts 17) and our task is not to bring God along, but to witness to the God who is already there. Dialogue provides for an honest encounter where each party brings to the table all that they are in an open, patient and respectful manner.

Evangelism and dialogue are distinct but interrelated. Although Christians hope and pray that all people may come to living knowledge of the Triune God, evangelism is not the purpose of dialogue. However, since dialogue is also “a mutual encounter of commitments”, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ has a legitimate place in it. Furthermore, authentic evangelism takes place in the context of the dialogue of life and action, and in “the spirit of dialogue”: “an attitude of respect and friendship”.²⁶ Evangelism entails not only proclamation of our deepest convictions, but also listening to others, and being challenged and enriched by others (Acts 10).

Particularly important is dialogue between people of different faiths, not only in multi-religious contexts but equally where there is a large majority of a particular faith. It is necessary to protect rights of minority groups and religious freedom and to enable all to contribute to the common good. Religious freedom should be upheld because it flows from the dignity of the human person, grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). Followers of all religions and beliefs have equal rights and responsibilities.²⁷

Evangelism and Cultures

The gospel takes root in different contexts through engagement with specific cultural, political and religious realities. Respect for people and their cultural and symbolic life-worlds are necessary if the gospel is to take root in those different realities. In this way it must begin with engagement and dialogue with the wider context in order to discern how Christ is already present and where God’s Spirit is already at work.

The connection of evangelism with colonial powers in the history of mission has led to the presupposition that Western forms of Christianity are the standards by which other’s adherence to the gospel should be judged. Evangelism by those who enjoy economic power or cultural hegemony risks distorting the gospel. Therefore,

25. Cf. *Baar Statement: Theological Perspectives on Plurality*, WCC, 1990.

26. PCID, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 1991, §9.

27. *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, 2011.

they must seek the partnership of the poor, the dispossessed and minorities, and be shaped by their theological resources and visions.

The enforcement of uniformity discredits the uniqueness of each individual created in the image and likeness of God. Whereas Babel attempted to enforce uniformity, the preaching of the disciples on the day of Pentecost resulted in a unity in which personal particularities and community identities were not lost but respected—they heard the good news in their own languages.

Jesus calls us out of the narrow concerns of *our* own kingdom, *our* own liberation and *our* own independence (Acts 1:6) by unveiling to us a larger vision and empowering us by the Holy Spirit to go “to the ends of the earth” as witnesses in each context of time and space to God’s justice, freedom and peace. Our calling is to point all to Jesus, rather than to ourselves or our institutions, looking out for the interests of others rather than our own (cf. Philippians 2:3-4). We cannot capture the complexities of the scriptures, through one dominant cultural perspective. A plurality of cultures is a gift of the Spirit to deepen our understanding of our faith and one another. As such, intercultural communities of faith, where diverse cultural communities worship together, is one way in which cultures can engage one another authentically, and where culture can enrich gospel. At the same time, the gospel critiques notions of cultural superiority. Therefore, “the gospel, to be fruitful, needs to be both true to itself and incarnated or rooted in the culture of a people... We need constantly to seek the insight of the Holy Spirit in helping us to better discern where the gospel challenges, endorses or transforms a particular culture”²⁸ for the sake of life.

Feast of Life: Concluding Affirmations

We are the servants of the Triune God, who has given us the mission of proclaiming the good news to all humanity and creation, especially the oppressed and the suffering people who are longing for fullness of life. Mission—as a common witness to Christ—is an invitation to the “feast in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15). The mission of the church is to prepare the banquet and to invite all people to the feast of life. The feast is a celebration of creation and fruitfulness overflowing from the love of God, the source of life in abundance. It is a sign of the liberation and reconciliation of the whole creation which is the goal of mission. With a renewed appreciation of the mission of God’s Spirit, we offer the following affirmations in response to the question posed at the beginning of this document.

We affirm that the purpose of God’s mission is fullness of life (John 10:10) and this is the criterion for discernment in mission. Therefore, we are called to discern the Spirit of God wherever there is life in its fullness, particularly in terms of the liberation of the oppressed peoples, the healing and reconciliation of broken communities

28. *Called to One Hope*, pp.21-22; 24.

and the restoration of the whole creation. We are challenged to appreciate the life-affirming spirits present in different cultures and to be in solidarity with all those who are involved in the mission of affirming and preserving life. We also discern and confront evil spirits wherever forces of death and negation of life are experienced.

We affirm that mission begins with God's act of creation and continues in re-creation, by the enlivening power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, poured out in tongues of fire at Pentecost, fills our hearts and makes us into Christ's church. The Spirit which was in Christ Jesus inspires us to a self-emptying and cross-bearing life-style and accompanies God's people as we seek to bear witness to the love of God in word and deed. The Spirit of truth leads into all truth and empowers us to defy the demonic powers and speak the truth in love. As a redeemed community we share with others the waters of life and look for the Spirit of unity to heal, reconcile and renew the whole creation.

We affirm that spirituality is the source of energy for mission and that mission in the Spirit is transformative. Thus we seek a re-orienting of our perspective between mission, spirituality and creation. Mission spirituality that flows from liturgy and worship reconnects us with one another and with the wider creation. We understand that our participation in mission, our existence in creation and our practice of the life of the Spirit are woven together for they are mutually transformative. Mission that begins with creation invites us to celebrate life in all its dimensions as God's gift.

We affirm that the mission of God's Spirit is to renew the whole creation. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1, NIV). The God of life protects, loves and cares for nature. Humanity is not the master of the earth but is responsible to care for the integrity of creation. Excessive greed and unlimited consumption which lead to continuous destruction of nature must end. God's love does not proclaim a human salvation separate from the renewal of the whole creation. We are called to participate in God's mission beyond our human-centred goals. God's mission is to all life and we have to both acknowledge it and serve it in new ways of mission. We pray for repentance and forgiveness, but we also call for action now. Mission has creation at its heart.

We affirm that today mission movements are emerging from the global South and East which are multi-directional and many faceted. The shifting centre of gravity of Christianity to the global South and East challenges us to explore missiological expressions that are rooted in these contexts, cultures and spiritualities. We need to develop further mutuality and partnership and affirm interdependence within mission and the ecumenical movement. Our mission practice should show solidarity with suffering peoples and harmony with nature. Evangelism is done in self-emptying humility, with respect towards others and in dialogue with people of different cultures and faiths. It should, in this landscape, also involve confronting structures and cultures of oppression and dehumanization that are in contradiction to the values of God's reign.

We affirm that marginalized people are agents of mission and exercise a prophetic role which emphasizes that fullness of life is for all. The marginalized in society are the main partners in God's mission. Marginalized, oppressed and suffering people have a special gift to distinguish what news is good for them and what news is bad for their endangered life. In order to commit ourselves to God's life-giving mission, we have to listen to the voices from the margins to hear what is life-affirming and what is life-destroying. We must turn our direction of mission to the actions that the marginalized are taking. Justice, solidarity and inclusivity are key expressions of mission from the margins.

We affirm that the economy of God is based on values of love and justice for all and that transformative mission resists idolatry in the free-market economy. Economic globalization has effectively supplanted the God of life with mammon, the god of free-market capitalism that claims the power to save the world through the accumulation of undue wealth and prosperity. Mission in this context needs to be counter-cultural, offering alternatives to such idolatrous visions because mission belongs to the God of life, justice and peace and not to this false god who brings misery and suffering to people and nature. Mission, then, is to denounce the economy of greed and to participate in and practise the divine economy of love, sharing and justice.

We affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news in all ages and places and should be proclaimed in the Spirit of love and humility. We affirm the centrality of the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection in our message and also in the way we do evangelism. Therefore, evangelism is pointing always to Jesus and the kingdom of God rather than to institutions, and it belongs to the very being of the church. The prophetic voice of the church should not be silent in times that demand this voice be heard. The church is called to renew its methods of evangelism to communicate the good news with persuasion, inspiration and conviction.

We affirm that dialogue and cooperation for life are integral to mission and evangelism. Authentic evangelism is done with respect to freedom of religion and belief, for all human beings, as images of God. Proselytism by violent means, economic incentive or abuse of power is contrary to the message of the gospel. In doing evangelism it is important to build relations of respect and trust between people of different faiths. We value each and every human culture and recognize that the gospel is not possessed by any group but is for every people. We understand that our task is not to bring God along but to witness to the God who is already there (Acts 17:23-28). Joining in with the Spirit we are enabled to cross cultural and religious barriers to work together towards Life.

We affirm that God moves and empowers the church in mission. The church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit is dynamic and changing as it continues the mission of God. This leads to a variety of forms of common witness, reflecting the diversity of world Christianity. Thus the churches

need to be on the move, journeying together in mission, continuing in the mission of the apostles. Practically, this means that church and mission should be united, and different ecclesial and missional bodies need to work together for the sake of Life.

112. The Triune God invites the whole creation to the Feast of Life, through Jesus Christ who came “that they may have life, and may have it in all its fullness” (John 10:10, REB), through the Holy Spirit who affirms the vision of the reign of God, “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth!” (Isaiah 65:17, KJV). We commit ourselves together in humility and hope to the mission of God, who recreates all and reconciles all. And we pray, “God of Life, lead us into justice and peace!”

Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World

How should Christians witness to their faith in an increasingly diverse, multi-religious world? This historical joint statement from the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the WCC was issued in June 2011. It addresses interreligious co-existence, tensions and conflicts, and missionary conduct but also the overarching principles that should guide all Christian activity in the interreligious arena.

Preamble

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met during a period of five years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.

A Basis for Christian Witness

1. For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

2. Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.

3. The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ's way by sharing the good news of God's kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-20).

4. Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22-28).

5. In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness to him (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark

16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

6. If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God's continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).

7. Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

Principles

Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfil Christ's commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts.

1. Acting in God's love. Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbour as themselves (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15).

2. Imitating Jesus Christ. In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21-23).

3. Christian virtues. Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Galatians 5:22).

4. Acts of service and justice. Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Micah 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to

recognize Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matthew 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.

5. Discernment in ministries of healing. As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.

6. Rejection of violence. Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.

7. Freedom of religion and belief. Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one's religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

8. Mutual respect and solidarity. Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.

9. Respect for all people. Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.

10. Renouncing false witness. Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.

11. Ensuring personal discernment. Christians are to acknowledge that changing one's religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.

12. Building interreligious relationships. Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

Recommendations

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, recommends that these bodies:

1. **study** the issues set out in this document and where appropriate formulate guidelines for conduct regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.

2. **build** relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in ongoing interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.

3. **encourage** Christians to strengthen their own religious identity and faith while deepening their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.

4. **cooperate** with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.

5. **call** on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.

6. **pray** for their neighbours and their well-being, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ's mission.

Appendix: Background to the Document

1. In today's world there is increasing collaboration among Christians and between Christians and followers of different religions. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Holy See and the World Council of Churches' Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation (WCC-IRDC) have a history of such collaboration. Examples of themes on which the PCID/WCC-IRDC have collaborated in the past are: Interreligious Marriage (1994–1997), Interreligious Prayer (1997–1998) and African Religiosity (2000–2004). This document is a result of their work together.

2. There are increasing interreligious tensions in the world today, including violence and the loss of human life. Politics, economics and other factors play a role in these tensions. Christians too are sometimes involved in these conflicts, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, either as those who are persecuted or as those participating in violence. In response to this the PCID and WCC-IRDC decided to address the issues involved in a joint process towards producing shared recommendations for conduct on Christian witness. The WCC-IRDC invited the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to participate in this process, and they have gladly done so.

3. Initially two consultations were held: the first, in Lariano, Italy, in May 2006, was entitled "Assessing the Reality" where representatives of different religions shared their views and experiences on the question of conversion. A statement from the consultation reads in part: "We affirm that, while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others' rights and religious sensibilities. Freedom of religion enjoins upon all of us the equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to denigrate, vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming superiority of our faith."

4. The second, an inter-Christian consultation, was held in Toulouse, France, in August 2007, to reflect on these same issues. Questions on Family and Community, Respect for Others, Economy, Marketing and Competition, and Violence and Politics were thoroughly discussed. The pastoral and missionary issues around these topics became the background for theological reflection and for the principles developed in this document. Each issue is important in its own right and deserves more attention that can be given in these recommendations.

5. The participants of the third (inter-Christian) consultation met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25-28, January, 2011 and finalized this document. Published June 2011.

Economy of Life, Justice, and Peace for All

A Call to Action

As a follow-up to the Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE) process, which concluded with the AGAPE Call presented at the 9th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Porto Alegre in 2006, the WCC initiated a program focused on eradicating poverty, challenging wealth accumulation, and safeguarding ecological integrity based on the understanding that Poverty, Wealth, and Ecology (PWE) are integrally related. The PWE program engaged in on-going dialogue between religious, economic, and political actors. Participants included ecumenical leaders, representatives and leaders of churches from all over the world, interfaith partners, leaders of government, and social service organizations and represented a rich variety of the world's regions and nations. Regional studies and consultations took place in Africa (Dar es Salaam) in 2007, Latin America and the Caribbean (Guatemala City) in 2008, Asia and the Pacific (Chiang Mai) in 2009, Europe (Budapest) in 2010, and North America (Calgary) in 2011. The program culminated in a Global Forum and AGAPE celebration in Bogor, Indonesia in 2012. The call to action that follows is the result of a six-year process of consultations and regional studies linking poverty, wealth, and ecology.

Preamble

This call to action comes in a time of dire necessity. People and the Earth are in peril due to the over-consumption of some, growing inequalities as evidenced in the persistent poverty of many in contrast to the extravagant wealth of a few, and intertwined global financial, socio-economic, ecological, and climate crises. Throughout our dialogue, we, as participants in consultations and regional studies expressed differing, sometimes even contrasting, perspectives. We also grew to share a common consciousness that life in the global community as we know it today will come to an end if we fail to confront the sins of egotism, callous disregard, and greed which lie at the root of these crises. With a sense of urgency, we bring this dialogue to the churches as a call to action. This urgency is born of our profound hope and belief: *An Economy of Life is not only possible, it is in the making—and God's justice lies at its very foundation!*

Theological and Spiritual Affirmations of Life

The belief that God created human beings as part of a larger web of life and affirmed the goodness of the whole creation (Genesis 1) lies at the heart of biblical faith. The whole community of living organisms that grows and flourishes is an expression of God's will and works together to bring life from and give life to the land, to connect one generation to the next, and to sustain the abundance and diversity of God's household (*oikos*). Economy in God's household emerges from God's gracious offering of abundant life for *all* (John 10:10). We are inspired by Indigenous Peoples' image of "Land is Life" (*Macliing Dulag*) which recognizes that the lives of people and the land are woven together in mutual interdependence. Thus, we express our belief that the "creation's life and God's life are intertwined" (*Commission on World Mission and Evangelism*) and that God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Christian and many other expressions of spirituality teach us that the "good life" lies not in the competitive quest for possessions, the accumulation of wealth, fortresses and stockpiles of armaments to provide for our security, or by using our own power to lord it over others (James 3: 13-18). We affirm the "good life" (*Sumak Kausay* in Kichua language and the concept of *Waniambi a Tobati Engros* from West Papua) modeled by the communion of the Trinity in mutuality, shared partnership, reciprocity, justice, and loving kindness.

The groaning of the Creation and the cries of people in poverty (Jeremiah 14:2-7) alert us to just how much our current social, political, economic, and ecological state of emergency runs counter to God's vision for life in abundance. Many of us too easily deceive ourselves into thinking that human desires stand at the center of God's universe. We construct divisions, barriers, and boundaries to distance ourselves from neighbor, nature, and God's justice. Communities are fragmented and relationships broken. Our greed and self-centeredness endanger both people and planet Earth.

We are called to turn away from works that bring death and to be transformed into a new life (*metanoia*). Jesus calls humanity to repent from our sins of greed and egotism, to renew our relationships with the others and creation, to restore the image of God, and to begin a new way of life as a partner of God's life affirming mission. The call of the prophets is heard anew from and through people submerged into poverty by our current economic system and most affected by climate change: Do justice and bring a new Earth into being!

Our vision of justice is rooted in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ who drove money changers from the temples (Matthew 21:12), made the weak strong and strong weak (1 Corinthians 1:25-28), and redefined views of poverty and wealth (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus identified himself with the marginalized and excluded people not only out of compassion, but because their lives testified to the sinfulness of the systems and structures. Our faith compels us to seek justice, to witness to the presence of God, and to be part of the lives and struggles of people made weak and vulnerable

by structures and cultures—women, children, people living in poverty in both urban and rural areas, Indigenous Peoples, racially oppressed communities, people with disabilities, Dalits, forced migrant workers, refugees, and religious ethnic minorities. Jesus says “Whatever you did to the least of these you did to me” (Matthew 25: 40).

We must embody a “transformative spirituality” (*Commission on World Mission and Evangelism*) that re-connects us to others (*Ubuntu* and *Sansaeng*), motivates us to serve the common good, emboldens us to stand against all forms of marginalization, seeks the redemption of the whole Earth, resists life-destroying values, and inspires us to discover innovative alternatives. This spirituality provides the means to discover the grace to be satisfied with enough while sharing with any who have need (Acts 4:35).

8. Churches must be challenged to remember, hear, and heed Christ’s call today: “The time has come. . . . The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). We are called to be transformed, to continue Christ’s acts of healing and reconciliation, and “to be what [we] have been sent to be—a people of God and a community in the world” (*Poverty, Wealth, and Ecology in Africa*). Therefore, the Church is God’s agent for transformation. The Church is a community of disciples of Jesus Christ who affirms the fullness of life for all, against any denial of life.

Intertwined and Urgent Crises

9. Our present stark global reality is so fraught with death and destruction that we will not have a future to speak of unless the prevailing development paradigm is radically transformed and justice and sustainability become the driving force for the economy, society, and the Earth. Time is running out.

10. We discern the fatal intertwining of the global financial, socio-economic, climate, and ecological crises accompanied in many places of the world by the suffering of people and their struggle for life. Far-reaching market liberalization, deregulation, and unrestrained privatisation of goods and services are exploiting the whole Creation and dismantling social programs and services and opening up economies across borders to seemingly limitless growth of production. Uncontrolled financial flows destabilize the economies of an increasing number of countries all over the world. Various aspects of climate, ecological, financial, and debt crises are mutually dependent and reinforce each other. They cannot be treated separately anymore.

11. Climate change and threats to the integrity of creation have become the significant challenge of the multifaceted crises that we have to confront. Climate change directly impacts peoples’ livelihoods, endangers the existence of small island states, reduces the availability of fresh water, and diminishes Earth’s biodiversity. It has far reaching impacts on food security, the health of people, and the living habits of growing part of population. Due to climate change, life in its many forms as we know it can be irreversibly changed within the span of a few decades. Climate change leads to the displacement of people, to the increase of forced climate migration, and

armed conflicts. Unprecedented challenges of climate change go hand-in-hand with the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources and leads to the destruction of the Earth and to a substantial change of the habitat. Global warming and ecological destruction become more and more a question of life or death.

12. Our world has never been more prosperous, and, at the same time, more inequitable than it is today. Inequality has reached a level that we can no longer afford to ignore. People who have been submerged into poverty, driven into overwhelming debt, marginalised, and displaced are crying out with a greater sense of urgency and clarity than ever before. The global community must recognize the need for all of us to join hands together and to do justice in the face of unparalleled and catastrophic inequalities in the distribution of wealth.

13. Greed and injustice, seeking easy profit, unjust privileges, and short term advantages at the expense of long term and sustainable aims are root causes of the intertwined crises and cannot be overlooked. These life-destroying values have slowly crept in to dominate today's structures and lead to lifestyles that fundamentally defy the regenerative limits of the Earth and the rights of human beings and other forms of life. Therefore, the crisis has deep moral and existential dimensions. The challenges that are posed are not first and foremost technological and financial, but ethical and spiritual.

14. Market fundamentalism, is more than an economic paradigm, it is a social and moral philosophy. During the last thirty years, market faith based on unbridled competition and expressed by calculating and monetizing all aspects of life has overwhelmed and determined the direction of our systems of knowledge, science, technology, public opinion, media, and even education. This dominating approach has funnelled wealth primarily toward those who are already rich and allowed humans to plunder resources of the natural world far beyond its limits to increase their own wealth. The neoliberal paradigm lacks the self-regulating mechanisms to deal with the chaos it creates with far-reaching impacts especially for impoverished and marginalised.

15. This ideology is permeating all features of life, destroying it from the inside as well as from the outside as it seeps into the lives of families and local communities, wreaks havoc upon the natural environment and traditional life-forms and cultures, and spoils the future of the Earth. The dominant global economic system in this way threatens to put an end to both the conditions for peaceful coexistence and life as we know it.

16. The one-sided belief that social benefits automatically follow from economic (GDP) growth is misguided. Economic growth without constraints strangles the flourishing of our own natural habitat: climate change, deforestation, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss, and so on. The ecological commons have been degraded and appropriated, through the use of military force, by the political and economic elite. Over-consumption based on the costs of uncovered debts generates massive social

and ecological indebtedness, which are owed by the developed countries of global North to the global South, as well as indebtedness over against the Earth is unjust and creates enormous pressure on future generations. The notion that the Earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Psalm 24: 1; 1 Corinthians 10: 26) has been dismissed.

Well-Springs of Justice

17. We confess that churches and church members are complicit in the unjust system when they partake in unsustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption and remain entangled in the economy of greed. There are churches who continue to preach theologies of prosperity, self-righteousness, domination, individualism, and convenience. Some support theologies of charity rather than justice for the impoverished. Others fail to question and even legitimize systems and ideologies founded on unlimited growth and accumulation, and ignore the reality of ecological destruction and the plights of victims of globalization. Some focus on short-term, quantifiable results at the expense of deep-seated, qualitative changes. However, we are also aware that even when many fail to examine and change their own production, consumption, and investment behaviour, an increasing number of churches from all continents are stepping up their efforts and expressing their belief that transformation is possible.

18. Ultimately, our hope springs from Christ's resurrection and promise of life for all. We see evidence of that resurrection hope in the churches and movements committed to making a better world. They are the light and salt of the Earth. We are profoundly inspired by numerous examples of transformation from within the family of churches and in growing movements of women, people in poverty, youth, people with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples who are building an Economy of Life and promoting a flourishing ecology.

19. People of faith, Christian, Muslim, and Indigenous leaders in the Philippines, have given their lives to maintain their connection to and to continue to sustain themselves from the land to which they belong. Churches in South America, Africa, and Asia are conducting audits of external debts and challenging mining and resource-extractive companies to be accountable for human rights violations and environmental damages. Churches in Latin America and Europe are sharing and learning from differing experiences with globalization and working towards defining common but differentiated responsibilities, building solidarity, and strategic alliances. Christians are defining indicators of greed and conducting intentional dialogues with Buddhists and Muslims which discover common ground in the fight against greed. Churches in partnership with civil society are engaged in discussing the parameters of a new international financial and economic architecture, promoting life-giving agriculture and building economies of solidarity.

20. Women have been developing feminist theologies that challenge patriarchal systems of domination as well as feminist economics that embed the economy in society

and society in ecology. Youth are in the forefront of campaigns for simple living and alternative lifestyles. Indigenous Peoples are demanding for holistic reparations and the recognition of Earth rights to address social and ecological debt.

Commitments and Call

21. The 10th General Assembly of the WCC is meeting at a time when the vibrant life of God's whole creation may be extinguished by human methods of wealth creation. God calls us to a radical transformation. Transformation will not be without sacrifice and risk, but our faith in Christ demands that we commit ourselves to be transformative churches and transformative congregations. We must cultivate the moral courage necessary to witness to a spirituality of justice and sustainability and build a prophetic movement for an Economy of Life for all. This entails mobilizing people and communities, providing the required resources (funds, time and capacities), and developing more cohesive and coordinated programs geared toward transforming economic systems, production, distribution, and consumption patterns, cultures, and values.

22. The process of transformation must uphold human rights, human dignity, and [human accountability to all of God's creation]. We have a responsibility that lies beyond our individual selves and national interests to create sustainable structures that will allow future generations to have enough. Transformation must embrace those who suffer the most from systemic marginalization, such as people in poverty, women, Indigenous Peoples, and persons living with disabilities. Nothing without them is for them. We must challenge ourselves and overcome structures and cultures of domination and self-destruction that are rending the social and ecological fabric of life. Transformation must be guided by the mission to heal and renew the whole creation.

23. Therefore, we call on the 10th General Assembly in Busan to commit to strengthening the role of the WCC in convening churches, building a common voice, fostering ecumenical cooperation, and ensuring greater coherence for the realization of an Economy of Life for all. In particular, the critical work on building a new international financial and economic architecture (*WCC Statement on Just Finance and an Economy of Life*), challenging wealth accumulation and systemic greed and promoting anti-greed measures (*Report of the Greed Line Study Group*), redressing ecological debt and advancing eco-justice (*WCC Statement on Eco-justice and Ecological Debt*) must be prioritized and further deepened in the coming years.

24. We further call on the 10th WCC General Assembly in Busan to set aside a period of time between now and the next General Assembly for churches to focus on faith commitments to an "Economy of Life—Living for God's Justice in Creation [Justice and Peace for All]." The process will enable the fellowship of churches to derive fortitude and hope from each other, strengthen unity, and deepen common witness on critical issues that lie at the very core of our faith.

25. The statement on “Just Finance and an Economy of Life” calls for an ethical, just, and democratic international financial regime “grounded on a framework of common values: honesty, social justice, human dignity, mutual accountability, and ecological sustainability” (*WCC Statement on Just Finance and an Economy of Life*). We can and must shape an Economy of Life that engenders participation for all in decision-making processes that impact lives, provides for people’s basic needs through just livelihoods, values and supports social reproduction and care work done primarily by women, and protects and preserves the air, water, land, and energy sources that are necessary to sustain life (*Poverty, Wealth, and Ecology in Asia and the Pacific*). The realization of an Economy of Life will entail a range of strategies and methodologies, including, but not limited to: critical self-reflection and radical spiritual renewal; rights-based approaches; the creation and multiplication of spaces for the voices of the marginalised to be heard in as many arenas as possible; open dialogue between global North and global South, between churches, civil society and state actors, and among various disciplines and world faiths to build synergies for resistance to structures and cultures that deny life in dignity for many; taxation justice; and the organization of a broad platform for common witness and advocacy.

26. The process is envisioned as a flourishing space where churches can learn from each other and from other faith traditions and social movements about how a transformative spirituality can counter and resist life-destroying values and overcome complicity in the economy of greed. It will be a space to learn what an Economy of Life means, theologically and practically, by reflecting together and sharing what concrete changes are needed in various contexts. It will be a space to develop joint campaigns and advocacy activities at the national, regional, and global levels with a view to enabling policy and systemic changes leading to poverty eradication and wealth redistribution; ecologically-respectful production, consumption, and distribution; and, healthy, equitable, post-fossil fuel, and peace-loving societies.

God of Life calls us to justice and peace.

Come to God’s table of sharing!

Come to God’s table of life!

Come to God’s table of love!

An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace

“Guide our feet into the way of peace” —Luke 1:79

P*repared at the culmination of the WCC-sponsored Decade for Overcoming Violence and in advance of the landmark International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, held in Jamaica in May 2011, the Ecumenical Call to Just Peace attempts to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the many dimensions and affronts to peace in today’s world.*

Preamble

This call is a concerted Christian voice addressed primarily to the worldwide Christian community. Inspired by the example of Jesus of Nazareth, it invites Christians to commit themselves to the Way of Just Peace. Aware that the promise of peace is a core value of all religions, it reaches out to all who seek peace according to their own religious traditions and commitments. The call is received by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and commended for study, reflection, collaboration and common action. It is issued in response to a WCC Assembly recommendation in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2006, and builds on insights gained in the course of the ecumenical “Decade to Overcome Violence, 2001-2010: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace.”

Just Peace embodies a fundamental shift in ethical practice. It implies a different framework of analysis and criteria for action. This call signals the shift and indicates some of the implications for the life and witness of the churches. A resource document, the Just Peace Companion, presents more developed biblical, theological and ethical considerations, proposals for further exploration and examples of good practice. It is hoped that these materials, together with the commitments arising from the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica, in May 2011, under the theme “Glory to God and Peace on Earth,” will assist the forthcoming Assembly of the WCC to reach a new ecumenical consensus on justice and peace.

1. **Justice embracing peace.** Without peace, can there be justice? Without justice, can there be peace? Too often, we pursue justice at the expense of peace, and peace at the expense of justice. To conceive peace apart from justice is to compromise the hope that “justice and peace shall embrace” (Ps. 85:10). When justice and peace are lacking, or set in opposition, we need to reform our ways. Let us rise, therefore, and work together for peace and justice.

2. **Let the peoples speak:** There are many stories to tell—stories soaked with violence, the violation of human dignity and the destruction of creation. If all ears

would hear the cries, no place would be truly silent. Many continue to reel from the impact of wars; ethnic and religious animosity, discrimination based on race and caste mar the façade of nations and leave ugly scars. Thousands are dead, displaced, homeless, refugees within their own homeland. Women and children often bear the brunt of conflicts: many women are abused, trafficked, killed; children are separated from their parents, orphaned, recruited as soldiers, abused. Citizens in some countries face violence by occupation, paramilitaries, guerrillas, criminal cartels or government forces. Citizens of many nations suffer governments obsessed with national security and armed might; yet these fail to bring real security, year after year. Thousands of children die each day from inadequate nutrition while those in power continue to make economic and political decisions that favor a relative few.

3 Let the Scriptures speak: The Bible makes justice the inseparable companion of peace (Isaiah 32:17; James 3:18). Both point to right and sustainable relationships in human society, the vitality of our connections with the earth, the “well-being” and integrity of creation. Peace is God’s gift to a broken but beloved world, today as in the lifetime of Jesus Christ: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.” (John 14:27). Through the life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we perceive peace as both promise and present—a hope for the future and a gift here and now.

4. Jesus told us to love our enemies, pray for our persecutors, and not to use deadly weapons. His peace is expressed by the spirit of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11). Despite persecution, he remains steadfast in his active nonviolence, even to death. His life of commitment to justice ends on a cross, an instrument of torture and execution. With the resurrection of Jesus, God confirms that such steadfast love, such obedience, such trust, leads to life. This is true also for us.

5. Wherever there is forgiveness, respect for human dignity, generosity, and care for the weak in the common life of humanity, we catch a glimpse—no matter how dim—of the gift of peace. It follows therefore that peace is lost when injustice, poverty and disease—as well as armed conflict, violence, and war—inflict wounds on the bodies and souls of human beings, on society and on the earth.

6. Yet some texts in the scriptures associate violence with the will of God. On the basis of these texts, sections of our Christian family have legitimized and continue to legitimize the use of violence by themselves and others. We can no longer read such texts without calling attention to the human failure to answer the divine call to peace. Today, we must interrogate texts that speak of violence, hate and prejudice, or call for the wrath of God to annihilate another people. We must allow such texts to teach us to discern when, like the people in the Bible, our purposes, our schemes, our animosities, passions and habits reflect our desires rather than the will of God.

7. Let the church speak: As the Body of Christ, the church is called to be a place of peacemaking. In manifold ways, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, our liturgical traditions illustrate how God’s peace calls us to share peace with each other

and with the world. Yet, more often than not, churches fail to live out their call. Christian disunity, which in many ways undermines the churches' credibility in terms of peacemaking, invites us to a continuous conversion of hearts and minds. Only when grounded in God's peace can communities of faith be "agents of reconciliation and peace with justice in homes, churches and societies as well as in political, social and economic structures at the global level" (WCC Assembly, 1998). The church that lives the peace it proclaims is what Jesus called a city set on a hill for all to see (Matt. 5:14). Believers exercising the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to them by God in Christ point beyond the churches to what God is doing in the world (see 2 Cor. 5:18).

The Way of Just Peace

8 There are many ways of responding to violence; many ways of practicing peace. As members of the community that proclaims Christ the embodiment of peace, we respond to the call to bring the divine gift of peace into contemporary contexts of violence and conflict. So we join the Way of Just Peace, which requires both movement towards the goal and commitment to the journey. We invite people of all world-views and religious traditions to consider the goal and to share of their journeys. Just Peace invites all of us to testify with our lives. To pursue peace we must prevent and eliminate personal, structural and media violence, including violence against people because of race, caste, gender, sexual orientation, culture or religion. We must be responsible to those who have gone before us, living in ways that honor the wisdom of our ancestors and the witness of the saints in Christ. We also have a responsibility to those who are the future: our children, "tomorrow people". Our children deserve to inherit a more just and peaceful world.

9. Nonviolent resistance is central to the Way of Just Peace. Well-organized and peaceful resistance is active, tenacious and effective—whether in the face of governmental oppression and abuse or business practices which exploit vulnerable communities and creation. Recognizing that the strength of the powerful depends on the obedience and compliance of citizens, of soldiers and, increasingly, of consumers, nonviolent strategies may include acts of civil disobedience and non-compliance.

10. On the Way of Just Peace the justifications of armed conflict and war become increasingly implausible and unacceptable. The churches have struggled with their disagreement on this matter for decades; however, the Way of Just Peace now compels us to move forward. Yet, to condemn war is not enough; we must do everything in our power to promote justice and peaceful cooperation among peoples and nations. The Way of Just Peace is fundamentally different from the concept of "just war" and much more than criteria for protecting people from the unjust use of force; in addition to silencing weapons it embraces social justice, the rule of law, respect for human rights and shared human security.

11. Within the limitations of tongue and intellect, we propose that Just Peace may be comprehended as *a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human*

beings from fear and want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation.

Living the Journey

12. Just Peace is a journey into God's purpose for humanity and all creation, trusting that God will "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79).

13. **The journey is difficult.** We recognize that we must face up to truth along the way. We come to realize how often we deceive ourselves and are complicit with violence. We learn to give up looking for justifications of what we have done, and train ourselves in the practice of justice. This means confessing our wrong-doings, giving and receiving forgiveness and learning to reconcile with each other.

14. The sins of violence and war divide communities deeply. Those who have stereotyped and demonized their adversaries will need long-term support and accompaniment in order to work through their condition and be healed. To reconcile with enemies and to restore broken relationships is a lengthy process as well as a necessary goal. In a process of reconciliation there are no longer powerful and powerless, superior and inferior, mighty and lowly. Both victims and victimizers are transformed.

15. Peace agreements are often fragile, temporary, and inadequate. Places where peace is declared may still be filled with hatred. Repairing the damage of war and violence may take longer than the conflict that caused it. But what exists of peace along the way, though imperfect, is a promise of greater things to come.

16. **We journey together.** The church divided about peace, and churches torn by conflict, have little credibility as witnesses or workers for peace. The churches' power to work for and witness to peace depends on finding a common purpose in the service of peace despite differences in ethnic and national identity, and even in doctrine and church order.

17. We travel as a community, sharing an ethic and practice of peace that includes forgiveness and love of enemies, active nonviolence and respect for others, gentleness and mercy. We strive to give of our lives in solidarity with others and for the common good. We pursue peace in prayer, asking God for discernment as we go and for the fruits of the Spirit along the way.

18. In loving communities of faith that journey together, there are many hands to unburden the weary. One may have a witness of hope in the face of despair; another, a generous love for the needy. People who have suffered much find the courage to keep on living despite tragedy and loss. The power of the gospel enables them to leave behind even the unimaginable burdens of personal and collective sin, of anger, bitterness and hatred, which are the legacy of violence and war. Forgiveness does not erase the past; but when we look back we may well see that memories were healed, burdens were set aside and traumas were shared with others and with God. We are able to travel on.

19. **The journey is inviting.** With time and dedication to the cause, more and more people hear the call to become peacemakers. They come from wide circles within the church, from other communities of faith, and from society at large. They work to overcome divisions of race and religion, nation and class; learn to stand with the impoverished; or take up the difficult ministry of reconciliation. Many discover that peace cannot be sustained without caring for creation and cherishing God's miraculous handiwork.

20. Sharing the road with our neighbours, we learn to move from defending what is ours towards living generous, open lives. We find our feet as peacemakers. We discover people from different walks of life. We gain strength in working with them, acknowledging our mutual vulnerability and affirming our common humanity. The other is no longer a stranger or an adversary but a fellow human being with whom we share both the road and the journey.

Signposts on the Way of Just Peace

21. **Just Peace and the transformation of conflict.** Transforming conflicts is an essential part of peacemaking. The process of transformation begins with unmasking violence and uncovering hidden conflict in order to make their consequences visible to victims and communities. Conflict transformation aims at challenging adversaries to redirect their conflicting interests towards the common good. It may have to disturb an artificial peace, expose structural violence or find ways to restore relationships without retribution. The vocation of churches and religious communities is to accompany the victims of violence and be their advocates. It also includes strengthening civic mechanisms for managing conflicts and holding public authorities and other perpetrators accountable—even perpetrators from within church communities. The “rule of law” is a critical framework for all such efforts.

22. **Just Peace and the use of armed force.** Yet there are bound to be times when our commitment to Just Peace is put to a test, since peace is pursued in the midst of violence and under the threat of violent conflict. There are extreme circumstances where, as the last resort and the lesser evil, the lawful use of armed force may become necessary in order to protect vulnerable groups of people exposed to imminent lethal threats. Yet, even then we recognise the use of armed force in situations of conflict as both a sign of serious failure and a new obstacle on the Way of Just Peace.

23. While we acknowledge the authority of the United Nations under international law to respond to threats to world peace in the spirit and the letter of the UN Charter, including the use of military power within the constraints of international law, we feel obliged as Christians to go further—to challenge any theological or *other* justifications of the use of military power and to consider reliance on the concept of a “just war” and its customary use to be obsolete.

24. We acknowledge the moral dilemma inherent in these affirmations. The dilemma is partially resolved if the criteria developed in the just war tradition may still serve as a framework for an ethic of the lawful use of force. That ethic would allow, for example, consideration of “just policing”, the emergence of a new norm in international law around the “responsibility to protect” and the exercise in good faith of the peacemaking mechanisms enshrined in the UN Charter. Conscientious objection to service in armed forces should be recognized as a human right. Much else that is antithetical to peace and the international rule of law must be categorically and finally rejected, starting with the possession or use of all weapons of mass destruction. Our common life invites convergence in thought, action and law for the making and building of peace. As Christians we therefore commit to a transformed ethical discourse that guides the community in the praxis of nonviolent conflict transformation and in fostering conditions for progress toward peace.

25. **Just Peace and human dignity.** Our scriptures teach us that humanity is created in the likeness of God and is graced with dignity and rights. The recognition of this dignity and these rights is central to our understanding of Just Peace. We affirm that universal human rights are the indispensable international legal instrument for protecting human dignity. To that end we hold states responsible for ensuring the rule of law and guaranteeing civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights. However, we observe that abuse of human rights is rampant in many societies, in war and in peace, and that those who should be held accountable benefit from impunity. In response we must reach out in friendship and cooperation to all partners in civil society, including people of other religions, who seek to defend human rights and strengthen the international rule of law.

26. **Just Peace and caring for creation.** God made all things good and has entrusted humankind with the responsibility to care for creation (Gen. 2:4b-9). The exploitation of the natural world and the misuse of its finite resources disclose a pattern of violence that often benefits some people at the expense of many. We know that all creation groans to be set free, not least from the abusive actions of humans (Romans 8:22). As people of faith, we acknowledge our guilt for the damage we have done to creation and all living things, through action and our inaction. The vision of Just Peace is much more than the restoration of right relationships in community; it also compels human beings to care for the earth as our home. We must trust in God’s promise and strive for an equitable and just sharing of the earth’s resources.

27. **Building cultures of peace.** We are committed to building cultures of peace in cooperation with people of other religious traditions, convictions and worldviews. In this commitment we seek to respond to the gospel imperatives of loving our neighbours, rejecting violence and seeking justice for the poor, the disinherited and the oppressed (Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 4:18). The collective effort relies on the gifts of men and women, the young and the old, leaders and workers. We acknowledge

and value women's gifts for building peace. We recognize the unique role of religious leaders, their influence in societies and the potentially liberating power of religious wisdom and insight in promoting peace and human dignity. At the same time, we lament the cases where religious leaders have abused their power for selfish ends or where cultural and religious patterns have contributed to violence and oppression. We are especially concerned about aggressive rhetoric and teaching propagated under the guise of religion and amplified by the power of media. While we acknowledge with deep humility Christian complicity—past and present—in the manifestation of prejudice and other attitudes that fuel hate, we commit ourselves to build communities of reconciliation, acceptance and love.

28. Education for peace. Education inspired by the vision of peace is more than instruction in the strategies of peace work. It is a profoundly spiritual formation of character that involves family, church, and society. Peace education teaches us to nurture the spirit of peace, instill respect for human rights, and imagine and adopt alternatives to violence. Peace education promotes active nonviolence as an unequalled power for change that is practiced and valued in different traditions and cultures. Education of character and conscience equips people to seek peace and pursue it.

Seeking and Pursuing Just Peace Together

29 The Christian pilgrimage toward peace presents many opportunities to build visible and viable communities for peace. A church that prays for peace, serves its community, uses money ethically, cares for the environment and cultivates good relations with others can become an instrument for peace. Furthermore, when churches work in a united way for peace, their witness becomes more credible (John 17:21).

— For Peace in the Community —

So that all may live free from fear (Micah 4:4)

“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness...?”

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” “Pray for those who persecute you.”

(Micah 6:8; Luke 10:27; Matthew 5:44)

30. Global challenges. All too many communities are divided by economic class, by race, color and caste, by religion and gender. Homes and schools are plagued by violence and abuse. Women and children are violated physically, psychologically and by cultural practice. Drug and alcohol abuse and suicide are forms of self-destruction on a large scale. Workplaces and houses of worship are scarred by conflicts within the community. Prejudice and racism deny human dignity. Workers are exploited and industries pollute the environment. Health care is inaccessible for many and affordable for only a few. There is a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Traditions that bind communities together are weakened by commercial influences and imported lifestyles. Media, games and entertainment that promote violence, war

and pornography distort community values and invite destructive behaviors. When violence occurs, young males will generally be perpetrators as well as victims and women and children will find themselves at greatest risk.

31. Main directions. Churches become builders of a culture of peace as they engage, cooperate and learn from one another. Members, families, parishes and communities will be involved. The tasks include learning to prevent conflicts and transform them; to protect and empower those who are marginalized; to affirm the role of women in resolving conflict and building peace and include them in all such initiatives; to support and participate in nonviolent movements for justice and human rights; and to give peace education its rightful place in churches and schools. A culture of peace requires churches and other faith and community groups to challenge violence wherever it happens: this concerns structural and habitual violence as well as the violence that pervades media entertainment, games and music. Cultures of peace are realized when all, especially women and children, are safe from sexual violence and protected from armed conflict, when deadly weapons are banned and removed from communities, and domestic violence is addressed and stopped.

32 If churches are to be peacemakers, Christians must first strive for unity in action for peace. Congregations must unite to break the culture of silence about the violence within church life and unite to overcome habitual disunity in the face of the violence within our communities.

— **For Peace with the Earth** —

so that life is sustained

*God created the world and made it whole, offering humanity life in all its fullness.
Yet sin breaks relationships between people and with the created order. Creation longs for
the children of God to be stewards of life, of justice and of love.*

(Gen. 2:1-3; John 10:10; Romans 8:20-22)

33. Global challenges. Human beings are to respect and protect creation. But greed at many levels, self-centeredness and a belief in unlimited growth have brought exploitation and destruction on the earth and its creatures. The cries of the poor and vulnerable echo in the groans of the earth. Excessive consumption of fossil fuels and other limited resources is doing violence to people and the planet. Climate change as a consequence of human lifestyles poses a global threat to just peace. Global warming, the rise of sea levels and the increasing frequency and intensity of droughts and floods affect especially the most vulnerable populations in the world. Indigenous people are exemplary in sustainable living and, along with inhabitants of coral atolls and impoverished coastal communities, they are among those who contribute the least to global warming. Yet they are the ones who will suffer the most.

34. Main directions. To care for God's precious gift of creation and to strive for ecological justice are key principles of just peace. For Christians they are also an expression of the gospel's call to repent from wasteful use of natural resources and be

converted daily. Churches and their members must be cautious with earth's resources, especially with water. We must protect the populations most vulnerable to climate change and help to secure their rights.

35 Church members and parishes around the world must self-critically assess their environmental impact. Individually and in communities, Christians need to learn to live in ways that allow the entire earth to thrive. Many more "eco-congregations" and "green" churches are needed locally. Much ecumenical advocacy is needed globally for the implementation of international agreements and protocols among governments and businesses in order to ensure a more inhabitable earth not only for us but also for all creatures and for future generations.

— **For Peace in the Marketplace** —

so that all may live with dignity

In wondrously creating a world with more than enough natural riches to support countless generations of human beings and other living things, God makes manifest a vision for all people to live in fullness of life and with dignity, regardless of class, gender, religion, race or ethnicity. (Ps. 24:1; Ps. 145:15; Isaiah 65:17-23)

36. **Global challenges.** Even as tiny global elites accumulate unimaginable wealth, more than 1.4 billion humans subsist in extreme poverty. There is something profoundly wrong when the wealth of the world's three richest individuals is greater than the gross domestic product of the world's 48 poorest countries. Ineffective regulation, innovative but immoral financial instruments, distorted reward structures and other systemic factors exacerbated by greed trigger global financial crises that wipe out millions of jobs and impoverish tens of millions of people. The widening socio-economic chasms within and between nations raise serious questions about the effectiveness of market-oriented economic liberalization policies in eradicating poverty and challenge the pursuit of growth as an overriding objective for any society. Over-consumption and deprivation are forms of violence. Global military expenditures— now higher than during the Cold War—do little to enhance international peace and security and much to endanger it; weapons do not address the main threats to humanity but use vast resources that could be rededicated to that end. Such disparities pose fundamental challenges to justice, social cohesion and the public good within what has become a global human community.

37. **Main directions.** Peace in the marketplace is nurtured by creating "economies of life". Their essential foundations are equitable socio-economic relationships, respect for workers rights, the just sharing and sustainable use of resources, healthy and affordable food for all, and broad participation in economic decision-making.

38. Churches and their partners in society must advocate for the full implementation of economic, social and cultural rights. Churches must promote alternative economic policies for sustainable production and consumption, redistributive growth, fair taxes, fair trade, and the universal provisioning of clean water, clean air and other

common goods. Regulatory structures and policies must reconnect finance not only to economic production but also to human need and ecological sustainability. Deep cuts in military spending should be made in order to fund programs that advance the goals of sufficient food, shelter, education and health for all people and that provide remedies for climate change. Human and ecological security must become a greater economic priority than national security.

— **For Peace among the Peoples** —

so that human lives are protected

We are made in the image of the Giver of Life, forbidden to take life, and charged to love even enemies. Judged with equity by a righteous God, nations are called to embrace truth in the public square, turn weapons into farm implements, and not learn war any more. (Exodus 20:17; Isaiah 2:1-4; Matthew 5:44)

39. Global challenges. Human history is illuminated by courageous pursuits of peace and the transformation of conflict, advances in the rule of law, new norms and treaties that govern the use of force, and now judicial recourse against abuses of power that involve even heads of state. History is stained, however, by the moral and political opposites of these—including xenophobia, intercommunal violence, hate crimes, war crimes, slavery, genocide and more. Although the spirit and logic of violence is deeply rooted in human history, the consequences of such sins have increased exponentially in recent times, amplified by violent applications of science, technology and wealth.

40. A new ecumenical agenda for peace today is even more urgent because of the nature and the scope of such dangers now. We are witnesses to prodigious increases in the human capacity to destroy life and its foundations. The scale of the threat, the collective human responsibility behind it, and the need for a concerted global response are without precedent. Two threats of this magnitude— nuclear holocaust and climate change—could destroy much life and all prospects for Just Peace. Both are violent misuses of the energy inherent in Creation. One catastrophe stems from the proliferation of weapons, especially *weapons of mass destruction*; the other threat may be understood as the proliferation of *lifestyles of mass extinction*. The international community struggles to gain control of both threats with little success.

41. Main directions. To respect the sanctity of life and build peace among peoples, churches must work to strengthen international human rights law as well as treaties and instruments of mutual accountability and conflict resolution. To prevent deadly conflicts and mass killings, the proliferation of small arms and weapons of war must be stopped and reversed. Churches must build trust and collaborate with other communities of faith and people of different worldviews to reduce national capacities for waging war, eliminate weapons that put humanity and the planet at unprecedented risk, and generally delegitimize the institution of war.

42. **A people born to longing.** Our home is not what it might and will be. While life in God's hands is irrepressible, peace does not yet reign. The principalities and powers, though not sovereign, still enjoy their victories, and we will be restless and broken until peace prevails. Thus our peace building will of necessity criticize, denounce, advocate, and resist as well as proclaim, empower, console, reconcile, and heal. Peacemakers will speak against and speak for, tear down and build up, lament and celebrate, grieve and rejoice. Until our longing joins our belonging in the consummation of all things in God, the work of peace will continue as the flickering of sure grace.

Theological Perspectives on *Diakonia* in the Twenty-First Century

Formulated at a conference jointly organized by three related programmes of the WCC—Justice and Diakonia, Just and Inclusive Communities, and Mission and Evangelism—and held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2-6 June 2012, the following document re-examines the whole notion and practice of *diakonia*—the participation of Christians in serving vulnerable people—in the churches and ecumenical bodies, especially in light of the massive social, economic, and religious changes taking place around the globe today.

This theological reflection is intentionally inductive—contextual and experiential. The 50 participants involved in various diaconal initiatives in about 25 countries brought with them some hard questions as well as insights on new possibilities, arising out of their engagement in the lives of marginalized people. They put forth some of the following challenges to be taken into account in this reflection on *diakonia* in the Twenty-First Century. These were: the institutionalization of injustice, particularly in the present regime of neo-liberal economic globalization; the reality of climate change and its impact; wars and conflicts and the consequent destruction, trauma and broken relationships; the fragmentation of communities due to aggressive assertion of religious and ethnic identities; the dispossession and displacement of vulnerable people; the violence against many sections of society, especially of women, children, people with disabilities and the aged; malnutrition, disease and the HIV and Aids pandemic; and the marginalization of ethnic and religious minorities, Indigenous peoples, the Afro-descendent communities, the Dalits in South Asia and others experiencing discrimination for various reasons.

Sri Lanka, a nation ravaged by prolonged war and conflict, struggling to find possibilities for healing and hope, provided the context of this conference. The conference was hosted by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka that represents the witness of churches - small, on the margins with limited space for public engagement, and each with a distinct identity, yet united in their witness to heal and reconcile. The conference, therefore, opted to look at *diakonia* from three specific vantage points as elaborated below:

First, it pursued its reflection by holding *diakonia* as a primary expression of the churches' participation in the ongoing mission of God. This option was chosen to assert that churches are not to be exclusive, inward-looking religious communities, but have a calling to be engaged with the world. The event also responded to the common tendency to view and pursue *diakonia* in institutional forms and to respond only to those challenges that these forms would allow.

Second, it attempted to re-imagine *diakonia* from the vantage point of those who are, in many cases, traditionally considered as recipients or objects of churches' *diakonia* - the vulnerable and marginalized communities. Besides the theological reasons, this option was taken to search for more people-based and less resource-intensive forms of *diakonia*, arising out of their aspirations, and in doing so to ensure their agency in redefining *diakonia* in today's world. It was also to suggest a possible shift from patronizing interventions to catalytic accompaniment.

And third, in view of the fact that many of the current models of *diakonia* were shaped by the perceptions and preferences of the churches in the geo-political North, the conference wanted to explore what *diakonia* would be if seen from the vantage point of the global South where the dynamics of life are radically different. Incidentally, more Christians live in the South than the North, mostly as fragmented minority communities, often in hostile contexts, as socially and economically marginalized, and amid intense struggles for life. This preference for the South does not imply that the global North lacks these same challenges or possibilities. Neither does it imply a rejection of the contributions of churches in the North to *diakonia* and this reflection. This choice was made deliberately, in view of the variety of life-expressions as well as Christian expressions that the South offers, and in an effort to address some of the complex questions arising there about the human predicament and the fate and future of the earth.

The following is a summary of reflections on the theme as seen from the vantage points mentioned above.

Church, Mission and *Diakonia*

"As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21).

1. God's mission is about the realization of God's vision for the world, a world in which "God rejoices because there shall no more be the sound of weeping, or the cry of distress, where people shall not die young, where people build houses and live in them and enjoy the fruits of their labour, where people will not die of calamities, and where the aggressors are transformed so that all shall live in peace." (Isaiah 65:17-25) This eschatological hope of a "new heaven and earth" (Revelation 21:1) is not passive but constantly breaks into our present, inviting people to become co-workers with God by realizing it in every here and now. This mission of God is dynamic and inclusive of all people and forces that uphold the sanctity and integrity of God's creation.

2. The Church, as a community called into being through baptism and led by the Holy Spirit, participates in this mission through its very being, proclamation and service. Commonly understood as service, *diakonia* is a way of living out faith and hope as a community, witnessing to what God has done in Jesus Christ.

3. Through its *diakonia*, the Church witnesses to God's purpose in Jesus Christ and participates in God's mission. In its *diakonia*, the Church follows the way of its Servant Lord who claimed that he came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10:45). In Christ, the Church is called to hold forth the power of service over the power of domination, so that life, in all its fullness, may be possible for all. Therefore, the Church presents itself not only as a sign of the coming reign of God but also of the way leading to it, Christ's way.

4. As a diaconal community, the church is called to live out its Christian witness both at local and larger as well as personal and corporate levels. This is to be reflected in all the different expressions of being Church: in worship and proclamation, in practices of hospitality and visitation (Hebrews 13:1-3), in public witness and advocacy. As "liturgy after the Liturgy"—empowered by what faith celebrates - *diakonia* involves actions of care, relief and service, but goes further and addresses the root causes of injustice embedded in oppressive systems and structures. Sustained action for justice is upheld by our faith in and allegiance to the God of life when faced with the death-dealing powers of Empire.

5. Every Christian community in every geo-political and socio-economic context is called to be a diaconal community, witnessing to God's transforming grace through acts of service that hold forth the promise of God's reign. It heals relationships, and nurtures partnerships for the sake of God's good creation. In bringing people and communities together around issues of life and of justice and peace, *diakonia* stands out as a reason for unity and as such also needs to be seen as its instrument. As an expression of participation in God's mission in the world, *diakonia* is beyond all parochial interests or the agenda of religious propagation.

6. Some of the larger institutional expressions of *diakonia* must be affirmed for their role in enabling human resource development, meeting human need in crisis situations, and for advancing the causes of justice and economic development of the vulnerable people. Since some of these and other traditional forms of *diakonia* have tended to rely on infrastructure, institutions, expertise and resources, many Christian communities have come to see themselves either as supporters or as beneficiaries and rarely as participants in *diakonia*. Such specialized ministries do not replace the mandate of every Christian community to be diaconal.

7. As a response in faith to the hope of the coming reign of God, the signs of which are present in all experiences of hope amidst turmoil, in actions that heal and nurture people and relationships, in struggles that seek justice and affirm truth, *diakonia* has to be dynamic, contextual, and versatile. It must effect partnerships, not

only at the level of global or larger church structures, but also among congregations, special ministries, and networks of people committed to values of justice, peace and human dignity at local, regional and national levels.

The *Diakonia* of the Marginalized People

“The stone that was rejected” (Psalm 118:22, Acts 4:11).

8. For many, *diakonia* is a Christian response to people in need and situations of crisis, and is characterized by actions of reaching out to them from locations of power and privilege with resources and infrastructure. Such an understanding has often resulted in viewing those in need as objects or recipients of *diakonia*. Many philanthropic or humanitarian initiatives are also guided by such attitudes. Such an understanding has not only failed to acknowledge the *diakonia* of the marginalized people but also treated them as mere objects and recipients. Some forms of *diakonia* have been pursued without attitudes of respect, awareness of the potential or a spirit of partnership with local communities.

9. Some diaconal initiatives which began with the intention of serving the weak and the vulnerable people, over the years have become instruments of service to the privileged and affluent sections of the society. Unfortunately, service to the poor is hardly the objective of some Christian educational and health institutions in many parts of the world today. Furthermore, the overwhelming culture of globalization with its accents on profit-making and consumerism has also introduced new meanings to service, resulting in the co-option of the traditional service structures into meeting the requirements of economic activity and interests. Because of this trend, reaching out to those disempowered by social and economic structures does not seem a priority for some churches anymore. Some other diaconal initiatives have also been used as means of proselytism. *Diakonia* is integral to who we are as Christians, and diaconal initiatives should not be misused. Repenting for these and other ways in which the churches have deviated from the path of God’s mission is urgent and essential for their credibility and integrity.

10. Even if they do not have the material and financial resources to do *diakonia* in the way many churches are accustomed to, marginalized people, through their lives and everyday resistance, practise *diakonia*. They testify to the sinfulness of the world, holding it accountable for its complicity and silence. Therefore, God opts for the marginalized people not because they are weak by choice, nor because of paternalistic compassion, but primarily because their lives point towards the urgent need of social transformation.

11. The world may tend to see the margins as places of disgrace and powerlessness; however, the biblical witness points towards God who is always present in the struggles of those unjustly pushed to the margins of society. It gives several accounts of God’s attention and caring love to people in situations of oppression and conse-

quent deprivation. God hears the cry of the oppressed and responds by sustaining and accompanying them in their journey towards liberation. (Exodus 3:7-8). This is the *diakonia* of God: a *diakonia* of liberation as well as of restoring dignity, and ensuring justice and peace.

12. "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46) This critical question indicates the decisive entry point that God made for this mission when sending the Son into the world. Jesus announces his *diakonia* as one that liberates the oppressed, opens the eyes that are blind, and heals the sick. (Luke 4: 16f) By asserting time and again that he has come to seek the lost and the least, Jesus constantly locates himself among the marginalized of his time. His *diakonia* rejects abusive power (Luke 4:1-12), refuses to be co-opted by the prevailing logic of power (Mark 10.45) and defies oppressive religious traditions (Luke 11:37-54). Instead, his *diakonia* opts to restore the ones who are denied life, even if these actions ultimately led him to the cross. [e.g. the man with the withered hand (Mark 3:1-6)]. Through such an option, he exposes and confronts the forces of marginalization. To that extent, the margins are the privileged spaces for God's compassion and justice and of God's presence in vulnerability and resistance. Here the sick were healed, the domination of evil spirits broken, the dignity of the marginalized defended, and the disciples empowered with life-affirming values for ministry.

13. Furthermore, marginalized people are not to be seen always as those in need and despair. They resist injustice and oppression in their own ways and through their struggles for life, justice, dignity and rights for themselves and for all, unveil the presence and power of God in their lives. For example, people with disabilities are promoting the values of sensitivity and partnership; the Afro-descendent communities, the Dalits and other discriminated communities are calling churches and communities to resist and overcome cultures and practices that discriminate and dehumanize millions of people; the Indigenous peoples are advocating for the value of the interconnectedness of life, even as their own lives and lands are threatened; young people in disadvantaged situations are resisting policies that deprive them of opportunities for education and employment; and vulnerable migrant workers, through their struggles for human rights, dignity and justice, are challenging political systems that deny them basic human rights in the name of national interests. There are many such expressions in every part of the world, in the global south as well as in the global north. In all such expressions, in their actions and allegiances towards liberation and transformation, the churches today have new possibilities of *diakonia* as well as of new ecclesial self-discovery. *Diakonia* of the marginalized, then, is crucial for church's engagement in realizing God's *oikoumene*, the alternative vision of the world.

14. From a theological perspective the language of marginalized people may be conceived as a way of labelling or of reducing people to victims of systems and structures. *Diakonia*, however, must acknowledge the destructive and dehumanizing

power of such structures, not only in order to point to the tragic effects of their reality, but also to the demands, legitimate rights and power of marginalized people to transform the world. In a world where people are treated as objects and commodities and are also mistreated on account of their identities such as gender, ethnicity, colour, caste, age, disability, sexual orientation and economic and cultural locations, *diakonia* must build persons and communities, affirm the dignity of all people, and transform cultures and practices that discriminate and abuse some people.

15. Marginalized people, through their yearnings for life with dignity and justice and through their participation in movements, are offering alternative visions of a world free of forces that deny justice, dignity and life for many. To many churches this is a demanding challenge but even more a liberating promise for renewing traditional models of diaconal practice and theological reflection, towards new patterns of inclusiveness, sharing and transformative action. Jesus too found himself among the marginalized of his time as he began his ministry of announcing the coming reign of God. A majority of Christian congregations around the world are made up of people who are mostly poor and marginalized on account of several factors, and this reality needs to be seen as an opportunity and a resource for more authentic ecumenical engagement. Partnership and solidarity with the marginalized alone will ensure the credibility of the churches' claim of their participation in the mission of God.

***Diakonia* for Transformation**

"To do justice and to love kindness" (Micah 6:8).

16. *Diakonia*, then, is service that makes the celebration of life possible for all. It is faith effecting change, transforming people and situations so that God's reign may be real in the lives of all people, in every here and now.

17. The God of the Bible seeks and effects change in concrete situations of life, especially of those who are denied the same. Therefore, *diakonia* as an action in God's love must strive to transform people, systems and cultures. God announces judgment upon those who abuse power and deny justice to the poor. Jesus too challenged unjust systems and practices and called the powerful and privileged who benefit from such, to repent and be transformed by the values of love, sharing, truthfulness and humility.

18. *Diakonia* is not limited to binding the wounds of the victims or doing acts of compassion. While such expressions of love and care are necessary, they do not preclude efforts aimed at confronting and transforming the forces and factors which cause suffering and deprivation. Diaconal ministry thus involves both comforting the victim and confronting "the powers and principalities" (Ephesians 6:12). It must heal the victim as well as the one who victimizes. It is a radical spirituality of struggle and commitment for transformation of sinful social structures and for the liberation of their victims. Without transformative work, *diakonia* would be a mere expression of service, subtly serving the interests of the oppressive and exploitative powers by

covering up their complicity. If it does not challenge injustice and abuse of power, it ceases to be authentic *diakonia*.

19. *Diakonia* also does not settle for superficial expressions of peace and good will. Resonating with the indignation of prophet Jeremiah, “They have healed the brokenness of my people superficially, saying, ‘Peace, peace’, when there is no peace.” (Jer.6:14), *diakonia* exposes such attempts of the powerful and privileged, often done to sustain the unjust and oppressive status quo. *Diakonia* is prophetic action which also involves speaking truth to powers.

20. In today’s world, *diakonia* may also imply political action, confronting unjust military and economic powers; questioning the state policies that seem to invest more on defence rather than on people’s basic needs and human development; challenging anti-immigration laws that deny the dispossessed and the displaced their right to live; opposing development policies that destroy the earth and its people; and in working with and advocating for the rights of people who have been made vulnerable by social and economic structures.

21. *Diakonia* may also imply social action, aimed at dismantling oppressive cultures such as patriarchy, racism, casteism, xenophobia and other discriminatory and exclusionary practices. The churches too need to repent for the presence and practice of these cultures right within and for their derisive attitudes and theological constructions that stigmatize certain sections of society.

22. However, *diakonia* does not merely resist and confront evil but also proposes alternatives to the ways in which human beings relate with one another and with nature. To that extent, *diakonia* is transformative (Romans 12:2). Jesus, our Servant Lord, called those who followed him to be the salt of the earth, the light, and the leaven of the world (Matthew 5:13,14); in other words, to be agents of change and transformation. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the *diakonia* of the early Christian community resisted the power of the Empire by proposing alternative values and visions of the world. *Diakonia*, then, besides being an expression of support and help to those in need, is essentially a creative action meant to bring about the world God so desires.

Challenges and Opportunities

“*I am about to do a new thing!*” (Isaiah 43:19).

21. In addition to the challenges, the context of the Twenty-First century presents numerous initiatives and struggles of people for freedom, justice, dignity and life in many parts of the world. Here lie new opportunities for churches to attempt *diakonia* in many creative ways while rediscovering themselves afresh in the process. There may be many other opportunities and possibilities, specific to each context. The following insightful suggestions, shared during the conference, may be considered for further reflection and action:

a. *Diakonia* of the local congregations

1. Become aware of the social, political and economic realities of life and people within which they exist as diaconal communities. Christian education must aim at cultivating a sense of social responsibility.

2. Strive to recognize and affirm the theological significance of *diakonia* through worship and proclamation. Church needs to be a training ground for creative engagement with the world.

3. Initiate people-level action on environmental issues.

4. Firmly respond to the reality of abuse and violence against women at home, community and church.

5. Educate people against alcoholism and substance abuse, enabling the victims to overcome these conditions.

6. Be and become open, just, hospitable and inclusive communities. Churches must strive to become discrimination-free zones and sanctuaries of safety and hope.

7. Build capacities among members, especially in areas of counselling, de-addiction programmes, educational and employment opportunities, gender sensitivity etc.

8. Seek cooperation and collaboration with other churches, other faith communities, and people's initiatives on relevant issues of people and life in each specific context. This may also include affirming diaconal actions as well as sharing resources.

b. *Diakonia* of the larger church bodies

1. Encourage, support and accompany local churches as they respond to their own issues by developing and implementing diaconal work.

2. Encourage expressions of solidarity and mutual responsibility, especially by bridging the divide between urban and rural, affluent and poor, established and migrant congregations, among others.

3. Address issues of discrimination and exclusion within the church itself and launch campaigns to end the same, both within and outside.

4. Develop policies and programmes around issues of HIV/AIDS, disability, poverty, food security and environmental stewardship.

5. Recognize, strengthen and support prophetic voices and initiatives that strive to uphold the causes of human rights, justice and rights of the marginalized communities.

6. Build partnerships with regional and national level churches and organizations with a view to encourage grassroots, people-based initiatives.

7. Encourage theological institutions to introduce *diakonia* as a discipline wherever necessary, and also to initiate advanced study and research on relevant diaconal practices.

8. Develop easily readable Bible study materials on *diakonia* for pastors and lay people.

9. Engage in diaconal actions with people from different faith communities.

c. *Diakonia* of the WCC and similar international organizations

1. Recognize *diakonia* as an essential ecclesial expression, and that their organizations' primary calling is not only to attempt certain diaconal actions on the behalf of churches but necessarily to accompany the initiatives of the churches. This may also include capacity-building, fostering partnerships, and mobilization of resources wherever necessary.

2. Journey with the people, communities and congregations in their struggles against discrimination and marginalization.

3. Advocate for the causes of justice, dignity and peace and for the victims of aggression, displacement and dispossession.

4. Support and accompany grassroots level people's initiatives for change. Some of these may not have the needed visibility and infrastructural presence to attract support.

5. Facilitate dialogue with international diaconal agencies to encourage patterns of church cooperation and to foster mutual accountability.

6. Prepare resources and facilitate processes for inter-church exchange of theological support for creative diaconal engagement in different contexts.

7. Recognize the power of solidarity in struggle for transformation and therefore, enable, encourage and nurture such expressions of solidarity at all levels.

22. Understood this way at this moment in time, *Diakonia* may sometimes involve confrontation with powers vested in the status quo. Risk may be inevitable at times, requiring an attitude of love, humility, courage and commitment. Jesus insists that discipleship seeks expression under the shadow of the cross (Matthew 16: 24). Therefore, as communities called together to a vocation of service in the way of Christ, who laid down his life while serving, the churches may encourage one another in the words of the First Letter of Peter: "Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make the defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (I Peter 3: 13-16).

Ecumenical Covenant on Theological Education

Leadership Formation in the Changing Landscapes of World Christianity

The following public statement was formulated by the ETE Accompaniment Group during its meeting in Bossey Ecumenical Institute 14-17 March 2012. It was recommended to and endorsed by the WCC Central Committee of WCC in August 2012 to be received and recommended for dialogue and study to WCC member churches and their dialogue with regional associations of theological schools in the process leading to the assembly in Busan. The statement aims at highlighting the strategic significance of ecumenical formation and theological education for the future of the ecumenical movement and reminding the churches of their responsibilities in the context of emerging challenges for the 21st century.

I. The Legacy of Ecumenical Commitment for Theological Education

The concern for ecumenical leadership formation and theological education has been an integral part of the ecumenical movement from its early beginnings and an essential dimension of the missionary engagement of Christian churches all around the globe. From very early beginnings a concern for the promotion of education was a key feature of Christian mission through the centuries. Many of the educational structures and institutions in the countries both of the North and the South owe their existence the pioneering work of Christian missionaries and educators. It was the Edinburgh 1910 world mission conference which has put missionary training and theological education firmly on the agenda of the ecumenical movement. Already Edinburgh 1910 highlighted

- the strategic importance of (theological) education as an indispensable element of any Christian mission both in the past and in the future;
- called for a massive quality improvement in training of missionaries which should be drastically upgraded in academic level and enlarged in terms of the disciplines covered;
- the call for intentionally moving beyond denominational lines in theological education and promoting the establishment of centralized mission colleges jointly supported by different denominations and mission agencies;

- the need to deliberately move towards theological and Christian education in vernacular languages.

It was due to the sustained commitment of the International Missionary Council (IMC) that the passion and zeal for translating the message in new cultural contexts by establishing institutions of missionary training and ministerial formation has found visible expression in the ecumenical movement.¹ When the WCC was founded in 1948 the Amsterdam founding message stated: “Here at Amsterdam we have *covenanted ourselves afresh to Him* and have *covenanted with one another* in constituting this World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together.” We affirm that this covenant for all of WCC’s future includes the binding obligation to deepen mutual solidarity and collaboration for strengthening theological education and ministerial formation in the churches. Four different instruments were created to serve the needs for ecumenical leadership formation, Christian education and theological training in the churches brought together in the fellowship of churches in WCC:

- the Theological Education Fund (1958-1976) of IMC in London, which brought together more than 100 mission partners all around the world for joint action in building up and strengthening capacities for theological education in the churches of the South and promoting contextualization of theological education. TEF was integrated into WCC in 1976 to give shape to the subsequent programs of PTE and ETE which served programmatic work on ecumenical theological education and curriculum innovation for institutions of theological education in the South and has benefitted through its programs, publications (Ministerial Formation) and project grants more than 1200 theological schools and their theological students all around the world;
- The World Sunday School Association which gave rise to the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) which was integrated into WCC in 1971, in order to strengthen ecumenical collaboration and conceptual understanding of programs for Christian education in schools and in Sunday School Movements;
- The Ecumenical Institute of Bossey which was even founded prior to WCC in 1946 in order to serve as privileged ecumenical conference and study centre and has offered ecumenical formation programs for around 3000 theological students since then;
- The WCC Scholarship program which has offered scholarships to both theological and non-theological study programs for younger Christian leaders for more than 60 years.

In integrating the tradition and constitutional mandates both of TEF and WCCE the WCC has taken up the moral and institutional obligation to continue that heritage of work for ecumenical formation, Christian education and ministerial formation while seeking new and creative ways of implementing this task under the new

1. For historical details see: Christina Lienemann, *Training for Relevant Ministry*, 1996 and Dietrich Werner, *Promoting ecumenical theological education in World Christianity—an unfinished agenda*, in: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/promoting-theological-edu.html>.

conditions and challenges of the 21st century. While each program of WCC has its own implications for ecumenical formation, Christian education and theological education history has shown that churches also need a visible and distinct programmatic activity in WCC to give shape to common action, ecumenical coherence and international collaboration in these areas. How this can be achieved institutionally and continued programmatically without leaving out or weakening one of the essential components and how to find proper collaboration and support for this work in WCC is a matter of concern to be discussed in the process towards Busan.

II. The Strategic Role of Theological Education for the Future of World Christianity

The commemoration of 100 years of Christian mission during the Edinburgh 2010 conference has affirmed again the strategic role of theological education for the future of World Christianity.² The preparatory study leading to the Edinburgh 2010 section on theological education has stated “that some major advancement was made in some areas, namely the creation and pluralisation of independent institutions of theological education in the churches of the South. Also some major efforts have been made in order to work out indigenous and contextualized models of theological education. At the same time it is ...(obvious) that new and old challenges in the area of theological education continue and persist to hamper the relevance and accessibility of theological education for Christian mission today. Some crucial challenges seem to be even more dramatic than 100 hundred years ago. Thus there is an urgency for increasing coordinated efforts for international networking and solidarity in promoting theological education in the fellowship of churches. Some would speak of an *emerging global crisis in theological education* which is becoming obvious increasingly and will be marking the next decades in the 21st century, having the potential of endangering the very future and integrity of World Christianity.”³

It has become a common conviction therefore, “that the concern for the promotion of theological education has been and should remain a priority area of joint witness and cooperation within the global missionary (and ecumenical) movement. . . . The task for providing accessible and contextually relevant forms of theological education for each part of the worldwide fellowship of Christian churches is far from being accomplished. On the contrary, at the beginning of 21st century we are facing a new urgency and increasing demand to cope with the huge challenges, crisis symptoms and fundamental changes of theological education which are caused by the dramatic changes in the landscape of world Christianity.”⁴

2. See: Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja (eds): “Handbook on Theological Education in World Christianity”, Regnum Publishers 2010.

3. World Study Report on Theological Education 2010, WCC-ETE p. 54.

4. World Study Report on Theological education p. 18.

The Central Committee reminds the WCC member churches that “Churches should regard the support for theological education (both with regard to lower degrees as well as higher degrees at Master level) as one of their most important priority mandates and obligations. A church without proper and qualified theological education systems tends to diminish itself or ends in Christian religious fundamentalism. A church with properly developed theological education qualifies itself for greater degrees of interaction and outreach to the different levels and challenges in its society as well as to a deeper commitment to holistic Christian mission. Churches should have a clear sense of ownership of their institutions of theological education without falling into the trap of dominating or curbing them.”⁵

The Central Committee concludes with conviction of the World Study Report on Theological Education “that theological education is the seedbed for the renewal of churches, their ministries and mission and their commitment to church unity in today’s world. If theological education systems are neglected or not given their due prominence in church leadership, in theological reflection and in funding, consequences might not be visible immediately, but quite certainly will become manifest after one or two decades in terms of theological competence of church leadership, holistic nature of the churches mission, capacities for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and for dialogue between churches and society. The transmission of the ecumenical memory and vision to future generations of pastors and church workers is a priority need in many WCC member Churches, its continuation is far from being secured at present.”⁶

III. A Fresh Understanding on Ecumenical Formation in Theological Learning

The basis of the WCC affirms: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” In the constitution of WCC the concern for ecumenical theological education therefore receives a high priority: It is defined as one of the primary purposes and functions of the WCC to “nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context”(WCC constitution par III). The ecumenical movement from its very beginning had a profound impact on the understanding of Christian education in general and ministerial formation for future ministers and priests in particular. If the ecumenical movement as a whole is about strengthening common witness and promoting new forms of the visible unity between

5. World Study Report 2010, p. 27.

6. World Study Report 2010p. 32.

churches of different denominational and confessional traditions then the scandal of churches remaining in disunity and using distorted images of sister churches in one's own educational materials and publications needs to be overcome with foremost priority in the area of theological education and ministerial formation. The strengthening and pursuit of church unity in theological education therefore is a Gospel imperative for any church joining in the affirmation of the church as being "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" in its essence (The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed [381])

For the challenges at hand for Christianity in the 21st century a fresh understanding of ecumenical formation in theological training and Christian education is needed which takes note of several transformation processes which affect the setting and needs for ecumenical learning at present. Ecumenical formation today has received a much wider and more comprehensive frame of reference.⁷ Ecumenical formation includes

- the support of interdenominational or non-denominational institutions and programs of theological education (which was intentionally supported already by the Theological Education Fund (TEF) of the IMC);
- the introduction of distinct courses and curriculum models on ecumenism and World Christianity in each local theological school or faculty and the development of related proper teaching materials on ecumenism and vital issues for church witness (such as courses on HIV/AIDS, Disability issues, Eco/Justice, Diakonia);
- the inclusion of materials for interfaith-learning in theological education;
- the contextualization of the theological curriculum according to needs for common witness for justice, peace and integrity of creation;
- the enrichment of the theological curriculum and proper inclusion of issues from the perspectives of women and children;

We state with a sense of urgency: There is no future for the ecumenical movement as a whole if there is no commitment to ecumenical formation processes in formal and non-formal theological education programmes of WCC member churches. If theological education fails to be guided by an ecumenical vision of a church renewed in mission and service to the whole of humankind there will be a serious shortage in terms of a new generation of Christian leaders, pastors and theological teachers carrying on the ecumenical vision and commitment into the 21st century and a widening gap and estrangement between the majority clergy and ever fewer experts on the ecumenical movement and ecumenical theological discourse which can already be observed in a number of member churches.

7. See: WCC Document Magna Charta on Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education, 2010: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education-ete/wcc-programme-on-ecumenical-theological-education/magna-charta-on-ecumenical-theological-education-in-the-21st-century-ete-reference-document.html>.

What the WCC has stated on earlier occasions with regard to theological education holds true until the present:

There is a need to keep before the churches and the younger generation a concern for the visible unity which links sharing in God's mission and the pursuit together of justice and peace with the need to heal divisions between the churches through mutual dialogue, mutual recognition and reconciliation. Those involved in theological education and ministerial formation have a vital part to play, not only through giving an ecumenical dimension to all parts of their curriculum, but by embodying ecumenical principles through the sharing of resources, the establishment of ecumenical colleges, institutions, courses and federations, and the interchange of faculty and students of different traditions.⁸

In the beginning of the 21st century we find ourselves in a new historical situation where we both need a fresh articulation of the ecumenical vision as well as a significant new commitment for ecumenical education and formation if the ecumenical movement is to remain a vital force for renewal and conversion in global Christianity. In a situation which is marked by the fact that the rapid globalization of markets, media and technologies has given rise to counter-reactions in terms of growing fundamentalism which is affirming exclusive and closed national, ethnic, cultural and religious identities all are obliged us to renew and rethink our commitment to ecumenical formation as an priority for safeguarding the continuation of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical witness as a whole. Ecumenical formation is not only a „constitutive mark of the church being the church“ (Vancouver 1983) but also an essential priority and new urgency at the beginning of the 21st century.

IV. Major Challenges and New Chances for Theological Education in the 21st Century

The Edinburgh 2010 study process on theological education has identified as the most important challenges for reshaping and strengthening theological education and missionary training for World Christianity in the 21st century the following factors⁹:

- a. Disparity in the availability of resources for theological education between the North and the South and within several regions
- b. The tremendous rise in the number of higher education students in the South in general and the rise in applications for theological study programmes in particular
- c. The growing interest of Pentecostal churches in theological education programmes

8. Message of the world conference of WCC on theological education in Oslo 1996.

9. See: Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, Edinburgh 2010 Vol II, Witnessing to Christ Today, Section on Theological Education and Formation, Edinburgh 2010, p. 148-174; Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, Mission Today and Tomorrow, Final Report on the Session on Theological Education and Formation, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series, Oxford 2011, p. 158-165.

- d. The urgent needs prevailing in many contexts to create more space for women in theological education, theological leadership and in the ministries of the church
- e. The lack of common quality standards and mutual recognition between theological schools of different contexts, denominational background and theological orientation
- f. Denominational fragmentation of the international landscape of theological education institutions
- g. The grave lack of scholarships and grants available for higher studies in theological education and the increasing difficulties of churches to fund their institutions of theological education
- h. Changing structural conditions of theological education (the move in some contexts away from church-related seminaries towards state-funded departments of religious studies)
- i. The fundamental implications of global migration movements and changing and increasingly diverse constituencies for programmes of theological education

The current global survey on theological education project¹⁰ with its empirical research has shown, that 33% of all respondents have stated that there are not enough or even far too few theological schools and theological education programs in their region.

The Edinburgh 2010 report also had stated: The integrity and authenticity of all the diverse streams of World Christianity in the 21st century can be maintained and deepened only if we move beyond a situation in which Christianity seems to flourish where theological education does not and vice versa, but where instead innovative forms of theological education are emerging which are life-giving, renewing, participatory and relevant for the growing charismatic renewal movements in the South and for the renewing churches in the North. What we need for the future is a more intentional cooperation and strengthened instruments both from churches and ecumenical agencies to contribute to the advancement of theological education and ecumenical formation in the 21st century.

V. The Role and Relevance of Christian Theology in Higher Education Institutions

The WCC also alerts the churches on certain trends and changes in the area of higher education institutions and related university policies which affect the role of Christian theology. The plausibility and legitimacy of 'theology' (as a confession bound distinct academic discipline) in secular university contexts is increasingly questioned in several places. There is a trend to move away from theological faculties and to give priority to departments of religious studies in state-funded universities. Reports from both Great Britain, Scandinavia and Germany indicate a decline in research projects and teaching positions in theology proper and a shift towards projects and positions

10. See www.research.net/s/globalsurveyonthetheologicaleducation.

in the field of religious studies. Very similar changes and trends are reported from a number of African as well as - to a minor extend—from Asian countries and certainly from the US context.

Therefore churches wherever politically possible should engage with governments in order to secure the future of theological education in their university settings. There is a move from denominational seminaries to studying in university faculties of religion. This means that many of the theological seminaries are at risk of closure or the dimension of ministerial formation has been weakened. This also risks a disconnect from the international communions of various Christian traditions. Also inter-denominational theological seminaries have been closed or are threatened in some contexts. Increasing tendencies of universities to integrate on theological education under Philosophy and Religion departments put pressure on churches to look for their denominational oriented training centers.

The Central Committee therefore joins in the voices of the Third Consultation of Theological Faculties in Europe in Graz, Austria, July 2010 which made a plea to recognize the validity and importance of theology within the university context and stated:

The move to Religious Studies is in part a response to a decrease in student numbers, in part a reflection of an interest in the religious pluralism of Europe. However, the inevitable result is a decrease in the number of faculty in traditional theological disciplines. We recognize that Theology and Religious Studies can be complementary disciplines in a faculty.”It further emphasized the “urgent need to make the case for the importance of theology in the context of universities in Europe. The case for theology taking its place amongst the humanities (and indeed the sciences) needs to be made by University teachers, church leaders and Christians with influence on the authorities. Reasons for the ongoing significance of theology include the rich history of theology in the Universities from their birth, the growing importance of religion in European and world politics, and the postmodern critique of any claim to an ultimately non-confessional worldview¹¹

VI. Common Convictions on Essential Elements for Quality Theological Education

The Central Committee welcomes the new international dialogue on quality in theological education and the theological perspectives which have been developed on this.¹² It is the role of WCC to call churches for more unity and common collaboration. In the

11. THE 3RD CONSULTATION OF THEOLOGICAL FACULTIES IN EUROPE 7TH—10TH JULY 2010, GRAZ, AUSTRIA “Jeopardised or in demand? Academic Theology in Europe between Education, Science and Research”, see: http://www.uni-graz.at/grazerprozess/tagung2010/Final_Statement_2010_en.pdf.

12. International consultation on quality in theological education, WOCATI, Johannesburg June 2011, see: <http://wocati.org/index.php?id=1863>.

area of theological education the commitment to church unity across denominational boundaries and to common quality standards are necessarily interrelated. Increasingly the debate on quality standards has become an important dimension in conferences of regional associations of theological schools. The Draft Version of a Common Charter on Quality in Theological Education¹³ which has been developed by WCC-ETE is recommended to be further discussed with representatives of member-churches, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic partners. The Central Committee confirms that there should be common affirmations in the area of quality in theological education which are of theological significance. It can be commonly affirmed for instance

- *That reading and studying the Bible as the Word of God should form the basis and undisputed primary resource of any theological education* which takes part in the continuous effort to translate the message of God's love and hope for future generations in given cultural contexts. Therefore immersing oneself into the rich treasures of its symbols, narratives, images and stories can serve as a common ground between different Christian traditions and also as an inspiration for alternative ways of theological reflection beyond critical reasoning.

- That World Christianity needs a multitude of different *contextualized forms of theological education* and the task of Edinburgh 1910 for theological education in vernacular languages and cultures is only gradually and very incompletely fulfilled. Therefore an urgent need remains in many places for culturally and linguistically appropriate programmes and resources of theological education.

- That the *Church, Christian mission and theological education are inseparably inter-linked* with each other although conditioned by various social and political contexts this inter-linkage might be expressed in different ways, church-related theological seminaries, faculties of theology or Divinity Schools in secular universities. The concrete implementation of this vital interrelatedness between Christian mission and theological education remains a constant task for all churches and institutions of theological education as long as the fundamental task for translating the message is taken seriously.

- *That Theological education always is in critical and anticipatory solidarity with Christian churches.* The process of theological education both reproduces and reflects existing ecclesial and denominational realities and identities, but in its prophetic role should also challenge the existing patterns of both the church and the world from the perspective of the Kingdom of God and his love for all creation.

- That Theological education essentially is an *ecumenical task of all Christian churches together*. Theological education curricula which do not pay proper attention to the wider spectrum of different denominational traditions and are not done in an

13. See: www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/education-and-ecumenical-formation/ecumenical-theological-education-ete/wcc-programme-on-ecumenical-theological-education/towards-a-common-charter-on-quality-in-theological-education-dietrich-werner.html.

ecumenical spirit violate the unity of the body of Christ and lead to a prolongation of the denominational fragmentation of the body of Christ. Thus the rise of religious fundamentalism, including within Christianity, and the diminishing understanding of the values and significance of the ecumenical movement present two of the most serious challenges for the future of theological education and its task to promote a proper and holistic understanding of Christian witness, service and unity.

- *That Educating the whole people of God* is a key to mission and Christian mission should be the organizing focus and reference point of theological education. As Christ's mission has had a deep concern for children, *any mission-minded theological education in the 21st century needs to have concern for children's ministries and children's theology* in order to give visible expression to the fact that children represent 30% of world Christianity while still being marginalized in theological curricula. We are called to an expanded definition of theological education as theological formation begins at a very young age, and does not happen not only in schools and churches. Children should be seen at the centre both in church life as well as in programmes of Christian education and theological formation. As most theological education for children is still left to women, theological education institutions are called to support theologically-sound role models of both sexes today.

VII. The Future of WCC's Involvement in Ecumenical Formation and Theological Education

For the future of ecumenical formation and theological education work in the different programmatic components in WCC we affirm the following priority suggestions:

- the area of ecumenical formation and theological education should receive a visible, distinct and strong role in the future working agenda and structure of WCC in the post-Busan period.
- The WCC needs a proper and high level international 'Joint Working Group on Ecumenical Formation and Theological education' which would bring together major players both from WCC's constituency as well as from non-WCC member churches such as Evangelical, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and other players.
- The formation and work of regional forums of associations of theological schools in Africa, Latin America and Asia which serve a crucial tool for bringing together churches and networks of theological education from all denominational background needs to be continued, accompanied and further strengthened in future.
- a more visible commitment of WCC is needed in the *area of Christian education* which historically for long decades had belonged to its core mandates.
- WCC needs to encourage churches to come together for a new international dialogue on the concept of ecumenical formation for the future of world Christianity. What is our common understanding of ecumenical formation at present? Do we have clear objectives for ecumenical formation defined which correspond to the needs

of churches in the changing ecclesial landscape? Could it be that there is a shift of emphasis in the concept and understanding of ecumenical formation shifting from doctrinal and denominational dimensions to ecological and interfaith-related issues and themes? What are the most important agents of change and strategic partners in ecumenical formation today?

- As the churches continue to struggle with increased costs as well as diminishing financial means for theological education institutions, with decreasing enrolment numbers of theology students in several regions as well as with the search for more relevant forms of ministerial formation at present it should be the role of WCC to bring together both global and regional partners in order to develop a common framework of information and action for advancing theological education in all areas in need. Do we have a sufficiently clear understanding on what the changing ecclesial landscapes actually mean and imply for theological education in future?

- WCC in dialogue with representatives of churches as well as associations of theological schools should closely monitor ongoing processes on accreditation, quality assurance and recognition of theological institutions. Churches in today's context have to struggle and to cope with increased demands for state accreditation for their schools which can threaten some of their theological schools (Indonesia).

- WCC should assist churches to continue to develop internationalization in theological education by investing in networking between institutions of theological education of different parts of the ecumenical family

- Churches should raise their prophetic voice and fight for the future of sound and biblically based ministerial formation and theological education where its continuation at present is endangered for political or financial factors

- Churches should invest more in common interfaith components in theological education

- Churches should invest in theological teachers exchange and facilitate mutual learning between institutions of theological education

- In order to fulfill its role the WCC needs more support from its member churches to continue the service of its instruments for ecumenical formation and theological education in the ETE program and the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey. Both staff secondment, direct financial support as well as support with expertise, collaboration and joint projects will help to sustain this work in future.

The WCC Central Committee meeting in Crete, Greece (28 August to 5 September 2012) received this statement of the ETE Accompaniment Group and endorsed this to be communicated with all WCC member churches as well as with regional associations of theological education institutions in order to serve the continued dialogue and relationships between churches and institutions of theological education.

Part II
Pre-Assembly Reflections

Inter-Orthodox Pre-Assembly Consultation

As is customary before an assembly, the World Council of Churches convened representatives of Orthodox member churches to assess prayerfully the state of the ecumenical movement, the council, its programmes, and the most pressing needs of the fellowship as seen from an Orthodox perspective. This report was received by the WCC Executive Committee in March 2013.

Preamble

1. At the initiative of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and under invitation of H.A.H. the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and with the gracious auspices of H. E. Metropolitan Nathanael of Kos and Nisyros, as representatives of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches we met in the island of Kos, Greece, from 11-17 October, 2012, to reflect on the theme of the 10th WCC Assembly, to prepare ourselves for the assembly, and to provide our churches' theological contribution to the WCC assembly in 2013. The consultation was moderated jointly by H. E. Metropolitan Prof Dr. Gennadios of Sassima on behalf of the Eastern Orthodox Church and H. E. Metropolitan Mor Eustathius Matta Roham on behalf of the Oriental Orthodox Church.

2. It has been a custom for the last thirty years in the World Council of Churches to convene an Inter-Orthodox consultation prior to its Assemblies. The main purpose of the meeting was to study, discuss and reflect on the main theme and the sub-themes of the next assembly from an Orthodox perspective in order to serve as preparation for all participants in Busan and to express our expectations of the next WCC assembly and beyond. Numbering thirty seven hierarchs, priests, university professors, lay men and women and youth, we were warmly welcomed by H. E. Metropolitan Nathanael of Kos and Nisyros at the opening session with the inauguration of a new hotel chapel in which all delegates participated, as well as local clergy, together with lay and local authorities. After an introduction of the aim of the consultation and theological reflections on the theme, concerns and hopes for the future by H. E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and

a short introduction of all the participants, our group devoted numerous sessions to hearing from participants about the themes and sub-themes of the upcoming assembly in Busan, “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.” The themes raised in these presentations are summarized in the following sections of this statement.

3. Each working day started with prayer in the newly inaugurated chapel. A special moment of prayer took place on Saturday, October 13 by H. G. Bishop Hovagim Manoogian (Armenian Apostolic Church, Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin) at the announcement of the passing away of the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Archbishop Torgom Manoogian. The fact that the meeting took place in Greece gave us the opportunity to visit local congregations and thus to have direct contact with the Greek people who are facing a deep economic crisis. We prayed for Greece and expressed our hope that the economic crisis will soon be overcome. Members of our consultation coming from the Middle East informed us about new developments in the region. All participants in the consultation, expressing our deep concern for the escalation of violence in the region, especially in Syria, prayed for peace in the Middle East, expressing our hope that God of life will lead the region and the entire world to peace and justice.

Theological Reflections on the Assembly Theme

4. In Orthodox spiritual experience and according to patristic tradition:

The Godhead is very life, and the Only-begotten God is God, and life, and truth, and every conceivable thing that is lofty and divine, while the creation draws from Him its supply of good, it may hence be evident that if it is in life by partaking of life, it will surely, if it ceases from this participation, cease from life also.

Thus, the Divine Life means the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

5. Humankind is created free, according to the image and likeness of God, in order to reach godliness and glorification through a life-giving relation with God. The misuse of our freedom, however, led to the disruption of the communion with our Creator, and therefore to death. Sin, according to patristic teaching, consists precisely of this break. From that point, disruption is experienced at all levels of human life and it extends to the rest of creation. After the fall, our relationship with ourselves, with the other, and with creation became antagonistic and controlled by the flesh. This leads then to all kinds of discrimination, injustice and conflict, to the exploitation of the weak by the powerful, as well as environmental consequences.

6. The tragic effects on human nature and all creation after the separation from the God of life are overturned in Jesus Christ: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” In Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God, the uncreated was united with the created. Transcending His transcendence, God entered human life and history, healed human nature corrupted by sin, and renewed the relationships between God and humanity, among human beings, and between humanity and the created

world. He accomplished this through His passion, crucifixion, resurrection from the dead, and ascension to heaven. And following the event of Pentecost, Christ remains present with us through the Holy Spirit in the Church. In Christ's salvific work, unity, righteousness, justice, and peace were achieved. Thus the Gospel of salvation is the word of reconciliation.

7. Baptism, as the sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ, introduces every Christian into the life of Christ, into communion with God and with all humanity that is created according to His image. The baptismal formula recalls the Trinitarian life itself, the Father is the Source of life, the Son is the Principle of life, and the Holy Spirit is the One who vivifies. This communion is maintained through our sharing in the Eucharistic body and blood of Christ. Thus, Christian communion is not a mere abstraction or simply social awareness, but is by God's grace a sharing in the very life of Christ, which begins for us at Baptism and is maintained through our Eucharistic life in the Church.

8. In the light of the incarnation, justice and peace are understood not as subjective conditions, but are experienced as gifts of the Holy Spirit by those who accept the grace of God. Justice leads to peace, and vice versa. Justice and peace are therefore interrelated realities; both exist together and express our relation to God (peace with God), to ourselves (peace with one's conscience), to others (peace with one's neighbour), and to the created world (responsible stewardship over creation). Justice and peace, founded, following Christ's example, on unconditional love and self-sacrifice, rise above their common social meaning and become an expression of transfigured life in Christ, beyond human wisdom, human passions, ambitions, and selfishness.

9. The Lord, in His final prayer before His passion, prayed for unity, peace, and justice (Jn 17.21), and this remains our calling today. Nevertheless, due to our weakness and our failure to respond to the life in Christ, to transfigure our hearts and minds in the light of His truth, we both experience and, at times, cause divisions, wars, injustice, and the degradation of our physical environment.

10. Responding to Christ's words, "in the same way, let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Mt 5.16), Christians are called to work together for the restoration of justice, peace and unity on the basis of Christ's message and God's love for humanity. In this perspective it is imperative to transcend both passivity and violence by finding a third way: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all" (Rom 12.17).

11. Our work together within the WCC for justice and peace will contribute to the unity of Christian mission and make the churches more credible in the eyes of the societies in which we live. This work for justice and peace may be carried out with secular agencies that promote human rights, though for Christians, our basis comes from the Gospel, which affirms the absolute value and dignity both of humanity and

of creation, and not from a secular, human rights agenda. Working on healing and peace-building with all people of good will is an appropriate way for Christians to seek justice and peace in our fragmented and suffering world. All people on earth need our charity, prayers, and solidarity.

12. In the life of the Orthodox churches, we pray ceaselessly for unity, justice and peace. The Divine Liturgy, from the opening litany to the conclusion of the anaphora, contains numerous prayers for the unity of the Church and the world, and the service concludes with the command to “Go in peace,” instructing the faithful to bring God’s peace to their homes and to the world around them. Christians are thus called to work for the transformation of the world, bringing about God’s justice and peace wherever they happen to be.

13. The theme of the assembly, “God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace,” challenges us and our churches to work together to realize this vision of unity, justice, and peace in its rich eschatological perspective, as described by the Prophet Isaiah:

He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Is 2.4)

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them,.. the nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. (Is 11.6-9)

This is the vision of the New Heaven and Earth, where Christ will “fill all in all” (Eph. 1.22).

Porto Alegre to Busan

14. Our consultation reviewed the work of the WCC since the Porto Alegre Assembly. We did so with the awareness of the challenges facing the ecumenical movement today. These challenges include the world financial crisis, which has had a strong impact on our churches and on the WCC. We noted as well the multiplicity of local, regional, and international ecumenical organizations, which leads of necessity to a constant reconsideration of the ways in which the WCC can best fulfil its mission of calling for Christian unity.

15. We reviewed the participation of the Orthodox in the activities of the WCC during this period, noting particularly our active participation in the work of the Commissions (Faith and Order, Mission and Evangelism, and the Church Commission for International Affairs), of the Joint Working Groups (with the Roman Catholic Church, with the Pentecostal churches), of the Assembly Planning Committee, as well as of the on-going WCC governance review, which seeks to implement the recommendations of the Special Commission in the day-to-day operations of the WCC. We noted as well the active participation of our two Orthodox families

of churches in hosting important strategic and programmatic events. Similarly, there was significant Orthodox participation in various ecumenical events as members of WCC delegations. There was also a concerted effort to increase the participation of Orthodox women and youth, an effort that needs to be continued and strengthened.

16. The multiple visits to many of our churches by the WCC general secretary provided further evidence of our close connection to the WCC. We note also the significant presence of Orthodox staff in Geneva, including in leadership positions, which ensures that the Orthodox presence is consistent in all the activities of the central offices of the WCC. We hope that this presence will be even further enhanced.

17. In particular, we wish to note a number of important international inter-Orthodox consultations that were held, several with significant financial contributions from the host churches:

18. The first, held in Sibiu, Romania, on 9-12 November 2010, addressed the issue of “The Ecumenical Movement in Theological Education and in the Life of Orthodox Churches.” The consultation stressed the critical role of our educational institutions in raising awareness about the ecumenical movement, and especially in preparing both faculty and students, in a responsible and critical fashion, to face the challenges and questions posed to us in a religiously pluralistic world.

19. The second, held in Aghia Napa, Cyprus, on 2-9 March 2011, prepared a common Orthodox response to the Faith and Order Study, “The Nature and Mission of the Church.” The assembled group addressed the many ecclesiological problems and challenges raised by the statement and made substantial suggestions for sharpening and clarifying the text. Subsequently, these and other suggestions have been incorporated in a new statement on unity that will be presented at the assembly in Busan.

20. Additional events took place in July 2009 in Bucharest, Romania, in September 2009 in Leros, Greece, and in October 2010 in Damascus, Syria—these were convened to prepare Orthodox delegates for the International Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica, in May 2011, and also assisted the Orthodox in articulating an Orthodox approach to peace with justice.

Expectations for Busan and Beyond

21. As Orthodox churches we are aware of our imperatives and challenges, as well as of the critical issues that Christian churches are facing today in the world:

22. Orthodox churches—both Eastern and Oriental—call for a stronger focus in the WCC on the search for Christian Unity. We often hear comments about the crisis in the ecumenical movement and about the lack of interest in unity or the lack of a clear vision about the nature of this unity. To a great extent, this is a consequence of the fact that the idea of visible unity is seen as unrealistic by many ecumenical partners, the Orthodox among them. We see this as a consequence of the developments taking place in some member churches over the last forty years (e.g., the ordination

of women, different approaches to moral and ethical issues, etc.). The gap between member churches is thus growing wider. On the other hand, the growing participation in the ecumenical movement of churches which are not members of the WCC and which bring to the dialogue new ecclesiological considerations and new understandings of unity as mission, adds new challenges to the search for unity, particularly when such churches apply for WCC membership.

23. The most appropriate way to resolve this situation would be to go back to the theological and moral teachings and practices of the early Church, moving to a patristic understanding of the Holy Scriptures and ethical values. A re-reading together of the patristic heritage would enable us all to find common ground, and this will give the churches in the WCC the ability to move forward and to revitalize the whole ecumenical movement. It is our hope that the Faith and Order Commission will continue with such an approach.

24. In Busan and beyond, we will be meeting and discussing together in the spirit of a fellowship of churches. In doing so, we should all give due attention to the observance of the Consensus procedure and the preservation of its ethos, especially in taking decisions on membership matters.

25. In our deliberations, we have realized the importance of a number of policy statements and other documents which are very important for our participation in the WCC. We would therefore urge both our churches and the WCC to develop serious ecumenical formation, particularly for the younger generation, based on such statements (particularly the Toronto Statement; the Policy Statement on CUV; the Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC; etc.).

26. As Orthodox churches—which identify both their history and their present with the mystery of the Cross, the suffering and resurrection of the Lord—we are deeply concerned with the conflicts, human rights violations, terrorist actions and persecutions taking place in different parts of the world. We are particularly concerned with the situations in the Middle East and Asia. We believe that conflicts must be solved only through peaceful means and dialogue, and not through military action. We call and pray for the immediate cessation of violence in these areas, as in all places where conflict is occurring, and for the universal observance of self-determination and good governance.

27. We believe strongly that we, together with all member churches, should continue—now more than ever—to promote inter-religious dialogue on issues concerning peace and reconciliation in the world. New and effective dialogue strategies are needed to prevent extremism and to ensure that religion is not used as a dangerous instrument of disorder and to justify violence. We believe that peace and reconciliation cannot be achieved without a respect for human rights and without the promotion of fundamental spiritual values—especially among the youth. Thus we call on the WCC to expand its peace-making efforts.

28. We encourage the WCC to help churches in the work of strengthening their mission of evangelization, but at the same time we condemn proselytism, which we consider to be a major obstacle for our common witness and unity in mission. The Orthodox churches, both Eastern and Oriental, have, through their dynamic theology and their living witness in places of suffering and human need, contributed in a substantial way to the missionary tasks of the WCC; and they are ready to meet the new challenges in today's world, taking into account the constantly increasing and alarming human needs in places of conflict and persecution, as well as in the ever more secular "developed" world that rejects or ignores Christianity and Christian values.

29. We deeply acknowledge our common responsibility for spreading the message of the protection of nature and the environment. We urge the WCC to continue its work and find more strategic partners in the work of eco-justice and sustainable development. All humankind is responsible for the condition of the world and God's creation. Resource depletion, environmental pollution, as well as the increase in the world's population, all urgently require joint efforts by all nations to preserve the variety and quality of life. Guided by God's commandment about being good stewards over the created world (Gen 2.15), the Orthodox churches call on the WCC to engage in visible actions aiming at protection of nature and the environment.

30. We appreciate the initiative of the general secretary of the WCC to appoint a working group to propose a statement on unity to be presented at the next assembly. Such a statement will emphasize the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches to seek the full visible unity of the Church. A draft of the Unity Statement was presented to our gathering and we were given to opportunity to comment on the text. We noted that diversity should not be celebrated in cases where diversity leads to division and disunity. On the issue of the unity of all creation, we suggest that the statement might draw on the existing work of our churches on the theology of creation and on ecology. We urge greater clarity in the ecclesial language of the text, a richer theological content, as well as an articulation of the doctrinal divisions that separate us.

31. "Blessed are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times" (Ps 106.3)

Indigenous Peoples' Consultation

In advance of the assembly, the WCC invited theological reflection from representatives of Indigenous Peoples on the assembly theme: God of life, lead us to justice and peace. The following are reflections of theologians representing the Ao and Chang Naga, Aymara, Igorot, Maori, Maya, Mizo, Quecha, Santal, and Turtle Island people, who met at Yu-Shan Theological College and Seminary, Hualien, Taiwan, from September 17 to 29, 2012.

Dualism and Triumphalism in Christian Traditions

Influenced by Hebrew and Greek thought many Christian traditions have constructed images of God in dualistic and hierarchical ways. Consequently, we have come to imagine God as an incomprehensible and all powerful being. This all powerful, all-knowing, and incomprehensible God is present everywhere, up there, beyond the realms of life here on earth.

Like Gnostics, we tend to believe that such a God of Life cannot be related to the material world. God is purely a transcendental and spiritual being whereas the world is created out of matter, and therefore evil, sinful and destined to destruction. This Holy God is separate and does not come into contact with the fallen earthly world. The traditional Christian view of God as life is shaped by this understanding.

Though God is Spirit, we construct images of God metaphorically. We often perceive God in terms of power and perfection, as Ruler, Lord, King, Almighty, Father, Master and Warrior. These are all conquest and success-oriented images. Though God is merciful, loving, caring, compassionate, a comforter and liberator who shares in our sufferings and, through Jesus Christ, taught us to love and care for one another and to be mutually interdependent, we tend to over-emphasize the triumphalistic images of God.

These images of the God of Life have made Christianity a religion of and for rulers, the elite and the dominant sections of society. Indigenous Peoples feel that such a God is one that liberates no one, not even his own followers, and therefore cannot liberate the poor and the marginalized, the victims of various forms of power, such as

Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, women, persons with disabilities, those living with HIV, and other discriminated communities.

Indigenous people reject a concept of God who is seen as the external monarch ruling over the world from above imposing his/her divine laws on it. We believe that God belongs to the earth who comes and dines, drinks, speaks and reveals himself/herself to us as person. We affirm that God's creativity, his/her active involvement in this world is not limited to the human realm alone. God works and lives in every being. By hurting the Mother Earth, we hurt our Creator as well as human community. God suffers when God's creatures are hurt, because God is an integral part of his/her creation. Therefore, God actively works this world to protect the vulnerable ones and wounded earth.

God Incarnate

God became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth so that we could share oneness with God, with one another and with the whole of Creation. In incarnation God does not remain remote and abstract in the world. He/she becomes tangible and visible in Jesus, made up of flesh and blood, rooted in and related to the heat and dust, the rough and tumble of the earth. Thus the Johannine affirmation, "God so loved the *world*" (John 3:16) and "the Word became *flesh*" (John 1:14). These are the defining characteristics of God's presence in the world. Jesus is not an appearance, a Docetic figure or Gnostic being. Jesus is of the sinful flesh, *sarx*, belonging to the *cosmos*, the world. We affirm that God is of this world, and therefore of Life. God is to be experienced in this world and in this life.

Our cosmo-centric vision of life teaches that the Holy Spirit is present in each iota of creation. There is nothing on the earth that has not been touched by the Spirit. In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God is compared with *ruah*. The Spirit inhabits every creation and gives life. The presence of the Spirit in stones and trees is real. The Spirit makes all living possible. It is through the work of the Spirit that plants are made to germinate, grow and bear fruit and oppressed communities resist for justice. In short, the presence of Spirit makes creation (in the full sense of the whole of God's Creation) alive and dynamic.

If we want to affirm that God is one of Life, then we must avoid viewing life in terms of power, prosperity, good health, healing, perfection and success. Measuring the active presence of God in terms of power, blessings, money, perfection and success is called 'prosperity' theology. This is not the teaching of the Bible, but a domestication of God and truncation of the Gospel.

Life in the God who is Life is measured not in lording it over the people but in loving them, not in what we have but in what we give, not in being perfect but in being compassionate, not in terms of success, but in terms of service.

God Is Life, Life Is Land

Unlike other great religions of the world, Indigenous Peoples' religious traditions do not have any founders, reformers or guides nor do people dance and sing praises to the Great Spirit; this is the tradition of a number of Indigenous Peoples of North America, Indigenous Peoples in Asia as well as the Mayan traditions. Instead, people dance and sing along with the cycle of seasons of the land—celebrating the expressions and exuberance of life.

One distinct feature of many indigenous forms of spirituality is that their belief systems, ceremonies, rituals, festivals and dances are community expressions that are centered around and deeply rooted in the land itself so much so that the God of Life cannot be understood outside of the relation to land/space. The Aos and Sangtams of Nagaland (India), for example, call their Supreme Being, *Lijaba*. *Li* means 'land' and *jaba* means 'real.' It means the Supreme Being is 'the real soil.' Other communities call the Supreme Being *Lizaba*. *Li* means 'soil' and *zaba* means 'enter', meaning 'the one who enters' or 'indwells into the soil.' Similarly, the Chang Naga also attributes the Supreme Being by the name *Mühghäü*. *Müh* meaning 'skies/heaven' and *ghäü* means earth/land. According to the Mayan tradition of Kaqchikel "*ru K'ux rubach'ulef*," God is present in entire face of the earth.

Many Indigenous communities believed that God is the one who enters the soil with the seeds and rises again in the crops for food. Thus, the blooming flower and fruits signify the presence of the Creator. God is not only "God of Life" but "God is Life" because the whole Creation is God's self-expression, love and wisdom. "The whole earth is full of God's glory" (Isaiah 6:1-3). The whole Creation declares that God is life. Indigenous Peoples, therefore, cannot imagine "God of Life" without a connection to the land; the land and God of Life are inseparably related.

Indigenous theologies reject any concepts that uphold God's transcendence and holiness that take God away from the earth. Such constructs of God contradict the true message of the Scriptures. The Bible affirms that God became flesh and lived among earth people (cf. Jn. 1). Jesus is the incarnation of God. He gave his life for the liberation of those who are oppressed. We perceive and reflect theologically because we feel His presence among us, the living presence of this God amidst our struggles.

Land and Peace

Justice and Peace are not for a life of prosperity, but for creation of conditions so that human life and God's entire creation may have the possibility of life, here and now and beyond. Human liberation would be void and empty without the affirmation of the integrity of the goodness of the land and its resources. Shalom without land is not shalom, as it would lead to slavery and destruction.

Therefore, the land and its resources, which sustain and nourish all beings and give them an identity and selfhood, are not merely a justice issue to be set alongside

other justice concerns, but the very foundation of history, existence and identity. This implies that poverty, war, oppression, ethnic conflict and identity problems cannot be understood or solved without relating them to the integrity of creation/land.

Doing Justice to Creation

Indigenous religion is centered on the earth itself. The religious practices, rituals, ceremonies, festivals, dances, etc., are all centred on the earth. Justice to creation/land then becomes central to peace and human dignity and fullness of life. Hence, doing justice to Creation is the starting point of theology. Commitment and dedication to the harmony of Creation/land springs forth in love, nurture, care and acceptance. This methodological priority to do justice to the totality of Creation challenges us to redefine our ecumenical vision of “God of life, lead us to justice and peace.”

Witness to the God of Life is incomplete without resistance for justice; and believing in the God of Life is to participate in life-giving activities or concrete actions. This demands the conscious rejection of unjust and oppressive systems in society and has to be a crucial option against social structures and in favour of the victims. If ecumenical witness is to be realistic and command credibility in our time, we have to abandon idealistic views of justice and peace, but locate the Kingdom’s value within social structures and resist or develop values collectively for the liberation of the victims.

A True Church

Indigenous Peoples affirm that the true Church has to participate in the creation of a just social order and be called to God’s mission, otherwise it is not a Church but a church that does not participate in creating a just social order is not a true church and is, therefore, not doing God’s mission, but is a mere agent of the oppressors. The church should shun the passive message of love and peace. To witness the God of Life involves mobilizing people for collective resistance in favor of justice and create a new consciousness of the rights of victims.

To be isolated from peoples’ movements, or discourage those involved in organizing peoples’ movements for justice, contradicts the teachings of Jesus who died on the cross. The God of the Bible is a liberator God and faith in the liberator God calls for struggle against all forces and forms of oppressions. A church that affirms the God of life participates actively in the struggle for the fullness of life. A church that is not in the struggle is dead.

Part III

Reports from Commissions and Working Groups

Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches

Summary of Ninth Report

This document offers a summary of a larger report from the JWG, which relates the focus and work of the group from 2007 through 2012. As the group approaches its fiftieth year, its recent foci include in-depth work on the notion of ecclesial reception of ecumenical work, the spiritual roots of ecumenism, church participation of youth, and emerging work on migration. Entitled Receiving One Another in the Name of Christ: Ninth Report, 2007–2012, it is separately published.

I. Introduction

The Joint Working Group (JWG) has been a vital and effective instrument for fostering cooperation between its parent bodies, i.e., the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). Following the *Decree on Ecumenism* of the Second Vatican Council (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) in 1964, the JWG was established jointly by the PCPCU (then the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity) and the WCC in 1965. Since then, the JWG has met regularly. It provides the space where the parent bodies discuss important topics affecting their relationships, and where their representatives share the experiences of their churches and talk about their common involvement in the ecumenical movement, as both the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and the WCC are committed to the goal of the visible unity of the church.

The JWG has functioned as a worldwide working group with regional and local input. For the term from the ninth WCC assembly in 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to the tenth assembly in 2013 in Busan, Korea, each parent body appointed 18 members to the JWG, selected from different regions of the world, with varied pastoral and ecumenical experiences. The JWG met five times in plenary, led by two co-moderators. The co-moderators, representatives of the parent bodies, co-secretaries, and the Faith and Order director and the RC consultant in the WCC mission team form an executive that meets twice a year. The executive oversees the work of the JWG between its plenary sessions and prepares the agenda and materials for them.

Looking at the changing ecclesial landscape at the beginning of the 21st century and the challenges the churches are confronted with in their search for visible unity and a common witness to the world, the JWG realized already at the plenary meeting in 2008 in Geneva that there was a common interest of the parent bodies in deepening the fellowship of churches in the ecumenical movement and in ecumenical formation that builds on the fruits of ecumenical dialogue, engages young people, and is inspired by the presence of migrants who challenge false self-centeredness of communities and local churches. This was reflected in the choice of the themes for study and reflection: the studies on reception and the spiritual roots of ecumenism¹, and reflections on youth. The JWG also discussed the root causes and the impact of migration on the lives of people, communities and the churches.

II. Growing Relationships of Trust

The JWG has not only fostered cooperation between the two parent bodies, but also contributed to growing trust and collaboration with other churches and ecumenical partners in the one ecumenical movement.

This is vital in the context of the rapidly changing ecclesial landscape, with the growth of Pentecostal and charismatic churches, the deep geopolitical shifts over recent decades, the devastating consequences of climate change and financial crises, conflicts concerning values and personal ethics, violence within and between different religious communities, and growing need for the accompaniment of Christian communities in conflict situations. These challenges demand that the churches renew their ecumenical commitment to a common witness and the search for the visible unity of the Church. In all of our efforts as the JWG the unity that Christ wills for his Church has been and will remain central.

Together, the Roman Catholic Church and WCC member churches have fostered relationships with evangelicals, Pentecostal and charismatic churches—not least through cooperation in the Global Christian Forum, but also through many other initiatives, e.g. the Centenary of the Edinburgh World Mission Conference in 2010, participation in the WCC- facilitated Joint Consultative Group with Pentecostals, cooperation in the Conference of the Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWCs), the Joint Committee between CWCs and WCC, and the publication of the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*² that was presented to the public by the WCC together with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

The quality of relationships nurtured by the JWG encouraged the WCC to intensify its very valuable cooperation with the CWCs and to offer new spaces for churches

1. Cf. also the two publications by H.E. Cardinal Walter Kasper. (2009) Continuum International Publishing Group, London/New York; (2007; first printing in 2006) New City Press, New York.

2. www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2011pdfs/ChristianWitness_recommendations.pdf.

and ecumenical partners beyond the WCC membership, both in reflections on ecumenism in the 21st century and in preparations for the forthcoming tenth assembly of the WCC in 2013 in Busan. In both cases, committees were formed that include as full members a broad spectrum of churches beyond WCC membership and ecumenical partners. In doing so, the WCC could build on the excellent cooperation with the RCC and increasingly also with Pentecostals in the Faith and Order Commission (F&O) and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

III. The Work of the JWG 2007–2012

The “ecumenical pilgrimage” of the group followed during this mandate the footsteps of Saint Paul in Damascus, Malta and Rome. There is no better way to summarize the spirit and the work of this JWG than to refer to Saint Paul’s letter to the Romans 15:7: “Receive one another, therefore, just as Christ has received you....” The time together always was grounded in common prayer, Bible reading, and celebration, consciously strengthening the spiritual roots of ecumenism as a shared basis for common work.

The time for sharing information and experiences by individual JWG members and the parent bodies has been an important and fruitful element of every meeting. The sharing provided precious spaces to monitor and discern developments concerning the parent bodies and the ecumenical movement at local, regional and international levels. This regular and structured exchange is conducive to building trust; to nurturing a quality of relationships that also allows participants to address difficult issues with mutual respect; and to nurturing common interest in the flourishing of the one ecumenical movement. The smaller JWG executive continued to be a very helpful instrument for the exchange of information, discussion of common concerns and the fostering of cooperation.

The importance of receiving the results of ecumenical dialogue, thus fostering a renewed commitment to ecumenism, surfaced in many ways in the reports of JWG members and of the parent bodies. The meetings of bishops with the PCPCU during their *ad limina* visits to Rome are just one example of important opportunities to draw attention to progress made in the past and to rekindle ecumenical commitment. In similar ways questions of ecumenical formation and the participation of youth continued to be included in the sharing. Migration moved centre stage in the observations of representatives from the Middle East and Asia as well as in reports by the co-moderators. The changing ecclesial landscape and cooperation in the Global Christian Forum were discussed at every meeting. Enriching experiences of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, and the difficult problems of religiously motivated violence, became ever more important in the times of sharing.

Responding to suggestions of the previous JWG presented in the Eighth Report, inspired by the spiritual life of the group and the sharing of its members, this JWG

concluded that it should make a specific contribution to the issues of reception and the spiritual roots of ecumenism from the perspective of the unique body that it is. These two texts together are meant to be mutually enriching dimensions of a holistic response to Saint Paul's exhortation in Romans 15:7 which, therefore, was chosen as the motto for this ninth report of the JWG.

Compared to previous JWG mandates, the group introduced a new way of working with two sub-groups that explored opportunities for stimulating cooperation in the areas of migration and youth, two issues which greatly challenge all churches. The discussion on migration needs to continue. The group working on the role of youth in the church contributed a text to this report which is included as Appendix.

IV. Study Documents

Reception: A Key to Ecumenical Progress (Appendix A)

The current Joint Working Group has met during the time when the ecumenical world has celebrated the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference, the event that gave birth to the modern ecumenical movement, as well as 50 years of the Second Vatican Council. These facts are reflected in the study on ecumenical reception in several ways.

The study is organized in five sections. Section I, entitled "Ecumenical reception: vital for achieving unity," starts first by describing the fundamental importance of reception in the life of the church, giving some theological aspects involved in reception, and then, the meaning of ecumenical reception. It proceeds by inviting churches continually to receive the ecumenical movement and its results, "the achievements of a century of ecumenism," into the life of the churches, and to build on those achievements as the ecumenical journey continues. The final part of this section sets the stage for the discussion to come by recalling that the JWG already has given much attention to ecumenical reception in the past, but asserts that the centenary is a special occasion on which to reflect more deeply on ecumenical reception and on the way a century of ecumenism has made a difference for the churches. All five sections end with "Learning points and recommendations" offered for reflection by the churches.

Section II describes the way ecumenical reception happens in the churches. After opening reflections on processes of reception, the rest of this section gives brief presentations describing the methods of ecumenical reception in fifteen Christian world communions, based on their experience and/or policy. The variety of approaches reflects differences in ecclesiology and illustrates the complexity of ecumenical reception.

Section III, the longest section, is titled "Overcoming the divisions of the past: reception promoting reconciliation." It illustrates the way churches, through ecumenical reception, have taken some major steps toward overcoming those divisions. It starts by commenting on the new ecumenical context developed during the century of ecumenism since Edinburgh 1910, in which long separated Christians have

increasingly recognized the degrees of faith they have continued to hold in common, despite centuries of division, and have begun to receive each other as Christians. With this new situation, the churches have been able to engage in dialogue and to face together the causes of separation in the past. It describes ways in which three historic areas of division have been addressed ecumenically, and significant steps towards reconciliation have been taken. The first concerns divisions in the fifth century especially following the Council of Chalcedon (451). The second concerns the schism between eastern and western Christianity following 1054. The third concerns divisions in western Christianity during and since the sixteenth century, not only of the Reformation churches from the Catholic Church, but also between Reformation churches themselves. Detailed presentations of significant steps toward reconciliation and overcoming these divisions are given, although much more needs to be done to achieve full visible unity. The final part of this section presents ways in which the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have been agents of reception.

Section IV shows that ecumenical reception also has been a struggle. Just as Part II gave concrete examples of reception processes, part IV shows concrete examples of reasons why reception processes can be a struggle.

Section V presents “Ecumenical formation: a key to ecumenical reception.” The Eighth JWG Report had stated that “greater effort is needed in the field of ecumenical formation” because “a new generation of Christians is sometimes unaware of the way things were and how much has changed in the decades since the founding of the WCC and since the Second Vatican Council.”³ This present study has documented those changes, showing steps taken towards overcoming the divisions of the past, and the way ecumenical reception has helped foster and promote reconciliation. This section discusses the links between ecumenical formation and ecumenical reception, traces the JWG’s ongoing concern for ecumenical formation, and outlines some general principles of ecumenical formation, as well as programs and guidelines to guide it.

The conclusion of this study, in Section VI, is “An appeal to the churches” to recognize what has been achieved during a century of ecumenism, to continually support processes of ecumenical reception, and to renew their commitment to the quest for Christian unity.

Be Renewed in the Spirit: The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism (Appendix B)

In response to the prayer of our Lord “that they may all be one” (John 17:21) and motivated by Christ’s call for renewal of life and conversion of heart, the Joint Working Group initiated a project to reflect anew on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. The

3. (2005) Geneva: WCC Publications, 29.

goal was twofold: to remind Christians of the spiritual impulse that has driven the ecumenical movement from its inception, and to consider fresh ways churches can nurture these spiritual roots by offering some practical recommendations.

Following an introduction, the text is divided into eight sections: basic terms, Biblical foundations, implications for prayer and liturgical practice, examples inspired by the saints, the power of transforming encounters, practical opportunities for churches with some recommendations to the parent bodies, a concluding summary, and suggested resources for further reading.

After defining the terms “spirituality” and “ecumenism” (words that popular culture often uses without sufficient clarity), this study explores the theological basis for spiritual ecumenism; considers practices of piety, prayer, and worship that nurture these spiritual roots; highlights how God in Christ through the Holy Spirit breathes new life into Christians through examples among the saints and transforming encounters with Christians of other traditions; and offers some concrete ideas for ways in which this spiritual foundation can be appropriated more fully in local settings.

The section on the theological basis for spiritual ecumenism is developed by using prayer as the chief organizing principle, because prayer is rooted in the Christian’s relationship with the Triune God, and with how Christians understand God and God’s will for unity. The section explores the use of prayer for unity both in personal piety and in liturgy, and it sees unity and diversity as two interconnected gifts that Christ gives the Church. The section concludes by stressing that unity is both gift and task, and that Christians live and work in enduring hope for the final vision of the people of God in harmonious relationship.

The section on implications for prayer and liturgical practice celebrates that Christians regularly pray for each other in a variety of ways, and that this is one of the fruits of the ecumenical movement. It specifically explores the use of ecumenical prayer cycles, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and the practice of common prayer beginning with the Lord’s Prayer, which Christian churches hold in common.

The text gives examples of the impulse toward unity inspired by martyrs, saints, and living witnesses, and highlights an initiative to explore ways that the witness of martyrs can be a force for unity. This topic was developed jointly in a consultation by the Monastery of Bose and the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC.

In “the power of transforming encounters,” the study explores ways that encounters with Christians from other traditions have been an inspiration that have propelled a deepened commitment to the quest for Christian unity.

The final section of the text offers practical recommendations to churches for ways that the spiritual roots of ecumenism can be manifested more fully. The text is grouped into five categories: (1) opportunities to pray together--placing more emphasis on ways participants can engage with each other during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, finding fresh ways to use the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, encouraging

ecumenical Bible study, and focusing on the impact of prayers for unity in liturgical settings; (2) opportunities for ecumenical witness—making use of ecumenical visitations to place a human face on the ecumenical movement, recognizing the power of witnessing by ecumenical leaders, and finding ways to foster ecumenical exposure to the young who have demonstrated some interest in ecumenism; (3) opportunities to offer ecumenical hospitality—on occasions of rites of passage, through attention to preparatory planning to show ecumenical hospitality, and by considering an intentional effort to involve Christians from different traditions in educational travel, focusing on the spiritual roots of ecumenism; (4) opportunities for programmatic engagement—through shared Bible study, careful attention to the ecumenical impulse underlying joint mission projects and other initiatives of community engagement; and (5) opportunities for ecumenical education—encouraging academic staff to draw intentionally and explicitly on the spiritual roots of ecumenism. Of particular note is the JWG recommendation that educational travel should be used as a means to involve Christians from different traditions in encounters dedicated to promoting dialogue and an exchange of spiritual gifts.

Reflections on Youth: The Church in the Life of Youth and Youth in the Life of the Church (Appendix C)

The Church is an important part of young people's lives and their participation in the Church is an essential element of the life of the Church. The absence of youth in church communities threatens the vitality of the Church.

Because young people are one of the most dynamic sectors in every society and are at a crucial time in their lives, the Church has to find appropriate and creative ways to lead them to Jesus Christ. The churches need to stimulate discussions with and among young people in order to understand their experience and the richness of their faith. The contemporary world presents many challenges and at the same time opportunities to young people. They are exposed to the pressures of an increasingly global society. The JWG invites churches to be aware of the consequences of these pressures and the inevitable frustrations to which they can give rise. Young people live in the midst of the proliferation of information and communication technologies. These have a considerable impact on their lives, sometimes with negative consequences, affecting their relations, interests, priorities, passions and lifestyles. Communications technologies also offer positive opportunities that enable young people to communicate, network, and cooperate, giving a sense of global solidarity and motivation to work for church and society. Moreover, young people search for personal spiritual experiences and a relationship with God.

The challenges young people face have an impact on the way that they participate in the Church. Young people can be active members of parishes and congregations and youth organizations. Some may feel that the Church does not respond to their

aspirations and modes of expression and, therefore, they may remain passive observers. This can lead to an uneasiness and sense of distance from the life of the Church. Therefore, the JWG invites churches to understand and respond to the complex reality experienced by youth, and to be open to their needs and expectations as a key to develop, maintain, and nurture their sense of belonging to the Church.

The actions of young people in promoting Christian unity have been noticeable throughout the history of ecumenism. The JWG invites the churches to develop new ways of engaging young people in the work of ecumenism and to reflect on their perceptions of youth. It is necessary to appreciate young people in promoting Christian unity and to move beyond seeing them as passive recipients, but rather, as partners whose input is heard and valued.

For that reason the JWG opened a channel of communication with young people through specific resources that can be used in different places and churches. The three areas explored by the *Resources for Youth* are: 1) Believing (faith); 2) Belonging to the Church (baptism); 3) Living one's faith (discipleship). Each area was dealt with from three different perspectives: the Word of God, the early Christian witnesses, and the Church today. The resource materials were tested among Christian student groups, parish and congregational groups, as well as in schools. The collected responses addressed the role of faith in the lives of young people; explored what it means to belong to the Christian tradition and the role of the Church; and considered interaction with Christians from different traditions. The JWG encourages churches to use that tool as a starting point in young people's reflections on their own Christian traditions. The responses indicated that young people expect the Church to be active and involved in the contemporary world. The feedback shows that young people are open to different Christian traditions but are not aware of the role they could play in promoting Christian unity. The JWG encourages churches to consider how young people can participate more consciously and actively in ecumenical strategies for collaboration.

Prospects for the Future (2013—2020)

The trust that is built through the structured and sustained form of cooperation of the parent bodies through the JWG is an important contribution to the coherence of the one ecumenical movement and the continuing search for the visible unity of the church. The JWG has been a space for open and constructive exchange, facilitating cooperation between different aspects of the life and work of the parent bodies, interpreting developments in both of the parent bodies and the wider ecumenical movement, and addressing common challenges and sensitive issues in an atmosphere of spiritual communion and friendship in Christ. Along with this ongoing cooperation, relationships between different programmatic areas of the WCC and the relevant dicasteries of the Roman Curia developed further during this period.

All these functions should remain central to any future JWG, independent of the size of the group or the duration of its mandate. Preparing for the 2012 WCC Central Committee meeting and the forthcoming assembly, the WCC governance group is reviewing all WCC related commissions and advisory groups regarding size, frequency of meetings and working methodologies, with the tendency to encourage the formation of smaller and at the same time more flexible bodies. The parent bodies will discuss these matters further and come up with a jointly developed proposal for the future.

Grateful for the opportunity of working together during this mandate, the JWG offers the following recommendations:

1. Some of the insights of the consultation at the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the JWG have proven to be relevant beyond the present mandate. The next JWG will surely benefit if the first two plenary sessions again are organized in Rome and Geneva. More detailed and better knowledge of the two parent bodies by all members of the group will lead to a clearer understanding both of the tasks and the potential of the group.

2. One concrete proposal for follow-up comes from the study group on *The Spiritual Roots of Ecumenism*. The group recommends exploring the possibility of a pilot project with the WCC Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum and the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People on pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

The JWG did not conclude its discussion on migration. The importance of the issue for the churches merits fostering collaboration between the parent bodies on this issue.

It will be necessary for the next JWG to reflect on new forms of working together, assessing and responding to the continually evolving global and ecclesial context. The JWG needs to feel the pulse of the ecumenical movement continuously, taking stock of the state of ecumenical relations, identifying strengths and weaknesses in actual ecumenical relations, setting priorities with measurable goals, and monitoring progress to determine whether goals have been seriously and consistently pursued.

It was underlined that the Joint Working Group should not duplicate the work of the Faith and Order Commission. The Joint Working Group has a role to play in providing reflection on the ecumenical dimension of issues, and must decide whether it can make a particular contribution in a given area, perhaps more often by asking a specialized body to undertake a study than by organizing a study on its own.

It might be good for the next mandate to explore other creative possibilities in response to the core mandate of the JWG. This might also strengthen the group for “being a challenge to the parent bodies by proposing new steps and programmes.” The following questions build on the work done so far, but also point to other tasks:

How could the JWG function more practically as an agent of reception and a promoter of the spiritual rootedness of ecumenism?

How can the new presence of diverse Christian communities in a given place as the result of migration become an enriching opportunity for the deepening of ecumenical relations in the context of a changing ecclesial landscape?

In which ways can the JWG continue to encourage better and growing ecumenical cooperation and participation of young people, for instance in universities and at occasions like the World Youth Day?

What can the parent bodies do together to foster inter-religious dialogue and cooperation?

Are there more effective possibilities of strengthening relationships with those Christians who keep a distance from the ecumenical movement?

Report of the Joint Consultative Group between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches

The report of the Joint Consultative Group reflects the work of the group between the period 2007 and 2012. It is prepared as a resource for the Busan assembly with advice and recommendations for how to strengthen the dialogue between the fellowship of WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches around the world.

The report bears witness to the JCG members' attempt to understand one another better and to bear witness to differing theological convictions. It contains theological reflections from the different traditions of the group members. It is neither an authoritative declaration of any of the churches involved, nor a confessional agreement on doctrinal issues. It is offered to those who are interested to learn more about the work of the JCG.

1. The Story of the JCG

The Joint Consultative Group (JCG) between Pentecostals and the World Council of Churches (WCC) was established by the Harare assembly in 1998, recognizing the growing need to consolidate existing relations and create new ones; to initiate study on issues of common interest, to explore different forms of participation; and to encourage collaboration.

The first round of JCG discussions, which took place from 2000 to 2005, were reported to the Porto Alegre assembly in 2006. From the beginning of its mandate, the JCG has sought.

- to search for better ways of understanding one another;
- to look for new opportunities for mutual learning and action;
- to share our experience of Christian witness with one another;
- to discuss our challenges with the hope of moving beyond them;
- to share what we will learn with our respective churches;
- leading to our affirmation of the common life in the Spirit.

The Porto Alegre assembly received the JCG report and recommendations; endorsed the continuation of the JCG; and recognized “the visible contribution of the Pentecostal churches in the dynamically changing Christian landscape, and the importance

to the ecumenical movement of engaging in mutual learning and sustained dialogue with the Pentecostal churches.”¹

The second round of JCG discussions was inaugurated in 2007 under the leadership two co-moderators—Rev. Dr Cecil M. Robeck, on behalf of the Pentecostal church members, and Rev. Jennifer S. Leath, on behalf of the WCC church members. The group, which was comprised of two teams of equal size, included both continuing and new members (appendix 1).

2. From Porto Alegre to Busan

The JCG met annually between 2007 and 2012, building on the relationships and hard-earned trust developed during the first round of conversation. Each meeting helped to deepen dialogue, but also to engage with national churches and local congregations—both Pentecostal churches and WCC member churches—making every effort to learn from and share with local churches through dialogue, fellowship and prayer.

In 2007 the JCG met in Baar, Switzerland at the Focolare Centre, which allowed for significant exposure to this charismatic community within the Roman Catholic Church. The meeting introduced a new group of members to the history and work of the JCG; and provided space for discussion on the ecclesial gifts of charisms and sacraments.

The group set as its agenda from 2007 to 2012 continued theological dialogue on the nature and mission of the church based on a study of the marks of the church as affirmed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed—the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

In 2008 the JCG met in Helsinki, Finland to discuss the oneness of the church. The meeting was held at the Orthodox Sofia Conference Centre and provided space for discussion with the Finnish Ecumenical Council, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Orthodox Church in Finland and the Finnish Pentecostal Movement.

In 2009 the JCG met in Hong Kong, China to discuss the holiness of the church. It met with the Hong Kong Christian Council, the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China and the Pentecostal Holiness Church of Hong Kong.

In 2010 the JCG met outside Geneva, Switzerland to discuss the catholicity of the church. Meeting at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute provided an opportunity for interaction with Bossey students and faculty, the Orthodox Centre at Chambesey and newly elected WCC leadership.

In 2011 the JCG met in Riga, Latvia to discuss the apostolicity of the church. The JCG coincided with a meeting of the European Pentecostal and Charismatic

1. Report of the Policy Reference Committee, “God in your grace ... Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches”, WCC, Geneva, 2007, p 281.

Research Association and provided the opportunity to meet with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Latvia, the Pentecostal Church and the United Bible Society.

The JCG returned to the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in 2012 to complete its report to the Busan assembly.

3. The Lessons the JCG Learnt from Holding These Conversations

The JCG is encouraged that WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches are finding more opportunities for dialogue, common prayer and serving Christ together. From its experience, over two periods of conversation, the JCG bears witness to its experience of a methodology that has enabled the work to be fruitful, and offers this to any others engaged in such conversations.

Fruitful ecumenical conversations benefited from certain commitments from the outset, especially that both teams in the conversation:

Set their work in the context of daily prayer and the study of Scripture together.

Were granted the time, energy, and finances necessary to see the process of conversation through to completion.

Gathered team members who represented a genuine and thoughtful cross-section of the constituencies intended to be at the conversation table.

Assigned persons who were personally secure, self-aware, and knowledgeable of and committed to the positions held by their tradition, yet open to new insights and lessons from their conversation partners in such a way that change in our perceptions of one another is possible.

Enlisted those with the necessary gifts to facilitate the process of conversation and with the broadest possible inclusion of all participants throughout the process.

The conversation benefitted from the partners making commitments about how they will work together. It worked best when both parties shared an attitude of humility, honesty and openness about what they bring to the table, accompanied by personal faithfulness to the gospel. Once that commitment was made, a fruitful conversation benefitted when participants:

Set aside presuppositions, stereotypes and apprehensions about one another.

Set goals together in a spirit of mutuality that led to the desired conclusion of time spent together.

Developed a mutually agreeable methodology by which these goals may be reached and assessed.

Resisted unilateral actions intended to favour oneself or one's tradition.

Resisted the temptation to idealize one's own tradition without also acknowledging its weaknesses.

Resisted the temptation to portray the weaknesses of the dialogue partner without considering its strengths as well.

Were willing to represent fairly and accurately, with love and respect, the breadth, depth, differences within, and nuances of one's tradition to the best of one's ability, whether or not s/he identifies with them completely.

Fruitful ecumenical conversation required a personal commitment and openness by all participants. It provided an opportunity for participants to grow spiritually and to grow together. In this conversion process, participants found it necessary to:

Listen to and to pray for one another with the mind and the heart so that genuine understanding between all parties became possible.

Share together in learning and teaching.

Take on assignments intended to contribute to the goals of the conversation.

Hold the best interest of the other participants at heart.

Fruitful ecumenical conversation benefited from the commitment of all participants to act upon the knowledge that is received in the conversation process, anticipating that that all participants would attempt to.

Bring into their lives and the lives of their ecclesial bodies what has been learned in the conversation.

Be open to promoting further conversations within their own constituencies.

Speak only the truth in love about the other tradition, once it has been honestly and candidly explained.

Report to the appropriate ecclesial bodies the fruit (both positive and negative) of the time spent in conversation honestly and in a timely manner.

Communicate these findings in as clear a language as possible in order to facilitate their reception by the broadest possible audience, and

Recognize the limitations that conversation alone brings to the quest for Christian unity while celebrating the gifts or new possibilities that issue from that conversation.

4. What the JCG Sought to Achieve

The basic goals of the JCG were (1) to *introduce* JCG members to a particular model and context of ecumenical dialogue (a joint consultative group); and (2) to *prepare* JCG members to introduce others from their respective churches to different ways of being in dialogue across Christian traditions. To achieve these objectives it was necessary to develop a methodology that allowed room for personal growth and mutual encouragement.

The group was composed of equal numbers of WCC and Pentecostal members, including pastors, professors, church leaders and lay people from around the world. Some were experienced ecumenists, while others were new to ecumenical dialogue. It was a dialogue of Christians who could represent their traditions and the experience of their churches. It was not only a dialogue between WCC member churches and Pentecostals, but an experience of intra-WCC and intra-Pentecostal discussion.

Because of its grassroots diversity the JCG had to find ways of being in dialogue that brought the gifts of every person to the table. The group quickly developed an inter-disciplinary approach that included personal testimonies, prayer, bible study, theological dialogue and engagement with local churches all working together to help explore the theme of discussion.

The JCG also served as a switch board for sharing updates on international, national and local developments in ecumenical dialogue, helping to nurture a number of significant opportunities for dialogue between WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches.

Through its inter-disciplinary approach the members of the JCG celebrated many points of common faith, but also navigated the tensions of theological, historical and experiential difference in understanding the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

5. Dialogue Centred on Shared Resources

The method and choice of topics for discussion drew more upon shared resources of faith, than theological issues and ecclesial positions alone.

One thing that all JCG members held in common was a deep faith and belief in Christ as God and Saviour. This was strengthened by sharing personal testimonies of faith in Christ, particularly at the beginning of the journey but also through deepened sharing along the way. Common faith was also nurtured by praying together daily using the songs, prayers and stories of each member's tradition.

The JCG chose to discuss a topic that each member loved and cared for dearly—the church. Moreover it chose to talk about the church using the ancient and common affirmation that the church is one, catholic, holy and apostolic as professed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (appendix 2).

In talking about the church the JCG looked to a common source for understanding—the Bible. As much time was spent studying Bible passages relevant to the mark of the church under discussion as was spent discussing theological positions papers. The common story of the people of God helped to steer the discussion toward common affirmations about the church (appendix 3).

In a spirit of love, we prayed the Lord's Prayer and shared our common faith through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

In a spirit love, we invited each other to share in and become part of our faith journeys.

In a spirit love, we reflected on scripture as the common word we share.

In a spirit love, we considered theological and historical accounts of our church traditions.

In a spirit of love, we encouraged and were encouraged by the churches we encountered.

6. Observations from Our Discussion on the Church

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed professes the church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These are commonly referred to as the “marks of the church”. It is what

Christians believe to be true about the church in every time and in every place. The profession is a source of shared faith in the Triune God, binding the faithful together.

The Church Is One—The creed professes that the church is one. This affirms what already exists in Christ and what will be forever. It is grounded in and reflects the nature of the Holy Trinity. It was important for early Christians to affirm their unity in Christ to deepen their experience of fellowship in the Holy Spirit and to proclaim their faith in the Triune God.

The church is one because the Holy Trinity is one. The church is one in Jesus Christ. There is one church, one people of God, one body of Christ, one gospel, one baptism, one communion of saints. Like the creed, these affirmations of faith from the life of the early church offer a clear vision of the church as one (Eph 4.4-6).

Today, the oneness, or unity, among Christ's followers is expressed in many ways. It can be experienced in sharing, in fellowship, in communion and through sacraments (e.g. baptism and Eucharist); it can also be expressed in prayer, through common service and continuing Christ's mission in the world to proclaim the love of God for all creation. It is a state of being and act of doing.

And yet there are many differences in how churches around the world understand the oneness of the church, how they seek to make their unity in Christ visible and how they bear witness to this mark of the church. The differences emerged through history, are expressed in theology and are visible in different ecclesiologies. In spite of these differences, unity is understood as a gift and a calling, rooted in common faith in Jesus Christ and with a common purpose in worshipping God and proclaiming the faith of the gospel in the Triune God.

The Church Is Holy—The claim that the church is holy is a claim made by faith. That claim is made in our confession of the creed (*credo* = I believe). This faith claim is based upon the fact that the God of Abram, Isaac, Jacob, the Triune God, has revealed Himself to be holy (*kadosh/hagios*). He is the Holy One of Israel. Holiness originates in God and is freely communicated by Him through the Spirit to His creation, in various times and places, and especially to those engaged in serving Him, the church of Jesus Christ. The church as both the body of Christ and as community is holy because God has communicated His holiness to the church. Our participation in this holiness is made possible by our participation in the life of the Triune God, through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus (Col 1.22) through the Holy Spirit. We have been cleansed through the "washing of water with the word" (Eph 5.26-27). We are the temple of God, indwelt by His Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3.16-17), and sustained by our life in Christ. It appears that all of us agree on these basic truths.

Where we have found differences among us is in the link that some make between the holiness of the individual Christian (understood as a process of sanctification) and the holiness of the church. The question is frequently asked, if the church is "without spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5.27) how do we account for sin among the saints?

That we, members of the body of Christ, are called to live lives that are holy (1 Pet. 1.13-21), lives that are worthy of our calling (Eph. 4.1-3) is not in dispute. Standards of personal holiness, however, are often in dispute, as is the place of discernment and discipline within the life of the holy community.

The Church Is Catholic—The mark of catholicity, from the Greek *kath'holou* meaning “as a whole” and “universal”, evokes a sense of totality, wholeness, integrity, perfection, and—with respect to the church-universality and ecumenicity. Given this etymological foundation, catholicity signifies and celebrates the presence of the risen Christ and affirms the true faith in the face of heresy and schism.

Catholicity is also understood by some members of the JCG as a task of the church, not merely a possession of the church. The JCG agree that this mark is also related to God’s mission. However, different perspectives surfaced concerning the mission of the church with respect to catholicity. Pentecostal, Protestant and Orthodox traditions have their own internal understandings of fullness and integrity.

At the conclusion of the meeting during which the JCG considered the mark of catholicity, the JCG developed the following affirmation in a spirit of togetherness.

“We affirm that catholicity is the gift of the Triune God to the church in its universality of time and space. The church is wherever and whenever there are those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and includes all those who have held this faith throughout the ages, inclusive of particularities such as age, social condition, gender, race, or ability. The church, in its catholicity, expresses its life through worship and God’s mission, making Christ known, pursuing justice and compassion for the sanctification of all of creation and making ‘every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.’ This obedient response to the call of God is only possible in the power of the Spirit, recognising the love of God that transforms us, and in humble dependence upon God’s grace.”

Pentecostals understand catholicity in terms of the “full gospel” in relation to the Lord’s promise to give life in fullness (Jn 10.10); He is Saviour, the one who baptizes in the Spirit, the Healer as well as the coming King. The JCG reaffirmed that the WCC does not exist as “the *una sancta* of which the creeds speak”, and so does not embody catholicity in this way, but as a fellowship of churches calling one another toward a “mutual accountability” as they embody faith in Christ and fulfil the call of catholicity.

The Church Is Apostolic—When we affirm that the church is apostolic, we begin with the Triune God, the Father who both sent (*apostello*) His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to bear witness to the truth in God and also sends the Holy Spirit. As Christians, we root our apostolic claims in Jesus Christ who, as the Father sent Him, sends His disciples into the world to bear witness (*martyria*) to the truth that we have come to understand as the gospel. That truth was made manifest in His incarnation, His death, and His resurrection. In a sense, all those who identify with Christ are

carriers of the gospel message (*evangelion*). The living out of this common calling is made manifest in word and deed, and in our common *koinonia*. Still, Jesus chose the twelve, in a unique way, to carry the message of truth, to set the church in order, to guard the “good treasure entrusted to you with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us,” (2 Tim 1.14) and to pass it along to the faithful of the next generation (2 Tim 2.2) and hence, to all generations.

The message that is to be guarded was embodied first in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Himself, but it also exists in the affirmations of faith such as may be found in 1 Corinthians 12.3 (“Jesus is Lord!”), and 1 Corinthians 15.1-11, the things of first importance. The apostle’s affirmation shows these truths as being rooted in scripture, which provides evidence that in Christ we are confronted by God’s eternal plan, and through Christ, we stand in continuity with the whole church. In the early church, the affirmations first given by the apostles (Jude 3) were entrusted to those on whom the apostles had laid their hands, consecrating them as bishops, who were asked in turn, to pass them along to the next generation. These basic teachings became the “rule of faith.” They embodied the essence of that “deposit of faith” in written form, which has been passed along to each generation. As time passed, the essence of these “rule of faith” became enshrined in the creed, now commonly confessed by much of the church. Thus, Christ, scripture, the creed, and the ongoing teachings of the church understood as “tradition,” provide the content and the context for the apostolic affirmation. The ministry keeps the faith of the church and experiences the faith through the liturgical or worship life and the practices of the church and its members. It appears that all of us may agree on these basic truths.

Where we have found differences among us is rooted in our separate histories. We do not all agree on how this passing of the deposit of faith is safeguarded. We do not necessarily agree on the sacramental or the charismatic character of the ministry, the limits on who is a minister, the role of succession in guaranteeing the “deposit of faith,” or whether there is an unbroken chain of succession. We do not all agree on a common understanding or interpretation of the scriptures or the place and meaning of apostolic life that may be evidenced by fruit (Gal 5.22-23) and charisms (1 Cor 12.8-10) of the Holy Spirit. Nor do we necessarily agree on how best to proclaim the deposit of faith that has been given to the church. These differences are not only between the WCC and Pentecostal members of the JCG, but also among WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches.

Pentecostals have been committed to the proclamation of the apostolic faith since their inception. Many Pentecostal denominations incorporate the term “apostolic” in their name (e.g. Apostolic Faith Mission). In addition to their commitment to apostolic faith, Pentecostals contend that the apostolicity of the church is also closely related to apostolic life (Acts 4), apostolic work (Jn 14.12), and apostolic power manifested in spiritual gifts as well as “signs and wonders” (Acts 2.4).

7. Unexpected Fruits

The JCG quickly affirmed that patience is a virtue when it comes to encouraging WCC member churches and Pentecostals to be in dialogue. Though patience is still needed, there were a number of unexpected fruits that the JCG helped bring to harvest during the past years. Though the JCG cannot claim to have planted these fruits, its members did help to nurture them with the hope that each fruit will increase the efforts to encourage dialogue and common witness.

In 2010 the WCC general secretary delivered greetings to the Pentecostal World Congress gathered in Stockholm, Sweden. An exchange of invitations has ensued for the Pentecostal World Congress and the WCC Assembly both taking place in 2013. The recognition and encouragement of dialogue at this level helps to highlight our need for one another.

New bilateral conversations have emerged between Baptists and Pentecostals; between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Pentecostals. In addition to the existing dialogues involving Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed with Pentecostals, these new conversations are a sign that deeper dialogue between church traditions is possible. In addition, there are many local and national conversations that reach the church at a grass roots level, i.e. forums for praying together, reading the Bible together and engaging in common diaconal work. The commitment to these conversations helps to build mutual understanding.

The Global Christian Forum (GCF) has made tremendous inroads in introducing church leaders from the Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions to one another. The relationships made through the GCF have nurtured many new developments and continue to help to deepen the broadest relationships.

The invitation to hold the 10th Assembly of the WCC in Busan, South Korea was endorsed not only by the WCC member churches in Korea, but by all the member churches of the National Council of Churches in Korea, including the Pentecostal Church. The invitation signifies an important change in relationships.

8. Member Testimonies

Given the importance of personal testimonies to the JCG methodology over the years, members of the JCG were invited to respond to the following three questions at the end of the journey

What have you learned from our work together?

How have you been transformed through our work together?

What are the challenges for the church that have been clarified through our process together?

While responses to these questions varied, the testimonies were positively provocative and reflect an overwhelming and unanimous celebration of this virtue—the

development of personal relationships of mutual love provide a sure foundation for the mutual understanding upon which inter-church, ecumenical dialogues rely—and the mutual understanding inter-church, ecumenical dialogues generate. When we grow in relationship with one another, we grow in love for one another; when we grow in love for one another; we grow in understanding of one another.

We learned that we must take the time to grow in love for one another in our diversity.

We were transformed and reoriented toward a common hope.

We gained a deeper understanding of the challenges we face together as Christians.

9. Recommendations

On the occasion of the Busan Assembly, the JCG prepared the following recommendations to the WCC member churches.

Recognising that together WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches confess faith in the Triune God according to the scriptures; together these churches are called to be a response to Christ's prayer for the unity of his believers, so that the world may believe in God's saving love for all creation; and

Recognizing also that JCG conversations in recent years have produced promising results, which should continue for the sake of common witness in the world and deeper mutual understanding between churches;

R1. *The JCG recommends that efforts should be maintained to encourage conversation between the member churches of WCC and Pentecostal churches that are not members of the WCC.*

A. Involvement in the Work of the WCC

R2. *The WCC should continue to involve Pentecostal leaders, pastors, lay people and theologians in strategic ways that help the fellowship of WCC member churches to encounter the Pentecostal movement.*

R3. *Recognizing the growing significance of Pentecostalism in the world, the JCG recommends the participation of Pentecostals in WCC commissions be strengthened, i.e. Faith and Order, Mission and Evangelism, International Affairs.*

R4. *The JCG recommends that collaboration in the area of theological education, ecumenical formation and youth initiatives continue, e.g. through theological education networks (ETE and WOCATI), the Bossey Ecumenical Institute and ECHOS (youth commission).*

R5. *The JCG recommends, that a Joint Consultative Group is maintained as a platform for monitoring the rapidly developing conversations (formal), dialogue (informal) and encounters between WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches.*

R6. *Acknowledging that there are Pentecostal churches that are members of the WCC, the JCG recommends that consideration be given by the WCC to the most appropriate*

ways of their engagement in this process of encounter and conversation, in consultation with its Pentecostal conversation partners.

R.7. Recognizing the value of the diversity on our and teams and the contributions each participant was able to make, we recommend that the WCC along with its Pentecostal partners in the JCG maintain and continue to strive toward balanced participation.

B. Conversations among Pentecostals

The Pentecostal movement is diverse, global and growing. The JCG would like to encourage the Pentecostal World Fellowship to continue to endorse the theological exchange between churches.

C. Conversations, dialogues and encounters at national, regional, and global levels

Though the WCC and the PWF offer global leadership, it is also important to encourage dialogue between national churches, between world communions and among church leaders.

Where WCC member churches and Pentecostal churches have engaged in dialogue at a national level great progress has been made.

R.8. The JCG recommends that churches around the world should be encouraged to be in conversation on a national and regional level, finding new ways to express common faith in and common witness to Christ.

The bilateral dialogues and conversations between world communions and Pentecostal churches have helped to deepen theological discussions.

R.9. The JCG recommends that global church traditions be encouraged to continue dialogue and conversations that lead to deeper mutual understanding, solving existing problems between the churches and healing of divisions.

R.10. Recognizing the Global Christian Forum brings leaders together from many church traditions, establishing relationships through the Forum that have helped initiate many new opportunities for churches to deepen their ecumenical encounter, therefore, the JCG recommends that these efforts be encouraged.

Appendix 1

Participants in the Joint Consultative Group

World Council of Churches

Rev. Jennifer S. Leath (2007 to 2012),
Co-moderator

African Methodist Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr Lesley Anderson (2007; 2009 to 2012)
Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas

Ms Kyriaki Avtzi (2008)
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Father Ioan Chirilá (2007 to 2012)
Romanian Orthodox Church

Rev. Dr Paul Goodliff (2007 to 2012)
Baptist Union of Great Britain

Rev. Marjut Haapakangas (2010 and 2012)
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Rev. Tuija Elina Mannström (2007 to 2008)
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Dr Konstantinos Kenanidis (2009 to 2012)
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Prof. Dr Marina Kolovopoulou (2007 to 2012)
Church of Greece

Rev. Dr Cephas Omenyo (2007 to 2012)
Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Dr Xanthia Morfi (2011)
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Rev. Iára Müller (2007 to 2011)
Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil

Rev. Eric S.Y. So (2007 to 2009; 2011)
Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China

Sr Mother Superior Theoxeni (2007)
Ecumenical Patriarchate

Pentecostal Team

Rev. Dr Cecil M. Robeck (2007 to 2009;
2011 to 2012), Co-moderator
Assemblies of God

Rev. Dr Japie Jimmy LaPoorta (2007 to 2012),
Co-moderator in 2010
Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa

Dr Kimberly Ervin Alexander (2008 to 2012)
Church of God

Dr Miguel Alvarez (2010 to 2012)
Church of God

Rev. Dr Teresa Chai (2008 to 2012)
Assemblies of God

Rev. Dr Harold D. Hunter (2007 to 2012)
International Pentecostal Holiness Church

Rev. Dr Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (2007 to 2012)
Finnish Pentecostal Movement

Rev. Connie Karsten-van der Brugge (2008
to 2012)
United Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches

Dr Jean-Daniel Plüss (2010 to 2012)
Swiss Pentecostal Mission

Dr Paulson Pulikottil (2007 to 2012)
Indian Pentecostal Church

Bishop Stephen Safwali (2007 to 2012)
Antioch Bible Church

Rev. Dr Frederick Ware (2009)
Church of God in Christ

Observers from the WCC Youth Commission, ECHOS

Dr Connie Ho Yan Au (2009)

Mr Nikos Kosmidis (2008)

Appendix 2

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed¹

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation he came down
from heaven,
by the power of the Holy Spirit he became
incarnate
from the Virgin Mary
and was made man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius
Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried;
on the third day he rose again in accordance
with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven.
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
he will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father;
with the Father and the Son
he is worshiped and glorified:
he has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and
apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the
forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

Appendix 3

Biblical texts used by the JCG to help
discuss the marks of the church

The Church is One
Acts 2.42-47 and 4.32-35
Acts 15—Full Chapter
Ephesians 4.1-16
Philippians 1.3-11
The Church is Holy
Hebrews 12.1-5
Isaiah 6.1-13
Leviticus 19.1-37
I Peter 2.1-10
Acts 10.9-20, 34-48
Philippians 1.2-5(11)
The Church is Catholic
Ruth 1.15-17; 4.13-17
Acts 11.27-30
John 15.1-17
Revelations 7.9-17
Philippians 3.12-16
The Church is Apostolic
John 20.21 and Luke 10.1-20
Numbers 11.16-17; 23-30
I Corinthians 15.1-11 and II Corinthians
11.5-30
II Timothy 1.6-7 and Titus 1.5-9
Acts 2.42-47
Philippians 4.2-9

1. Em tua graça—resources for praise and prayer, Ninth Assembly, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2006.

Report of the Joint Consultative Commission between the World Council of Churches and Christian World Communions, 2007 to 2012

What follows is the report on the work of the Joint Consultative Commission between the World Council of Churches and Christian World Communions. A draft report has been shared with the WCC Central Committee (August 2012) and the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (October 2012) for information and feedback. This final report, referencing the work of the Joint Consultative Commission and taking into account feedback from the WCC and CWCs, is being submitted to the Busan Assembly in 2013.

1. Introduction

The WCC Porto Alegre assembly initiated the Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Christian World Communions (CWCs) in 2006.

The assembly, having affirmed the “specific role and place of CWCs in the ecumenical movement” and convinced that “the WCC is strengthened by interaction with CWCs”, proposed that a joint commission would “explore the significance and implications of overlap of membership, coordination of programmes, and other common efforts between the WCC and the Christian world communions; [...and] the feasibility of a structure for WCC assemblies that would provide expanded space for Christian world communions and confessional families to meet, for the purpose of deliberation and/or overall agendas” (report of the policy reference committee, Porto Alegre assembly, 2006).

A Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) of 14 members was formed in 2006 with half of its members appointed by the WCC central committee and half of its members named by Christian world communions.

H.E. Dr Archbishop Nareg Alemezian (Armenian Apostolic Church Holy See of Cilicia) and Rev. Dr Robert K. Welsh (Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council) served as the co-moderators of the JCC on behalf of the WCC and CWCs respectively. The JCC met annually in Geneva from 2007 to 2012, meeting coincidentally with the steering committee of the conference of secretaries of CWCs.

2. The work of the Joint Consultative Commission

a. One ecumenical movement—reflections from the JCC

The fundamental affirmations that emerged during the past six years of JCC meetings were rooted in the mutual claiming of a common understanding of the one ecumenical movement that affirms the ecclesial nature of the search for visible unity and common witness; and the need for ecumenical partners to work cooperatively in the service of the churches. That is, the relationship between conciliar and confessional ecumenical partners is particularly important in helping to nurture the one ecumenical movement. While this relationship was sometimes strained in the past, a more cooperative and complementary relationship has emerged in recent years.¹

b. Inter-religious dialogue—new initiatives and approaches

The JCC helped to guide the WCC and CWCs in responding cooperatively to new initiatives in inter-religious dialogue, particularly with regard to Christian-Muslim dialogue, by encouraging space for wider Christian consultation and a common platform for dialogue with Islam facilitated through the WCC.²

c. Forum on Bilateral Dialogues—platform for sharing

The JCC gave direction for the on-going work of the Forum on Bilateral Dialogue, which is sponsored by CWCs and facilitated by Faith and Order, by encouraging reflection on the insights of and achievements of the bilateral dialogues; bringing coherence to the bilateral dialogues; endorsing proposals for the forum to meet more regularly; and challenging the CWCs to rethink the approach to bilateral dialogue so that it might be more relevant to churches, especially those churches in the global south.³

d. Assemblies—cooperative leadership

The JCC helped to reshape the discussion on common assemblies with a wider circle of partners and by clarifying that, rather than pursuing “joint assemblies”, it would be more strategic to develop the WCC assembly as a significant gathering of the whole ecumenical movement, which includes the strong participation and cooperation of CWCs and other ecumenical partners with the WCC as it prepares the assembly. The JCC affirmed the value of ecumenical leadership participating more fully in the assembly as a way to nurture greater coherence in the one ecumenical movement, i.e. CWC governing body members.⁴

1. *cf.* Report of the continuation committee on ecumenism in the 21st century.

2. *cf.* Current Dialogue, no 52, July 2012.

3. *cf.* Reports from the ninth and tenth forums on bilateral dialogue, 2008 and 2012.

4. *cf.* reports from the assembly discernment and assembly planning committees to the WCC central committee 2009, 2011 and 2012.

e. Other areas—encouraging synergies

The JCC helped to encourage a number of common programmatic interests between CWCs and WCC member churches; particularly CWCs participation in the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation; and also the preparation of guidelines for common witness developed by the WCC, World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Interreligious Dialogue. It also held regular discussion with the leadership of the Global Christian Forum, taking stock of developments and offering advice from the joint perspective of CWCs and the WCC.⁵

3. Affirmations from the Joint Consultative Commission

The work of the JCC affirmed a number of basic principles that are relevant for ongoing cooperation between the WCC and CWCs.

The ecclesial nature of the ecumenical movement; that is, churches are the primary actors of the ecumenical movement and their direct involvement is needed to make Christian unity and common witness in the world more visible.

The WCC as a fellowship of churches that provides space for its member churches to experience the fellowship they share in Christ. The ethos of fellowship and consensus offers the WCC a unique role in the ecumenical movement in convening churches and ecumenical partners around common concerns.

The CWCs as communions of churches that provide space for their member churches to experience communion as a family of churches sharing a common theological and confessional heritage. The ethos of communion offers CWCs a unique role in the ecumenical movement in deepening Eucharistic fellowship and engaging in inter-communion dialogue.

The value of conciliar and confessional cooperation in serving the one ecumenical movement. The relationship between the WCC and CWCs has matured over decades from antagonistic to cooperative based on a growing sense of common responsibility in nurturing the churches' commitment to making unity in Christ more visible.

Recognizing areas for strategic cooperation. There are key areas where cooperation between the WCC and CWCs has particular relevance, e.g., in presenting a common Christian voice for dialogue with other faiths; in pursuing theological dialogue that reconciles divisions among churches; and in pursuing common witness for justice and peace.

4. Recommendations of the Joint Consultative Commission

The JCC helped to begin reshaping relations and building greater cooperation between the WCC and CWCs with a focus on nurturing the one ecumenical movement and

5. *cf.* Just Peace Companion; Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World; reports from the Global Christian Forum.

serving the fellowship of churches in their pursuit of visible unity and common witness in Christ.

The JCC provided a flexible mechanism for consultation and sharing between the WCC and CWCs. Meetings of the JCC were held annually in connection with an already established gathering of CWC leadership.

The JCC *recommends* to both the WCC assembly and the conference of secretaries of CWCs that a similar joint commission be continued to strengthen interaction and cooperation between the WCC and CWCs:

- Such a mechanism should be flexible, i.e. meeting regularly to maintain interaction; connected with other events; and bringing together church representatives, communion leadership and relevant ecumenical staff;
- The commission should involve the leadership and key staff of the WCC and the leadership of Christian world communions committed to deeper cooperation and engagement with the WCC;
- The commission should report regularly to the WCC central committee and the conference of secretaries of Christian world communions for accountability and feedback.
- The commission should continue to reinforce on-going collaboration, while helping to facilitate communication and collaboration in response to emerging issues.

Appendix 1

Meetings of the Joint Consultative Commission

The meetings of the JCC were held in conjunction with the steering committee of the conference of secretaries of Christian world communions, which meets annually in May/June in Geneva.

The JCC met on the following dates:

10 May 2007

14 and 15 May 2008

22 and 23 June 2009

19 and 20 May 2010

8 and 9 June 2011

6 and 7 June 2012

Appendix 2

Members of the Joint Consultative Commission

WCC members included:

H.E. Dr Archbishop Nareg Alemezian, (2007 to 2010; 2102), Co-chair

Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Cilicia)

Mr Douglas L. Chial (2007 to 2012)

World Council of Churches

Rev. Canon Dr John Gibaut (2008 to 2012)

World Council of Churches

Dr Aruna Gnanadason (2007 to 2008)

World Council of Churches

Archpriest Mikhail Gundyayev (2007 to 2012)

Russian Orthodox Church

Archimandrite Benedict Ioannou (2007)

Ecumenical Patriarchate

Mr Georges Lemopoulos (2008 to 2012)

World Council of Churches

Rev. Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus (2007 to 2012)

World Council of Churches

Rev. Dr Larry Pickens (2007 to 2008)

United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr Martin Robra (2007 to 2012)

World Council of Churches

CWC members included:

Rev. Dr Robert K. Welsh, (2007; 2009 to 2012), Co-chair

Disciples Ecumenical Consultative Council

Rev. Canon Dr Alyson Barnett-Cowan (2010 to 2012)

Anglican Communion

Monsignor Gosbert Byamungu (2008 to 2011)

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Rt Rev. Gregory Cameron (2007 to 2008)

Anglican Communion

Bishop Brian Farrel (2007 to 2012)

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Rev. Dr John Graz (2007 to 2012)

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Nancy Irving (2007 to 2009; 2012)

Friends World Committee for Consultation

Dr Kathryn L. Johnson (2008 to 2011)

Lutheran World Federation

Rev. Canon Kenneth Kearon (2009)

Anglican Communion

Rev. Stephen Larson (2012)

Lutheran World Federation

Rev. Dr Larry Miller (2007 to 2008; 2010 to 2012)

Mennonite World Conference

Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko (2007 to 2009)

Lutheran World Federation

Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, Co-chair in 2008 (2008 to 2009; 2011 to 2012)

World Communion of Reformed Churches

Monsignor John Radano (2007)

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Rev. Dr Douwe Visser (2009 to 2010; 2012)

World Communion of Reformed Churches

Report of the Echos Youth Commission

The Echos Commission on Youth in the Ecumenical Movement met in October 2011 in Adma, Lebanon, to evaluate its work and mandate since it was first constituted after the last WCC assembly in Porto Alegre, 2006, as a consultative body of young people from a broad cross-section of the ecumenical movement.

*“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Luke 3:4)¹*

I. Introduction

Echos Commission on Youth in the Ecumenical Movement met for its fourth meeting 24-31 October 2011 in Adma, Lebanon. Given the clear call for our fellowship of churches to walk in solidarity with the churches of the Middle East region, the commission decided to meet in the Middle East and offer special support to youth in the ecumenical movement in the region, and especially in Lebanon. The Commission would like to thank World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) Middle East for their hospitality and accompaniment, along with many other young ecumenists representing churches and organizations in Lebanon. We also thank His Holiness Aram I for his invitation to meet at the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia headquarters in Antelias, Lebanon. We give thanks to God for the “cedars of Lebanon,” the people of faith, who stand tall and strong as witnesses to the grace, mercy, and peace of God even in the midst of social challenges. The following include a recollection of our mandate and recommendations for the ongoing work of Echos and the future governance of the WCC based on our evaluation of the work of the Echos commission since the World Council of Churches 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil. (N.B. For

1. The commission decided on its name in its first meeting 2007, Geneva: “We are called to respond to the echos from the past of those ecumenical leaders who have gone before us. We must also lay the groundwork for the youth that will come after this generation. So we hope to send our voices as echos into the future. One biblical reference to our name is revealed in the voice of John the Baptist who is speaking as an echo into the future: “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” (Luke 3:4).”

our by-laws, a summary of our self-evaluation, our recommendations to the Assembly Planning Committee and the Echos report submitted to the Governance and Continuation Committee please see the appendices.)

II. Our Mandate

The 9th Assembly “endorsed promoting ecumenical leadership development of youth in the life of the WCC, including the full participation of youth in all programmes of the WCC. Their voices, concerns and presence must be brought more directly into the decision-making and leadership of the work and governance of the council” (cf. programme guidelines committee par. 15). As a result, the WCC 9th Assembly “directed the WCC central committee to create a representative body of young adults who would coordinate the various roles of young adults connected to the WCC and facilitate communication between them. Such a body would create space for a meaningful participation of young adults in the life and decision making of the WCC, and would be able to hold the WCC accountable to its goals regarding young adults” (cf. Policy Reference Committee par.14).

III. Evaluating Echos

Some key questions that emerged as a result of our evaluation process were the following, along with our strongest responses to these concerns:

In what (if any) capacity should Echos continue following the 10th Assembly? We recommend that Echos should be continued as a commission for the following reasons:

Echos has answered “identity questions,” having built a structure that can facilitate youth work in and beyond the commission and having established by-laws that can adapt to future generations’ needs. Because of this work, those who follow Echos in this commission will inherit a ready vehicle for their vision forward. Moreover, as a commission, a body with influence in the infrastructure of the WCC, the youth who follow will inherit an infrastructural position that will help it to fully attain its mandate.

Echos offers a unique and diverse voice of youth gathered, primarily, from member churches of the WCC while it also promotes a unique vision of expanding the ecumenical landscape by shaping a youth ecumenical movement within and beyond the WCC.

Echos facilitates a unique form of ecumenical formation: through practical and sustained experience, Echos trains commissioners (who, in turn, train others) in ecumenism, the role of the WCC in ecumenism, advocacy for systemic changes within the WCC and the broader ecumenical movement that empower youth and other marginalized groups within the WCC, advocacy for greater participation of youth at all levels of the WCC and in the broader ecumenical movement, and supporting one another as global youth ecumenical leaders.

How can we better prioritize networking with the wider ecumenical movement? On one hand, we see the ongoing value of the WCC and its uniquely prophetic voice in this season of ecumenism. On the other hand, we have seen other models of ecumenism that might accommodate more expanded ecumenical spaces and better facilitate certain, important forms of networking and unity building (e.g., Global Christian Forum). With this in mind, we believe that Echos must prioritize its participation in co-facilitating, as one of many invested partners, a forum involving other ecumenical organizations and churches. This forum may be realized through virtual and/or physical meetings, but is essential to the ongoing work of youth in WCC and in the broader ecumenical movement.

What is the value of the physical meetings of Echos Commission, and the importance of particular regularity of meetings and terms for commissioners? Physical meetings (with the frequency of every 18 months) have been essential to the productivity of the commission. Furthermore, our work has shown that, even with this regularity of time, there is a great deal of pressure and difficulty to complete the necessary work. As far as the numbers of commissioners are concerned, it is important to maintain the current level of 25 commissioners in order to maintain the strength of the WCC as a partner for work with the wider youth ecumenical movement. We recommend that the length of term for the commissioners remain as it is specified in the by-laws for the sake of accountability to our functions.

IV. Recommendations

Items to be approved by the central committee for action at the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly to be held in 2013 in Busan, Republic of Korea: That the following aim expressed within the bylaws of Echos be the first and strongest priority of the commission: “To broaden and strengthen the ecumenical movement through networking with young adults from local, regional and global ecumenical organizations—inside and outside the WCC constituency—and facilitating spaces for exchange” (cf. By-laws). Specifically, we recommend that “spaces for exchange” be promoted through the co-facilitation of a forum (e.g., through virtual gathering) along with leaders of other youth church bodies and youth organizations in the wider ecumenical movement.

That the following adjustments be made to the composition of Echos through the by-laws such that there would be a slight increase amongst those within Echos who come from the wider ecumenical movement. We will ask for contributions toward participation expenses from 25-99%, from youth commissioners who join us from the wider ecumenical movement or their sending bodies.

Currently the composition of Echos is: four to six (4-6) central committee members, one (1) commissioner from each of the WCC consultative bodies, at least one (1) Roman Catholic and one (1) Pentecostal youth, two to four (2-4) youth from

amongst important ecumenical youth partners and regional ecumenical organizations and remaining commissioners from youth involved in various levels of ecumenical work from the WCC member churches (cf. Doc. No. GEN 09 Section 6(6.1)(a-d) Echos By-laws).

We recommend that the composition be shifted to the following balance: two to four (2-4) central committee members, one (1) commissioner from each of the WCC consultative bodies, at least one (1) Roman Catholic, at least one (1) Pentecostal, and at least one (1) evangelical youth, seven (7) youth from amongst important ecumenical youth partners and regional ecumenical organizations and remaining commissioners from youth involved in various levels of ecumenical work from the WCC member churches.

That the commission continues to meet with the same regularity with which it currently meets.

That the youth programme (with the commission as a central part of the responsibilities of this programme) be assigned at least one (1) single person who serves as 100 percent staff.

IV. Conclusion

We give thanks to God for the work that we have been given to perform in the service of Christ's Church and in the service of promoting fuller participation of youth in the WCC and within the wider ecumenical movement. We are also thankful for those within the WCC who have given support to the efforts Echos has made toward this end by praying for us, by consulting us with respect for our perspective and by including us as a matter of conviction. May God bless us all with the help of the Holy Spirit in the pursuit of justice and peace!

Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the Twenty-First Century

Final Report

World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2012

Building on the work of previous consultations and the mandate of the 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, the Continuation Committee presented in its final report in 2012 its assessment of the present state, theological basis, and ecclesial and institutional challenges of the contemporary ecumenical movement.

*Holy Spirit, advocate and comforter,
Purify us, carry us beyond our narrow personal and institutional concerns;
Let us discern what God calls us to be and to do in this world.*
—from the opening prayer of the first meeting of the committee

I. Our Journey as a Committee

1. The Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century—its membership and task

The Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century (CCE21) was formed after the 2006 Porto Alegre Assembly and met for the first time in 2007 in Bossey. The formation of the committee was in many ways unique. It is a committee which is facilitated by the WCC but not a committee of the WCC. The rationale for membership and the mandate were endorsed, but not formulated by the WCC Central Committee. They were the result of two major conferences of the so called “reconfiguration process” that were held in Antelias in 2003 and in Chavannes-de-Bogis in 2004. Between these two meetings the emphasis changed and moved from “reconfiguration” to “ecumenism in the 21st century”. Reports on the two consultations were presented to the 2006 Porto Alegre assembly. Participants in these consultations included representatives of WCC member churches together with representatives of

the Roman Catholic Church and other churches beyond WCC membership, of conciliar instruments, i.e., regional ecumenical organizations and national councils of churches, of Christian world communions, international ecumenical organizations, a variety of youth organizations, etc. Therefore, the continuation committee—though small in numbers—included representatives of the same broader constituency.¹

Of particular importance for the work of the committee has been the value statement of the 2004 Chavannes-de-Bogis conference. The statement articulates clearly the values that have emerged in ecumenical relationships:

*The ecumenical movement in the 21st century will be a special space:
where increasing numbers of Christians are involved in the work of Christian unity, and
the fellowship among the churches is strengthened;
where an open and ecumenically minded culture is fostered in the everyday lives of people
in their own contexts, and where ecumenical formation is a central focus at all levels of
church life, from the local to the global;
where spirituality is the basis of life of Christians together, and where, as individuals,
churches and organizations, Christians can pray together and encourage each other to
discern God's will for their lives;
where all, including the marginalized and excluded, are welcomed into inclusive and lov-
ing communities;
where relationships, built on mutual trust, are strengthened between all parts of the ecu-
menical family;
where each Christian can be supported in practising responsible stewardship, and where
churches and Christian organizations can be mutually accountable to each other;
where the diversity of cultures and traditions is recognized as a source of creativity;
where hospitality is shown towards those of different faiths, and where dialogue is encour-
aged;
where women's visions of being church are shared;
where young people are encouraged to join in and lead; where the ministry of healing is
carried out in shared actions; where the healing of memories leads to reconciliation;
where, together, we are able to be prophetic in confronting the injustices and violence of
the world, and to take risks in our commitment to justice and peace when Christ calls
us to do so.*

Receiving the two reports, the Policy Reference Committee of the ninth assembly of the World Council of Churches in 2006 in Porto Alegre made it clear that:

The process of reconfiguring the ecumenical movement is in large part an effort to

1. The committee included 5 representatives of member churches (selected by the WCC executive committee); 1 representative of the Roman Catholic Church; 1 representative of Pentecostal churches; 2 representatives from ecumenical youth organizations; 1 each from REOs, CWCs, NCCs, agencies/specialized ministries, international ecumenical organizations and ecumenical renewal communities.

“choreograph” the intricate relationships among the various ecumenical instruments and new ecumenical partners, so that clarity, transparency, communication and cooperative efforts mark those relationships, and allow the ecumenical movement as a whole to offer to the world, and to the regions and local churches the coherent grace-filled spiritual message of Christianity.

. . . The process that has been called “reconfiguration” should be understood not as a patching up of the existing ecumenical structures, but as a dynamic process to deepen the relationships of the ecumenical movement to its spiritual roots and missionary identity, reaffirm the relationship of the ecumenical instruments to the churches, clarify the relationships among the various ecumenical instruments and ensure that the message and the effort be coordinated and coherent.

The Policy Reference Committee recommended the formation of the Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century. The committee was asked to build on the results of the two consultations of the reconfiguration process.

Membership and terms of reference of the committee reflected the insight of the CUV process that the ecumenical movement is polycentric and, indeed, an open ecumenical space. The WCC is not at the centre and does not own the space as such. However, because the WCC is not just an organization, but first and foremost a fellowship of member churches that have also created most of the other ecumenical instruments in their quest for unity and common witness to the world, the WCC was entrusted with the task to facilitate a common table that would serve to

- strengthen a shared vision and a shared analysis of the changing context,
- foster relationships with and among ecumenical partners,
- ensure coherence of the many actors in the ecumenical movement and
- identify and implement better ways of working together with clearer understandings of different roles, functions and levels of action.

The CCE21 was to reflect on these tasks and to propose feasible steps in this direction. It met four times:

- 2007 in Bossey, Switzerland;
- 2009 in Belém, Brazil;
- 2010 in Rome, Italy and
- 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

All four places represent important contexts and concerns that were to be addressed by the committee: the ecumenical movement and the Ecumenical Institute Château de Bossey; the reality of rapid social change and new ecclesial realities in Belém; the tradition and worldwide scope of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome; and both the presence of one of the oldest Orthodox churches with its impressive roots in the history of Ethiopia and a Lutheran church that is nurturing charismatic expressions of faith in Addis Ababa.

In 2011, the moderator and some group members met with representatives of the Governance Review Continuation Committee (GRCC) and the Assembly Planning Committee (APC) to compare notes and focus the specific task of the committee more clearly so that it would complement and not duplicate the work of the others.

Bible studies were always an important component of these meetings: on texts of the letter to the Ephesians and on key texts related to the ecumenical vision (John 17:21; Ephesians 1:10, Colossians 1:15 ff.; Luke 4:16 ff. etc). Listening to the texts of the Bible, the committee came to the conclusion that it would be misleading to call for a new vision for the ecumenical movement. The Bible studies helped the committee to see that the main emphasis of the vision on the unity of the church and the unity of humankind was firmly rooted in the Bible and, indeed, a gospel imperative. Compared to more than sixty years ago when the WCC was founded, the horizons of this vision are broader today than in the past. This applies to both the changing ecclesial and religious landscape as well as the care for creation. In view of the changing horizons, the broader cosmic vision of Christ's reign in

texts like the letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians or the Book of Revelation began to speak in new ways to the committee.

2. Bossey 2007—The First Step in the Journey

At the first meeting in 2007 in the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, the committee

- reviewed its mandate,
- started to explore the changing ecclesial and ecumenical landscape and to
- discuss the nature and shape of the next WCC assembly since the assembly would need to demonstrate progress concerning the tasks stated above.²

Robina Winbush shared reflections on the two consultations of the “reconfiguration process” held in 2003 in Antelias and 2004 in Chavannes de Bogis. The deputy general secretary, Georges Lemopoulos, spoke about six central questions for the work of the committee regarding the vision, the balance between broadening and deepening of the fellowship with a possible emphasis on accountability, the willingness to change, the power to set agenda, the need for a deeper understanding of the spiritual dimension of life, and for constant renewal. Rudolf von Sinner shared 12 theses on ecumenism in the 21st century for discussion, starting from the observations that:

- the centre of gravity of Christianity has moved to the South;
- the globalization and opening up of the world also brings injustice, fragmentation and fundamentalism;
- ecumenism is in crisis or in transition, and these two elements are usually intertwined;

2. The report of the meeting was published by the WCC in 2007: Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century, Papers for and a report of the first meeting of the committee, Geneva: WCC, 2007.

- religions can foster war or peace and, therefore, for peace to exist among nations, peace among religions is necessary.

His first thesis underlined that the ecumenical movement had to be built on trust, which had (thesis two) the readiness for self-critique and repentance as pre-conditions.

These three contributions set the tone and the direction for the work of the committee. Based on the conviction that the next WCC assembly would be the decisive moment deciding on success or failure of the work of the committee and utilizing the presence of the many representatives of important partners in the ecumenical movement, the Bossey meeting included a discussion on the assembly and “expanded space” that was facilitated by Doug Chial.

3. Belém 2009—vital challenges and new insights

In 2009 in Belém, Brazil, in the beautiful surroundings of the Focolare Movement’s Mariápolis compound and supported by the Movement’s constant prayers, the committee explored the changing ecclesial and ecumenical landscape, looked at institutional challenges, and started to identify priority areas with the goal of greater coherence of the ecumenical movement and effectiveness of the work of all partners involved. The context of Belém, only days before the World Social Forum and the World Forum on Theology and Liberation took place in this sprawling harbour city in the Brazilian state of Pará, was indicative for many of the aspects of the changing conditions for ecumenical cooperation.

The second emphasis of the Belém meeting on the institutional challenges led to an important affirmation of the need for a committed fellowship of churches and the ecclesial character of the ecumenical movement. On this basis, the Belém report already included a list of roles and functions of the WCC that was later discussed in different fora, including the Central Committee of the WCC.³

The Belém report began to identify priority areas for the WCC and ecumenical partners with common foci, shared objectives and clear methodologies of cooperation. The committee analyzed the recent development of the classical streams of the ecumenical movement as they reflect the institutional environment of ecumenism and confronted this analysis with the major trends of the changing context. The classical streams do have their origins in basic dimensions of the life of the church. The impact of the changing context is, however, reshaping them and their institutional expressions. Business as usual is no longer possible. New configurations of actors and new challenges cannot be ignored. The Belém report serves as the core of this final report.

3. Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century, Report on the second meeting of the committee in Belém, Brazil, Geneva: WCC 2009.

4. Rome—deepening reflection on the main foci

With its third meeting in Rome, graciously hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, CCE21 began to look more concretely at the contemporary challenges as they affect three of these priority areas: unity, mission, and justice, diakonia and advocacy (leaving reflections on peace to the IEPC). Inter-religious cooperation and ecumenical formation were seen as cross-cutting concerns.

Working in three groups on the priority areas and the impact of challenges and trends that affect all of them, the committee realized that the different priority areas are indeed closely linked to each other in dynamic and interactive relationships. This requires an institutional framework that, at this stage, only the WCC can offer under condition that the work is carried out with and through member churches and ecumenical partners, i.e. with the existing configurations of actors whose cooperation needs to be facilitated and nurtured.

5. Addis Ababa

For the last meeting, the committee was strongly supported by the WCC member churches in Ethiopia: the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. The committee concentrated on the theological affirmations and the recommendations for the final report mindful of the Ethiopian context and the impressive history of this country that was never fully colonized and has a strong Christian tradition from the early Church until today.

6. Concluding remarks

It was a great privilege to serve as the moderator of this committee and to accompany it on its ecumenical journey. I want to thank all committee members for their commitment to the one ecumenical movement and their contributions to the work of the committee. I want to express my sincere gratitude for all who hosted meetings and facilitated our work. We offer the fruits of our considerations to the decision making bodies of all those who were represented in the membership of the committee, with the hope that they foster relationships and will lead to greater coherence and effectiveness of ecumenical initiatives and programmes. Let me conclude this introduction with the prayer that the Holy Spirit, advocate and comforter, will inspire all those who have the task of taking formative decisions for the future of ecumenism during the years to come.

Archbishop Michael Kehinde Stephen, Methodist Church of Nigeria

II. Contemporary Challenges

From reports to the Ninth Assembly of the WCC in 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, reports and documents received by the WCC Central Committee, publications by other ecumenical organizations and individual authors, and ongoing deliberations of

the Continuation Committee, we have concluded that there are considerable commonalities regarding the main dynamics and challenges of our time.

Churches bear witness to Christ who gives meaning and fullness of life in a highly mobile, globalized context. Ecumenism can demonstrate how churches may faithfully define and discern ways that make for the justice and the peace for which Jesus wept and prayed, not seeking benefit for themselves alone but for the *oikoumene*. Such ecumenical engagement by the churches is rooted in their commitment to unity in Christ and is manifested in advocacy and solidarity. The ecumenical movement is a space where an effective witness is possible through bringing parties to the table to demonstrate paths to peace, providing Christian witness to an alternative model for politics, economy, ecology and identity. This can help to overcome the loss of identity that global pressures bring, by bearing witness to the life-giving fellowship that is offered in the body of Christ. The committee is convinced that the following issues affect all: individuals, church bodies and ecumenical actors.

An important change in recent decades is the shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity (in terms of numbers of people confessing Christ as Lord and Savior) towards the global South that is related to the growth of charismatic and Pentecostal churches.⁴ Another important change is the impact of the historic process of globalization on the economic, political, cultural and religious spheres of societies. These changes have many consequences. Migration, whether forced or voluntary, changes in family structures, economic, ecological and social pressures have resulted in a mobility that creates a myriad of social and religious identities. Mobility and pluralism are factors that did not exist to the same extent at the beginning of the ecumenical movement. They now have a deeper impact on the way personal and institutional identities are understood; they affect the individual's sense of community, belonging and loyalty, as well as the churches' relationship to the ecumenical movement as a whole.⁵ This ambiguous situation should not be confused with the richness of God-given diversity.

Major challenges for the common witness and advocacy of the churches were highlighted by the committee:

a) Justice issues such as the consequences of slavery and colonial oppression, poverty, lack of land reform, unjust trade relationships, wars and conflicts for resources and control of entire regions, initiatives for basic health care etc. were always high

4. For most recent data see the World Christian Database, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary—<http://worldchristiandatabase.org>; also Todd M. Johnson/Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009). It is important to note, however, that not in all cases the data seem to be based on sound statistical material.

5. Mobility and identity become justice issues when they are coupled with an economic system that rewards the hyper-mobility of some while trapping others. This becomes visible in human trafficking and child labour.

on the agenda of the ecumenical movement. The financial crisis and economic recession are posing today a deep challenge for oral accompaniment, joint advocacy and action by the churches. The lessons of the economic downturn in 2008 confirm that the quest for justice and the critique of the prevailing economic paradigm remain a priority for the churches in today's world. This includes the concern for the just distribution of food, the fight against HIV/AIDS and preventable diseases, overcoming poverty, providing education, promoting health and advocacy for the most vulnerable communities including youth, women, indigenous communities and people with disabilities. Issues of gender justice and human sexuality have become church-dividing issues.

b) The concern for economic justice is closely intertwined with the concern for God's creation. The effects of climate change on the natural and human world, including resulting conflicts and migration, certain biotechnologies and the loss of biodiversity, are threats to life on earth that call for the witness of the churches to God the creator, the reign of Christ over the universe and the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

c) The concentration of different forms of power in the hands of a small minority of people and countries continues to be a major factor of global dynamics. The shift from the bi-polar world system that dominated the second half of the 20th century has, however, not given way to a mono-polar system. The transition process with new competing centers of power has brought conflict and war. The biblical understanding of peace with justice and reconciliation is of utmost importance for the churches' witness in today's rapidly changing geopolitical arena.

d) Technology is changing the way people communicate and relate to one another, creating new and often ambiguous forms of community. These technologies challenge the churches to find new ways to relate to people and build authentic community.

The market logic, in which goods are more valuable than community, affects the churches' practice. In this context, churches often lose focus on identity in Christian community and compete with each other locally and globally. Where this dynamic exists, communities of faith that don't have the ability to compete or don't believe in the logic of competition are further marginalized. The decrease in financial support for churches and ecumenical organizations exasperates opportunities for ecumenical partnership and common witness.

There is a need for conversation with religions and ideologies—seeking to faithfully embody alternative ways of living together amid the rise of religio-national fundamentalism, relativism, privatization and market ideologies, recognizing that these are often attempts to overcome the effects of marginalization. It is possible to support religious freedom while peacefully engaging religious diversity through interreligious dialogue and co-operation.

There are important differences concerning the ranking of more detailed analyses and the theological discernment of these main concerns, which account for contro-

versies and tensions within and among churches and different actors in the ecumenical movement. This fact underlines even further the need for a common platform that enables the churches, and ecumenical organizations to encounter and to engage each other in addressing these challenges at various levels.

III. Theological Affirmations

The ecumenical movement has its centre in the Triune God and not in human efforts, plans and desires. The committee affirms that the theological foundation of the search for the full visible unity of the church, and its common witness to the world is rooted in Scripture, namely in Christ's prayer for his disciples ("that they may all be one") as found in John 17:21. It is our understanding that the search for the goal of full visible unity of the church is also for the sake of the healing and transformation of the world. Common witness for justice and peace has always been central for the ecumenical movement. The theme of the forthcoming WCC Assembly at Busan resonates well with this conviction and trajectory: "God of life, lead us to justice and peace."

Christians live their faith in the context of different cultures and religions and within the wider horizon of God's creation. Acts 15 remembers the decisive moment when the apostles did not shy away from the difficult questions that arose when boundaries of ethnic, cultural and religious identities were being crossed and found the strength to open up to the universal horizon of the gospel message. Those of us who came from the "gentiles" would have never become Christians if this agreement to extend the mission of the apostles to the *oikoumene*, the inhabited earth, had not happened.

This committee believes that Christians are called to speak together to envision a new reality. It believes that ecumenism offers vision of communion which helps individuals, churches, movements and institutions discover an important dimension of their participation in the *koinonia* of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.⁶ This vision of *koinonia* is a foretaste of the fullness of life that is promised in Christ (John 10:10). It is life-affirming and inspires action for the transformation of the world in the light of the coming of the Holy City and the Tree of Life, whose "leaves are for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22,2).

The ecumenical movement is called to deepen fellowship among its participants and broaden participation, and facilitate greater coherence. These three dimensions reflect the relational reality of the triune God, and the *koinonia* as the heart of the

6. The Greek word *koinonia* refers to the communion or fellowship among churches and Christians which is based on the conviction that in Jesus, the Christ, the Triune God united with God self and with one another those dispersed by human sin and set against each other. Such relational understanding of salvation and of the church is, thus, rooted in the faith in the Triune God whose very being is *koinonia* (cf. *On the way to Fuller Koinonia: The Message of the World Conference*, in: Thomas Best and Günther Gassmann, *On the way to Fuller Koinonia. Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Faith and Order Paper no. 166*, Geneva: WCC, 1994, 225).

fellowship of member churches. This *koinonia* is not our own property but a gift of God, who wants the churches to participate in God's reconciling and healing mission. Nobody can remain satisfied to limiting this *koinonia* to him or herself; it invites always to build new relationships, and to do so trusting in the mystery of God's presence among the other.

For the World Council of Churches (WCC), Christian World Communions (CWCs), Regional Ecumenical Organizations (REOs) and National Councils of Churches (NCCs), there is agreement on the centrality of the church-based character of their expression of ecumenism. International Ecumenical Organizations, Ecumenical Renewal Movements, Specialized Agencies, International Ecumenical Youth Organizations, relate to the churches and bring their important gifts to the ecumenical movement. Together, all partners agree on the centrality of the ethos of fellowship, consensus⁷ and common witness as foundational for a common vision. These relationships require mutual respect and trust as their base, in line with the core values as mentioned above (cf. page 2).

Worship (*latreia*) and proclamation (*kerygma*) are essential for nurturing the fellowship in the ecumenical movement through love and prayer. Community (*koinonia*), witness (*martyria*) and service (*diakonia*) lend themselves to structure the interaction between the different sets of actors in the ecumenical movement. All these are important features intrinsic to the life of the church.

Based on the committee's analysis of the contemporary context, it identified five main areas

that are crucial for the future of the ecumenical movement in the 21st century:

- The changing ecclesial landscape
- The relationship between mission and ecumenism
- The struggle for justice and peace
- Relationships with other faith traditions and religions
- Our deeper awareness of our relationship to creation

Changing Ecclesial Landscape

Christians of different traditions are addressing these new horizons in various and serious ways. There are many practical examples of how churches translate these insights into action. Exchange between them through the diverse expressions of the ecumenical movement can strengthen and inspire their action, and co-operation can make it more effective.

In terms of the changing ecclesial landscape, as described in the section on the contemporary context with its challenges and opportunities, the theological questions raised involve who has the power to define truth and to include or exclude oth-

7. Consensus here refers to the practice as developed in the WCC and other bodies.

ers. Trust has to prevail over competition because such trust is rooted in faith in the Triune God. Only on this ground is it possible to be open for a fresh perspective on one's own church, movement or institution, and others, which then includes a constructive way of being accountable. It allows the facing of conflict without separating, but remaining in dialogue in the midst of divergences.

Some churches grapple with the ecclesial-based nature of the ecumenical movement in a context in which an increasing number of Christian communities do not identify with a denominational model. The same is true for movements and organizations that are not church-based and may feel uneasy with the central place given to churches in the ecumenical movement. This raises the question of how to share space with such communities without letting go of the positive achievements of the past (e.g., results of ecumenical dialogues), deepening commitment and mutual accountability.

Mission

The committee affirmed the central importance of a wholistic understanding of mission, including evangelism, witness and care for life, in the 21st century ecumenical movement. The Greek expression for mission is *exapostole*, sending. Our sending/co-mission by Christ is closely related to the sending of the Son by the Father. The divine objective of both is: "that they might have life, and might have *it* abundantly" (John 10:10 NAS). From this perspective, mission is indeed *missio Dei* with which we are entrusted. Therefore, Christ's love and care must be our prototype, relying on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We learn from Christ's self-emptying love, *kenosis*,⁸ which was the starting point of His mission. Mission workers are first accountable to Christ, and after that accountable equally to their brothers and sisters in Christ. Mission, love and *kenosis* are the inseparable premises for effectively preaching the Gospel of God. In considering mission in the context of ecumenism in the 21st century, we reaffirmed that missionary *activities* and ecumenical dialogue require respectful relationships, accountability and trust. Undoubtedly, proselytism destroys this foundation and becomes a stumbling block to dialogue and responsible mission. Our common ground in Jesus Christ does not allow building "on someone else's foundation" (Romans 15:20). This issue requires a serious discussion towards closer understandings as a step to assure each other of good intentions.

Besides the inter-confessional problems that might be raised when there is a lack of coordination and cooperation among Christian communities, uninformed mission activity can be problematic for local communities when sensitive relationships with people of other faiths are not acknowledged. Missionaries are called to take also into consideration new contexts for mission, and to think deeply about the factors, whether regional, political, economical, cultural, religious or gender specific, in that context.

8. Cf. Philippians 2.5-11, especially verse 7.

The Struggle for Justice and Peace

The quest for justice and peace is central to the church's mission; it is the call of Christ to the Church. In the quest for justice and peace we recognize the significance of all of creation and each human being in relationship to God and each other. Through the communion with God, Christians are set in community with each other and are called to reflect the communion found in the Triune God. This makes justice an essentially relational matter, restoring *koinonia*. It is a call back to God's intention that is wholeness and fullness in life. The implication of this is that justice seeks transformation of the present circumstances of life which is a precondition for peace. The quest for justice calls us to address the issue of unequal distribution and appropriation of power. This is often seen through various forms of oppression - economic, gender, racial and other forms of injustice.

Power that is used in ways that contribute to the destruction of life and creation leads to brokenness and separates us from God and one another. By rejecting the misuse of power, we discover our shared humanity in the vulnerability of the Crucified. It is out of this vulnerability that we are called to a life of justice. As we consider the question of power and vulnerability, we look to our understanding of the incarnation and *kenosis*. By coming into the world as a baby in a poor refugee family, God chose to identify with human vulnerability. Our understanding of the self-emptying of God and willingness to endure the reality of the cross radically redefines power and vulnerability. In our identity as Christians, we are called to appropriate power in ways that heal and transform human communities and a groaning creation.

The fruit of the Spirit assures a favorable environment for justice and peace (Galatians 5:22-23). By working for justice and reconciliation, peace is fostered. Justice brings the dynamics of power and vulnerability into balance in human relationships and social systems. It exists to eliminate avoidable suffering and contributes to peace. The church's active expression of justice interfaces with and gives purpose to uniting the church for the sake of the world. We recognize that the commitment to the work of justice may also at times bring tension in the church. However, it is the gift and call of unity that graces us with the capacity to work through such tensions toward sustaining wholeness.

Diakonia is an immediate response to sufferings that are present in the world. *Diakonia* is a natural partner with mission in the 21st century. Justice is linked to *diakonia* in that it functions best when justice is at work. Justice wrestles with the underlying issues that make *diakonia* necessary. *Diakonia* without justice becomes anemic. Justice without *diakonia* can be heartless and even destructive.

We are called to join in partnership with people's movements, organizations and peoples of other faith traditions to work for justice in the world we share.

The Ecumenical Movement and Interreligious Dialogue

Acknowledging the potential of religions to both be instruments of peace and of conflict, we indicate the need for continuing dialogue between religions and ideologies to find different ways of living together in peace. In some regions of the world people of different faiths have lived side by side for centuries—both in peace and in conflict. In other regions a multi-religious society is a more recent fact due to post-colonial migration and globalisation. In some regions Christians have lived as a minority among other faiths for centuries; in others, Christianity has been virtually the only religion. These different contexts lead to variant departing positions in interreligious relations and cooperation that need to be recognised and accounted for in dialogue within the ecumenical movement and with representatives of other faith traditions.

Christians are called to be agents of peace and to be witnesses to the peace of the risen Christ, who has sent his disciples into the world, sustained by the Holy Spirit (John 20.19-23 and Acts 1:8). This requires solidarity with all who struggle in conflicts that have a religious undertone. Where this solidarity is lacking the credibility of dialogue is at stake.

In the conviction that all humans are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1.27), religious diversity in turn can be considered as a source of enrichment. How can this common humanity lead us to challenge the boundaries that we set for ourselves and others? Christians are called to enter into a relationship with representatives of other faiths that challenges exclusion without ignoring the differences that exist among us.

Creation

Churches are called to be the living mystery, the sign and instrument of God's reign to come and contribute through their very being to reconciliation and healing of the whole creation (Coll. 1.15; Eph 1:10) that is suffering from injustice, war and environmental destruction. Overcoming their own divisions and the dividing walls of hostility by the grace and love of God, the churches participate in the wide horizon of the ongoing and new creation of this world.

Oikoumene understood as God's household of life points to this wide horizon and the eschatological expectation of God's reign to come, which is also a response to the groaning of creation (Rom 8:18 ff.). The common witness of the churches carries the promise of the transformative power of the life-sustaining and life-renewing Holy Spirit and contributes to justice, reconciliation and peace for humankind and all of God's creatures on planet earth. The ecumenical movement is meant to be a fellowship where the churches see their common role in participating in the wholeness of God's work.

The first to be said about this world, about life, is to be said about God; God the will of life, God the word of life, God the Spirit of life.⁹ In this Trinity of the God of life is everything potentially present and bound together in unity of diversity. God the creator is the God of the life-giving word. The first words of the book called Genesis, the beginning, are about the power to create light and order in darkness and chaos by words. Reading the first chapter of the Gospel according to John, we hear that *the word was with God and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people*. Christians are invited to participate in the use of creative words, words giving life, to communicate light and order in the midst of darkness and chaos. God the creator is God the Spirit, the omnipresent Spirit. The breath of God is giving life to the entire creation. The Spirit of God is moving the whole world, the *oikoumene*, and therefore also the churches.

Life is a gift of God and can only be received as a gift. A gift to be given—to others, for others. The texts of the creation stories are not neutral; they include human beings, and are not leaving us like outside spectators. They call for humility, a stronger love to everything created, and a new will to care for creation. When the future of life on earth as we know it is at stake—with a single strike from a nuclear weapon, over decades through climate change and the loss of biodiversity, and every day through conflicts and wars, through poverty and hunger that kill millions of people and poison and destroy fields, water sources and animals—churches need to act for the life of generations to come.

IV. Institutional Challenges

There are three different sets of institutional challenges:

- the first concerns the classical streams of the ecumenical movement;
- the second relates to the different institutional expressions of the ecumenical movement that developed in the 20th Century;
- the third refers to new institutional challenges that reflect the changing context.

The major streams¹⁰ of the past are still visible, although they have changed considerably in recent decades. If it was the genius of the founding generation of the

9. Cf for this and the following: Olav Fykse Tveit, *Christian Solidarity in the Cross of Christ*, Geneva: WCC, 2012 pp. 3ff.

10. The three classical streams of the ecumenical movement are the Missionary movement (1910 Edinburgh), the Faith and Order movement (1927 Lausanne) and the Life and Work movement (1925 Stockholm). Faith and Order and Life and Work came together to form the WCC, while the International Missionary Council joined the WCC only in 1961. There were other, smaller entities, e.g. the Commission on International Affairs (included in the WCC in 1948 already), the World Council of Christian Education (included 1971) etc. that also contributed to life and action of the WCC.

WCC to combine the major streams of the young ecumenical movement in one organization that was based on member churches, it is very important now to understand how the major streams continue to be represented in the movement and institutions we encounter.

The stream of ecclesially-centred ecumenism today goes beyond the work of the Commission on Faith and Order. With the Roman Catholic Church joining the ecumenical movement after the Second Vatican Council, the bilateral dialogues pursued by the Roman Catholic Church and other World Communions at various levels have become an important element of the search for visible unity, with the Christian World Communions as primary actors.¹¹ The question to be addressed is, "What is the role of the World Council of Churches and Christian World Communions within this stream, and how do they relate to each other?"

The Mission movement and the Life and Work Movement have also changed considerably in recent decades, especially under the influence of contextual theologies and a more active role of churches from the global South. Perspectives of contextual theologies with a strong focus on culture and social justice have broadened the scope of mission theologies and approaches to issues of church and society. This happened not without tension and conflict, dynamics that are still echoed in contemporary debates.

Another notable shift is a consequence of the growing importance of financially strong specialized ministries in the field of ecumenical diakonia and development. Mission societies that have been active in the domains of health, education and social action for decades are increasingly asked to avoid duplication with development agencies or to merge activities.

Fundraising and advocacy campaigns by specialized ministries have also had an influence on the understanding and methods of advocacy with governments and other national actors and with the UN at the international level. At times, the impression was given that these were competing and not complementary approaches. The inequalities in existing distribution of financial resources within the ecumenical movement have raised new questions of power relations in mission engagement and ecumenical efforts.

After decades of alienation between some Evangelicals and some Ecumenical organizations, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) has started to reach out to Charismatic, Pentecostal and African Instituted Churches. These groups have reciprocated and responded to invitations to join together with the CWME. The process towards the centenary of the 1910 World Mission Conference at Edinburgh is a case in point. Another important process, including inter-religious involvement, is the series of consultations concerning a Code of Conduct on

11. It is important to note in this context the renewed impetus for a Panorthodox Council; cf. the statement by the Synaxis of Orthodox Hierarchs in November 2008 in the Phanar.

Conversion. Differences regarding the understanding of mission today, evangelism, conversion, syncretism and proselytism need to be addressed, while efforts still have to be made to build trust and reliable working relationships. The Global Christian Forum (GCF) has emerged as a different platform for the broadening participation in the ecumenical movement in dialogue with Charismatic, Pentecostal and African Instituted Churches.

These observations point to the fact that the institutional arrangement of the ecumenical movement has become more diversified. The same factors that changed the outlook of the traditional streams also influenced changes in and among the main organizational expressions of the ecumenical movement in the 20th century.

Analysis of the relationship between the different spheres of ecumenism shows that there is growing intentional cooperation and a division of labour, between the WCC and Regional Ecumenical Organizations (REOs), National Councils of Churches (NCCs) and in Africa sub- regional Fellowships of Churches.¹² This is partly due to the fragile financial situation of many of the National Councils and Regional Ecumenical Organizations. While the REOs are confronting these challenges, the WCC and other ecumenical partners have continued to accompany and support them. What is emerging is a clearer understanding of the different priorities in response to the context and the need for a clear division of labour so that different ecumenical efforts complement each other.¹³

A number of organizations that are concentrating on specific target groups or concerns are loosely defined as International Ecumenical Organizations. Some of them, such as the World Student's Christian Federation (WSCF), the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) date back to the 19th century—whereas others such as Ecumenical News International, ACT International and ACT Development have been created only in recent years. The general secretary of the World Association for Christian Communication and the executive director of the WSCF represented them on the Continuation Committee. It is important to map their individual contributions and explore the linkages

12. Jill Hawkey presented results of her study mapping current ecumenical structures and relationships at the consultation on Ecumenism in the 21st Century in Chavannes de Bogis/Switzerland (Appendix V to the report, pp. 66-80). A wealth of data on work by different partners that is financed by the specialized ministries is made available by the yearly Partner Survey for the WCC Roundtable. Making use of these data, the WCC has analyzed the development of Regional Ecumenical Organisations and two World Communions that are based also in Geneva (LWF and WARC).

13. The following are just a few examples for improved co-operation: the WCC together with REOs (All Africa Conference of Churches, Conference of European Churches, Middle East Council of Churches, Christian Conference of Asia, Caribbean Council of Churches and Pacific Conference of Churches) have fostered inter- regional co-operation on migration and trade; the AACC is contributing to the WCC's work on economic justice through its focus on poverty in Africa; the same is true for the Pacific Conference of Churches and its focus on Climate Change.

with other ecumenical organizations. It is encouraging to see, for instance, increasing co-operation between organizations focusing on young people, e.g. the World Student Christian Federation, Syndesmos, Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association. The creation of the WCC's ECHOS youth commission, which includes membership beyond WCC member churches, has also contributed to improved co-operation. The YWCA has also strengthened its financial basis through clearly focused priorities (e.g. work on HIV/AIDS). The need for clearer priorities seems a common trend for all those organizations that depend on specialized ministries and other donors for their funding.

The Christian World Communions (CWCs) include the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches, and different Church families. While they differ in the extent to which they engage in mission, ecumenical actions and diakonia, one main contribution they make to Christian Unity is involvement in bilateral dialogues. The annual meetings of the Secretaries of the CWCs provide an opportunity to deepen fellowship and develop ecumenical co-operation, and the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance also send representatives.

There are three new institutional challenges that reflect the changing context (again influenced by some of the same trends that surfaced earlier):

First, there are the new forms of networking. There are two basic models that have developed: these networks either concentrate on particular issues—which allows for the co-operation of a broad coalition of different actors - or they concentrate on one set of actors with the ability to address a broader agenda. The Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) is an example of the first approach; the ACT Alliance, the merger of ACT International and ACT Development into ACT Global is an example of the second approach.¹⁴

Second, there are new platforms for broader participation beyond the classical ecumenical movement, such as Churches Together, Christian Councils or the Global Christian Forum. These platforms tend to focus more on open dialogue and much less on the discipline of mutual accountability.

Third, there is an increasing number of inter-religious councils locally and nationally. Some of these are replacing local councils of churches, while others are focusing on reconciliation and peace in situations of conflict. Internationally there are new opportunities emerging to work together with inter-religious partners.

All three dimensions of institutional challenges demonstrate how new realities and dynamics drive institutional development and change. There is a need (a) to deepen the relationships between those belonging to the fellowship of ecumenically committed churches, (b) to broaden participation in the ecumenical movement and

14. See the most recent Joint Newsletter of ACT International and ACT Development, Dec. 2008.

(c) to ensure greater coherence of the different institutional expressions and organizations involved. These actions need to be informed by analysis of the trends that can be observed. There is also a need for thorough theological reflection on guiding vision and values, as the process of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC and the subsequent work of the Permanent Commission on Consensus and Collaboration have clearly shown. There is an ongoing need to map ecumenical activity, to define the charism of each ecumenical organization and to plan how to support each organization in its work.

Deepening the fellowship, broadening participation in the ecumenical movement and maintaining greater coherence are tasks that the WCC is willing to perform in service to its member churches and to benefit all partners in the ecumenical movement. The WCC has begun to approach this task in new ways by convening all who need to interact and to talk to each other in one ecumenical space or around one table. The Continuation Committee on Ecumenism in the 21st Century and the WCC Assembly Discernment Committee¹⁵ are the most recent examples of both the willingness of the WCC to fulfill this convening role and the readiness of ecumenical partners to recognize the WCC as the privileged instrument of the ecumenical movement, demonstrating the ecumenical commitment of the fellowship of its member churches, but not demanding to be recognized as the centre of the movement.

Such a convening role facilitates developments, but it also requires the capacity to discern the signs of the time and to stimulate new insights—very much in the same way as the convening function should enhance and not mute prophetic voices. In addition to accepting the privileged role of convening, the WCC is willing to be a participating member in shaping and encouraging the discourse. The WCC is able to provide a space where conflicts are not avoided but may be identified and worked through. These steps are preconditions to fulfilling a prophetic role.

V. Main Foci

There has been a shift from the *reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement*, i.e. ecumenical institutions to the emphasis on *ecumenism in the 21st century*. This shift requires that more attention be given to the convergence between theological, contextual and institutional challenges.

15. The WCC ninth assembly in 2006 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, had a vision of an “ecumenical assembly that would assemble all churches to celebrate their fellowship in Jesus Christ, and to address common challenges facing the church and humanity”, and agreed on the specific mandate “to explore the feasibility of a structure for WCC assemblies that would provide expanded space for Christian world communions and confessional families to meet for the purpose of deliberation and/or overall agenda” (policy reference committee report). The Assembly Discernment Committee was established by the WCC Central Committee in February 2008 to work on this recommendation, cf. Continuation Committee, Belém report, p. 32.

Churches are building common ground by recalling the spiritual roots of the ecumenical movement—that they are one in Christ, who calls us to make that oneness visible through unity and witness. Christians are meant to be an answer to Christ’s own prayer (John 17:21). Re-affirming the ecclesial nature of the search for visible unity and common witness, they remind each other of their common roots and their common journey. The churches—their members and their leaders along with their doctrines and traditions—are the primary actors in the ecumenical movement. The churches engaging with each other more deeply in common witness will strengthen not one, but all ecumenical instruments.

Worship (*latreia*) and proclamation (*kerygma*) are essential for nurturing the fellowship of the ecumenical movement through love and prayer. Community (*koinonia*), witness (*martyria*) and service (*diakonia*) lend themselves to structure the interaction between these different sets of actors in the ecumenical movement, as some examples demonstrate:

a. The search for visible unity will benefit from deliberate interaction between the bilateral approach and the multi-lateral approach. The WCC-convened forum on bilateral dialogues provides a model for this interaction that has the potential to clarify the different roles in this arena and the different understandings of unity that have emerged.

b. Mission in the 21st century is a core issue at stake in the relationship between WCC member churches, and Evangelicals, charismatic and Pentecostal churches. Edinburgh 2010 has been a crystallizing event for this agenda that needs further reflection and action. The Roman Catholic Church and other ecumenical bodies are engaged in critical issues important to mission in the 21st century.

c. The churches’ engagement for economic justice, creation, peace and reconciliation provides a single focus for “one arena of engagement.” The role of the churches, the WCC some Christian world communions, and specialized ministries in ecumenical diakonia and global advocacy belongs to this arena in which the relationship between churches and specialized ministries has to be addressed.

d. The previous three foci need to be accompanied by a fourth focus on the role of different ecumenical actors in inter-religious dialogue and co-operation. This is an urgent matter given the pressing need for successful models of inter-religious co-operation at local, national and international levels.

Other concerns have become a priority for almost all involved in the ecumenical movement, i.e. the nurturing of the spiritual roots of ecumenism and the need for concentrated and sustained efforts for ecumenical formation at all levels.

A question to be addressed: Is it possible to say that these four foci lend themselves to re-focus the common efforts of different actors involved in the ecumenical movement?

Lessons learned in the process on ecumenism in the 21st century so far seem to suggest that a shared understanding of contemporary challenges, the combination of

theological reflection on the basic elements of the new horizons for the ecumenical vision, the nurturing of the ethos of fellowship and consensus, followed by work on the four main thematic foci, indeed, lead to a more solid basis for common action and facilitate a renewed flourishing of the ecumenical movement.

VI. Recommendations

Based on our analysis of the contemporary and institutional challenges and our theological affirmations, we, the members of the CCE21, are convinced about the opportunity to live out the gift of ecumenical calling in more intentional cooperation by all, and make the following recommendations to the World Council of Churches, Regional Ecumenical Organizations, National Councils of Churches, Christian World Communions, Ecumenical Youth Movements, Specialized ministries, Renewal movements, The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and churches and organisations whether or not traditionally seen as ecumenically engaged. This includes Pentecostal, charismatic and Evangelical churches.

Foundational

We recommend that all involved in the ecumenical movement:

- Commit to the biblical call to oneness in Jesus Christ (John 17: 21) and the call to be instruments for the fullness of life for all (John 10: 10);
- Understand our work together to be based on belief in the Triune God who calls us to unity and gives us the gift of communion;
- Find constructive ways of living out our unity even in the face of the challenge of engaging the theological and ethical issues that threaten to divide.

Implications of the Changing Ecclesial Landscape

Especially bearing in mind the shift of the demographic centre of gravity of Christianity to the global South and the worldwide emergence of new churches that are not currently engaged with the ecumenical movement, the CCE21 recommends that all of the partners:

- Discern and engage the implications of this within their relationships and actions;
- Take seriously and activate the full participation of the global South;
- Be prepared to receive the contributions of those who may not currently be around the ecumenical table;
- Receive migration and emerging migrant churches all over the world as an opportunity for integrating the North and South;
- Address the issue of unequal distribution and appropriation of power by being vigilant against the abusive use of power and promoting models of learning from each other through the receiving of gifts whether of affluence or poverty from each other regardless of the context from which they operate.

Organizational Implications

While ensuring ecumenical engagement is a movement and the new ecclesial landscape has polycentric features, there are organizational implications to deepening and expanding the fellowship of ecumenical space. The CCE21 therefore recommends:

- That the World Council of Churches take on a convening role as a gift to the churches and ecumenical partners;¹⁶
- That the WCC convene the partners in the ecumenical movement in a way that is larger than itself (recent positive models include the setting up of the CCE21 and the assembly preparatory process), and does not claim to be recognized as the centre of the movement;
- That as part of its convening role, the WCC governing bodies rethink the set up work and content of commissions, as well as its assembly and post assembly structures;
- That the WCC and other organizations find appropriate structures and methodologies by which they can engage;
- The affirmation of the larger space and call on all to make every effort to mutually address negative images attached to one another, and affirm the gifts that each brings to the continuing ecumenical movement;
- The Evaluation of the Global/Regional dynamics with a vision of developing effective ways of actively connecting National Councils of Churches and their participants in national and local levels and to strengthen coherence at all levels.
- Connecting to the lived reality of local congregations and communities, and affirming innovative ways of hospitality.
- Taking seriously current financial constraints and finding creative ways of staying focused and coherent while encouraging churches to invest in and find resources to sustain the life-giving impact of the the vision and work of the ecumenical movement.
- Addressing the financial changes and challenging power relations within the movement—so that agendas are not mainly determined by sources of income;
- Finding creative ways of accompanying one another and responding in solidarity in the different regions on behalf of the whole movement. These may include having representatives of the organisations serve as links to other parts of the ecumenical movement or sending delegations of “living letters.”¹⁷
- Taking note of the cooperation that took place in the process on “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World.”¹⁸ we call upon all actors to take every opportunity

16. The convening role is exercised in recognition of and within the limits set by the 1950 Toronto Statement, which clarifies that the WCC is not a church nor a super-church.

17. The WCC has conducted pastoral team-visits as “living-letters” to member churches and their countries during both “The Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women” and “The Decade to Overcome Violence.”

18. World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian*.

to work together on issues that will overcome common challenges and produce common ways forward.¹⁹

- Strongly affirming the conciliar model of ecumenism, and at the same time valuing and supporting bilateral and multilateral conversations.
- Affirming the distinctiveness of the various processes and gifts that different organizations bring.
- Reviewing and affirming new processes and platforms for engagement which brings others around the table, in recognition that some new processes need to mature in order to create space for open respectful dialogue and mutual accountability to the core values as stated in this document.²⁰

VII. Members of the Committee

Archbishop Michael Kehinde Stephen, Moderator

Methodist Church Nigeria

Rev. Dr Karin Achtelstetter (as of 2012)

World Association for Christian Communication

Rev. Mitchell Bunting

Iona Community

Fr Dr Gosbert Byamungu

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Rev. Rothangliani Chhangte, proxy of Rev Dr Cheryl Dudley in 2009, Belem

Mr Christophe D'Aloisio

SYNDESMOS—The World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth

Rev. Dr Cheryl Dudley

Church World Service

Ms Christine Housel (as of 2011) World Student Christian Federation

Rev. Pravinkumar Israel, proxy of Rev. Dr Wonsuk Ma in 2007, Bossey

Assemblies of God

Archimandrite Dr Jack Khalil

Patriarchate of Antioch/ Orthodox Church

Rev. Vineeth Koshy

Orthodox Oriental

Rev. Dr Wonsuk Ma

Asian Pentecostal Society

19. The representative of Eastern Orthodox churches on the committee requested to minute that he was not in consensus with referencing the document on “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World” in the recommendations.

20. Cf. page 2.

Dr Larry Miller, proxy of Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi in 2007, Bossey
Mennonite World Conference

Rev. Dr Randolph Naylor (2008—2010)
World Association for Christian Communication

Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi
World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Rev. Sukhwan Robert Oh, proxy for Rev. Dr Wonsuk Ma in 2011, Chavannes
Oikos Community church

Ms Nienke Pruiksma
Protestantse Kerk in Nederland

Archdeacon Hratch Sarkissian (2008—2010) Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy
See of Etchmiadzin)

Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri
Council of Churches of Malaysia

Rev. Dr Rudolf von Sinner
Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil

Rev. Michael Wallace (2008—2010) World Student Christian Federation

The Venerable Colin Williams (2008-2010) Conference of European Churches

Rev. Robina Winbush
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Selected participants of the essay contest at the occasion of the 60th
anniversary of the WCC present at the Belem meeting in 2009

Ms Erin Brigham
Roman Catholic Church

Mr Mengfei Gu
China Christian Council

Mr Beril Huliselan M.Th
Presbyterian Church (Indonesian Christian Council)

Revd Dr Peniel Jesudason Rufus Rajkumar
Church of England

Rev. Chad Rimmer
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
International Church of Copenhagen

Ms Lucy Wambui Waweru
Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Kenya

