

# **Central Committee**

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**FOR ACTION** 

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# **Report of the General Secretary**

# GOD OF LIFE, LEAD US TO JUSTICE AND PEACE

Moderator, vice-moderators, presidents, members of the Central Committee, others who are serving the World Council of Churches through your many tasks and ministries, colleagues and ecumenical partners

Your eminences, your excellencies, honourable hosts and friends, dear observers and guests,

Dear sisters and brothers.

# 1. A Central Committee meeting in Crete

This is the last meeting of the Central Committee in this period after the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly, and the first Central Committee in this period after the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly outside Geneva. We have received and accepted the cordial invitation from the Ecumenical Patriarch, H.A.H Bartholomaios I to hold this meeting here in the Orthodox Academy in Crete. Let me express our gratitude for the invitation and the hospitality offered to us here, and for the good cooperation with the Director of the Academy, Dr Konstantinos S. Kenanidis and the staff of the Academy. Let me also offer a special word of thanks to the vice-moderator, HE Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima, who has facilitated this invitation and made the connections to local hosts together with our Deputy General Secretary, Mr Yorgo Lemoupolos. And let me on behalf of the whole Central Committee express a sincere word of thanks to all our staff for the immense work of preparation for this meeting over a long period—those who are here and those who are back in Geneva. There are weeks and months of planning the meeting itself; there is even more work to prepare the documents we are receiving. We are sorry that Catherine Christ-Taha, the leader of the conference office, had to stay back due to health problems in her family. We ask for prayers for Catherine and her family.

Last week before this meeting, I attended memorial services for two outstanding ecumenists that normally would have been here with us these days. On Monday, 20 August, we held a memorial service in the Ecumenical Centre among colleagues and friends for Maria Chavez Quispe, who passed away 24 July at the age of 37. She was the consultant for the Indigenous Peoples' Programme, a Methodist theologian from Bolivia, a gift to her church and her people, and to the whole ecumenical movement. Her cancer, in the end, could not be stopped; but she gave the energy of her life during these last years to her work and

her young daughter Zoe and her husband Hansueli. We continue to be with them in our prayers, giving thanks to God for her strong contributions.

On Thursday, 23 August, I represented the WCC in the funeral of our president, HH Abune Paulos, the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Addis Ababa, who died suddenly at the age of 76. He had a dramatic life during the many phases of the life of his country and his church, and he was well connected to the ecumenical movement and the WCC many years ago. For 20 years he served as Patriarch of his church, which is the oldest and largest church in Africa, blessed by receiving the Gospel and the baptism in the name of the triune God in the very first years of the church (Acts 8). He connected the church to the wider ecumenical movement, and he brought impulses and learning from the WCC to his church. He was a leader in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and he took significant interfaith initiatives. We enjoyed his friendship and support, and together with his church we thank God for his ministry. As Ethiopia also lost its Prime Minister in the same week, we are in solidarity and prayer for this country and for the election of new leadership.

May God bless the seeds they have left among us, so that they bear rich fruits.

We live in the shadows of death, but we also live in the life of God. The ecumenical life has many and rich blessings. We know that this Academy is a place for many important ecumenical encounters. The Academy is itself a sign of ecumenical reconciliation, built in solidarity with great support and inspiration from the movement of Academies in Germany. It has strong features of Mediterranean hospitality and warmth, in the many meanings of that word. This place, and the whole island, has significant expressions of our common Christian heritage. Important events recorded in the book of Acts happened on Crete and in the sea surrounding the island. Important traditions of the Christian faith are living here, not least through the monasteries and their spiritual life, practical diakonia and care for the ecology developed here.

This Academy also represents an openness to all dimensions of life, invites us to celebrate, reflect and enjoy life in the creation of God. It is also an arena for several discussions of threats to the life given by God, the environmental crisis and other challenges to the life in justice and peace that we are praying for. With all its facilities and neighbouring facilities, it therefore serves as an excellent arena for our meeting under the theme "God of life, lead us to justice and peace!" In the natural splendours of Crete, we are able to enjoy both the sun and the shadow, sea and land, heavens and earth.

We know, however, that the sunshine has been too strong and the land dry from droughts resulting in fires in several places in the northern hemisphere this summer and also in this country, Greece. This is something that many people, for example in Africa, experience as a daily reality most of the year. However, another reality of shadows, in addition to potential unwanted effects of climate change, also comes to us as we are gathered in Greece. The effects of the financial crises of the last years, which have such a negative impact on the poorest countries particularly, are now also striking Europe and particularly Greece and its citizens where we are at the moment. Questions of justice are raised in many ways within this country and within the European fellowship in this financial crisis. Unemployment rates - particularly among young people - are higher than ever after World War II. The church here has found itself in the role of helping to provide a response to the most basic needs for food and shelter. Some European churches are raising fundamental questions about the leadership and justice of Europe these days, also in the perspective of keeping the state of peace achieved over many years. Questions of justice and peace are here - and in so many other places in the world - even a matter of life and death. Reminded of global realities in a gathering like this, we know that the call for both economic and ecological justice coming from our constituencies and from our study on poverty, wealth and ecology, is an urgent one.

The church is called to bring the Gospel of the cross and resurrection of Christ to a groaning world, as the church as first fruit of the salvation, since the whole of creation groans for redemption (Romans 8). "The Gospel in a groaning world" was the theme on which the National Council of Churches of India asked me to elaborate in a keynote at their Assembly this year, which gave me an opportunity to reflect on how this is genuinely the ecumenical ministry, uniting in Christian solidarity in the cross of Christ with one another and with the world as it is. We are lamenting and asking for actions that can bring change, asking together the questions that make us look for hope, not for enemies: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8: 31). This is what it means to pray to the God of life.

As we are here to celebrate life, we are here also to find our contributions now and for the future to the justice and peace that life requires. Thanks to God, we are not empty handed. We are in the period of harvesting from the work in which we are involved. Harvesting time is not only a rewarding time, it is also a time to prepare for utilization of what we have, and to refine and be nurtured by the fruits of the soil and the labour of our hands and minds. It is also a time to discern for the next seasons what needs to be used for planting in the next phase, particularly to reflect on what we have learned from this period.

### 2. Harvesting fruits of our life and work

This Central Committee meeting has three special tasks: (a) to receive the harvest of the work of the WCC since the 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly and prepare the harvest to be presented to the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly, (b) to guide the preparations for the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly and to prepare decisions to be made at the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly, and (c) to assess the work of the WCC since the last meeting of the Central Committee and plan for and give guidance to the next months of work of the WCC until the Assembly and a new Central Committee can take over. This is an important period of transition to make the best possible preparations for the right priorities to be made during the Assembly.

In our high-level policy-making functions as Central Committee, we share responsibility to lead the council. Now we have come to the time to conclude this period, to reap the harvest and take stock of where we are. The Executive Committee has filled its role to make further and necessary decisions to follow up the policy and the recommendations of the Central Committee. These meetings have been prepared by and led by the Moderator and the Vice Moderators; and I have had the privilege to work with them and secure the flow of the work of the council. My task as General Secretary is to lead the work of the council accordingly and to represent the council and our fellowship within and outside our constituency, day by day, in accountability to you and the member churches as you represent them all.

In my report, I will highlight some of the major issues I have dealt with as General Secretary since we were together in February 2011. I will particularly share with you how the theme of this meeting, which is identical with the Assembly theme, has been illuminating our work and has already been elaborated and given guidance to the events, experiences and reflections over these last 18 months.

In the last months and weeks you have received several substantial and solid reports about different dimensions of our work. Some of them include documents and/or statements that we shall discuss, receive and authorize to be sent to the Assembly. I am humble and proud when I read these documents (and I admire you who read all of them and are well prepared for this meeting). These documents give testimony to the efforts and contributions of a wide range of highly qualified people; among them are you, others involved in the ecumenical movement, experts and resource persons, and not least staff of the WCC. I am humble and proud to be asked to lead the presentation of this comprehensive work; a

substantial part of it was done before I was elected to this ministry under the leadership of my predecessor, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia. I will particularly honour those who have been faithfully doing their work through different and sometimes difficult phases, and through what are often necessary challenges and critical comments of what was done and not (yet) done to improve and to bring the projects toward their present status or their completion. I particularly thank all those among you present here who represent our donors and others who through your efforts and contributions have been supporting the work presented in these many reports; without your contributions we could not do any of this.

We present a wide range of fruits: projects, gatherings of real and transforming encounters, wide and deep reflections, new initiatives and faithful continuation of work that requires long seasons to be ready to harvest.

I also particularly thank those who have participated in the evaluation of our work, our methods, our structures and our plans. This is sometimes inspiring, sometimes demanding and cumbersome work. As an institution serving a movement, we will always be in need of evaluation and change. After serving half of my tenure, I realize that change takes time. I also have learned that in order to be the inclusive and uniting fellowship we want to be, we need to have a proper profile to make us visible and identifiable, while also working through processes that give wide ownership and solid consensus to our results. In this, the overall policy developed for deliberations in the Central Committee and the signals given by these meetings are the impulses that bring direction to the later execution of the policy by the Executive Committee and the staff, as well as inspiration to the daily work and the legitimacy for our positions and efforts.

### 3. A revised structure of accountability and governance

As you can hear from my reflections about our roles, I find that the harvest from the work we have been doing together in the last years, to revisit and revise our governing structures, make sense and offers us new possibilities for clarity and focus in our work. You have received the last report from the Continuation Committee on Governance Review. This last meeting of this Central Committee shall now conclude this important and demanding process for the council and provide an improved structure for the life and work of the council in the next period. The meeting of the Central Committee in February 2011 provided important discussions, guidance and new participants to the work in this last phase, and the committee has now successfully completed its work under the leadership of Bishop John White.

The improved and clarified mandates and lines of accountability for the General Secretary to the Executive Committee and further to the Central Committee, the Moderators and the Presidents are presented to us. The efficient and significant advisory role of commissions and their direct connections to the governing bodies will be strengthened. The proposal for rotation for the Executive Committee is the best available, as far as I can see. No structure is perfect, nothing is written in stone; but the invested time and work in this process will bear fruit, and already does so, as far as I can see.

All structures, no matter how good they are, are only helpful when we use them properly and try to fulfil our different roles in them properly. Nevertheless, we should now harvest the fruits of this process, making us aware of the important issues involved in these questions discussed, and the many careful considerations behind the proposals on our table. I will particularly emphasize that this work is done to make us able to steward our resources in the best possible way, including the time, human capacities and the gifts of knowledge and representation of the many contexts and churches provided by all who are participating in the governing structures of the WCC. To be able to share our responsibilities, we need to

empower all participants by an efficient and transparent structure. To be transparent we need to have clear mandates and regulations for each body and ministry. To be efficient we need to avoid unnecessarily complicated procedures. To be as representative of our churches as possible, we need to have systems of rotation and proper sharing of positions. To be an instrument of strategic leadership for the whole ecumenical movement, we need to have proper ways to include our partners in the work and in the governing processes. We also come to this conclusion of the work on governance to find the best ways to make us more able to be representative of the wide fellowship of churches that we are, to find the best way of making use of specialized competence in the churches and among the partners, and to make us more open to specific contributions from our partners. A lot has been achieved in this process, and I thank all who have been giving substantial amounts of time and wisdom into it. We could have done even more to reform our council, but we also know that the structure is not the only dimension of reform that makes the council able to change and fulfil its tasks in the future.

The World Council of Churches is defined by all the three key words in our name. We are global, in all continents, and therefore also in solidarity with one another, seeking peace in all its meaning for the whole earth. We are ecumenical in the mutually accountable way that conciliar ecumenism offers a unique model for, which we again confirmed in a consultation with regional and national councils of churches in Lebanon, in February of this year. And we are a fellowship of churches called to express this vision of unity, requiring justice and peace to be realized under contradictions and in conflicts, in humility, carrying the cross of Christ and the hope of resurrection together as churches, for and with one another. This identity and calling brings us into different seasons or different phases. I find that we now are in a phase of transition into a period guided by the theme of the 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly, blessed by the richness of this theme and challenged to be in a mode of prayer and openness, as we try to make more clear what it means to pray to God of life, to make visible what this "us" means as churches, and as humanity and creation, and to realize the content and the dynamic between the two values of the kingdom of God: justice and peace.

### 4. "Lead us to justice and peace!"

Since we met as Central Committee, the WCC has called and organized the biggest event in this period since the 9th Assembly, the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in May 2011. A lot of material has been presented to you before and after this remarkable event in the ecumenical movement, so well hosted and inspired by the churches in Jamaica. Through their commitment, their ministry and spirituality, the participants got a renewed theological, moral and spiritual incitement to unite in the call to a just peace. We have significant documents from that event that provide ample material for the council to give leadership in the ecumenical contributions to justice and peace. We discussed last time in the Central Committee the document A Call to Just Peace. We also have a significant study of our legacy and the contributions from the ecumenical movement to peace presented in the Just Peace Companion. We also have the message from the convocation. This message was produced through a marvellous effort from the editing group, responding accurately to the message from the many very active and vocal participants in the convocation. These documents have given us a platform for the work for justice and peace that now is of great significance in the planning of the Assembly.

In the evaluation of the IEPC, we clearly saw the importance of confirming and even celebrating the work for justice and peace as belonging not only to the core business of the WCC but to the heart of our Christian calling to follow Jesus Christ and carry our cross together as churches and disciples. We also saw the need for common platforms for the many initiatives and institutions that promote peace with justice

locally, nationally and globally, and that the WCC offers a unique opportunity for this. My friend Senaid, the president of the Islamic Council of Norway, present in the IEPC, made me aware of how privileged the Christian churches are to have an organization like the WCC to promote just peace in the name of our religion and offer a forum for proper discussions about peace. We also learned that the common manifestation of the church as a fellowship of peacemakers and the ecumenical movement as one uniting different peace initiatives is important, even if we do not have a final and definite common statement on the concept of just peace. We did expect that more clarity could have come out of more substantial reflection in an event like the IEPC. We did, however, since it was an event, get a sincere and clear expression of the commitment and the priority of the work for justice and peace in the Christian world. We did learn more about how to plan and monitor the dynamic of a large gathering like that, with the challenge of its not being a decision-making body but still a representative gathering of our constituency. We received a lot; we could have gotten even more. More has to be done; but we have a substantial and strong impulse and a solid platform for our further involvement both in reflections and actions for just peace.

The group appointed to discuss the follow-up of the convocation toward the Assembly has advised me on how to proceed further. They have first of all asked that we try to make the call to and the contributions to just peace a bloodstream running through the whole Assembly and the work we do now and in the future as a council. We will come back to this in our two plenary discussions on the Assembly, as well in reflections and discussions on program reports. The advisory group does not recommend that we now make efforts to produce a new declaration of just peace at this stage, partly because the process has not started to give that kind of work on a new concept this close before the Assembly and partly because there is a need for reflecting more on the relevance of the concept in different contexts before more work is done to conclude a definition on what just peace is or should be. I think this is wise and that it might actually offer us more for the work for justice and peace just now than spending time and energy to formulate quickly a declaration on just peace (which has been the recommendation since the Porto Alegre Assembly). We should first gain even more from the process and discussions in the coming assembly using this significant theme, as we are receiving and making use of the harvest from this period, both from the IEPC and from other programs like the study on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology, human rights advocacy, etc. The wider understanding of peace, which corresponds quite well to the rich legacy of the work of the WCC that we also harvest in this meeting, is clearly expressed through focus on the four realms: peace among the peoples, peace in the market place, peace with the earth and peace in the communities.

As you notice, I am shifting terminology between speaking about peace with justice, justice and peace, just peace and peace in its wide and deep meaning. I do so for three reasons. There is not yet a settled terminology of "just peace," and therefore different ways of expressing the proper interrelation between justice and peace are needed to continue our discourse. Second, we need to develop our concept and eventually a declaration of just peace clearly in a direction that is embedding this diversity of approaches to both justice and peace. We should avoid developing a counter-concept to the concept of just war and therefore directly linking to that discourse; we should aim at something more. On the other hand, those who might listen for guidance from the churches and from the WCC in difficult processes of decision-making in conflict situations should be offered arguments and principles that can be used and made operational in such situations. Therefore, we should also have the goal of working toward some criteria for just peace that could be relevant in those contexts. Even if some of the criteria in the old paradigm of "just war" can be used in certain cases to declare a military action "unjust," the critical questions in the application of these criteria are many in a world were war and armed conflict are not so much a matter of

international conflicts but within and across national borders. The danger of making the paradigm of "just war" primarily legitimating the use of military means without the proper critical moral and political processes is a very real one. We as churches cannot ignore the difficulty that political leaders have when they have to decide about how to stop or defend their people in an armed conflict; but we should offer much more than the old paradigm of "just war."

We should also avoid having a new concept that can easily (and wrongly) be understood as a reflection of imperial language and even of the proceedings and powers of colonialism. The concepts of international law have, to some extent, been understood in terms of the agreement among the powerful, and were during colonial times – and still might be – used by the powerful to claim their "rights" to control or colonize other territories. We see also in conflicts today that the stronger parties seek to control the conditions for peace agreements. We have to struggle with these questions in different contexts. And exactly that is our task as a fellowship of churches and an ecumenical movement, more than defining rules for international agreements that can be abused by the strongest part. We need to be open to all relevant dimensions of peace and particularly insights of those from the marginalized or weaker part in any conflict. Nevertheless, we cannot accept that only because a concept like "just peace" has been used and even abused, that we cannot give it a proper and dynamic meaning. Even the concept of peace can be used and abused for unholy purposes; but we cannot stop using it but must fill the terminology with the best meaning and make it a reality for those who need peace so desperately.

Therefore, I find that the ongoing discourse, both conceptual and contextual reflections, should continue as we now have this privilege of having an Assembly theme like the one we have. A declaration of just peace, if needed, should be based on both dimensions. I therefore see this as a proper task for the work of the council after the Assembly. It is a genuine task for a renewed CCIA with a clearer profile, having competence to discuss justice and peace in relation to many contexts in the world. It could also be important for the Faith and Order commission to give proper theological reflection as to how the understanding of unity as a gift of the God of life requires both justice and peace and how the call to be peacemakers belongs to the mandate and mission of the church in any relationship with state and peoples. We can and should continue to address situations of conflict and injustice in the light of our reflections on justice and peace or just peace in these coming days. This Central Committee meeting in itself offers an opportunity for that in our public statements, in our reflections on how different programme activities contribute to that effort, and in having the theme of the Assembly as a guiding theme for the whole meeting here in Crete.

In my report to the Executive Committee in September 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where we met at the invitation of the late Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Abune Paulos, I reflected on how our work in many parts of the WCC programmes and in our fellowship as churches are contributing to a deeper and more mature understanding of the proper dynamic between justice and peace. I would like to continue to share some of my reflections in this regard, not least as a result of visits to or from the member churches of the WCC, and give you some accounts from initiatives I have been taking or involved in through the last months. Two visits have been cancelled in this period so far, one to Iraq and one to Sudan and South Sudan, in both cases due to unclear internal situations and violence. In Sudan, the WCC and the AACC have through many years accompanied the peace process and the establishment of a two-state solution. Still, there is a great need for a just peace, including respect for basic rights in terms of religious freedom, particularly for the Christian minority in Sudan, where churches have been destroyed and burned. This violence attacks at the core of human dignity and well-being and deserves proper attention from the international community. Together with the general secretary of

AACC, Dr Andre Karamaga, we have issued statements of protest against the attacks on churches in Sudan.

### Pakistan

Since our last meeting, I have visited Pakistan as one element in a wider initiative to address the negative effects of the so-called blasphemy laws in Pakistan. The peaceful future of this country, as in all countries, depends on just laws and a fair implementation of those laws. An important obstacle to real peace and reconciliation is grounded in the legal system. These laws poison the relationships between peoples in Pakistan, and also between Muslims. The visit coincided with the inauguration of the new cathedral of Raiwind Diocese in the Church of Pakistan, where our member of the Central Committee and Executive Committee, Bishop Samuel Azariah, has led the work for many years. The very moving event was an important occasion to see the life of the church and the commitment to be church in a context of rich traditions but also new fears for violence and disrespect for human rights in a country where the political leadership is challenged by many, including extremist Muslim groups. Together we reflected on the mission of the church under these circumstances and particularly the need for the church to search for and manifest the truth, but sometimes by not participating in the confusing public debates, being silent as our Lord was silent to witness to the truth when he was before Pilate. At the end of last year, the moderator of CCIA, Rev Bondevik, visited the Prime Minister of Pakistan on behalf of the WCC to raise these issues with him. In September this year, a wide hearing about these problems is planned in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva and initiatives to engage the diplomatic community in Geneva will be taken.

### Papua

The Executive Committee issued a statement about human-rights violations and injustice against the population of Papua in its meeting in February this year. I had the privilege of visiting Indonesia in June, combined with participation in the last phase of the last meeting in the Poverty, Wealth and Ecology process in Bogor, outside Jakarta. In this meeting, the significant report you have now received about an economy of life for all was (almost) finalized. The meeting had a very qualified and representative participation, including two of our Presidents, Dr Nababan and Dr Dossou. It reflected also the realities of many countries in Asia, where matters of economic justice have a great relevance for the issue of peace in its deeper sense.

The connection between economic justice and a sustainable stewardship of the resources of nature is clearly seen in Papua, where the indigenous population have little access to the enormous outcome of exploring and even exploition of the natural resources of this land. In this situation the church finds itself between "the two heavy stones," as it was said, the liberation movement and the government, seeking to comfort their people and give dignity to their life, struggling for the rights of the peoples of Papua for more justice, more security, but also more infrastructure and education to secure more self-determination (as they also are promised in legal acts of Indonesia). The challenge is to find the proper relationship between justice and peace in this context. How can the people secure their rights by peaceful means? How can the people of Papua be liberated from military control over the political situation, building "peace" on the conditions of the powerful international companies and the powerful influence from Jakarta undermining their own rights and autonomy?

The church in Papua, and particularly the member church receiving me, the Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua has the courage to be church in this conflict, to be prophetic and peacemaking, comforting and protesting, inclusive and strong at the same time. The spiritual strength and the realistic approach to this reality impressed me, and the need for proper support and accompaniment from the international fellowship they belong to in the WCC and the WCRC were expressed in different ways. The moderator of this church has confirmed the significance of the visits, both from our President Nababan in March and the one I could make in June together with our vice-moderator Margaretha Hendrick-Ririmasse, as expressions of accompaniment and encouragement in this particularly challenging situation. We as ecumenical bodies nationally and globally should support them and be their voice in our places, both in Jakarta and Geneva.

# Nigeria

After several visits to Nigeria from the WCC the last years, particularly a living letter visit a year ago, I took an initiative to arrange another visit this May. As follow-up to our Christian-Muslim consultation of November 2010, I asked, early this year, HRH Prince Ghazi of Jordan and the Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought to establish and lead together with me a joint Christian-Muslim high-level delegation to visit Nigeria. We succeeded, with support from the National Council of Churches in Nigeria and our staff, in making this happen in May this year. Among the participants were President Bernice Powell Jackson. The report of the visit was communicated broadly throughout our networks and to the media during July. We had a wide-ranging joint understanding of the situation, and we witnessed the need for attention to more justice to bring an end to violence and ensure future peace. The need for justice is striking and quite comprehensive, including land rights. Economic justice is a significant issue, as within Nigeria the wealth is extremely unequally shared. There is a need for basic security, too, bringing criminality and terror to an end and bringing those responsible to justice as well as need for an end of impunity, fairer and clearer regulations of rights, and a stronger and reliable legal and political system. There is in all this a great need for attitudes of peace, for a willingness to see beyond the present political and ethnic conflicts, for not using religion and religious identity to fuel the tensions, and for going further into a joint vision of living together for the prosperity and the peace for all.

We confirmed that we together as Muslims and Christians should and could convey attitudes and teaching about peace and justice from our traditions, and we can encourage the leaders of the Nigerian religious communities to commit themselves to a set of common values and objectives. As Christians and Muslims we are deeply concerned about the recent attacks on church buildings and worshippers, as well as what we heard about attacks and killings of Muslims. We heard testimonies from both Muslims and Christians about atrocities and killings. We have to realize that Christians are also involved in the conflicts. I hope we can get the resources to follow up this effort to accompany joint initiatives to bring forward the truth about what is happening and to strengthen a joint Christian-Muslim voice based on sources in our religious traditions for promoting peace. The international audience should not identify Nigeria as a battlefield between Christianity and Islam but as a country that has a lot of struggles and conflicts, in which religion becomes a dimension in these conflicts. It is our common responsibility to prevent and critique the use of our religious faiths and identities as pretexts for violence.

In Abuja, Nigeria, I also had the privilege to participate in the installation of the new leadership of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa (FECCIWA). The WCC should aim at

paying more attention to the West African region, not at least due to the growing tensions related to religion and the new extremist groups in that region, probably a negative effect of the war in Libya.

### Canada

The visit to our member churches in Canada in March 2012 confirmed for me the strong commitment in Canada to justice in the whole world, for all and with all. I was moved by witnessing the serious struggle with the effects of injustices against the First Nations Peoples in their own country, realities in which the churches had a very complicit role. It was shocking but revealing to me that to sing "Amazing grace" could be a reminder of an experience of injustice and oppression from the boarding schools. It was also challenging to hear in the same conversation with indigenous peoples their clear expectations of the WCC. The Christian faith has been used for oppression. But the critical approach to the past is also a identifying trait of our faith, opening up to the truth and the reconciliation that God can give and that we are called to give one another. To share the intention and the content of our statement (Executive Committee February 2012) on the Doctrine of Discovery was a particular privilege, referring to how we as a fellowship of churches have learned from and lamented over the effects of this political doctrine, which has been given a kind of theological rationale over the centuries. That this rationale has been totally ignoring the Christian doctrine of God as creator of all, caring for all and the rights and dignity of all makes the Doctrine of Discovery a heresy—a still dangerous heresy, since the mentality of the doctrine is not gone.

For our reflection on just peace, I noticed that the outstanding representative of the First Nations in the truth and reconciliation commission of Canada, Prof Dr Littlechild, in a very personal way expressed the need to go from knowing the truth toward reconciliation, and a truth and reconciliation process first of all with himself. He also affirmed the importance of the WCC's role in international work for the rights of indigenous peoples, and he hoped for further cooperation within the UN systems both in New York and Geneva.

The strong commitment to unity in the church and the world is a significant contribution from Canadian churches and ecumenists over many years. We celebrated a joint Anglican-Lutheran eucharist, a wonderful sign of the fruits of ecumenical labour over many years, including the work of Faith and Order.

### Germany

Several institutions and events in Germany have called upon the General Secretary in the last year and a half. Among them, the Kirchentag in Dresden, Germany, was a remarkable event in size and profile, confirming and nurturing the unification of Germany and the commitment to work with the WCC for just peace, emphasizing in that event particularly the peace with the earth. I was asked to participate both in discussions and by offering a Bible study. It is encouraging to see the great interest in the theme of our Assembly and the concept of just peace, particularly the many young people committed to work for peace and justice in the world. The high public profile and significant influence that these events and movement can have in a country like Germany is remarkable, e.g., when politicians on all levels participate. I also participated in a Central European event in Ulm, Germany, with representatives from churches from several countries along the river Donau, praying, walking and preaching for peace with the earth and among the people. There is a deep commitment in the German churches to elaborate the concept and idea

of a just peace, following the strong impulses from the post World War II learnings and contributions from these churches. The substantial influence in public discussions from the arena and the voices of the movements and the leaders of the church are an inspiration for the whole ecumenical movement.

In a totally new type of encounter between labour movement, environmentalists and the church, taking place in Berlin, Germany, June 2012, again the WCC was called to participate. The theme of transformation raised à lot of urgent questions for the whole ecumenical movement. The issues of economic justice and equity were discussed and the contribution from the WCC addressed the just peace that requires also access to decent work. I presented the new initiatives in Geneva for work between the ILO and the WCC on this theme, and it was warmly welcomed as a relevant matter in the German context. There is in Germany, and in Europe as a whole, a great need for decent work, particularly for younger people. This is a reality in many continents, and a potential threat to the just peace we are praying and working for. The theological reflection on the concept of just peace is also an issue of theological reflection. I was invited for the ecumenical workshop organized by Ökumenische Rundschau to present the WCC work for justice and peace in the Israeli/Palestinian context, and the text was printed in the following edition of the periodical.

#### Samoa

The Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) celebrated its 50 years in Samoa August 2011. I learned about the welcoming ceremonies and the reconciling ceremonies of the people of the Pacific as a very special contribution to the richness of the church life in that region, and therefore of our fellowship. Peace is built in many levels, and particularly in how one receives guests and how one addresses conflicts by rituals of reconciliation. Papa John Doom, the president of the Pacific region, helped me to understand the great significance of conciliar ecumenism in the time of liberation and independence for the states and the churches about 50 years ago. Since then, the World Council of Churches has served just peace in this region through several actions, together with the PCC, and on the mandate of the member churches, through our joint decisions and actions in Geneva. The need to raise issues of both justice and peace in this region is on our table, and the Executive Committee has in its last meetings addressed both the restrictions on the Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma and the injustices and suppression of the free nation of Tahiti (Maohi Nui) from the former colonial power, France.

#### Assisi

Pope Benedict XVI decided to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the prayers for peace among religious leaders, an event initiated by Pope John Paul II. The WCC has been represented in these events in different ways, and this time the General Secretary was asked for the first time to be one of the speakers in the public event, representing the member churches in this international inter-religious gathering. I spoke about the need for religious leaders to take responsibility to promote just peace in Jerusalem, and I reminded the audience that the negative effects of not solving the Israeli/Palestinian conflict with a just peace are felt in many other countries in the world, such as the church in Pakistan. I also raised the need for the contributions from young people to justice and peace – in the time of St Francis and today. The youth movements in the churches are vitalizing the work, and we desperately need them within our ecumenical movement. Therefore it is crucial to empower and give space to young people in church and society, not looking at them only as the future of the church.

#### The Middle East and Northern Africa

In February 2011, we again addressed the situation in many of the countries surrounding the Mediterranean. Many changes have taken place since then, and we have addressed the potential and challenges of the "Arab spring" in different ways. One was a consultation in Beirut, Lebanon, in January this year, where we called Christian and Muslims to discuss the future of Christians in this region after the so-called Arab spring. Quite impressive were the younger men and particularly women from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria who asked for a new future based on democracy, shared citizenship and therefore equal rights for all women and men, regardless of faith and ethnic identity. This request corresponds to our commitment to work for human rights and democracy as expressions of justice and peace. But the challenges of the churches in these countries are also related to the uncertainty and even fear of what the future will bring after radical changes have taken place, particularly if authorities are based on a Muslim majority that would allow extremists to put pressure on Christians and churches. The example of Iraq is worrying many church leaders in this region. Also within the churches there are changes. In these days the Coptic Church is preparing for the election of a successor to the late Pope Shenouda (II); and some of our Central Committee members could not be here for that reason. The next Pope will have to find a role for the church in a changing Egyptian society. The millet system from the Ottoman period in several countries has provided a certain protection and a predictable and even privileged situation for numerical minorities and groups for many years, including the Christians. However, the combination of the old system and the non-democratic authorities has become an unreliable and unsustainable situation in many countries and the churches have to contribute to the new reality.

The question is what will come next, and how can Christians become an active resource for a society in change and development, in a society providing proper respect and security for Christians. We have as a fellowship a call to contribute to this situation through many networks, events and relationships, and to bring our perspectives, not from outside, but from a fellowship that includes the churches in this region. However, there seem to be clear signs that they want and, in some cases, need others who raise their voices to make the truth known and the most difficult issues raised through safe spaces. Christians in the Middle East and North Africa should not feel that they are alone within the fellowship of churches, particularly in times when they - and we as a council - find that the Christian presence in that region is in danger for several reasons, resulting in a decline of members. We have also in this last period tried to organize different visits, meetings and consultations about their situation; and another wide consultation with the wider ecumenical fellowship is planned for next January. More than that, they should be encouraged and supported as they give a Christian witness, a prophetic and reconciling message, in words and acts. The Christian tradition of working for peace with justice and Christian anthropology compel us to work for the rights and dignity of all human beings. The voice and contribution of the churches are needed for peace and justice in the region. Therefore, it is of high significance that the churches in the region are well connected through the World Council of Churches, churches of different confessional and church traditions so that the council also can know and speak on the basis of many perspectives and on behalf of many. It is based on this focus on the need to accompany and give solidarity from the WCC to the churches in this region that my predecessor invited the ELCJHL to apply for membership in the WCC, and at this Central Committee meeting we come to the concluding phase of dealing with the issue.

The situation in the Holy Land and in Jerusalem is an ongoing concern and challenge for all who work for a just peace, even if it has fallen into the shadow of the events in neighbouring countries like Egypt and Syria during the last year. In my visit to Jerusalem a week ago, I was again reminded how things change all the time in this area. I can see from visit to visit that more annexation of land happens within the

framework of occupation. The settlements increase, the houses and the land of the Palestinians, particular in and around Jerusalem, get continuously smaller. There are so many examples of how justice and the peace are or must be interrelated in this context. Without ending violence, which includes the occupation and restrictions and violations of the human rights of the whole people of Palestine, there will not be a sustainable peace for the people of Israel either. A just peace must be seen as a commandment, implied in the command to love God and your neighbour, shared by Jews, Muslims and Christians. I have tried to address the issues raised in this process even last week, including by a visit to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Jerusalem a week ago, and I hope that we can find a consensus that corresponds to the intention of that invitation and our common commitment to strengthen the Christian witness and presence in the Holy Land.

One remarkable development I see internationally, in a time when the peace process seems to be stalled, are the many signs and messages from Jews in different parts of the world, in the United States and in other countries, heavily criticizing the occupation and settlement policy of Israel, because it undermines the idea and the identity of being a democracy. This situation cannot continue, and Israel cannot have a future as an occupier and the violator of international law. This is what the WCC has said year after year, and that the concern for the justice of the Palestinian people is a deep concern for the peace and the future of both Israelis and Palestinians. This has become clearly manifested in decisions of the governing bodies of several of member churches the last year, as the occupation has been condemned through addressing different aspects of the illegal activities according to international law. The United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church in the USA, the United Church of Canada, and others have made decisions, based on very serious preparations, that have received much well-deserved attention. The discussions have shown how these issues are a concern for member churches and their constituencies, and how significant the positions of the churches are in public opinion, particularly in the USA. I am encouraged to see how member churches affirm their responsibility to fill their role in the quest for a just peace for Israel and Palestine, and hope that this new manifestations strengthen the commitments and contributions of the WCC.

This year one of our most significant programs, the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine (EAPPI) is ten years old. It has a unique role in giving access for ordinary people to be directly informed about the realities of this conflict on the ground, but also to make a contribution to the people affected by the conflict through accompaniment, observation and reporting of what they experience. This is a genuine WCC program for just peace, involving churches and ecumenical partners, providing new insight and understanding, offering expressions of fellowship and solidarity, mobilizing for peace for all peoples affected by addressing injustices. The reality speaks for itself, no propaganda or caricatures are needed from our side. The accompaniers see what really happens, for some of them something new, for others a deeper understanding of what they knew. "We have to see the reality, and then the conclusion is clear, it cannot continue like this," one accompanier told me, "neither for Palestine nor for Israel." The comprehensive preparation and the debate in the synod of the Church of England this summer, followed by the decision to actively support the program, is a confirmation of the importance of what we do there. We thank all who have been and are involved in the programme for their great contribution to just peace and urge them to continue to soberly and properly illuminate the reflections and debates about this conflict in their home contexts, in the churches and in public.

Syria

The people of Syria are bleeding from a terrible armed conflict, escalating in force and cruelty. The world seems helpless and unable to offer solutions; the big nations are even unwilling to come to joint efforts within the UN that could help to stop the violence. The WCC has tried to address the issue by several statements from the General Secretary and the Executive Committee, calling all parties to an immediate stop to the violence, torture and killings, calling particularly the President and the government to take their responsibility to protect their own citizens and not use violence against civilians and against peaceful expressions of critique. We have expressed support for the churches and all people of Syria in these terrible times of fear and violence and called for solidarity, support and prayers from the whole world. We have encouraged the churches and all Christians to bring their witness for justice and peace to the whole nation. We have tried to provide opportunities to reflect on the future of Syria, to develop relations across the different groups in Syria and visions for a life together with justice and peace, including safety and peace for the Christian churches. There is no reason not to continue this call to solidarity and this work for a vision of just peace. The people of Syria are paying a high price for the failures of many. We are as human beings and as Christians obliged to care and be bothered about this situation, and we will be talking with one another about this reality also in this meeting.

To summarize these reflections, churches in our constituency are in different ways involved in the quest for a just peace in all its dimensions. To address these issues together with the churches is a primary task for the WCC, even prior to the conceptual discussion on "just peace." The WCC has several ways of doing this; but the flexibility to initiate proper actions is dependent on both the cooperation between the WCC and the churches and the means available to the WCC for these situations. Second, these examples confirm that a common approach to a concept or a declaration of "just peace" should have a real contextual dimension; and it requires a multifaceted approach to get to more conceptual clarity. Third, the relevance of a joint approach, discussing the dynamic and relevant definition of "just peace," is helpful as a way to apply our values and contributions in a certain context. However, the struggle with the questions in a conflict is more important than having the fixed criteria to assess what to do. Again, the connection between addressing our prayer to the God of life and praying for justice and peace guides us to a deeper reflection on how justice and peace are fulfilled in given contexts, not in an abstract realm. Fourth, I am impressed by the many reflections and initiatives for studying the theme of our Assembly that have already taken place in many churches, and we should be aware of how the discourse develops in the next year.

# 5. "Lead s": The WCC as a fellowship of churches serving the unity of all

The opportunities to visit member churches or to have visits from you have been numerous and given me splendid access to personal relations and deeper insights in the life of the churches. This is crucial in filling my role as General Secretary and for this council as a fellowship of churches. I have given priorities to participate in events that have given access to many of you in our constituencies, and I have tried to combine participation in meetings with visits to and encounters with local and national churches and institutions. I have said I want to meet with women, youth and people living with HIV and AIDS and with representatives of diaconal programmes, in addition to the meetings with church leaders, as a general rule, in order to give me a wide understanding of the life and mission of the church. A report like this should not and cannot be a travel report. The appendix is meant to give you a picture of how I have tried to employed the outgoing part of my ministry in relation to the member churches and ecumenical partners. This is time-consuming work, and I know that you and I wish there could be even more time for

it. You know the challenges of balancing the different tasks. In these first two and one-half years, it has been of great importance for me to get to learn much more about the reality of our fellowship and the life of your churches, and to discuss what the WCC can be for you in the coming years. I cannot reflect on all the encounters, as you understand, but I can assure you that all of them have been important and encouraging for me and the work I am asked to do.

In the report to you last time, I focussed on how the call to unity is reflected in many dimensions of our work. I have been asked to give lectures and speeches about our understanding and work for unity in several places the last year: Yerevan, Armenia; Trier, Germany; Toronto, Canada; and Sibiu, Romania. I have in these contributions reflected on how unity is an expression of life. We live in unity as families, in local communities, and we can see in nature how life has expressions of unity as a dimension of life itself, to care and protect, and to give life a chance. I have used a photo I took of a rock at the seaside in my home country in Norway, where we can see how the lichen grow in uniting circles regardless of the circumstances, even when there is a deep split in the rocks to overcome. They continue the circle on the other side. I have used this to say that there is a mission of bringing dimensions of unity of life in our time when we pray this theme: God of life, lead us to justice and peace. This mission is the common vision of the WCC, and we need the reminder that we have to give signs of unity in life across splits and what seem to be unmoveable realities. Sometimes it is our task to help one another to zoom out so that we see the bigger picture, not only the relatively small rock, but the whole landscape to which we belong as Gods creation and the people of God.

I am glad that we at this Central Committee can present to you a process and a draft for a statement on unity that can be discussed and approved by the Assembly, according to the tradition of issuing a statement of unity at an Assembly. Led by our President, Dame Mary Tanner, a working group has gone into this task of saying something more, in addition to what has been said in the statements on unity from former assemblies, e.g. in New Delhi, Vancouver, Canberra, and Porto Alegre. This statement will be brought into the reflections of unity before, during and after the Busan Assembly, relating to the theme of the Assembly.

Unity is a gift of life and a gift of love, not a principle of unanimity or unilateralism. We have a call as church and as churches together to express the unity of life that is given to us in Jesus Christ, through the life, the cross and the resurrection so that brokenness, sin, and evil can be overcome. We are called to bring this into the life of humanity where we live, and even to the care for the unity of creation where we respect the balance of life and the most vulnerable dimensions and conditions of life. In this perspective, it becomes even more urgent that we continue our efforts to make the unity of the church visible, to be more united in our understanding of our faith and our calling, and that it comes to expression in shared ministry and in sharing of the sacraments. It becomes even more important now that we continue the theological reflections to make this gift of the unity of life a clear expression through the life in our churches: As a sign of humility and care and of sharing the gifts of life expressed in the fellowship in the prayers, in the breaking of the bread and in the renewed listening to the word of God (cf. Acts 2:42).

In my visits to the member churches, I am introduced to many challenges to the unity between and within the churches. The many bilateral dialogues between churches and church families are still a reality that contributes also to the multilateral relationships between the churches. New connections are established thereby. However, there is a certain and reasonable impatience among many to see more movement in the reception of the ecumenical dialogues and agreements. Some of the churches and families of churches find that there are also new questions that are potentially dividing. The ecumenical movement seems also in some churches to have less power and fewer committed spokespersons than in some earlier periods.

There are tendencies toward fragmentation and more attention to what is uniting the few rather than the many. The call to unity is not ended by new challenges, rather to the contrary. However, we also need to see more dimensions of the call to unity and remind ourselves that we are always only understanding from our perspective, fragmented, still embraced by and called to love (1 Cor 13).

The need for ecumenical formation of present and future leaders of the churches is quite urgent in my mind. We, therefore, should do more to develop a diversity of courses to be offered at Bossey for building the open and committed minds of the leadership of the churches and make us all more able to follow and be led together as one in our quest for justice and peace. The need for safe spaces for reflection and dialogue over old and new challenging and dividing issues is something the WCC has offered and should continue to offer. Helpfully, Faith and Order has offered a study of how we can learn more about the processes of making discernments in ethical issues.

Faith and Order also presents to us a gift, a statement about the Church, which is a fruit of their many years work on ecclesiology. This document is to be received by the Central Committee and to be sent to the churches to encourage further reflection on the important text presented here. This study also has an important role in the coming years to analyse what could move the process of visible unity further, learning from the past and addressing specific issues that have potential for bringing more visible unity. The follow-up of the longstanding and important work on ecclesiology is one of these vital tasks.

However, this is not the whole picture. I also see the strong expressions of solidarity, of joint search for justice, of willingness to abstain from demarcations and condemnations, of humility and tolerance, of search for a unity in many situations and events, among those who are praying for justice and peace, among those who recognize the life of Christ and the church in the other.

One of the important issues that is coming up this year (and likely in the coming years) is how to mark the 500th anniversary of the critical examination of the life and teaching of the church by Martin Luther and others that led to what was later called the Reformation, and furthermore to the establishment of new churches independent from the Roman Catholic Church. Is this anniversary something to celebrate or is it something that should call for repentance and change? Our moderator, Dr Altmann, is deeply involved in these questions as he leads a group within the Lutheran World Federation to discuss these issues.

What we should celebrate together is the renewal and the discovery of the Gospel. We should celebrate that the ecumenical movement and dialogues have helped us to see this as a treasure for all of us, regardless which church tradition or identity we might have. I agree that we should be humble, whether we are Lutherans or not, in the way we celebrate this as a jubilee for a church or a church tradition. We know that the Reformation and the division between the churches were a result of many elements, not least political interest, but also of human failures on all sides. However, this particular and significant event will raise many questions about how the status of the unity of the church is, and hopefully also lead to new initiatives of honest and constructive dialogue. I will be disappointed if the strong recognition of the importance of the renewed understanding of the Gospel of 1517, which we have seen from all partners in the ecumenical family, including the participants of the Roman Catholic Church, is not anymore seen as a reason to celebrate in 2017.

In this situation I believe we must renew our call to unity and engender new reflection on why we are called to unity. This call comes from the God of life, from God our creator, our redeemer and our life-giver. It is more than repairing broken inter- and intra-church relationships; it is for the sake of the world — so that the world may believe in the grace of God of life, in God's will for life in unity. The search for

unity goes deep into our human existence and our life as human beings. The church as a fellowship of the grace and life given in Jesus Christ is called to convey this grace and life of God to renew all life, and therefore we must express the unity in the gift of Christ.

In the longstanding discussions of the ecclesial character of a World Council of Churches, we will find many warnings against seeing this as a church or a super-church. We do not need to revitalize those questions. We are per definition a fellowship of churches with different ecclesial identities, locally and globally; however, we should recognize the reality of the fruits of the ecumenical movement and of the dining and defining together in the many dimensions of work. We do experience the real, but imperfect, reality of unity in faith, hope and love within and among our member churches and with other churches and that there are many fruits of the ecumenical movement that nurture the life of the churches. We see new uniting churches these days, as in Sweden between the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church and the Mission Covenant Church. New initiatives, such as the Global Christian Forum, offer also new possibilities for building relationships we did not have. God is opening new doors for many of us but also reminding us again that unity requires willingness to engage in a critical and self-critical accountability and to grow in humility and love.

One particular way of experiencing the unity of the church is exactly the signs I see of sharing the willingness to carry the cross of Christ as a protest against injustice and as a sign pointing to the grace and new life in Christ. This has been mentioned above in several reflections on how the churches find themselves in the middle of the quest for a proper relationship between justice and peace. It is also quite moving to see the commitment to the dimensions of renewal and reform that the churches have in their relationship to ecumenism and the WCC. I see examples of church leadership with new visions for the future common life together.

Our legacy of work toward visible unity offers a lot for our reflections and for our futurework. We now can renew that commitment through the experience of being united in the prayer for life, justice and peace, bringing our call to church unity also into the mission of church – where it belongs.

### 6. Mission in the life - in and from the margins

The WCC sponsored another major event, a pre-assembly mission conference in Manila, the Philippines, in March this year. Although it had a smaller size than the previous global mission conferences, it led to a significant new statement on mission presented to us by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. We will have a full plenary to discuss the content of this statement and the outcomes of the conference. In this context, I would only like to emphasize two dimensions.

First, the reflection on mission here is adequately included in the theme for the Assembly and this Central Committee. Moreover, the need for the mission perspective in the Assembly with this theme becomes quite obvious. It is by serving the world through sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ that we both can see the fullness of our faith in God of life and the full calling of the kingdom of God. The Gospel drives us all to be where Christ is and to be there with the message of God's love, justice, and peace.

Second, I think this reflection about "centre" and "margins" is a significant sign of how the ecumenical movement has opened up to these perspectives through reflection and practice. After several periods of mission and understandings of mission accompanying the ecumenical movement since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this perspective is now where we are, acknowledging and appreciating the reality of the church and the

Gospel in and from what has been seen as the margins. We are a fellowship of churches in mission in all these contexts, and the impulses and the inspiration for our work come from all the many contexts in which we are doing mission. It is no longer an impulse coming from (a few) centres in the north. It is really a multicentred reality. And my experience is that remarkably strong testimonies with great integrity in words and action are often given when the church represents a less privileged or even vulnerable position.

And again we are led to see that we, the WCC as a fellowship of churches, are a reality in the world as it is, where we are, in all the contexts of the world, in all continents, in many cultures; the churches are genuine expressions of the reality of humankind in its vulnerability and potential.

I had the privilege of meeting with churches and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, as well as joint initiatives for human rights for women, youth and peoples with HIV and AIDS. In many ways I saw the reality described in the mission statement, both the need for the holistic mission of the church and the reality of how the church has a mission in what could be seen as the margin and how that mission can inspire and empower the mission of the whole global fellowship. I had another similar experience as I participated in the CCIA meeting in Tirana, Albania, where we see the fruits of the traditions and the new mission initiatives led by our President, Archbishop Anastasios. These initiatives have led to resurrection of the church there and the new presence of the church with its mission of sharing the gospel, searching for justice and peace, and celebrating the presence of God in the midst of what was declared as a non-religious society.

I also see that the WCC has an important role of being part of the wider ecumenical reflection on the definition and initiatives for mission and evangelism. We carry a legacy of important discussions about mission; but we also represent a richness of traditions and churches practices of mission in their daily life.

In the visit to the churches in Armenia and Romania, I saw how they have revitalized their mission roles under the new conditions after the fall of communism. The identification with the peoples of their lands, which has always been important, is quite significant also in this renewed reflection on the mission of the church, continuing the diaconal ministry in new times. The meetings with the future clergy of the Orthodox churches in Armenia and Romania were inspiring, and they remind us that the commitment for the unity of the church and for participation in the ecumenical movement must be built in the phase of theological education and preparation for ministry in every generation. In a consultation in Oslo in June 2012, we addressed the challenges of theological education today and emphasized again the importance of the relations built in those formative years, significant for the future of the ecumenical movement and the common mission of the church.

### 7. The WCC in Geneva

One of the major tasks of the General Secretary is to lead, guide, recruit and develop the staff resources and the staff community of the WCC. Another is to provide resources and stability for the work and the individual staff. I have tried to address several challenges in this last period. The most substantial and demanding issue was to secure the pensions of the active staff in a time when the status of the WCC retirement fund was in a critical situation. As I have informed you, we faced a situation calling for action from the WCC, more urgently than many of us were quite aware of when you in February 2011 asked me

to look into this and to find a solution. The deficit of the fund was growing fast, reaching a level that could only be seen as a situation that had to be solved with extraordinary measures taken and not by waiting for better times, according to the Swiss authorities. Swiss regulations secured the pensions of the retirees, hence the risk of the active staff to face severe losses in their pensions gained through years of service for the WCC was becoming unacceptable. The final moral and financial responsibility of the WCC could not be ignored, and therefore the situation caused a severe risk for the whole financial sustainability for the council.

I quite immediately after February 2011 started to ask for a full analysis of the situation and the different options and started to take the actions I found necessary. The Deputy General Secretary, Yorgo Lemopoulos, accepted the difficult task of leading the Board of the WCC Retirement Fund through the last one and one-half years with the clear expectation from the WCC as employer to describe the situation properly and to propose the necessary steps to be taken. My understanding of the situation was a response to the request of May 2011 from the pension fund board for an extraordinary, substantial contribution from the employer.

After a first consulting process, I presented the urgent situation and a plan for how to address the situation to the Executive Committee in September 2011. This included a termination of the WCC Pension Fund, transferring all pensions for active and retired members to a bigger and more sustainable provider and finding a way to finance this through activating dormant assets in our real estate in Geneva.

The financial plan to cover these costs has been developed and is based on two major elements: A bank loan with favourable conditions from COOP Bank and a development plan for the property in Geneva at and around the Ecumenical Centre. After consulting several resource persons, within and outside the staff, particularly people who knew the Geneva real estate market well, and scrutinizing the alternatives carefully, we came to the conclusion that this was the best and to some extent the only option. The decisions are made in good faith according to the mandate given by the Central Committee to the Executive Committee and the General Secretary to do our level best to act as a responsible and reliable employer to our staff, to secure the WCC assets, and to act according to the Swiss regulations under which we operate in Geneva. Based on solid discussions and decisions in the Executive Committee and in the steering group appointed by the Executive Committee to accompany the General Secretary in this process, we have initiated a process of receiving offers for such a development; and the steering committee has chosen to accept the offer from and work with the biggest, well known and very experienced development company in Switzerland, Implenia.

My conclusion so far is that we have done what we had to do when we had to do it and that we have tried to find the best available solutions for the pension fund and for the financial plan to address the problem. We have also done more than address a crisis; we have addressed a need to develop the property we have in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva for the future use of the council and the ecumenical movement and to develop the best of its financial potential now and for the future. After a long and thorough process, guided particularly by the Director of Finance, Elaine Dykes, confirmed by the steering group, I have signed a contract for a partnership cooperation with Implenia as the best available and most reliable option to realize our goals.

A lot of work has been done to transfer the pensions and concluding the life of the pension fund. A lot of work is ahead of us to make the best choices for the development of our property to make it serve the objective of being a visible, functional, effective and attractive building for the work of the WCC and our ecumenical partners in Geneva also in the future.

Since this has been an issue of great dimensions with a clear time pressure, also with issues requiring a high level of competence and at times confidentiality, I was very much occupied by how we have proper transparency and accountability in dealing with this process. I will thank my good colleagues, Director of Finance, Elaine Dykes, and Director of Human Resources, Michèle Cassard, for the competence they brought to the many complicated issues we had to deal with so far. I also thank the advisors provided by the churches, financial advisor Martin Blöcher from EKD, lawyer and real estate advisor François Bolsterli from FEPS (Geneva), and real estate manager Kurt Mosvold from Norway. The Executive Committee acted on the mandate they had to serve the best interests of the council at any time and in any situation between the Central Committee meetings. The steering committee members appointed have given fidelity and wisdom to the steps taken, and we will need the same in the coming months. We have tried to give proper information as wide as we could as early as we could. We have tried to focus on what we need to do now to avoid the council's ever being in an even worse and critical situation.

I have not focused on how we came into this situation but how we get out of it. Let me now raise the question that was raised in one of the reflections of the Executive Committee. Since this issue related to the retirement fund has to do with stewardship of a very substantial financial value for the council particularly so when we had to make additional contributions of this kind to liberate the WCC from unbearable risks and burdens, should there be somebody from outside looking into what happened and provide a report for the governing bodies and for the churches? I find that this is a question you should answer in this next phase.

Through this process, I have been forced to reflect more on what are the added values of having our secretariat and an ecumenical centre at the road between the Geneva airport and the UN institutions of that city. As we learn how valuable this real estate is, we are immensely grateful for the wisdom of those who provided the ground and those who established and built this centre there almost 50 years ago. We also see the awareness in the local and international Geneva context of our presence. We also see more the enormous potential of being situated like this, within walking distance of many of the powerful institutions, international organizations and arenas that have been placed there, and which deal with closely related issues to other agendas: justice, peace, human rights, international cooperation on health, labour, etc. In Geneva we also have access immediately to the missions of almost all countries in the world and the staff they have there to deal with issues on our agenda. And, not to forget, these institutions and missions have direct access to the WCC as expression and manifestation of the 350 member churches around the world, to the ecumenical commitment and contributions from a number of specialized ministries, and to competence, networks and other capacities for addressing the issues we are there. We have the benefit of being in more than 110 countries because the member churches are there; we do not need to establish an office here and there to know what is happening and to have an impact on the national and local contexts. Geneva represents a legacy and an identity for the ecumenical movement; and it is an arena where the churches have to be visible and present somehow. The added value of having an ecumenical centre and an ecumenical institute at Bossey gives countless opportunities to encounter many of the church representatives and partners in the same place, either in the offices or through the meetings. For instance, this spring we gathered the diplomatic corps for a lecture on human rights and religious faith by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Dr Rowan Williams. We have used the New York liaison office now as a platform for active work on behalf of us as churches to get an international treaty to control arms trade. Much more is done; more can be done with these instruments.

The most significant resource composition of the staff community is constantly a matter for reflection and further planning. Since the last Central Committee there have been several changes in staff, which is

normal in any organization (cf. the list that will be presented to you in the closed session). One of the challenges at the moment is the clear request from the Executive Committee to implement the rule of up to 10 years service for programme staff, in cases of internal advancements up to 14 years. To do this at the same time as we plan for the Assembly has led me to give general encouragements for a while to staff who are in these categories to work on their own exit plans for the time around the Assembly. More specific conversations with individual staff will have to be pursued in the weeks after this Central Committee. This change of staff will be substantial, but not a total change of staff resources, as many are on contracts that go into the next period after the Assembly. It will give the Council an opportunity for renewal and to adjust the staff resources according to the priorities given by the Assembly. On the other hand, it means that a lot of competence will leave the council as staff exit. I hope that many of them can find new roles and jobs in their churches and in other related institutions, so that this very particular competence from the WCC will be brought into other dimensions of the ecumenical movement. This is also partly your responsibility and the responsibility of the churches you represent.

Furthermore, I call upon your cooperation, your creativity and your commitment as churches to encourage and help us to recruit the best personnel resources for the special ministry of working for the WCC. The Personnel Committee has pointed very clearly to the need for more cooperation and communication between the WCC and the member churches in the processes of recruitment of staff. This is a shared commitment for all of us, I hope. The challenge of balancing continuity and renewal, gender and age, competence and representation from the whole constituency is a good one; and I am committed to lead that process, guided by the Executive Committee, according to the mandates we have. Since we were together there have been a number of changes in staff, and I will particularly point to the efforts we have done to recruit well qualified women for key positions in the council. The Staff Leadership Group has now three women and four men, and we have more women in other positions of leadership, e.g., as manager of Income Monitoring and Development.

One important change approved by you in February 2011, now implemented, is that the program work of the council be led by two Associate General Secretaries, one for unity and mission, Rev. Dr Hielke Wolters, and one for public witness and diakonia, Dr Isabel Phiri. The project coordinators, including the two positions of directors for Faith and Order and CCIA, report directly to them. There is no longer a level for directors of programmes. This gives the advantage of connecting more dynamically the three dimensions: programmes, church and ecumenical relations, and the ongoing work of the General Secretary. As I have tried to show in this report, my ministry is dependent on and related to what colleagues do, and more can now be done to integrate these dimensions for mutual strength and benefits. Church relations and programmes also need to be much more in interaction. The joint leadership of the two AGSs will ensure that all programmes can easily be related to others as relevant and required; most programmes have certain aspects of both sectors. e.g., interfaith dialogue is both about unity and mission, but has a lot to do with public witness for justice and peace, as well. We also have given the organization another opportunity for flexibility, as definition of programme coordinators and projects can be handled without heavy structural changes.

We have made plans and taken initiatives for developing staff competence for use of our electronic tools, for project management and developing indicators of impact, for leadership training and for media training. We will continue to focus on what is needed in this period of transition before the assembly and what is needed for the new period after the assembly for new and old staff.

In another report you will know about developments in communications. Let me just make some remarks from my side on initiatives I have made, followed up by the communication department and others. I

have tried to narrow the focus of the communication department to development of our means and methods of communication, so that responsibilities like archives and library are placed under the general secretariat. I have also taken the initiative to slim and upgrade what we offer in terms of book sales and library functions, making the library in Bossey the only collection of the WCC and strengthening the archives, closing the bookshop and opening a reading room with access to WCC publications. We are also taking concrete steps to strengthen the quality and reach of our publications while avoiding large expense and inventory.

I have also reduced the budget contribution to ENI, in several steps, as we have had to cut our own budget and staff in communication drastically over the last years. I have tried to keep it at a level so that the transition of ENI into a more independent and not basically WCC-funded activity could take place. I have to express my regard to the new ENI board and staff for the ability to produce as much as they now do with far fewer resources than before. We realize that all news services themselves are in transition now.

I have appointed a staff writer to primarily report on the many good activities in our programmes and events. The percentage of stories about the activities and initiatives has been reduced to give more space to other dimensions of our work. On the other hand, I feel obliged to make sure that what I say and do in different events and on visits on behalf of you is recorded and presented to you and others through our website. I have also started a programme of media training for myself and have learned a lot through it; I have decided to make use of other tools of communication like Twitter and a blog from now on.

We do try, and work with consultants on how we can get into the secular media with our stories and messages. More can be done; but I will refer to two issues that were planned and done with some results in that respect. The first was the presentation and handing over of copies of all our archive files from the project Brazil Never More! They were given to the federal attorney of Brazil in June 2011 in São Paulo. Mass media reaching the millions in the whole of Brazil covered the story and wrote about the material from the 1980s that now can serve as an important source for the truth and reconciliation work of Brazil after the time of dictatorship. Some said that people in Brazil got more information about the WCC and its work for justice and peace through this event than at the Assembly in 2006. The advantage was that this connected to their own agenda, history and life, which is a condition for getting media attention. In addition to me, both the Moderator Dr Walter Altmann and our President Dr Ofelia Ortega accompanied me and made the WCC very visible in this event. It is significant that the national and regional representatives of the council also become well known as such in their own regions.

About the Assembly preparations I have a lot to say, and I will address the good work done in Korea and in Geneva in my input in the plenaries on the Assembly

### 8. The Good New Days

We are an organization that has many "good old days" or "golden days," the times when there were more staff, more capacity, more francs in the bank accounts but also when there were more cigars in the cantina and more of a lot of other things. We do not have the option to be the WCC of the past; we only can fill our role of today and plan for tomorrow.

These two years and a half have taught me a lot. I have been getting together with you in all the corners of the world, addressing your urgent needs, and discussing plans and visions for tomorrow. I have tried to

give you a picture of how this WCC is indeed a fellowship of churches, by using some of many examples from my work and experiences. As we are gathered here these days we will share a lot more, all of us are invited to participate in this sharing of life and our visions for how we can pray together and be led together to justice and peace.

This meeting is successful if we together can establish a revised future governing structure of the council, and if we here can articulate what we learn from the work of this period for the work to be done on the strategies for the next period. Your mandate, as members of the Central Committee and as advisors for programmes and members of commissions and committees, is soon coming to an end. New mandates and directions will be given by the Assembly, so that the next Central Committee can meet in the year after the Assembly to define the strategic policy and the programmes for the next period.

Let me towards the end of my report offer you some of my strategic reflections for the future of the council, on the background of what I have discussed above:

- a. The world needs coherent and committed Christian contributions to justice and peace and particularly to the dynamic and balance between justice and peace, mobilizing or criticizing the powers of the world. We have a unique legacy as WCC; we have a unique expectation directed to us. We have a faith basis that brings unique motivation and vision for a just peace. A proper Christian anthropology, emphasizing the unique value and dignity of every human being, is needed more than ever. It is founded in the faith in the God of life of all, including the whole earth, made more and more visible. The WCC should represent a voice that is free to address injustice and conflict and violence, bound to our calling and our love for others. The Assembly and the Asian context for it can teach us a lot about how this can be a reality in the coming years.
- b. We have to make more out of the vision and the reality of being a fellowship of churches. We are already using that as a criterion in our programme planning. We ask, and must ask even more prudently and actively, what in this programme or project is bringing what the churches need the WCC for? What is our unique added value? We also must answer how we involve donors to the programmes in the participation in the programme itself.
- c. The presence, facilities and relations in Geneva can be used even more to help increase the churches' influence and participation in international agendas. The same can be asked in relation to our office in New York. That requires competence and relationships with these partners in Geneva; we have had them and we can have them for the future.
- d. Another methodological strategy is to combine the programme work, the church relations work and the work of the General Secretariat even more than today so that the WCC works as one organization with our priorities.
- e. Another strategic reflection from my side is on how we define our priorities according to where the energy is. The energy is where there is a combination of our calling, the urgent needs from the churches and from those who expect something from a fellowship of churches, and the willingness from churches and partners to invest time and money in the WCC to address these issues. We are not donor-driven, but we have to be donor-financed. It is possible for a WCC with clear visions and clear priorities to have an impact on what donors want to invest in; and round tables can and should be developed further to clarify this constructive balance and dynamic.
- f. The WCC should be a competence-driven and competence-building organization, offering this to member churches and partners, for example through the development of a diversified curriculum of courses in Bossey and other means of competence-building, for our staff and for staff in churches and partner organizations.

- g. The WCC should have a strategic leadership role in initiatives on church reconciliation and unity, particularly as we see the need to develop relations to parts of Christianity not currently members of the WCC. I believe that we have something to contribute; I believe that member churches want and need that.
- h. The WCC should represent significant perspectives and take a leading role in interfaith initiatives on behalf of Christianity together with partners in the Christian World Communions. This was done successfully with the document on *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*, launched in June 2011 together with the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Inter Religious Dialogue.
- i. The WCC should further develop a plan for common action to relate economy and ecology for all. The good work of our programmes and initiatives in Poverty, Wealth, and Ecology, AGAPE, climate change, and water is foundational for our concerted and focused efforts in economic and ecological justice and sustainability.
- j. The WCC must encourage a more strategic and wider involvement of youth in the WCC, connecting to other ecumenical youth movements and other movements of young people who share our visions for justice and peace. Such partnerships will speak to the WCC's goals of ecumenical formation and nurture of the next generation of leaders.

I have made it a slogan that the WCC is helping the churches to "dine and define together"—this role of setting the table for sharing, sharing life and sharing the gifts of God, discussions, discernment, even decisions on common strategies and actions. I have come to the insight that I should add: "do." The WCC should dine, define and do together what we can according to our calling and our capacity. The definition of what we should and could do is an important dimension. After having terminated a lot of the most operational activities of the council, most of them now taken care of by ACT Alliance or other institutions serving the operational work in many parts of the world; after terminating our role of being a donor supporting other projects and partners; after reducing staff capacities substantially from those times when our portfolios were of that scale and kind, we still have the important task of defining what we are doing. What are the specific offerings we have, and what are the impact indicators and outcomes of our type of work? We are sharing life and reflections, forging proper analyses and discussions, establishing consensus and commitments. We are praying and listening, accompanying and affirming, supporting and being present, and recognizing and receiving one another. We are being prophetic and reconciling, doing advocacy and creating new visions.

The dining and defining are activities that express how we are sharing and the deliberations but also the real being at the same table. These are also actions. We can refine our tools, our capacities, our project plans, our initiatives, through experience, through work, through becoming active and praying ecumenists together.

Therefore, we have to say: dining, defining, and doing. We are called to find ways to do together what our divine calling compels us to do, a calling that we understand and respond to best when we are sharing at the same table.

We should develop ourselves in this strategic period of transition. I have taken initiatives to work in ways that help us define strategies for our work, processes that leads to priorities for the next period, develop leadership skills, improve our ability to assess impact and improve planning, and strengthen the role of the WCC as giving strategic leadership in the ecumenical movement. Now I will listen to you.

I am looking forward to what is ahead of us, these days in this significant meeting, and in the days and months after this meeting, in the name of God of life.

### **APPENDIX 1**

# Summary of meetings of the Steering Committee

Steering committee members: Dr Walter Altmann, H. E. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Bishop Ivan Abrahams, Dean Anders Gadegaard, Bishop Sally Dyck, Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit

Advisers to the steering committee: Mr François Bolsterli, Mr Kurt Mosvold, Mr Martin Blöcher

Mandate:

Report to the executive committee on the solution for the pension fund and the real estate development process; and safeguard the interests of the WCC

# 1. Meeting of 24 October 2011

#### **Documentation**

- Master plan for the development: Mr M Heiniger
- Three proposals from consultants or development company:
  - O Pilot company mandate proposal: Colliers, consultants
  - O Land evaluation, development process and proposal for services: Mr P Gilliot, consultant
  - O Land evaluation, development process and proposal for services: Implenia, development company

# **Meeting notes**

The meeting affirmed that the primary objective was to develop and sell enough of WCC's current real estate to cover the pension fund deficit and move the fund to another service provider; to initiate plans for the whole property including the ecumenical centre, to house the WCC and other ecumenical partners; and to develop other portions of the property to generate income for WCC for the future.

The advantages of obtaining the initial funding directly from a bank, rather than from an investor were discussed, and preference expressed for obtaining a loan, while not excluding recourse to a suitable investor. Proposals for services from different development consultants and a development company were reviewed.

The steering committee advised the general secretary:

- to move forward with staff colleagues to secure a loan of CHF 30 million to cover the pension fund deficit, using the WCC real estate as collateral;
- to work with the pension fund board to select the best service provider that will accept the current pension fund which is unsustainable; and
- to employ a consultant who will assist the WCC with a tender process to secure a pilot company
  which can partner with WCC to provide the capital necessary for development of the property
  over several phases.

### 2. Meeting of 24 November 2011

#### **Documentation**

- Letter of offer for tender to two development companies and two development consultants (prepared by Mr F Bolsterli, legal adviser)
- Letters of offer received from the four contenders: pg development (Mr Gilliot), Colliers, Losinger and Implenia

 Report: Evaluation of offers obtained for the transfer of the WCC Retirement Fund: management summary and annexes

# Meeting notes

The evaluation report of the two offers received for the pension fund was presented and discussed.

Mr Bolsterli presented the offers received from the developers. The two consultancy firms did not offer the same depth of services, in particular the financing of the development work. Of the two development companies, Implenia was preferred, being the largest and most important development and construction company in Switzerland. Its proposal had stated that it would accompany WCC in securing CHF 30 million in loans. Holding a letter of intent with the developer would help in direct negotiations with a bank.

In approaching the decision, the committee acknowledged that the WCC had shifted from its original plan of partnering with a consultancy firm and investor to partnering with a development company.

WCC was working with two banks, and had expectations of receiving an offer before the end of the year from one bank.

# The steering committee agreed:

- with the recommended transfer of the WCC Retirement Fund assets and obligations to the collective institution, Profond; and
- that WCC should pursue partnership with Implenia as a developer, securing a letter of intent in January 2012

The steering committee recommended that WCC consider in addition to Implenia the need for a commercial real estate consultant.

# 3. Meeting of 13 January 2012

# **Documentation**

- Draft discussion paper on strategy for development of the property
- Draft letter of intent prepared by Implenia
- Draft letter of intent Implenia/WCC, alternative text proposed by consultant Mr Gilliot
- Draft consultancy mandate pg development, consultant

It was reported that the loan request had been refused by one bank at the end of December. Reasons included the financial profile of the WCC, the perceived higher risk in the Geneva real estate market and the reluctance of the bank to lend against an asset, rather than based on future cash flows. Following discussions with Implenia, the approach was now to develop a "pool", in which several banks would be approached. The plan would be to raise CHF 15 to CHF 20 million with a major bank mortgaged by the Ecumenical Centre, CHF 4 million in addition mortgaged against the Ecumenical Centre, CHF 2 million in addition mortgaged against the residential building, and call upon charitable foundations, a private bank, and most importantly member churches, to complete the required funding.

The different texts of the letters of intent were reviewed, and preference expressed for the text proposed directly by Implenia. The committee discussed the broad guidelines for the building strategy.

The steering committee advised the general secretary:

- to proceed with signature of the letter of intent in the format proposed directly by Implenia;
- to request a revised mandate from Mr Gilliot, with services offered on an hourly basis during the preliminary phase of the project

The steering committee **confirmed** that complete demolition of the buildings should be undertaken in favour of a new development on the site; and that the advice of the Geneva canton and commune be taken into account in defining the development most likely to advance in a timely way with approval.

# Dates of significant meetings and communications, 21 October 2011to 10 February 2012

# (i) Concerning WCC Retirement Fund

24.11.11	Steering committee agreement on decision to transfer WCC Retirement Fund to the collective institution, Profond
25.11.11	Information meeting for all members on pension fund situation with pension fund board
23.11.11	and WCC general secretary
19.1.12	All staff meeting with general secretary and WCC staff included brief report pension fund
	situation
19.1.12	Letter to affiliated organisations from the general secretary on the pension fund situation
10.2.12	Letter of information to members from pension fund board on change on anticipated
	transfer to collective pension scheme, change of scheme to defined contributions plan and
	related change in Rules 2012, effective from 1 January 2012

# (ii) Concerning development project with Implenia

21.10.11	Following preliminary meeting of 19.10.11, letter from Implenia expressing interest in project and assessing WCC's objectives, concluding that the three objectives seem realistic and could be met
9.11.11	Letter requesting offers for tender for development partner sent to Implenia and others
	(Mr F Bolsterli)
21.11.11	Implenia's letter describing offer for services
24.11.11	Steering committee agreement on selection of Implenia as development partner
1.12.11	Letter to Implenia confirming its selection as WCC's development partner (Mr F Bolsterli)
9.1.12	Meeting with Implenia, WCC, Mr P Gilliot (consultant), Mr F Bolsterli: introduction of
	process, purposes of letter of intent, strategy for finance research
13.1.12	Steering committee agreement to proceed with letter of intent with Implenia
20.1.12	Meeting with Implenia, WCC, Mr P Gilliot (consultant), Mr F Bolsterli: discussion of letter
	of intent, review of progress with finance research, opening of discussion on approach to
	development project

20.1.12 Signature of letter of intent by Implenia and WCC

- Meeting with Implenia, WCC, Mr F Bolsterli: summary of meetings with department of urban planning and commune of Grand-Saconnex; review of draft reports for steering committee of 13.2.12 concerning finance research and approach to development
- (iii) Concerning meetings with local authorities
- 2.12.11 Meeting of general secretary with Geneva state councillor, Mr Mark Muller, president of department of construction, transport and information technology
- 1.2.12 Meeting of Implenia and Mr F Bolsterli with the local authority FIPOI Fondation pour les immeubles pour organisations internationals (foundation for buildings for international organisations)

  WCC received minutes on 3.2.12
- 8.2.12 Meeting of Implenia and Mr F Bolsterli with the cantonal department of urban planning (minutes under preparation)
- 8.2.12 Meeting of Implenia and Mr F Bolsterli with the commune of Grand-Saconnex (minutes under preparation)
- (iv) Other relevant matters: Mr P Gilliot, consultant
- 7.12.11 Letter from WCC to Mr Gilliot requesting submission of a draft mandate as consultant for the development project
- 13.1.12 Draft mandate from Mr Gilliot reviewed by the steering committee, with recommendation that fees be submitted on a monthly basis during preliminary phase of project to 31 March 2012
- 7.2.12 Letter received from Mr Gilliot, communicating his withdrawal as consultant

### Summary of meetings of the Steering Committee: 13 February to 31 May 2012

Steering committee members: Dr Walter Altmann, H. E. Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Bishop Ivan Abrahams, Dean Anders Gadegaard, Bishop Sally Dyck, Rev Dr Olav Fykse Tveit

Advisers to the steering committee: Mr François Bolsterli, Mr Kurt Mosvold, Mr Martin Blöcher

Mandate:

Accompany the real estate development project; report to the executive committee on the solution for the pension fund and the real estate development process; and safeguard the interests of the WCC

# 3. Meeting of 13 February 2012

### **Documentation**

- Summary of the steering committee meetings 24.10.11 to 12.2.12 (annex to the report of the general secretary to executive committee)
- Report from Implenia: Analysis of the real estate development options
- FIN05 Report of the pension fund board to the general secretary at 12 February 2012, as requested by executive committee

# Meeting notes

Efforts to obtain financing had not proved successful to date. A strategy of obtaining loans from three different banks was under consideration.

The preliminary results of the pension fund at 31.12.11, before audit, suggested that the net amount due to Profond for transfer at 1.1.12 might be between CHF 24.7 million and CHF 27 million, depending on policy decisions. The loan target continued to be set at CHF 30 million.

Implenia's analysis confirmed that WCC could expect to generate CHF 30 million to repay a loan, own its own building and sufficient other buildings to meet its income objective of CHF 3 million. A land utilisation ratio of 1.7 was assumed, based on a proposal made by the state. An architects' competition should be planned, with attention to the roles of the canton and commune in influencing the period of delay governing the delivery of permits. Implenia estimated that sales proceeds from a first transaction might be expected after five years.

The steering committee advised the general secretary:

- to continue to seek a loan of CHF 30 million, and to extend the period for the loan from four years to five years;
- to ensure that an architects' competition is planned in co-operation with the recommended state representatives;
- to accept the state's proposal that the density ratio for the estate be increased from 1.2 to 1.7, subject to the acceptance of development plans; and
- to consider the need for additional advisors and consultants or staff to support the process over the next 12 months.

### 4. Meeting of 28 March 2012

#### **Documentation**

- Report and recommendations of the WCC RFB to the general secretary, 28.3.12
- Draft development contract WCC and Implenia, 21.3.12
- Commentary on the draft development contract, F. Bolsterli, legal advisor, 23.3.12
- Five financial tables related to the development contract terms, Implenia, 28.3.12
- Implenia's diagram illustrating the cost-sharing scheme, 28.3.12
- Draft text of decisions for advance consideration

# Meeting notes

An offer of financing was received from the Co-op Bank at the end of February for CHF 30 million. A loan of CHF 24 million had been contracted at a fixed annual rate of 1.3% for five years, effective from 30.3.12, with no reimbursements due during the period. Any further drawing required under the loan offer would be presented for approval to the steering committee.

The estimate required to cover the cost of transfer to Profond at 31.3.12, with retroactive effect to 1.1.12, was CHF 23.2 million. Including additional provisions estimated at CHF 1.5 million and to be determined, the total estimated transfer cost was CHF 24.7 million, reduced by CHF 2.6 million from CHF 27.3

million in February 2012. Among other matters, actuarial obligations to retirees had reduced (CHF 0.9 million); and assets available had increased (CHF 0.6 million).

Discussion focused firstly on the requirement of the pension fund regulators that transfer be made at 100%, resulting in an issue concerning the treatment of a provision or reserve of an estimated CHF 1.6 million, given Profond's estimated coverage of 92.3% (prior to its own year end audit) and secondly on the steps required to complete the transfer contract.

F. Bolsterli had taken the lead in working on the legal terms of the draft development contract with Implenia. His commentary highlighted the fundamental principle that WCC can be assured of keeping costs low during the development and implementation process. WCC is authorised to conduct controls and to review offers for tender. Implenia is committed to transparency in its dealings with WCC and all decisions will be made jointly. While the financial terms reviewed were considered fair, they were open to negotiation.

The steering committee agreed that the date for signature of the development contract be extended to 31 May, with the objective of ensuring sufficient time for the advisors to assess possible adjustment to the financial and legal terms, and conduct negotiations.

# The steering committee approved:

- the transfer of capital to the WCC Retirement Fund according to the Report and Recommendations of the WCC Pension Fund to the General Secretary of 28 March, 2012, and authorized the general secretary to sign and execute transfer contracts and a letter of confirmation to the WCC RF so that the WCC Pension Fund could make the transfer to Profond before 31 March;
- the principle of "grand-fathering" measures, at the maximum cost of CHF 1,600,000, but required that the model and the criteria be developed and presented by the general secretary to the steering group after a further consultation with the WCC RFB and external advisors on the subject, at the latest at 15 April, 2012;

# The steering committee also required:

- that the recommendation above also address whether WCC should cover the cost related to affiliated organisations or not, and if so that such cost be limited to a maximum of CHF 250,000, within the total cost of CHF 1,600,000;
- that the issues related to insurances raised in the Report from the WCCRFB be discussed further in relation to the issues mentioned above, and that the general secretary bring a proposal to the steering committee on both issues at the same time.

# 3. Meeting of 14 May 2012

#### **Documentation**

- Draft development contract v2
- Update from the advisors on the results of the negotiation process with Implenia, 14.5.12
- Comparison: financial profile after negotiations of 11.5.12 with financial profile as reviewed 28.3.12

### Meeting notes

The transfer of assets to Profond had been successfully conducted at 30.3.12, while certain details of the transfer contract remained to be finalised.

A commercial real estate advisor had been appointed at the end of April, and had developed recommendations on the financial terms which had help confirm and guide the work of the advisors. The possibility of earning sufficient income through sale of leasehold rights, retaining title to land, was emphasised as an option by the adviser. The advisors to the steering committee reported various amendments agreed to financial terms, resulting in a potential additional gain of CHF 9 - 10 million in proceeds for WCC, subject to the building profile to be agreed, and then approved by the state. The outcome was considered to be satisfactory for WCC.

A report was made on a favourable meeting with the Wilsdorf Foundation, one of the most significant private charitable foundations in Geneva.

Further work was required on "grand-fathering" measures, in particular with regard to the cost, and a recommendation would be presented at a later date.

The general secretary expressed his thanks to all for the accompaniment and counsel. It was considered that the work of the steering committee may be considered as complete.

# The steering committee advised that:

- one remaining effort be made adjust the profit-share ratio in WCC's favour
- the contract proceed to signature, being considered satisfactory for WCC, with or without the addition of the requested additional adjustment above

The committee concurred that the recommendations on "grand-fathering" measures be submitted by e-

### Dates of significant meetings and communications, 11 February 2012 to 18 June 2012

### Concerning WCC Retirement Fund

16.3.12	Letter to all active members of the WCC Retirement Fund announcing the transfer to
	Profond and requesting any objections to be raised by 28.3.12 (no objections raised)
30.3.12	Transfer of CHF 24 million from WCC to the WCC Retirement Fund
30.3.12	WCC Retirement Fund completed transfer of CHF 88.5 million assets to Profond, with a
	further estimated CHF 2.5 million to be transferred to assure full coverage (remainder
	transfer completed by 4.7.12, with CHF 83,000 remaining payable from the WCC RF's
	perspective)
25.4.12	Recommendations of WCC RF Board to the general secretary concerning potential
	additional provisions
30.4.12	Regulatory authority pronounced the entry into liquidation of the WCC RF

Regulatory authority pronounced the entry into liquidation of the WCC RF

#### Concerning development project with Implenia (vi)

Final general assembly of the WCC RF

29.6.12

20.3.12	Draft development contract v1 received
21.3. 12	Advisors' meeting
27.3.12	WCC meeting with Implenia for first review of the proposed financial profile
30.3.12	Amendment to Letter of Intent, extending date of development contract to 31.5.12
2.5.12	Advisors' meeting, followed by negotiation meeting with Implenia
3.5.12	Draft development contract v2 received
7.5.12	All staff meeting included report on the real estate development process
8.5.12	Report from commercial real estate consultant, Mr J Hamel, on financial terms in the
	development contract
11.5.12	Advisors' meeting to review Mr Hamel's report; subsequent negotiation meeting with
	Implenia
14.5.12	Draft development contract v3 received
24.5.12	Final version development contract received
30.5.12	Development contract signed
1.6.12	Letters sent to state department, commune, association for real estate for international
	organisations (FIPOI) and Wilsdorf Foundation announcing the signature of the
	development contract

APPENDIX 2

General Secretary Visits and Meetings 23 February 2011- August 20, 2012

Geneva:		
Date	Place	Purpose
24 February 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of the Norwegian Minister of Government, Administration, Reform and Church Affairs with her delegation
24 February 2011	Ecumenical Centre	United Bible Societies Visit – offer of materials for WCC 10th Assembly
17-18 March 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of WEA general secretary, Geoff Tunnicliffe
28 March 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of RCC Archbishop from Eritrea
29 March 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Courtesy visit from Presbyterian Church in Cameroon leadership
30 March 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit from CCME head, Doris Peschke
		French churches official visit
6-8 April2011	Ecumenical Centre	EKD Council Visit
		Visit of the Old Catholics bishops
		Visit of Lausanne Movement leadership Doug Birdsall
9-10 May 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Cardinal Koch visit
11 May 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of PCUSA stated clerk, Gradye Parsons
1 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Meeting with PCK leadership (officers)
6 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Seong Won Park re- assembly
6-7 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland Archbishop
8 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Joint Consultative Commission with WCC and CWCs
		Visit of PKN leadership, Adrien Plaisier

Date	Place	Purpose
9-10 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	LWF Council Meeting
21 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of WACC GS, Karin Achtelstetter
22-23 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	WCC Round Table Meeting
27 June 2011	Bossey	Lunch with University of Geneva rector and dean of theological faculty
27 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Ambassador Yoftahe Dimitros, General Secretary of the Eritrean Orthodox Church
28 June 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Joint launch of "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World
		Recommendations for Conduct" with PCPCU and WEA
29- 30 June2011	Ecumenical Centre	Continuation Committee on Governance Review meeting
16-18 August 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Church of Norway bishops
5 September 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Rev. Jonathan Goodall, Lambeth Palace
		Visit of Claudia Warning and EED colleagues
10 October 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Dr Bubhe, Friedrich Ebert Foundation
31 October 2011	Iraqi Mission, Geneva	Meeting with Iraqi Ambassador
9 November 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Rev. Lee from Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea and colleagues from Presbyterian and Methodist Church in Korea
10-11 November 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Norwegian Church Aid Management Team
14 November 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Scottish Churches
16 November 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of YWCA President, Deborah Thomas-Austin and General Secretary

Date	Place	Purpose
		Nyaradzayi Gumbonzvanda
23 November 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Most Rev. Emmanuel Josiah Udofia, Primate of the African Church, Nigeria
2 December 2011	Geneva - Mr Müller's office	Visit to Mark Müller, member of the Geneva government - Chargé du département des constructions et des technologies de l'information
5 December 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Lunch with Cardinal Koch (initiated by LWF)
8-9 December 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Meeting on Syria
9 December 2011	Ecumenical Centre Library	IRM Centenary celebration
8 December 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Rev. G. Tunnicliffe, World Evangelical Alliance
8-9 December 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Meeting of WCC Officers
12 December 2011	John Knox Centre	Financial Architecture meeting
16 December 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Norway Permanent Mission Ambassador H.E. Steffen Kongstad
19 December 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Prof. Dr Heinrich Beford- Strohm, Bishop of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria
5 January 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of South African Permanent Mission Ambassador H.E. Abudul Samad Minty
10-13 January 2012	Bossey	Unity Statement Meeting
16 January 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Margareta Wahlstrom, Special Representative of the U.N.Secretary- General for Disaster Risk Reduction
16-22 January 2012	Bossey	Meeting of the Continuation Committee on Governance Review
17 January 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Rev. Jonathan Goodall, personal chaplain and ecumenical officer to the Archbishop of Canterbury

Date	Place	Purpose
19 January 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Strategy Group on Health and Healing
19 January 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Bishop Dhiloraj Canagasabey, Bishop of Colombo and spouse
23 January 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Mgr Morerod, Bishop of Geneva, Lausanne and Fribourg
23 January 2012	Chapel of the Ecumenical Centre	GS hosted Vatican Mission Interreligious Prayer for Peace worship
31 January 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Delegation from Korea - Assembly planning Committee
8 February 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Norway Church Aid visit
9 February 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Meeting of the Reference Group on IEPC follow-up
10 February 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Norway Permanent Mission Ambassador H.E. Steffen Kongstad and Mr Kåre Stormark
		Deputy permanent representative
10 February 2012	Geneva	Dinner with South African Permanent Mission Ambassador H.E. Abudul Samad Minty
27 February 2012	Ecumenical Centre	HE Mr Ikram Adyerbekov - Special Envoy of the Head of the Congress Secretariat. Senator of Kazakhstan Parliament
27-29 February 2012	Ecumenical Centre and Bossey, WHO and British Embassy to the UN	Official visit of Archbishop of Canterbury and delegation
2 March 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Taizé Community
7 March 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Cuban 5 spouses
	Ecumenical Centre	Iraqi guests
26 March 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Harris Church, Ivory Coast
27 March 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Swiss Church Women Presidents
27 March 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Mtg with Leonardo Emberti from

Date	Place	Purpose
		Sant'Egidio, and Romain Grandjean from the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
28 March 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Pat Gleeson, new ECLOF GS
13 April 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Meeting with Korean journalists
8 May 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Kirchentag Presidium
9 May 2012	Geneva	Visit to Wilsdorf Foundation
8-10 May 2012	Bossey	Round Table
11 May 2012	Geneva	Visit of Bishop Raul Vera Lopez from Mexico and delegation
11 May 2012	Norway Embassy	Meeting with Norway Ambassador and Mr Hovda, ILO
14-15 May 2012	Bossey	Officers Meeting
23 May 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Delegation from Church of the Brethren, Nigeria
30 May 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Signing of contract with Implenia
30 May 2012	German Mission to the UN, Geneva	Bundestag Committee on Human Righ and Humanitarian Aid
31 May 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Visit of Journes d'Arras
1 June 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Marie Dannis, co-president Pax Christi International
4 June 2012	Geneva	Meeting with World Bank Geneva representatives
5 June 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Rev. Guy Liagre, new CEC GS
29 June 2012	Ecumenical Centre	Korean churches high level delegation
4 July 2012	Geneva	Lunch with Coop Bank officials
6 July 2012	Ecumenical Centre	GCF meeting with WCC
12 October 2011	Ecumenical Centre	Meeting of Ecumenical Centre General Secretaries to bade farewell to Fr V. Ionita, CEC Interim GS
14 October 2011,	Ecumenical Centre	All Staff Meetings, December 15

Date	Place	Purpose
11 November 2011, 15 December 2011, 19		meeting followed by Advent celebration
January 2012, 30 April 2012, 7 May, 2012, 29 June 2012		
June 2012		
30 January 2012	Bossey	SLG retreat
24 October, 24 November 2011, 13	Ecumenical Centre	Steering Group meetings
January 2012, 13		
February 2012, 20		
March 2012, 28 March 2012, 17 May 2012		

### General Secretary Visits outside Geneva

DATE	PLACE	PURPOSE
8 January 2011	Cairo, Egypt	Present personal condolences to Pope Shenouda after Alexandria massacre
9-10 January 2011	Tripoli, Libya	Visit the offices and college campus of the World Islamic Call Society (WICS), discuss follow-up of November meeting on Christian-Muslim dialogue
14 January 2011	Lambeth, UK	Official visit to Church of England and Anglican Communion; consultation with Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and dinner in honour of Cardinal Kasper
20 January 2011	Rome, Italy	Visit Centro Pro Unione- delivered lecture
2-3 February 2011	Loccum, Germany	Conference at Evangelischen Akademie Loccum – delivered lecture
2-5 March 2011	Cyprus	Orthodox consultation on The Nature and Mission of the Church
		Meeting with Archbishop Chrysostomos II of the Church of Cyprus
		Meeting with president of Cyprus, Dr Demetris Christofias
8-15 March 2011	Korea	Official church visit
		Relationship building visit in light of the Busan assembly
14-16 May 2011	Kingston, Jamaica	WCC Officers and official church visit to Jamaican churches and government authorities
17-25 May 2011	Kingston, Jamaica	IEPC event
25-30 May 2011	Cuba	70th anniversary celebrations of the NCC Cuba and visit to churches and government authorities

DATE	PLACE	PURPOSE
15-19 June 2011	Dresden, Germany	Kirchentag
23-26 June 2011	Brazil	Brasil Nunca Mais – handling of official WCC archives on human rights violations during the military dictatorship
		CLAI Board Meeting
		Confessional Families Gathering
25-27 June 2011	Lebanon <sup>.</sup>	Visit churches
1 July 2011	Bern, Switzerland	Official church visit to SEK-FEPS
		Speech and visit to council of churches in Bern
2-4 July 2011	Ulm Strasbourg	Ulm Donau Friedenswelle – end of the DOV celebration ecumenical formation seminar
12-24 August 2011	Taizé, France	Visit to Taizé (spiritual retreat)
19-21 August 2011	Kerala, India	keynote speech for 150th anniversary of Mar Thoma church reformation
23-31 August 2011	Samoa	PCC 50th anniversary celebrations  Pacific church leaders meeting
11-17 September 2011	Ethiopia	WCC Executive Committee meeting
18-20 September 2011	Oslo, Norway	200th Oslo Conference, key note
20-23 September 2011	Yerevan, Armenia	Church Visit, Armenian Apostolic Church (Holy See of Etchmiadzin Church Visit

DATE	PLACE	PURPOSE
7-10 October 2011	Pakistan	Church visit, Church of Pakistan
17-19 October 2011	Washington DC, USA	Meeting of the Christian World Communion General Secretaries
20-21 October 2011	New York	Public event sponsored by WCC United Nations Liaison Office
26-28 October 2011	Assisi, Italy	25th Assisi World Day of Prayer For Peace—Pope Benedict XVI
28-29 November 2011	United Kingdom	Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Networking Conference, delivered keynote speech
30 November 2011	Lyon, France	Rencontre Nationale des Délégués à l'œcuménisme, keynote speech
23-27 January 2012	Antelias, Lebanon	WCC Christian-Muslim consultation on "Christian Presence and Witness in the Arab World"
1 February 2012	Trier, Germany	International Ecumenical Forum— Pilgrimage of the Holy Robe, keynote
2-4 February 2012	Israel/Palestine	Church Membership Visits,
		WCC Staff Coordination Meeting on Israel/Palestine and Middle East Issues
5-8 February 2012	Beirut, Lebanon	WCC Consultation on the Future of Conciliar Ecumenism—REOs and NCCs
23 February 2012	Kassel, Germany	Joshua ConsultationResources for Spirituality and Interreligious Dialogue
24 February 2012	Frankfurt, Germany	Oekumenische Rundscha
11-16 March 2012	Canada	Strengthening Relations with Member churches
17-20 March 2012	Bergen, Norway	Visit to Church of Norway
21-25 March 2012	Manila, Philippines	CWME Pre-Assembly Mission Conference – offered Reflections on Mission and EvangelismVisit with member churches and ecumenical partners

DATE	PLACE	PURPOSE
24-29 April 2012	India	NCC-India Assembly Strengthening relations with member churches and ecumenical partners
30 April-4 May 2012	USA	United Methodist Church General Conference—Strengthening relations with member churches
4-5 May 2012	USA	Armenian Diocese in the USA Strengthening relations with member church, received the "Friend of the Armenians" award
15-19 May 2012	Romania	Strengthening relations with member churches
22-27 May 2012	Nigeria	Interreligious Delegation for Solidarity Peace and Justice
6-7 June 2012	Oslo, Norway	Participation in the Ecumenical Theological Education (ETE) consultation, meetings with NCA and MFA
8 June 2012	Germany	Strengthening relations with member church – EKD meeting on Transformation
12-16 June 2012	China	CCIA Meeting—Commission revisioning, visit with CCC
17-28 June 2012	Jakarta and Papua, Indonesia	PWE consultation and Church visit Poverty, wealth, and economy reflections and affirmations;
		Strengthening relations with member churches
18 August 2012	Israel/Palestine	Church Membership Meetings
23 August 2012	Ethiopia	Funeral of HH Abune Paulos



For Action

### **Central Committee**

28 August – 5 September 2012 Kolympari, Crete, Greece

### Document No. GEN 06

# EN

### The Church - Towards a Common Vision

Original

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### 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 Gethsemene 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 21:17). 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 proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world so that the world may believe. 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, the suggestions offered by the meeting of the Faith and Order plenary commission held in Crete in 2009 and 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.

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 toward 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 toward the full realization of unity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Cf. the By-laws of Faith and Order, reprinted in Thomas F. Best, ed., Faith and Order at the Crossroads: Kuala Lumpur 2004, WCC, Geneva, 2005, "Faith and Order Paper No. 196," 450, and Article 3 of the constitution of the World Council of Churches.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Nature and Mission of the Church: For more details about this process, see the "Historical Note" which appears at the end of the text.

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 common 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 toward the kingdom of God, especially upon several difficult ecclesiological questions that have divided the churches in the past. It registers the progress toward 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 as important as that which led to its production.<sup>3</sup> 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 ongoing 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.

# Chapter 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Churches Respond to BEM, vols. I-VI, ed. Max Thurian, WCC, Geneva, 1986-1988; and Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses, WCC, Geneva 1990.

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 restoring 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.

- 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 affliction. When he saw the crowds he had compassion on 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 tells us that the last words Jesus addressed to the apostles before his ascension into heaven were: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8). 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."
- 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as It Is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381), WCC, Geneva 1991, "Faith and Order Paper No. 153," paragraph 216.

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."<sup>5</sup>

### 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. St. 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 leaven to foster the well-being of the society in which they lived 6 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).7 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.8
- 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation," paragraph 6, printed in You Are the Light of the World, Jacques Matthey, ed., WCC, Geneva 2005, p. 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Cf. "Letter to Diognetus," 5, in Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers, translated by Maxwell Staniforth, Harmondsworth 1968, 176-177.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> See, for example, Augustine, Ennarationes in Psalmos 44, 24-25 = Patrologia Latina 36, 509-510.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Such solidarity of mutual assistance is to be clearly distinguished from proselytism, which wrongly considers other Christian communities as a legitimate field for conversion.

The stupendous development of the 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.

### 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 (cf. John 17:21) on the eve before he offered his life for the salvation of the world (cf. Eph. 5:25; Gal. 1:4; 2:20; Rom. 8:32).
- 9. Visible unity requires that churches be able to recognize in one another the authentic presence of what the Creed of Nicea-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 toward 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.

### 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> For example, see the Anglican-Lutheran text "Growth in Communion" (2002), in J. Gros, FSC, T.F. Best and L.F. Fuchs, SA, ed., *Growth in Agreement III*, WCC, Geneva 2007, "Faith and Order Paper No. 204, 375-425, which reports on important Anglican-Lutheran regional covenants (Meissen, Reuilly, Waterloo, etc.). Hereafter this book will be referred to as *GA III*.

will into practice?" This text has been written in order to assist the churches as they reflect upon such questions, seeking common answers. 10

### Chapter II The Church of the Triune God

### A. Discerning God's Will for the Church

- 11. Since all Christians share the conviction that scripture is normative, this 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. 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. 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.

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

(a) The Initiative of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> 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 GA III, 606-610.

<sup>11</sup> As the Montreal statement "Scripture, Tradition and Traditions" (1963), Section II, paragraph 39, pointed out, "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...." As printed in G. Gassmann, ed., Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993, WCC, Geneva 1993, "Faith and Order Paper No. 159," page 10. See also A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics, WCC, Geneva 1998, "Faith and Order Paper No. 182," paragraphs 14-37, pages 14-26.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> This theme will be taken up extensively in paragraphs 28-30 below.

- The Church is called into being by the Father, "who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but 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 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 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. 2:9), 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 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 seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding 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." A defining aspect of the Church's life is 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.
- 15. The response of Mary, the Mother of God (Theotokos), to the angel's message at the annunciation, "Let it be done to 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).

<sup>13</sup> See the section entitled "The Church as 'Creature of the Gospel" in Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, "Church and Justification," J. Gros, H. Meyer and W.G. Rusch, ed., Growth in Agreement II, WCC, Geneva 2000, "Faith and Order Paper No. 187," 495-498, which refers to Martin Luther's use of this expression is in WA 2, 430. Hereafter this book will be referred to as GA II. Some bilateral dialogues have used the Latin phrase creatura verbi to express this same idea; see the section entitled "Two Conceptions of the Church" (paragraphs 94-113), which describes the Church as "creatura verbi" and "sacrament of grace" of the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, "Toward a Common Understanding of the Church," in GA II, 801-805. See also the statement of the Porto Alegre general assembly of the WCC (2006) entitled "Called to be One Church," par. 10, in GA III 608.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Cf. Church and World, chapter VI "Discipleship and Community," paragraph 2, page 64. See also ARCIC II, "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ" (2004), GA III, 82-112, and the Groupe de Dombes, Mary in the Design of God and in the Communion of the Saints (1997-1998) Mahwah, NJ 2002.

- 16. Christ prayed to the Father to send the Spirit on his disciples to guide them into all truth (Jn 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.
- (b) 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 which God will always remain faithful (cf. Rom. 11:11-36).
- 18. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel is journeying toward 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 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. 4:11-12) 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 ongoing 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." All members of the body, ordained and lay, are interelated 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 fulfill their calling only in and for the Church; they need its recognition, support and encouragement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Ministry, paragraph 13, in H. Meyer and L. Vischer, ed., Growth in Agreement, WCC, Geneva 1984, Faith and Order Paper No. 108, 485. Hereafter GA I.

20. There is very 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". 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." Agreed statements are making it clear that the royal 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.

### (c) Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit

Christ is the abiding head of his body, 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, <sup>18</sup> 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 "2 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).

### (d) 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,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Ministry, paragraph 9; in GA I, 484-485.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, "Toward a Common Understanding of the Church" (1990), paragraph 132; in GA II, 810. See also the Lutheran-Roman Catholic text "Ministry in the Church" (1981), paragraph 17, in GA I, 252-253: "The New Testament shows how there emerged from among the ministries a special ministry which 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" (1986), paragraph 29, in GA II, 588, has affirmed that "the church has always needed a God-given ministry."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Cf. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on Justification (1999), paragraph 15; in GA II 568-569.

catholic and apostolic. These attributes, which are not separate from 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. <sup>19</sup> 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." 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). His Son Jesus "loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word... that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:26-27). 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 all 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 succession in ministry, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is intended to serve the apostolicity of the Church.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Cf. "Called to be One Church," paragraph 5; in GA III, 607.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> "Called to be One Church," paragraph 5; in Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Paragraphs 3-7 of the Porto Alegre statement, "Called to Be One Church" (2006), offer a similar explanation, adopted by that general assembly of the World Council of Churches, of the creed's profession that the Church is "one, holy, catholic and apostolic."

- 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 with the Triune God and, at the same time, a communion whose members partake together of the life and mission of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4), who, as Trinity, is the source and focus of all communion. 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 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 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.<sup>22</sup> Those who refrain from employing this expression believe that its use 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> 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" (Lamen gentium 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 paragraph 20 of "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 mankind." In N. Goodall, The Uppsala Report, WCC, Geneva 1968, 17.

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 lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (Acts 15:28). Later, the ecumenical councils provided further examples of such "necessary things," as when, at the first ecumenical council (Nicea, 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

### Legitimate and divisive diversity

Ecumenical dialogue in search of the Church unity for which Christ prayed has, in large part, been an effort by representatives from various Christian churches to discern, with the 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." Culture, language and shared history all enter into the very fabric of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Cf. J.W. de Gruchy, The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church: a Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa, Johannesburg 1986<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> "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." From the Canberra Statement "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling" (1991), in Gassmann, *Documentary History*, 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Joint Working Group of the WCC and the RCC, "The Church: Local and Universal," paragraph 15, in *GA II*, 866. "Local" should not be confused with "denominational" in this description.

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. 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 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.

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 these latter, 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. <sup>28</sup>

### The relationship between the 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 nonetheles 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> See the unity statement of the New Delhi General Assembly of the WCC (1961), in Gassmann, *Documentary History*, 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechesis 18, in PG 33, 1044.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> A good example at the multilateral level is the Joint Working Group's "The Church: Local and Universal" (1990), in GA II, Geneva 2000, 862-875. From the bilateral dialogues, see "Ecclesial Communion – Communion of Churches" of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic "Church and Justification" (1993), GA 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: <a href="http://www.pcf.va/roman-curia/pontifical councils/chrstuni/ch orthodox docs/re pc chrstuni doc 20071013 documento-ravenna en.html">http://www.pcf.va/roman-curia/pontifical councils/chrstuni/ch orthodox docs/re pc chrstuni doc 20071013 documento-ravenna en.html</a> [accessed 25 Nov. 2011].

appropriate relation between the various levels of life of a fully united Church and what specific ministries of leadership are needed to serve and foster those relations?

# Chapter 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, either positive in the sense of growth and development or negative in the sense of decline and distortion.<sup>29</sup> 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 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 grevious 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> This condition of change is not meant to obscure the enduring meaning of Jesus Christ and his gospel: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

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. Essential Elements of Communion: Faith, Sacraments, Ministry

37. The journey toward 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." These attributes serve as a necessary framework for maintaining unity in legitimate diversity. Moreover, the growth of churches toward the unity of the one Church is intimately related to their calling to promote the unity of the whole 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 merely to summarize them briefly and to indicate a few of the further steps forward that have been made in recent years.

### (a) 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> From "The Church: Local and Universal" (1990), paragraph 25, in GA II, page 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 general assemblies of the WCC. The Canberra Statement (see Gassmann, Documentary History, 4) enhances the ministerial element by adding the word reconciled to recognized. Similar configurations of the fundamental components of communion appear in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic document "Facing Unity" (1984), in GA II, 456-477, which presents the church as a community of faith, sacraments and service; and the Methodist-Roman Catholic text "The Apostolic Tradition" (1991), GA 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 (2005) 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"; from "Called to Be One Church," paragraph 2; in GA III, 606-607.

Ecumenical dialogue has shown that, on many central aspects of Christian doctrine, there is a great deal that already unites believers. 31 In 1991, the study text Confessing the One Faith not only succeeded in showing substantial agreement among Christians concerning the meaning of the 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."32 While the churches generally agree 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.<sup>33</sup> The challenge today is for churches to agree on how these factors work together.

### (b) 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. 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 which do not consider any rites as essential to the life of the Church.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> See, for example, the first two chapters – "Fundamentals of our Common Faith: Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity" and "Salvation, Justification, Sanctification" – of Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Dialogue*, Continuum, London/New York 2009, 10-47, which recounts convergence about these topics among Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed and Roman Catholics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> A Treasure in Earthen Vessels, paragraph 32. Earlier Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, 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 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 GAI, 491.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> See, for example, the Lutheran-Orthodox "Scripture and Tradition" (1987), in GA II, 224-225; the Methodist-Roman Catholic "The Word of Life" (1996), paragraphs 62-72, describing the "Agents of Discernment," in GA I, 632-634; the Anglican-Roman Catholic "Gift of Authority" (1998), in GA III, 60-81; the Disciples-Roman Catholic "Receiving and Handing on the Faith" (2002), in *Ibid.*, 121-137; the Methodist-Roman Catholic "Speaking the Truth in Love" in *Ibid.*, 138-176; and the Reformed-Oriental Orthodox "Report" (2001), paragraphs 22-28, describing "Tradition and Holy Scripture" and "The Role of the Theologian in the Christian Community," in *Ibid.*, 43-44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Cf. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses, WCC, Geneva 1990, Faith and Order Paper No. 149, 39, 55-56.

- 41. The growing convergence among churches in their understanding of baptism may be summarized as follows. Through Baptism with water in the name 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.<sup>36</sup>
- 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.<sup>37</sup> 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 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 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> This paragraph recounts the material elaborated under the subtitle "II. The Meaning of Baptism," in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Baptism, paragraphs 2-7; in GA I, 470-472. Very similar affirmations from four international bilateral dialogues are found in "Common Understanding of Baptism" of Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 164-168, as well as in the Faith and Order study text entitled *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, WCC, Geneva 2011, Faith and Order Paper No. 210.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> 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 <a href="http://www.ekd.de/english/mutual\_recognition\_of\_baptism.html">http://www.ekd.de/english/mutual\_recognition\_of\_baptism.html</a> [accessed on 14.1.2012].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> This summary draws upon "II. The Meaning of the Eucharist" in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Eucharist, paragraphs 2-26; in *GA I*, 476-480. For varying degrees of convergence between Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed and Roman Catholics, see "The Eucharist," in Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 168-190.

effective witnesses." 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.<sup>39</sup> 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."40 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: may not the number and ecclesial status of these sacraments or ordinances be addressed in ecumenical dialogues? We also 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?

- (c) Ministry within the Church
- (i) 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."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> From Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Eucharist, paragraphs 24 and 26; in GA I, 480.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition: A Study Text, paragraphs 30.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: "Ministry," paragraph 17, in GA I, 486; see also the commentary to this paragraph on page 500.

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.<sup>42</sup> 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 and deacon. 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. Among the several means for maintaining 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 episcopos-presbyteros-diaconos. 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.<sup>45</sup> In contrast, others do not view faithfulness to the gospel as closely bound to succession in ministry, and some are wary of the historic

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> See Anglican-Roman Catholic "Ministry and Ordination" (1973) and "Elucidation" (1979) [= GA I, 78-87]; and Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue, "The Sacrament of Order in the Sacramental Structure of the Church," (1988) [= GA II, 671-679].

<sup>43</sup> Ignatius's Letter to the Magnesians 6 and 13; Letter to the Trallians 7; Letter to the Philadelphians 4; Letter to the Smyrnaeans 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Two insightful accounts of these Reformation developments are the Reformed-Roman Catholic text "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," paragraphs 12-63, entitled "Toward a reconciliation of memories," in *GA II*, 781-795; and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic text *The Apostolicity of the Church*, Minneapolis 2006, paragraphs 65-164, pages 40-71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> On this point, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic "Church and Justification" (1993), paragraph 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" (GA 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'" (paragraph 197; GA II, 532).

episcopate because they see it as vulnerable to abuse and thus potentially harmful to the wellbeing of the community. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, for its part, only affirmed that it "may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it."

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

- (ii) The Gift of Authority in the Service of the Church
- 48. All authority in the Church comes from her Lord and head, Jesus Christ, whose authority, conveyed with the word exousia 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 (Mark 1:27; Luke 4:36) which placed itself at the service of human beings. Having received from his Father "full 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. 47
- 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 fulfillment 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. Authority in the Church, in its various forms and levels, must be distinguished from mere power; it comes from God the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit and is marked by God's holiness. The material sources of authority recognized in varying degrees by the churches, such as scripture, tradition, worship and synods, also reflect the holiness of the Triune God. Authority emerges wherever the truth which leads to holiness is expressed and the authority of God, whose praise was voiced "from the lips of children and infants" (Matt. 21:16; citing Ps. 8:2) may be recognized by the Church when articulated by any of its members. Holiness means a greater authenticity in relationship with God, with others and with creation.

<sup>46</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Ministry, 22; in GA I, 488.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> 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," paragraph 12; see above note 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> See the report entitled *The Standing Commission on Faith and Order Meeting in Etchmiadzin, Armenia*, Geneva 2011, Faith and Order Paper No. 211, 8-9 and 14-17, for significant recent work on the "Sources of Authority: Tradition and traditions."

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. When they convincingly express a shared faith, ecumenical dialogue and the agreed statements it has produced also enjoy a certain kind of authority, in that they reflect a common search for and discovery of the truth in love (cf. Eph. 4:15), urge participants to seek the Lord's will for ecclesial communion, occasion the appreciation of the inspiration and good example of other believers and invite ongoing *metanoia* and holiness of life.

The authority which Jesus Christ, the one head of the Church, shares with those in ministries of leadership is neither merely 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 fider) 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).<sup>49</sup> 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. One thinks here of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's leadership in declaring that "apartheid was too strong to be overcome by a divided Church," of the initiatives by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to unite Christian leaders in the cause of ecology, of 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 Br. Roger Schutz in inspiring countless Christian believers, especially the young, to join together in common worship of the Triune God.

### Authority in the Church and its exercise

Significant steps toward convergence about authority and its exercise have been recorded in various bilateral dialogues.<sup>51</sup> 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Cf. "Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority," paragraph 13-14; see above note 27.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Desmond Tutu, "Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness," in T. Best and G. Gassmann, ed., On the Way to Fuller Koinonia, Geneva 1994, 96-97.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> See, for example, ARCIC II, "The Gift of Authority" (1998), in GA III, Geneva 2007, 60-81; this is also echoed in paragraph 83-84 of the Methodist-Roman Catholic document "Speaking the Truth in Love," in GA III, Geneva 2007, 163-164.

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?

### (iii) The Ministry of Oversight (episkopė)

- 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. This diversity calls for a ministry of coordination so that these gifts may enrich the whole Church, its unity and mission."52 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.53 These ways of exercise have been succinctly described in Baptism, Eucharist 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."54
- 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

<sup>52</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Ministry, paragraph 23; in GA I, 488.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> 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 underlying these three orders were "believed by many to be essential to the good order of the Church." Fifty-five years later, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Ministry, Commentary on paragraph 26, cited this Lausanne text in justification of its affirmation that ordained ministry should be exercised in ways that are personal, collegial and communal.

<sup>54</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Ministry, paragraph 26; in GA I, 489.

responsibility" in the communion of the church.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup> The 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. May\_dialogue have made it now possible for a common assessment of the normativity of the teaching of 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. Even in the early centuries, the various ministries of primacy were plagued at times by competition between

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> See Orthodox-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, "Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority," paragraph 5 (note 27 above), which, among other things, also notes that synodality may be taken as synonymous with conciliarity.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> An "ecumenical" council or synod would be one representing the whole Christian world. The first such council is universally recognized as that which was held at Nicea 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 GA III, 12-14, as well as the subsection "Councils and the Declaration of the Faith" of the Disciples-Roman Catholic, "Receiving and Handing on the Faith" (2002), in GA II, Geneva 2007, 125-127.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> This canon can be found at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3820.htm [accessed on May 16, 2012].

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.

- 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." 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. 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. 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 serving to foster and promote the unity of the Church at the universal level be understood and exercised?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Paragraph 31.2 of "Report of Section II: Confessing the One Faith to God's Glory," in T. F. Best and G. Gassmann, On the Way to Fuller Koinonia, WCC, Geneva 1994, 243.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, London, Catholic Truth Society, 1995, paragraph 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.

<sup>60</sup> See ARCIC II, "The Gift of Authority" in GA III, 60-81, and the Orthodox-Roman Catholic, "The Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church," note 27 above.

## Chapter 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 toward 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."

- 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. <sup>62</sup> 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 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. <sup>63</sup> Within the contemporary context of increased

<sup>61</sup> Church and World, Chapter III, paragraph 21 page 27.

<sup>62</sup> 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: <a href="http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding.html">http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding.html</a> [accessed on 13.04:2012]. 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> The "Charta Oecumenica" (2001) of the Conference of European Churches (KEK) and the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE), paragraph 2, states: "We commit ourselves to recognise that every person can

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 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. 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

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:

http://www.vatican.va/roman curia/pontifical councils/interelg/documents/rc pc interelg doc 20111110 testi monianza-cristiana en.html [accessed 5 January 2012].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> See Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, English language edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K., William B. Eerdmans, 2000; also in GA II, 566-582.

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-divisive," 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 unity. 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

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 idly stand by in the face of natural disasters which affect their fellow human beings or threats to health such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Faith also impels them to work for a more just social order, in which the goods of this earth may be shared more 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.

<sup>65</sup> For example, ARCIC II, "Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church" (1993), in GA II, 344-370; and the Joint Working Group of the WCC and the RCC, "The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions" (1995), in GA II, 900-910. See also the report entitled The Standing Commission on Faith and Order Meeting in Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia, WCC, Geneva 2011, Faith and Order Paper No. 211, 9-10 and 18-20, for significant recent work on the "Moral Discernment in the Churches."

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 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. 66 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 "salt of the earth" and "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 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.

### Conclusion

67. The unity of the body of Christ consists in the gift of koinonia or communion that God gratiously bestows upon us 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> See, for example, the Reformed-Roman Catholic text "The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom," 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), 121-138.

the Body and Blood of the Lord, and are sent out in mission.<sup>67</sup> St. John Chrysostom spoke about two altars: one in the Church and the other among the poor, the suffering and those in distress.<sup>68</sup> 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.

### **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 fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit". 69 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> The previous five sentences largely repeat and paraphrase the statement from the 9<sup>th</sup> Forum on Bilateral Dialogues, held in Breklum, Germany, in March 2008. For the statement drawn up by this forum see <a href="http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/breklum-statement.pdf">http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/breklum-statement.pdf</a> [accessed on 14.1.2012].

<sup>68</sup> Homily 50, 3-4 on Matthew in PG 58, 508-509.

<sup>69 &</sup>quot;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.

Thus, the 1927 World Conference on Faith and Order focused on seven theological subjects<sup>70</sup>. One of them was dedicated to the nature of the Church; 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<sup>71</sup>, 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"<sup>72</sup>. 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"<sup>73</sup>. 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<sup>74</sup>.

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 role of the Church in God's salvation of the world<sup>75</sup>. 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 ecclesiologically 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 Conference 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*, and this, in turn, issued in the third chapter of the Conference's final report entitled "Christ and His Church".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> H. N. Bate (Ed). Faith and Order – Proceedings of the World Conference – Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927. New York: George H. Doran Company, 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> For a selection of responses see L. Dodgson (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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> L. Hodgson (Ed). The Second World Conference on Faith and Order held at Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937. London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1938, 228-235, 236-238.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> 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, Faith and Order Paper 3, Geneva: Faith and Order, 1950, 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> to September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1948. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1949, 51-57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> 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. Faith and Order Paper 7, London: Faith and Order, 1951.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order - Lund, Sweden: August 15-28, 1952. Faith and Order Paper 15, London: Faith and Order, 1952, 7-11.

This was precisely the theme of the study report<sup>79</sup> 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"<sup>80</sup>.

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"<sup>81</sup>; the 1975 Nairobi statement on the one Church as a conciliar fellowship<sup>82</sup>; the 1991 Canberra statement on the unity of the Church as koinonia/communion<sup>83</sup>; and the 2006 Porto Alegre statement "Called to be the One Church".<sup>84</sup> All these have been cumulative steps toward 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 in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry<sup>85</sup>.

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. 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 world 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. 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. 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

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Christ and the Church – Report of the Theological Commission for the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Faith and Order Paper 38, July 1963. Geneva, WCC, 1963.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer (Eds). The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order – Montreal 1963. Faith and Order Paper 43, New York: Association Press, 1964, 41-49.

<sup>81</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> 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.

<sup>83</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> 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.

<sup>85</sup> Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry. Faith and Order Paper 111, Geneva: WCC, 1982.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. the WCC/Faith and Order series Churches Respond to BEM. Geneva: WCC, 1986-1988, volumes I-VI.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Cf. Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses. Faith and Order Paper 149. WCC: Geneva, 1990, 147-151.

<sup>88</sup> 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. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2010.

Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community" 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. As 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". 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. 92 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 Nature and Purpose 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"93 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.94

When sufficient time had been allowed for the responses to come in, the commission set out on revising its ecclesiology text, producing a new draft entitled *The Nature and Mission of the Church*<sup>95</sup>, which was presented to the 2006 WCC Assembly held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Seeking to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Cf. Church and World – The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community. Faith and Order Paper 151, Geneva: WCC, 1990.

<sup>90 &</sup>quot;Final Document: Entering into Covenant Solidarity for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of 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. WCC: Geneva, 1992, 164-190; Cf. T. F. Best & M. Robra (Eds.), Ecclesiology and Ethics: Ecumenical Ethical Engagement, Moral Formation, and the Nature of the Church. WCC: Geneva, 1997.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> 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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A stage on the way to a common statement. Faith and Order Paper. 181. Geneva: WCC/Faith and Order, 1998.

<sup>93</sup> T. F. Best and G. Gassmann, (Eds), On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order. Faith and Order Paper 166, Geneva: WCC, 1994, 243.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup>Encyclical Letter Ut Unum Sint of the Holy Father, John Paul II, on Commitment to Ecumenism. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995, §89.

<sup>95</sup> The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement. Faith and Order Paper 198. Geneva: WCC, 2005.

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 highlights the elements necessary for communion between the churches, such as apostolic faith, baptism, eucharist, ministry, episcope, 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 from October 6-14 of 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 maximize 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*. 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. The superior of the church and produced detailed evaluations on the text.

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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Cf. John Gibaut (Ed.) Called to be the One Church: Faith and Order at Crete. Faith and Order Paper 212, Geneva: WCC, 2012, 147-193.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Cf. John Gibaut (Ed.) Called to be the One Church: Faith and Order at Crete. Faith and Order Paper 212, Geneva: WCC, 2012, 207-231.

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 spring of 2011 which 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.

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 meeting 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, north of Milan, 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 toward greater convergence especially on the ministry, and especially in bilateral agreed statements, as well as recent Faith and Order work, such as the study text *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition.*<sup>98</sup>

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, near Geneva, 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 toward the manifestation of that unity for which Christ prayed.

<sup>98</sup> One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition. Faith and Order Paper 210, Geneva: WCC, 2011.