



Saksbehandler: Vebjørn Horsfjord

Saksdokumenter:

- Det lutherske verdensforbunds utkast til misjonsdokument: "Mission: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment".
- Utkast til høringssvar fra Den norske kirke til Det lutherske verdensforbund om dokumentet.

LVBs Misjonsdokument

Sammendrag

Det lutherske verdensforbund (LVF) har siden 2001 arbeidet med en revisjon av misjonsdokumentet fra 1988 *Together in God's Mission*. Revisjonsarbeidet har etter hvert blitt så omfattende at det må karakteriseres som et nytt dokument. I februar i år ble et utkast sendt medlemskirkene til uttalelse. Høringsfristen var 15. august, men Mellomkirkelig råd har – under løfte om å levere et svar innen 10. september – fått utsatt fristen. En redaksjonsgruppe i LVF møtes i midten av september for å ferdigstille dokumentet.

I Den norske kirke har LVFs dokument vært utsendt til LVFs nasjonalkomité, og en prosedyre for behandlingen ble drøftet på komiteens møte 27. mai. 25. august ble det avholdt en konsultasjon for medlemmer av nasjonalkomiteen og andre inviterte parter. Misjonsledere, ledere for diakoniinstitusjoner og -organisasjoner samt personer med missiologisk kompetanse deltok. På bakgrunn av konsultasjonen er det utarbeidet et utkast til høringssvar.

Høringssvaret har følgende hovedelementer: (1) Det uttrykkes stor tilfredshet med mye av arbeidet som er gjort med dokumentet, og man er særlig tilfreds med den metoden som er valgt: Å ta utgangspunkt i en kontekstbeskrivelse før man reflekterer videre teologisk. (2) Vedrørende kontekstbeskrivelsen etterlyses en grundigere behandling av både økumeniske spørsmål og av religionsmøtet i vår tid. (3) Det uttrykkes et tydelig ønske om en betydelig grundigere behandling av ekklesiologi i dokumentet og (4) En dialog med tradisjonelle lutherske begreper etterspørres. I tillegg berøres en rekke mindre punkter som også anses som vesentlige.

Forslag til vedtak:

1. Mellomkirkelig råd avgir høringsuttalelsen med de endringer som framkom i møtet.

Økonomiske/administrative konsekvenser

Forslag til vedtak medfører ingen nevneverdige økonomiske eller administrative konsekvenser.



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

Department for Mission and Development – Office of the Director

To: LWF Member Churches

27th February, 2003
/pas

Dear Friends,

Re: Revision LWF Mission Document

As you may know, one of the recommendations coming from the LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission, Nairobi, October 1998, was the revision of the LWF Mission Document: *Together in God's Mission: An LWF Contribution to the Understanding of Mission* (1998). An ad hoc team, consisting of representatives of all LWF regions, was appointed to work on the revision and a mission encounter was held in Berlin in 2001 to provide input for the document.

A first draft was shared with the Program Committee for Mission and Development during the LWF Council meeting in Wittenberg last year, with those who had attended the mission encounter in Berlin and with others in the various regions for comment.

The reactions were considered by the core group (members of the ad hoc team), which had worked on the drafting of the document, when it met in Geneva in December 2002, and the document was re-worked and shortened considerably.

We are sharing this revised draft with you now and would ask you to study it and let us have your comments (general comments, comments by section and comments on special emphases or issues in the document or that you would wish to see discussed in the document) by August 15, 2003 at the latest. The document will also be shared during the regional pre-assembly consultations and in village group four at the assembly.

The ad hoc team will meet in Geneva in September 2003 to finalise the document for presentation to the Council in 2004.

We look forward to receiving your reactions, which will be of great assistance to us as we continue to work on the document.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Péri Rasolondraibe (Dr)
Director LWF/DMD



MISSION: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment
An LWF Contribution to the Understanding of Mission

(Draft B - February 2003)

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INTRODUCTION

The 1988 Lutheran World Federation (LWF) mission document: *Together in God's Mission: An LWF Contribution to the Understanding of Mission*, expressed a holistic understanding of mission. The document also described the local church as the **witness** that carries God's mission across different spheres: religious, ideological, sociological, political, economic, geographic and demographic. More specifically, the document states:

"Proclamation of the gospel, calling people to believe in Jesus Christ and to become members of the new community in Christ, participation in the work for peace and justice and in the struggle against all enslaving and dehumanising powers are therefore an integral part of the mission of the church. All such activities point to the reality of the Reign of God and to its final realisation at the fulfilment of history." (P.9)

The theological understanding and conviction that the mission of the church, derived from its participation in God's mission, is a holistic mission was developed further at the Eighth and Ninth LWF Assemblies in Curitiba (1990) and Hong Kong (1997) respectively. This document seeks to show how the holistic character of mission is rooted in Lutheran heritage.

The LWF Consultation on Churches in Mission, held in Nairobi in 1998, underlined this missional understanding and practice as part of Lutheran identity. The Consultation also echoed the affirmation of the 1988 LWF mission document, when it stated:

Mission encompasses proclamation, service and advocacy for justice. Mission as

proclamation is an attempt by every Christian to tell and interpret the gospel story in his/her context as a way to discover God's saving action and meaningful presence in the world. Mission as service highlights the diaconal dimension of a faith active in love, working for the empowerment and liberation of those in need. Mission as advocacy for justice denotes the church's praxis in the public arena as affirmation and re-affirmation of the dignity of human life, both as individual and as community, as well as a widened sense of justice, encompassing the economic, social and ecological spheres. (Report P.20)

The Consultation envisioned transformation as an important mission imperative. This understanding of mission as transformation – of both the individual and the society – deepens the soteriological dimension of service. Mission as transformation challenges the church to undergo transformation itself in order to be an instrument of transformation in the world.

Furthermore, the Consultation called for a revision of the 1988 mission document in order to better reflect and address the mission challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. This new document, therefore, builds on the foundation of the 1988 LWF mission document and offers theological bases of understanding and practice of mission for this century.

The purpose of this document is to:

- help Lutheran churches throughout the world become more deeply aware of God's mission to the world and the role of the church as the body of Christ as a part of that mission; and

- serve as a tool to accompany Lutheran churches in their self-analysis and reaffirmation of mission in their respective contexts. This means to invite the church at all levels (congregational, national, regional) and related agencies to re-evaluate their responsibility for mission and to stimulate them in their efforts to seek new ways of understanding their present and future participation in God's mission.

a hermeneutical spiral. It is based on the dynamic view that mission is contextual. Thus, it draws on a theology, which is intentionally incarnational, i.e. reflective of and informed by the context, and promotes, as well as feeds on, praxes that interact with and transform the context. As in the example of the Emmaus road, the church carries out its mission as accompaniment to people in the complexity of their contexts. Therefore, mission theology is done together with them and in their contexts.

A Biblical Model for Mission

Several biblical stories provide models for the church's understanding and practice of mission. One model is suggested by the Ezekiel vision encounter (Ezekiel 37); another is Jesus' mission proclamation in Nazareth (Luke 4). No one model explains everything. Each model offers challenges and opportunities. For this document, the "Emmaus Road encounter" (Luke 24:13-49) has been selected as the model that speaks for and enlightens a hermeneutical spiral approach to mission, an approach that is reflective of the interaction between contexts, theology and practice.

The mission encounter begins as Jesus **walks with** the disciples on the Emmaus road, sharing in their painful context by **listening** along **with** and **to** them as they tell their story (vs. 18). Then Jesus, interpreting the Scriptures, **shares with** the disciples a theological understanding of God's saving act in history and reveals to them in the breaking of the bread the presence of the resurrected One in their midst. With eyes opened to the in-breaking reign of God, the disciples go out to share this good news with others.

Following the Emmaus road model, this document begins with a section that seeks to name and analyse the contexts of mission. The second section discusses the theology of mission, and the third section focuses on the practice of mission. This approach is known and practised among churches in the South as

Section 1.

THE CONTEXTS OF MISSION

As God's incarnation took place within a specific context (Luke 2:1-2), God's mission always takes place in a particular economic, political, religious or cultural context. Present contexts are certainly different from that of Judea 2000 years ago, but God's reign still breaks into a specific context in today's world. Thus, engaging in mission requires prayerful discernment of the signs of the times and a faithful reading of the contexts.

1.1. Discerning and naming the contexts of mission

The contexts in which people live shape and influence their understanding of the world, the gospel and themselves. However, the church cannot assume that its view of the world, others, the earth and God is universal. It names its contexts to help it be in the world without being assimilated by the world (John 17), and to discern those things in its contexts that God seeks to transform.

Naming the contexts is a co-operative venture of conversation and dialogue, listening and speaking, acting and observing, giving and receiving. Marginalised and excluded voices reveal contexts in new ways, sharpening the church's focus in mission.

Mistakes may be made in the church's efforts to name its contexts. Yet without comprehending the contexts, it may simply assume that the way things are is the way they are meant to be. Understanding contexts requires naming the realities and powers that are operative in the world; this includes naming both the powers of evil and the power of God. Sin, destruction, broken community and individual relationships reveal a way of life that is not as God intended. Contexts, however, are also places and situations where God is already working to bring God's promised reign to fruition through transformation, reconciliation and empowerment. These are places and events

where good news is proclaimed, the voices of the oppressed are heard, injustices addressed, and creation and all people are restored to health.

1.2. Voices that name the contexts

There are many important voices in the world, which name the contexts. The cries of the poor, the oppressed, the excluded, forgotten and silenced point to the destructive arrogance of the powerful and the need for the in-breaking reign of God, where there is justice and inclusion into a life-giving community. The corrective interpretations of women's theologies, the creative voices of youth, the testimonies of those who have experienced God's empowering presence and work in their community, help the church to see the world as a "Bethel," a house of God (Genesis 28:17).

The scriptures provide a different set of lenses by which to view the world and its operative values and ideals. They help the church evaluate its own contexts from a broader historical perspective and from the perspective of God's intentions for the world. Likewise, theological and confessional documents, with themes such as justification, grace, Word and the sacraments shape how the church views its contexts from a new perspective. Ecumenical partners also provide a different perspective and may give new or clearer glimpses of God's reign breaking into the world, along with new possibilities and challenges for mission that may have been overlooked.

Prophets in society, within and outside the church, describe the reality of the contexts. They may be scientists, sages, concerned women or voices calling out in the wilderness of people's lives. They may call into question the church's assumptions and challenge it to revisit its priorities and ideals. God's creation also raises its voice to name contexts. It bears witness to the glories of God (Psalm 19:1-4), a God who delights in nourishing the physical, emotional and

spiritual life of all creation. It also painfully decries human greed and wanton violence that cause untold devastation and desolation of the environment

1.3. Changing global realities affecting global and local contexts

God's mission and the resulting mission of the church take place in ever-changing contexts. The church's contexts may differ from place to place and the forms of contexts may change. Nevertheless, despite constant changes and differences in contexts, there are certain overarching themes that present themselves as the church looks at the contexts of mission at the beginning of a new century.

1.3.1. The complex effects of globalisation

The different parts of the world have become increasingly inter-linked as a result of improved means of transportation and communication technologies. In general, globalisation has had a considerable impact on all aspects of societal life, e.g. economy, politics, culture, communication, as well as the individual's sense of value and morality. On the one hand, globalisation gives one a sense of the familiar wherever one is, and sharpens one's sensitivity to the finiteness and interconnectedness of the ecosystem.

On the other hand, with its promotion of individualism at the expense of the community, globalisation has increased the gap between people, nations, and the wealthy and the impoverished. The adverse effects of economic globalisation, with its emphasis on profit making, competition, consolidation of conglomerates and private ownership of means of production, have reduced the economy of many countries, especially in the South, to one of sheer survival. Local economies are at the mercy of transnational corporations, which dictate the course of the globalised economy. Some corporations have more wealth and, thus, more power than the majority of the world's governments. In addition to their debilitating debt burdens,

impoverished nations suffer from the ill effects of the commodification of life and bodies, the westernisation of culture and the feminisation of poverty. As a result of cash cropping, agribusiness and severe climate change, many nations of the South are unable to maintain food security. Every year, millions of families and entire nations find themselves worse off economically than the one before. The number of educated young people unabsorbed by the job market is on the rise.

Consumerism, an essential element of neo-liberal economy, comes as a challenge to the church in mission. While a high level of consumption is required to stimulate market-based economy, the market mentality, which attributes market values to everything, including morality and religion, fuels and promotes consumerism. An economy that thrives on spending more rather than saving is detrimental to the sustainability of the earth's resources for future generations. Advertising on television, radio, newspaper and the Internet has made consumerism a sought-after goal even in places where poverty predominates. It often blurs the distinction between wants and needs and its appeal to purchase rather than recycle has a detrimental effect upon society and the environment. The church in mission is challenged to address economic injustices and to question any view that defines or evaluates people according to their wealth or market worth.

As the globalised consumer economy continues, the devastation of the ecosystem intensifies. Rainforests continue to be destroyed for timber, and arable land and the use of pesticides have been increased to maximise profits. The amount of land suitable for growing crops has decreased as desertification has increased. The trend to corporate farming has generated unemployment and, consequently, migration from the countryside to the cities, highlighting the connection between ecological and economic issues. Encroachment of certain predatory aspects of

western civilisation on other areas of the earth, the rapid world population growth and harmful cultural traditions have led to the extinction of many species of animals and plants and threaten others, as well as the delicate balance of fragile ecosystems.

Technological advances and modern conveniences have often come at the expense of land, air and water. Pollution by chemicals, noxious emissions, and radiation threatens the well being of all creation: plants, animals, the earth itself and people.

God's creation has suffered greatly at the hands of sinful human beings. In Paul's words, "the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only creation, but we ourselves" (Romans 8:22-3). Economic advantages gained at the expense of creation are just as sinful as those gained at the expense of human dignity and worth.

1.3.2. Technological contexts

Along with globalisation has come an increased use of technology and greater access to information. Information technology has both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, people can communicate with each other more freely and immediately, and the ability to store, retrieve, process and disseminate information has increased. People are also able to transcend traditional geographical boundaries of religions. Information technology may also allow the church to reach out to people who are withdrawn from institutional religious communities.

On the negative side, virtual contact may become more important than personal contact. Moreover, information technology runs the risk of increasing the gap between those who do or do not have access to this technology. The wealthy have easier access to technological innovations than the poor, driving a greater wedge between the affluent and poor nations and individuals in the world.

There is a flourishing global market in genetic engineering in animal and plant life. Genetically modified food is creating new dependencies, even though the physiological consequences are not yet known. The genetic patenting of indigenous plants by global agricultural corporations develops and supports the ongoing process of dependency and deprivation of the right to ownership of southern countries.

The exploitation of women as "surrogate mothers" or as ovum-donors is growing. While there is the possibility of sex pre-selection, the practice of female infanticide is increasing.

The ability to do something does not necessarily mean it is right. Scientists exercise significant power in a world that idolises technology, and there is a temptation to abuse this power for military and other aims. As it engages in mission, which gives a glimpse of God's in-breaking reign, the church is faced with making ethical decisions about the value and use of technologies.

1.3.3. Health contexts

Despite advances in scientific knowledge and technology, the world continues to struggle with health issues. The intensity of the struggle, however, differs from one continent to another. Even in the 21st century, the relation between illness and poverty is striking. In many countries in the South, and also in pockets of poverty in affluent countries, the poor are prone to ill health. Illness exacerbates the frail economies of such countries.

Today's world is marked by different physical, mental, psychological, emotional, spiritual, and relational and social illnesses, some of which are acknowledged, while others are kept hidden and are the object of denial. Among these are killer diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, that bring devastation to entire continents. HIV/AIDS has reached pandemic proportions in many countries of the South.

Economic, cultural and other factors have affected the ability of some countries to react appropriately. Although primarily a health issue, it also creates serious social and economic problems, among them an increasing numbers of orphans and the inability of families affected by AIDS to provide for themselves. Women are becoming much more vulnerable and burdened. This crisis constitutes a challenging opportunity for the church in mission, yet, due to the many misconceptions surrounding HIV/AIDS, the church has had trouble talking about it publicly.

In some cases, illness may result in permanent impairment. Disabling conditions, however, are not illnesses. Approximately 10% of the population in any given country suffer from one of the five broad categories of disability: physical disability, blindness, deafness, intellectual impairment and mental illness. They face discrimination when seeking employment. Work places, public buildings and even churches are not always accessible to people with ambulatory problems. Increasingly, churches are making efforts to provide ways for people with disabilities to participate fully in church life and work (e.g. sign language interpretation for the deaf). Working with others in educating society to remove physical obstacles for, stigmatisation and exclusion of people with disabling conditions is an urgent challenge for the church.

1.3.4. Violence in the world

God's mission has always taken place in the midst of a violent world. The crucifixion was an act of violence against God and, indirectly, against humanity and all creation. The mission of the church began in the midst of persecution and violence. Violence, in all its forms, overt or covert, has always been used to gain power over others. It is a potent tool used by those with power or seeking power to control, suppress or enforce change to their benefit. It is sin.

War and conflict: Violence takes the form of war and conflict between nations or within a nation as power struggle to maintain or increase one nation's or faction's control over limited resources and to achieve uncontested superiority over the other. Conventional wars were fought by the military using predetermined rules of engagement. More recently, insurrection-ists, rebels and warlords have engaged in armed conflict. Innocent civilians, especially children and women, are dragged into these conflicts and used as pawns, shields or targets. The use of terror as a forceful means to break the enemy has always accompanied armed conflicts. Today's technological advances make this form of violence even more lethal, physically and psychologically.

War brings untold suffering, disease and poverty to the most vulnerable, women and children and to succeeding generations. It inflicts devastation to infrastructures and the environment. Equally destructive is the covert violence of geo-political and economic warfare imposed on impoverished nations. This occurs when aid is contingent upon adopting various policies, which benefit the giver at the expense of the recipient. The unsolvable debts of the countries in the South, the facilitation of investment across borders to make maximum profit at minimum cost to the detriment of those countries where investments are made are examples of covert violence. Poverty itself is a form of violence, for it robs people of their human dignity, health and well being.

Structural and systemic violence: Violence occurs when social structures are founded on and maintained by privileged groups for their own benefit and power. Patriarchal structures, for instance, do not recognise the rights and equality of women. Migrant groups are exploited and immigrants treated unjustly for ethnic, racial, sexual or religious reasons. Social stratification is another form of social violence. The "untouchables", or those from the lowest social standing in society, are often unjustly excluded. Violent social or political structures, such as

dictatorship, oligarchy or patriarchy, have always resulted in systemic violence. It foments the suppression of human and civil rights, implementation of unjust political policies, or unilateral imposition of regional values, ideologies or economics on others. Gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and even language have provided the basis on which people have been excluded or rendered voiceless. In extreme cases, this can lead to so-called ethnic cleansing or genocide. Throughout history, systemic violence has not been left unchallenged. Counter-violence conflicts, including the use of terror at national and regional levels, have caused long protracted suffering and destruction.

Violence against women, children and the weak: Violence is also the cause of terrible suffering in homes, often directed against women, children, the elderly and the disabled. They are abused physically, sexually and mentally. Battered women are isolated from nurturing, supportive communities in order to exercise greater control over them. Violence may take the form of inequity in salaries and opportunities between men and women, or of "glass ceilings" in the corporate sector. Violence may also take the form of exclusive language that renders silent and nameless half of the world's population. Children may be malnourished or denied education. Violence includes forcing children to fight in wars and into prostitution and child labour.

Violence against the elderly and the ageing occurs when institutions destroy their dignity or sedate them heavily, or when their own children and society abuse them financially, socially, physically or intellectually. The wisdom of the elderly is often rejected or suppressed, their contributions forgotten. The church in mission is called to address this violence in ways that encourage community rather than isolation from community.

Violence in religion and in the church: Religious fanaticism is a sad part of human history. It breeds religious violence that may

be directed inward in attempts to purify and cleanse the church or religious body, or outward, against people of other religions or even other denominations. In one sense, this is violence in its worst form, for it justifies itself in the name of religion and in the name of God. This violence has been practised overtly by fanatic zealots in all religions, and covertly through unhealthy views and understandings of other religions, which directly influence the understanding of mission.

The church is not always the victim of violence, even though that is often the case. The church has also been violent towards its own members. Colonial churches exercised power over developing mission churches, often preventing the younger churches from developing their own leadership and sense of mission. Abuse of power by church authorities has often been the cause of church conflicts. Women have been subtly and obviously excluded from leadership and oversight positions in the church, and their voices silenced or ignored.

Violence seeks to isolate and separate people from their communities and from their sources of nurture and hope. It treats people as less than human. Violence is a sin that attempts to suppress and negate all signs of hope and community in God. The church in mission is called to name and shame this violence and walk with those who seek justice and peace and to ensure human dignity.

1.3.5. *Religious, cultural and political contexts*

In many parts of the world, people are seeking new forms of spirituality to satisfy their spiritual longings. The institutional church no longer offers the spiritual satisfaction they seek. New or rediscovered forms of religion are meeting this need or taking advantage of the search for spirituality. Some have left institutional religions to develop rediscovered cultural

roots, to engage in spiritism or to embrace secularisation.

A new challenge for the church in mission, especially in the North, is to address the context of religious and cultural plurality in its midst. Large-scale migration of people across regions and continents, seeking financial opportunities or fleeing from oppression and violence, has led to an ever-larger diversity of religion and cultures in the major cities of the world. Religious cultures are no longer isolated from each other. Being a missionary to a foreign culture no longer requires travel to the far reaches of the earth, more likely, all it requires is a walk to the neighbours next door. A church in mission is thus involved in dialogue and in daily interaction.

One response to the increasing religious plurality has been a reactionary fundamentalism, with its strong desire for groups to protect themselves from outside influences or to recover a passionate loyalty to an idealised traditional religious belief. While the need to recover or emphasise the fundamentals of one's faith is important, fundamentalism makes them absolutes and imposes them upon everyone in the community. When connected with political and economic power, reactionary fundamentalism can be used to justify opposition or even violence to any outsiders who do not accept these fundamentals in the same way.

History, traditions and rituals shape a people's culture. Various cultures may have different views on what is meant by the wholeness of life or the sacredness of life and the after-life. Some cultures emphasise the individual, others the community. Some may consider salvation primarily in terms of eternal life; others stress salvation in terms of its present benefits. Different cultures have different dietary restrictions or laws. The migration of religious groups, as a result of globalisation, may lead to a clash of cultures when cultural or fundamentalist groups attempt to protect, nourish or even

disseminate a particular culture or religion. Cultures may try to impose uniformity upon society. Cultural conversion is not equivalent to spiritual conversion. Distinguishing between culture and Christianity is crucial, since a missional church affirms cultural plurality and the diverse gifts it brings to the world.

Christians live in different political contexts. On the one hand, there are differences of opinion over whether governments participate in or oppose the mission of God. On the other, people may confuse the reign of God with political power. Good governance makes it tempting to assume that it is blessed by God and that such a system is ordained for all cultures. Every system of governing, however, imposes its contextual and ideological perspectives upon society. The imposition of political ideologies may silence the voices of people, rob them of their dignity, foster systemic violence or lead to global conflicts or war. Bad governance may hinder access to adequate educational, health, security or organisational resources. Yet God's mission takes place in these contexts.

1.4. Context and Theology

Some of the realities of present day contexts, which have implications for the church's mission and theology, have been named. The disciples on the Emmaus road saw their context differently when Jesus opened up the scriptures and revealed himself to them as the resurrected Christ in the breaking of the bread. This enlightenment was necessary for them to make sense of and to address their context in a way that would help and empower them for mission. The church, too, needs to reflect critically on its theology and practice of mission in the light of the Word of God made alive by the Holy Spirit within the contexts.

Context and theology relate to each other in a dialectical and dialogical manner aptly described as a hermeneutical spiral. Theology traces its origin in the hearing of

the Word of God in context followed by faith commitment. The "faith active in love", born of the hearing and working of God's creative Word, expresses itself in *praxis*, that is, an activity that seeks to incarnate the gospel in the life and context of a community. Christian theology is a faithful reflection on God's being and acting in the world and on the praxis of the church and the individual. Theology of mission, more specifically, reflects on God's mission and on the church's response to Christ's gracious call to follow him.

As it reflects on praxis, Christian theology is necessarily contextual, that is, while it addresses the context it is influenced and, to a deeper extent, conditioned by the context. Theology, therefore, needs to be challenged continuously and transformed by the Word of God from scriptures. The disciples on the Emmaus road had their acquired theology about the Christ challenged and transformed by the risen Christ. A theology that is capable of articulating God's mission must be transformed continually by the Word heard in praxis.

Moreover, theology, drawing from a long history and wealth of Christian tradition and confessions, sharpens the church's analysis and naming of the context. Serving the missional church faithfully in the dialectical tension between praxis in context and the creative word of God, theology enables the church to think clearly about its engagements in the world and strengthens the church's understanding of its reason for being.

SECTION 2. THE THEOLOGY OF MISSION

2.0. Introduction

The theme of God's people being sent into the world to herald the breaking in of God's gracious reign into the world runs through the New Testament, although the word "mission" is not found in the scriptures. From the 16th century, due to historical circumstances, mission became attached to conquest, colonialism, cultural and religious imperialism and the implantation of western Christianity across the globe. Today, there are different connotations to the word "mission", there is confusion and, at times, even aversion to the term. It is hoped that discussing the theological grounding of mission, using the hermeneutical spiral approach, will provide some clarity about the different understandings of mission and retrieve it from past abuse.

The Word of God in the scriptures, brought to life in context by the working of the Holy Spirit, is the foundation of church life, mission and theology. Although the different parts of the Scripture do not appear to be uniform, Lutherans, with their tradition, hold to the view that Scripture interprets and explains itself, disclosing what is essential and what is not. What is scripturally essential is the good news that Jesus the Christ is the Saviour and foundation of our faith and the source of all transforming missions.

The mission of the church will continue until the fulfilment of God's reign. According to the witnesses of Scripture, God's reign is eschatological, that is, a reality of end time which is already coming, breaking into lives and contexts in the here and now. In Jesus the Christ, the fullness of God has been revealed (Col. 1:19, 2: 9). With this revelation, God's new heaven and earth (Rev. 21) is breaking into the existing world. Present creation **already** participates in the new creation. A decisive sign of God's reign is the overcoming of death on the cross by

Christ's resurrection that opened up a new future for humanity with God. **The mission of the church is to point to and to participate in this eschatological reality of the in-breaking reign of God.**

The world and human beings, as part of the old creation, however, are still under the sign of the cross and **not yet** fully redeemed. This "already and not yet", as the apostle Paul describes it, is the basic tension of Christians' faith, speaking and daily living and is constitutive of the church's mission contexts. The church participates in God's mission, always pointing to the breaking in of God's reign and anticipating its final fulfilment as the basis for transformation, reconciliation and empowerment.

2.1. The mission of God

Through the ambiguities of life and tribulations of a violent world, the church has learned to trust in the revelation of scriptures that the God of Jesus Christ is a God who is present and acts in love in and for the world. God is in mission. In Jesus, God has come to the "far away country", lived and died together with the lost son in order to bring him home, with all the dignity of God's children (Luke 15: 11-24). The mission of the one loving God is a mission of mercy and grace and not of desert and might. God's grace, overcoming the consequences of sin, that is alienation, death and depravity, extends beyond the individual to all communities, to all creation. All God's creation has been touched by this grace and is, therefore, awaiting transformation (Rom 8:22-23).

This God in mission, who creates and sustains the universe and yet becomes vulnerable in and at the hands of Own creation, is a Triune God. Trinity spells "God in mission" as always a God for others, namely, the whole humankind, the world, the entire creation. The Trinity is a communion in mission, empowering and accompanying the One who is sent, the beloved, to impact the world with life, wholeness and peace. For the ongoing mission of God, the Father and

the Spirit send the Son, the Father and the Son breath in the Spirit and the Son and the Spirit reveal the glory of the Father to the far reaches of the universe. This sending, yet accompanying and empowering the beloved, this reaching out for others and, thus, accepting to be vulnerable in love is characteristic of the Trinity. It is this love that unites the Godhead.

2.1.1. God's mission as creator

The biblical view of God's mission in creation affirms a relationship between God and the world. God created the world out of God's gracious will from nothing. Thus, the world is totally dependent on God who, as the source of all life, sustains, replenishes, transforms and renews life in the world (Ps. 104). Creation belongs to the heart and substance of the gospel for God's limitless love and goodness are manifested in creation.

In love God has also shared God's mission in creation with all people, created in God's own image to be God's co-workers. Human beings, as God's stewards, are accountable to God for the care of creation. This responsibility of the "created co-creator" is intricately connected with human dignity. God in grace also sustains the world by working within human institutions and societies. It is the vocation of those who confess God's name to work in partnership with all people for the realisation of God's purpose of peace and wholeness. This includes work for justice, trust among peoples, freedom from hunger, responsible use of the earth's resources and the proper use of technology for human welfare.

Although humankind and the whole creation (Rom.8) suffer from the powers and consequences of sin, as the context painfully attests, these do not have the final word. The message and reality of creation include also the promise that God will "make all things new" (Rev.21:5). The Trinitarian God, therefore, is calling people to participate in mission in creation, which even now, in the

midst of all evil, anticipates the coming consummation. Forgiveness, healing, transformation, trust, justice and reconciliation are the signs of the future of the world with God. Christians, in their own contexts, can strengthen these encouraging signs in many ways.

2.1.2. God's mission as redeemer

Jesus' life, work, suffering, death and resurrection reveal God's unconditional love for the world God created (Jn. 3:16). The wholeness of mission requires that all the essential Christological aspects be taken into consideration. The life, teaching and ministry of Jesus sets an example to the Christian as to how mission should be done: Jesus' personal "manifesto" in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-20), the sending of the disciples (Matt. 10), his teaching and parables, the status, dignity and importance he gave to women, his healing and feeding the hungry. More importantly, however, God's mission as redeemer is revealed in *the way of the Son*, namely, *the way of incarnation, the way of the cross and the way of resurrection*.

Incarnation offers a model for holistic mission, because, through incarnation, God enters into the totality of human existence. The birth of Jesus means the realisation of the most central promise in God's mission: the sending of the Son into the world to save it. In Jesus, God became human in a particular place, time and culture. He subjected himself to human conditions. He identified himself with people, entering into solidarity with anyone in need. In Jesus, God disclosed the original intention of creation and true humanity.

The way of the cross is God's powerful way of saying NO to sin and injustice and standing for love and justice in spite of persecution and crucifixion. In identifying himself with the suffering of people and bearing their sins on the cross, Jesus Christ penetrated into the deepest darkness of human existence and overcame the power of

death. Christ's death effects salvation, which concerns the whole world: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor. 5: 19). The cross of Christ also reveals God's way of solidarity with the excluded and oppressed, as well as a way of protest against injustice and oppression. In reality, at the depth of every oppression and exclusion, as experienced in context, is the crucified God. However, Christ's crucifixion neither sanctifies unjust suffering nor provides a model for how suffering should be borne. Rather, it is a witness to God's desire that no one should suffer violence.

Christ's *resurrection* is the single event that has deeply transformed the world. Violence, death and the terror that its finality brings no longer have the last word. Resurrection opened a new reality of liberation and hope for humankind and the whole creation. God is reconciled with humankind and creation through Christ's death and resurrection. God also opened up reconciliation between human beings and between humankind and creation. Moreover, Christ's resurrection reveals the true nature of things. Creation itself takes on a new dimension. Every created thing, every moment and event, is pregnant with life-giving potentialities; nothing is allowed to have finality, even would be "dead ends" are transformed into opportunities for mission. The *way of resurrection* is a way of transformation and empowerment.

2.1.3. God's mission as sanctifier

God's mission continues in the world through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God empowered the prophets, descended on Jesus from the beginning of his ministry, indwelt and empowered the first disciples and sent and equipped the nascent church for its witness. In the same way, the Holy Spirit sends and enables all of God's people in every age, irrespective of gender and age, for participation in mission.

Through the gospel, the Holy Spirit calls people to repentance, faith and new life. It is

the Spirit who gathers into one body, a new family, a diversity of humans, breaking the barriers of class, race, gender and culture. It is not the messengers, but the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin and injustice, who arouses faith and who renews God's people for mission, individually and collectively. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the proclaimed Word reaches out and seeks to transform even those far from the reign of God, those who oppose, ignore, or distort the gospel.

The lasting fruits of mission are the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit enables imperfect human efforts to become instruments of God's mission. The Holy Spirit transforms human words proclaiming the Good News, the water of baptism and the bread and wine of the Eucharist into signs of Christ's presence in the church, empowering the church for God's mission. The Holy Spirit equips Christians and the whole church with a diversity of gifts (I Cor. 12, Rom. 12, Eph. 4). Equipped with these spiritual gifts, "charismata", they are able to proclaim the gospel and share the life described by the gospel with all peoples in every place. All of the Spirit's gifts – preaching, teaching, healing, prophecy, administration and others given to women and men – are intended to strengthen the communities of God's gathered people, congregations, for inner growth and for holistic mission. The Spirit makes the church, imperfect though it is, a foretaste of the promised age to come.

2.2. The mission of the church

The Trinity, as a "community of divine sending" has created a space for the church to have a foretaste of the feast to come, namely, to take part in God's mission, to be sent, empowered and accompanied by grace into the end of the earth. Receiving the church, with all its human frailty, into the divine missional communion (I Cor. 1:9) shows the depth of God's love and the extent of God's vulnerability.

The church's participation in God's mission, therefore, is a gift of God's grace, a gift grounded on and flowing from the reign of God in the world. Created out of grace in the outpouring of God's love, the church does not live for its own self but for God and for the world. "Predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son" (Rom. 8:29), the church responds to its missional calling, trusting in Jesus' word, "Who believes in me will do the works that I do; and greater works than these will they do, because I go to the Father" (Jn.14: 12).

Thus, the mission of the church is of the gospel, not of the law, for God's redeeming grace has set the church free from a compulsive pursuit of success and results for its own sake. The success of mission cannot be measured principally with human expectations and reasons. As the church follows its Lord faithfully, its mission also reflects the vulnerability of unconditional love shown on the cross of Christ. In God's mission human defeat often turns to victory, for Christ's power is made perfect in weakness (II Cor. 12:9).

2.2.1. Mission is of the being of the church

The church is God's own people created to declare the wonderful deeds of the One who called them out of darkness into God's marvellous light (I Peter 2:9). The reason for being of the church is to participate in God's mission. Thus, mission is of the very being of the church. To be in mission is not optional for the church. Mission is constitutive of its being as the "One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic" Church (Nicene Creed).

2.2.1.1. Mission and the one, holy and apostolic church

The church as the "body of Christ" is **one** and it participates in the one mission of the triune God. Due to human weakness, the church has not yet realised in time the oneness it confesses to be, but has tried over the centuries to approximate it by endeavouring to engage in mission in "unity

in diversity". Christians have always confessed that the disunity of the church is detrimental to its witness to the love of God. Christ's high priestly prayer that "they all may be one ... that the world may believe..." (Jn 17:21) has also become a prayer of the church as it longs for the day when it will be the **one** "body of Christ". The unity of the church is one of the purposes of mission. For the different churches, participating together in God's mission in ecumenical joint ventures is a way to experience unity, strengthening thus their effort in ecumenical dialogues.

The church is "**holy**" because it is a communion that God loves and sanctifies by setting it apart for mission. The church's holiness, therefore, is not in its "otherness" vis-à-vis the world, but expressed precisely in its being in the world, participating in God's mission through its being, presence and acts in a violent and wounded world. As the church points to the grace and love of the holy one in the midst of the self-destroying world, there is a deep sense of longing for and expectation of holiness. The church in its mission points to the sacredness of life and of all God's creation and, in its presence witnesses, even without words, to the dignity and sanctity of sustained creation.

The church in mission is **apostolic** in that it is empowered, sent and accompanied into mission by the "divine community of sending". The apostolicity of the church has to do primarily with being sent with a message of good news to the world. It also reflects the fundamental nature of the church as being sent. Apostolicity refers less to church hierarchy and authorities than to the apostolic faith active in mission through women and men. Sending, however, does not necessarily imply going to far away countries or cultures, even though cross-cultural witnessing is an essential part of sending. In today's globalised world, the "ends of the earth" are often close to home.

2.2.1.2. Mission and the catholicity of the church

The catholicity of the church, understood from the perspective of mission, refers generally to the geographic spread of the Christian faith throughout the world and the presence of the church in every locality among countless cultures and subcultures within one world. The Christian faith, like leaven, not only permeates the whole dough, but also transforms it. The emphasis, however, is more on the qualitative universality of faith and its incarnational implantation into every culture, rather than the quantitative spread of the church. This qualitative universality encompasses believers of all times - God's people of past generations, of today, and of years to come. The catholicity of the church is also a reminder that all of God's creation will one day be united and renewed in Christ.

The Christian faith, with its universality profiles, is also culturally bound. Faith is by nature incarnational, firmly committed to a time, a place and a culture. As local congregations endeavour to engage in mission, they must seek the balance between locality and universality, for universality and particularity are inseparably connected with each other. Without the universal communion of faith, each local church is unable to find a genuine self-understanding in the local context. For the church in mission, therefore, catholicity or universality without contextuality leads to imperialism, and contextuality without catholicity leads to provincialism.

2.2.1.3. Mission and the church as communion and ecumenical fellowship

The reality of the communion of churches is rooted in the communion of the triune God through Christ (I Cor. 1: 9). Communion, therefore, is not a strategic association or alliance for practical purposes that could be abandoned if proven not beneficial. It is a

reality reflecting the identity of the church as one sharing in God's very being.

Used ecclesologically, the term "communion" expresses three levels of church relations: first, the unity of the church across all times and space; second, the nature of life together in the local church; and third, the relationship between local churches in a regional and global context. Understanding the church as communion has direct implications for the understanding and practice of mission. On the one hand, engaging in mission as communion brings a qualitative difference to mission. Since the mission of the church is not for its own glorification, churches of the same tradition in different regions and of different traditions in the same region can join their efforts in a common mission venture. Communion that maintains the spirit of unity expresses itself in humble commitment, respect for one another, forbearance, patience and love. The tendency to compete for mission fields or turfs in different parts of the world, in the race to expand the profile and sphere of influence of one's own denomination or organisation should be replaced by co-operation and joint action. Competition and the idea of "conquest" jeopardise God's mission.

On the other hand, sharing in joint mission ventures in different parts of the world strengthens the communion of churches. Partnership in mission expressed in commitment with one another and in the sharing of mission resources, be they spiritual, human, material or financial removes any sense of superiority, isolation, opportunism and suspicion. Churches that do mission together are apt to maintain the spirit of unity, mutuality, learning and sharing from one another and to experience the blessing of life in communion.

The vision and practice of communion can help the church greatly to address the prevalent fragmentation and division in communities and bring healing to a world broken by greed and violence. As members

one of another (Rom.12: 5), church members are called 'to build up each other' (I Thess.5: 11) and 'love one another with mutual affection' (Rom.12:10). Thus, the church as communion can invite communities to share responsibility and to promote a just society.

2.2.2. Mission is Word-empowered and Spirit-led

The church is the creation of God's dynamic Word (*creatura verbi*). It is sustained, inspired and empowered by the Word for mission. God's Word sustains the life of faith through the ambiguities and temptations of the ever-changing contexts of the church. It also equips God's people for every good work (II Tim 3:16) and, thus, enables it to address the needs of specific contexts. The Word creates in the church both the will and the insights to participate in God's in breaking reign.

The Sacraments as "visible Word" are also related inseparably to mission and its goals and praxes. In baptism, the Christian Church has found the promise of unconditional grace, forgiveness and a new life in Christ, a life of discipleship. Baptismal grace nurtures this life of discipleship throughout a Christian's lifelong journey of "faith active in love". In baptism, believers are called to communion with the Trinity in mission and, by the same calling, are sent and accompanied by the Holy Spirit into the world with a message of love. Baptism is an ordination to mission, in which each member of the church has his/her own vocation and task.

Mission spirituality can also be found in the Eucharist, in which Christ himself is present with the church in and with the bread and wine, giving his body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, sharing his life with the world. As a "sacrament of presence" pointing to the reality of God's gracious reign in the world, the Eucharist provides the basis for mission as transformation, reconciliation and empowerment. It is also an effective sign that brings unity, one that transcends all human

boundaries, be they racial, linguistic, national, gender or social. The Eucharist brings God's eschatological reality into the life of the church, empowering it for mission and giving the world a foretaste of the coming consummation (I Cor.11: 26).

Mission is Spirit-led: The Holy Spirit awakens, inspires and guides Christ's followers to bear witness to Christ and to God's unconditional love. The Spirit revives and renews continuously the church for mission. Spiritual renewal is a gift of the visitation of the Holy Spirit. Church renewal may take the form of creative worship and liturgical, structural, missiological and charismatic renewal, all of which are the working of the Holy Spirit using different gifts for different purposes. Although renewal can be imitated, its authenticity is attested to by its fruits in holistic mission.

Led by the Spirit and endowed with diverse gifts, the whole church is charismatic. A charismatic church uses all the gifts of the Spirit for mission: proclamation of the gospel, deliverance from evil powers, prayer for healing, community building, service and advocacy. Charismatic renewal underscores the fact that the Christian faith concerns the whole human being, emotion, reason, will and passion. This explains the fact that charismatic movements in churches account for their rapid growth and expansion. Mission is experiential. It is necessary, therefore, for churches to study, analyse and learn from charismatic phenomena, with their positive and negative consequences, in order for them to serve more faithfully in God's mission.

2.2.3. Mission is holistic and contextual

The church in mission understands its participation in God's mission as contextual, addressing faithfully the challenges of ever changing and complex contexts and, thus, comprehensive and holistic. Mission is **holistic and contextual** with regard to its aim, practice and location. Its aim

encompasses the whole of creation (ecological concerns), the whole of life (social, political, economic and cultural) and the whole human being, i.e. all people and the whole person (spiritual, mental, relational, physical, environmental needs) and interpersonal. Its practice calls for the participation of the whole church, women and men, young and old. Being holistic, mission flows from the being of the church as worshipping, messenger, serving, healing and oikumene community. As such a community, the church seeks justice through advocacy, effects transformation through empowerment and works for peace and reconciliation. Given the catholicity of the church, mission happens in all places, wherever the church is, and in all times to all generations. Thus, every church is responsible for mission tasks in its locality, but should also be prepared to co-operate with others in different localities when called to partnership, and to engage in joint mission ventures in places where “no one has gone before”.

As the church engages in mission holistically and contextually, it is faced with dialectically inter-related missiological issues that require clarification. Clarification of issues such as proclamation and service, justification and justice, salvation and healing and mission and interfaith dialogue will help greatly in the church’s understanding and practice of holistic mission.

2.2.3.1. Proclamation and service

The church’s holistic mission encompasses proclamation and service. The gospel is primarily the good news of God’s gracious justification of the sinner through faith in Jesus Christ. As a living, creative word of God, the gospel is to be verbalised and articulated in a language understandable to people in their contexts and time. Evangelism focuses on making sure that the gospel is proclaimed to all people by the whole church and that the good news addresses the contexts concretely and relevantly. The

church and individual Christians proclaim the gospel by word and bear witness to it by the way they live in every situation. There has to be a coherence of living and speaking, of word and deed. Proclaiming and witnessing belong together inseparably as participation in God’s transforming mission in the world. Word without deed can be abstract and powerless, and deed without word can be dumb and open for any interpretation.

With regard to service (diakonia) as an integral part of mission, however, one should be mindful of two theological aspects of the issue. On the one hand, any Christian – individual or organisation-- engaged in humanitarian assistance, or acting for peace, justice and integrity of creation, for instance, should be prepared and willing to name, when asked, the root of such activities, namely one’s faith in the gospel. On the other hand, in special cases, like emergency situations, the church needs to follow a kenotic approach in serving those in need, being mindful not to use people’s vulnerability to impose religious beliefs on them.

Furthermore, there may be times and places in the world where oral proclamation of the gospel would not be possible and the only way of witnessing is a wordless service rooted in prayer. This wordless service may have many faces, like humanitarian assistance, charitable work, or struggling for social and political transformation. In such circumstances, to be a Christian could mean to suffer in the way of the cross and may lead eventually to martyrdom.

2.2.3.2. Justification and justice

God’s justification of the sinner by grace transcends all human concepts and systems of justice based on the law of merits, retribution, distribution, reparation, and retaliation. Justification by grace does not focus on what the sinner has done or promises to do, but on what God offers. What God offers is an invitation, signed with

the blood of Christ, to life in communion with God. It is God's gracious invitation that justifies humankind's being in this life and it is also God's unmerited invitation that justifies the faithful's belonging to God's household. To be in communion with God is to belong to the missional Trinity.

Justification by grace, therefore, is liberating and creative. It liberates human beings from constant preoccupation about self-justification, self worth and achievements and creates for them new beginnings and possibilities for life in abundance. God's liberating and creative justice is also at work in God's mighty acts in history, when the afflicted receive encouragement, the captives are released and the oppressed are set free. This liberation initiates the rebirth of life in community where solidarity, reconciliation and justice can blossom (Is. 61: 1-7).

The church's engagement in advocating for and working towards the establishment of justice flows from God's liberating and creative justice at work in God's mission, in which the missional church participates. As God's grace creates the space for liberating justice to unfold, the church is called to discern the form in which justice will take shape in society. The church needs to reflect prayerfully on the kind of justice that would bring transformation, reconciliation and empowerment in and for society. Faith in the God who justifies by grace inspires and energises the missional church "to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with God" (Micah 6: 8).

2.2.3.3. *Salvation and healing*

God's Mission in the world includes the experience of healing in the context of community life, as well as the spiritual reality of salvation through the redeeming presence of Christ in the life of the Christian community, both corporately and individually. Salvation as the eschatological promise that one day God will be all in all remains in constant tension with the harsh

reality of life and its longing for healing. Healing encompasses questions pertaining to health and sickness, and medical, psychiatric, emotional and spiritual treatment and cure. For Christians of all denominations healing is a basic theological theme as it plays a significant role in spiritual life. The existence of disease and the fact that not every sick person among Christians receives healing raise questions about the relation of healing to salvation in Jesus Christ.

According to scriptures, God is the source of all healing. In the Old Testament, healing and salvation are interrelated and in many instances mean the same thing: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved" (Jer. 17: 14). The New Testament, however, does not equate being cured from an ailment with being saved. The New Testament also makes a distinction between cure and healing. Some may be cured but not healed (Lk. 17: 15-19), while others are not cured but healed (II Cor. 12: 7-9). Cure denotes restoring lost health and, thus, carries a protological view. Healing, on the other hand, refers to the eschatological reality of abundant life that breaks in through the event of Jesus Christ, the wounded healer, who participates in all aspects of human suffering, dying and living, and overcomes violation, suffering and death by his resurrection. In this sense, healing and salvation point to the same eschatological reality.

2.2.3.4. *Mission and interfaith dialogue*

To differing degrees, churches have engaged in dialogue with people of diverse faiths and convictions. The relevance and aims of such dialogues in relation to the mission of the church have been a much-debated theme in theological discourse. Questions have been raised whether dialogue would replace mission outreach, or serve as a preliminary step for mission, or again be an integral part of the comprehensive mission of the church.

On the one hand, interfaith dialogue, as the search for peace and co-operation in society, for mutual understanding and for the truth, is an integral part of the mission of the church. As the church is called and sent to bring transformation, healing and reconciliation in society, working with different groups of people to achieve peace and co-operate for the establishment of justice pertains to its mission. Inter-religious dialogue, for instance, is an effective instrument to diffuse religious tensions and to identify ways for the multi-religious community to tackle together the problems of poverty, discrimination, violence and development in general.

On the other hand, Christianity, like Islam and other religions, is a missionary religion. Sharing its faith with others is basic to its identity. Jesus has blessed and commanded his disciples to make disciples of all nations. Christ offers salvation and healing to all humankind by faith alone without human merits. This uniqueness of Christ is foundational to the church's mission. Coming to a positive understanding of the nature of missionary religions, and how to accommodate their need to propagate, can be a major theme in interfaith dialogues. However, interfaith dialogue should not aim at converting dialogue partners.

For the church, a Trinitarian approach may provide the possibility of underlining the uniqueness of Christ, while at the same time confessing to the Holy Spirit's influence also outside the church and God's work in creation and also in other religions. Partners in dialogue should come to a high level of mutual understanding and, thus, exercise mutual respect that allows the practice of witnessing one's faith in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society.

2.3. Theological dimensions of mission

As the church participates in God's mission, empowered by the Word and led by the Spirit in the way of Christ, it engages faithfully and purposefully the challenging contexts of the

21st century. Engaging prayerfully the challenges of its context and pondering anew the different components of its mission, the church must deepen its theological reflection on some overarching mission dimensions that could strengthen it in carrying out its contextual mission. This document has focused on three dimensions of mission: *Transformation*, *Reconciliation* and *Empowerment*. These dimensions of mission are reflected in God's mission as creator, redeemer and sanctifier and enhanced in the missiological understanding of the threefold way of Christ, the way of *incarnation*, *the cross* and *resurrection*. These mission dimensions permeate all mission endeavours (e.g. proclamation, service and advocacy for justice) and provide criteria by which the church judges its faithfulness in mission before Christ, who has sent it into the world.

2.3.1 Transformation

Scriptures speak of transformation as an ongoing process of total reorientation of life with all its aspirations, ideologies, structures and values. Transformation is a continuous process of rejection of that which dehumanises and desecrates life and adherence to that which affirms the sanctity of life, gifts in every one and promotes peace and justice in society. This comes from the knowledge of the gracious will of God, who calls and empowers people, through the Holy Spirit, to be conformed to the image of God's Son, offering the self as instrument of righteousness (Rom.12:2, 6:13, 8: 29, I Pet. 1:14, Eph. 4:23, 5:10,17, II Cor. 3:18, Col. 1:9).

Different sectors of society have worked energetically for change and progress, based on the insatiable human need for self-improvement and gain. Such process of change, though laudable and at times useful, should not be confused with transformation, which from the perspective of the mission of the church, is primarily God' work in the midst of creation. Transformation, perceived in the light of Christ's resurrection, is the unfolding of the potential life-giving nature

of all creation. It is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to effect transformation in and through the church to the whole world. Living with expectation in the “already and not yet” of God’s redemption, the church must guard itself from a triumphalistic view of transformation and instead should accept it in faith with its ambiguities and uncertainties.

The Holy Spirit leads and empowers the church into a mission of transformation in the world, - and not into a mission of “other-worldly” transmigration - following the threefold way of Christ. Following Christ in the way of incarnation, the church enters deep into the contexts, identifying itself fully with the plight of the victims of injustice, exploitation and exclusion in society. It stands in solidarity with those impoverished and dehumanised by neo-liberal economic globalisation and, thus, becomes the church of the poor. As it renounces and denounces unjust and violent practices and structures in public and domestic spheres as sinful and destructive to life in society, the church walks with Christ in the way of the cross. Mission as proclamation, service and advocacy must be carried out under the sign of the cross, not as an opiate for the victimised, but to strengthen solidarity and hope. Following Christ in the way of resurrection, the church, witnessing to the gospel through word, presence and deed, does not let political and social oppression and economic “dead ends” have the last word. Through its mission as diakonia, which is not a mere token of faith, but purposefully aiming at sustainable community for all, the church is led by the Spirit to “make way out of no way”.

The church’s mission in transformation, therefore, encompasses both individuals and structures and relations in societies. As it walks in the way of Christ in the midst of a broken and violent world, the church itself undergoes deep and often painful transformation. Seen from the way of Christ, transformation is not always experienced as a glorious or joyous event. Liberation as well as reconciliation, for instance, may require

the painful experience of giving up power and privileges. As transformation necessitates “swimming against the tide” it may imply making sacrifices, enduring persecution or even facing martyrdom.

2.3.2. Reconciliation

Scriptures clearly state that one of the aims of God’s mission is reconciliation: “*God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself ... and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation*” (II Cor. 5: 19). The church in mission participates in God’s reconciling mission as God’s ambassador, beseeching people on behalf of Christ to be reconciled with God. This is a foundational aspect of reconciliation, namely, restoring the relationship between God and human beings. Through proclamation and witness through Christian living and diakonia individuals are brought to repentance and faith and rejoice in being accepted into God’s communion of the “sent”. The grace of this unmerited and unhoped-for reconciliation makes it possible to extend reconciliation to all other human relations: within a family, with other groups, in society and between nations. As an ambassador of reconciliation, a peacemaker, the church’s mission tasks include mediation, restoration of peaceful co-existence and building and sustaining relations. To assume this responsibility for reconciliation, the church takes its inspiration from following Christ’s three-fold way. Walking the way of the cross, the church takes upon itself the pains of the suffering of the victims and the arrogance of the perpetrators in order to make room for peace and reconciliation. God’s reconciling power is made perfect in the vulnerability or foolishness of the mission of the church.

The church’s mission of reconciliation extends also to the international sphere. In the 21st century many countries are still living with the legacy of previous centuries’ oppression and injustices. Presently, countries that struggled under colonialism are suffering again from the poverty-inducing

neo-liberal economy peddled by economic globalisation. Such death-dealing structures and systems should not have the last word in a world where God has broken the finality of death. The mission of the church, in the way of resurrection, is to make liberation and reconciliation possible for both the oppressed and the oppressors. The two movements have to go together. For liberation without due consideration to eventual reconciliation is self-defeating, and reconciliation without liberation is unrealistic and ideological. Reconciliation and liberation require the implementation of restorative justice at the national and international levels, to allow victims of oppression and injustice to regain their human dignity. Through this liberating reconciliation and reconciling liberation the church initiates a process of transformation, anticipating the final reconciliation of all things in God's eschatological reign.

2.3.3. Empowerment

Speaking of empowerment in mission reflects the word of Jesus: *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses ...to the end of the earth"* (Acts 1: 8). Empowerment refers here primarily to God sharing power (*dynamis*) with people for participation in God's mission. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to resist misusing power as "power over" others and to walk in the way of Christ where power is shared with all. The church is thus empowered to speak of God's unconditional love in a world where hatred abounds, to speak of justification by grace in a world where all seem to be measured by the merits of their market value, and to speak of hope in the midst of untold violent suffering and despair.

As a consequence of divine empowerment, the church in mission also experiences the grace of sharing empowerment among all people. In the church, every baptised believer is endowed with a special gift for mission, for mutual up-building and encouragement. Whether they are male or female, lay or clergy, young or old, all their gifts are to be

developed, appreciated and availed. The church is not a divide between the powerless and those with power and able to empower others. Rather, as the church walks the way of Christ, it benefits from the mutual empowerment of its members, an empowerment flowing from the presence of the empowering triune God in its midst.

God's empowerment extends also to society at large through the mission activities of the church as one of God's empowering instruments in the world. Through its service and charitable work, the church provides help for the immediate needs of people in distress (e.g. refugees, displaced persons, victims of natural disasters). However, the church is called to go beyond a "hand out" or charity ministry to a mission of empowerment. The church seeks ways to assist those in need, regardless of their origin or creed, to regain their human dignity by being in control of their own lives.

2.4. Theology, context and practice

Mission as accompaniment needs a theology that is reflective of and developed in the context of the missional church. Such contextual mission theology must also reflect on the praxis of the church. Mission theology, using the hermeneutical spiral, already refers to and draws from the practice of mission.

Moving to the third section, the aim is to look at the practice of mission as an indication of how the missional church lives out its calling to participate in God's mission. Mission flows from its being as a witnessing, missional church. The purpose of the third section, therefore, is not to provide a prescription for mission practices for all situations, or to enumerate the various mission tasks that the church must perform. This section aims at indicating general directions and impulses of mission practices that, hopefully, will initiate creative discussions and inspire imaginative programs and projects among churches and their related agencies.

SECTION 3. THE PRACTICE OF MISSION

3.1. The whole church in mission

The church understands mission as a faithful expression of its calling, namely to point to and participate in God's in-breaking reign in Christ Jesus. The mission of the church, in its different forms and aspects, aims at transformation, reconciliation and empowerment in and of the world. Mission is God's gift to every baptised person, as well as to the whole church: from the congregation to the national church to the world-wide communion of churches. On the one hand, the whole church, i.e. every member, participates in mission, for mission is not the prerogative of a few professionals or a few wealthy congregations and churches. Mission by proxy is a foreign concept in the mission of God. On the other hand, mission is the calling of the whole church, not only individuals, and thus is the responsibility of and done in common by the whole household of God, the communion of the sent.

Engaging in mission from the perspective of the *communion of the sent (and also of the saints)* leads the church to faithful *martyria* as it stands together in all places at all times in common witness. As the church practices mission as a communion, and not only as isolated individual congregations or churches, solidarity and partnership in mission will develop and competition and wasteful duplications will cease. Lutheran churches, for instance, when participating in God's mission as a communion of Lutheran churches, will reap the blessings of shared mission resources. The mission endeavour itself will benefit from the wealth of experience gleaned from around the world and from different generations of Christians.

Since mission must be contextual for the faith to be rooted in people's real life

experience, every church assumes primary responsibility for mission in its immediate locality and region. However, because of the apostolicity and catholicity of the church, proximity does not mean ownership. Mission remains God's mission and Christians from different parts of the world may receive a call to share mission responsibility with another church. Given the increasing complexity of today's contexts of mission, partnership in mission is more crucial than ever before. New models of partnership that promote equal participation and sharing of responsibility are being experimented. Churches in North and South are now talking about accompaniment in mission. As the word accompaniment comes from companion, which means "sharing bread together", companion churches in mission share all their resources and, thus, share in the pains, hopes and joys of one another. As in the Emmaus story, companions share the journey together with all the concerns, pains and hopes that each one brings. The resurrected Christ, who joins the journey, makes the companionship empowering and transforming for the church and the world.

3.2. The missional church in action

For the missional church, mission is not so much what the church does, but rather the church at work. Word-empowered and Spirit-led, the missional church knows that mission is of its being, that it flows from its being a worshipping, messenger, serving, healing and oikumene community. Mission flows from the nature of the church as a witnessing community.

3.2.1. A witnessing community

The church, as a witnessing community, points to the in-breaking of God's reign in the world, using the spiritual gifts (*charismata*) that the Holy Spirit has generously bestowed upon it. According to I Corinthians 12, the church is gifted with spiritual gifts for the strengthening of the communion/fellowship (*Koinonia*), for the

proclamation of the gospel (*Kerygma*) and for service and healing (*Diakonia*). A church in mission is a gifted (*charismatic*) church for mission.

3.2.1.1. As a *worshipping community*, the church points to the reality and presence of God's gracious reign, which calls together and sustains, through Word and Sacraments, a faithful community of forgiven sinners. The worshipping community also points to the coming future with God, an eschatological reality that is coming towards the present. Thus, the church prays for and expects that God's new reality breaks forth in its worship. Because of what it is and what it expects, the church is empowered through worship for transforming mission in the world.

3.2.1.2. As a *nurturing community*, the church sees itself as a learning community and learning in community. The nurturing of God's people for mission is an important dimension of the mission of the church. Equipping the whole church for mission (Eph. 4:11-12) includes **Christian education and theological education**. On the one hand, Christian education provides accompaniment for a lifelong journey of faith. In the LWF, for instance, Christian Education is understood missiologically as "going deep in order to go wide" and as "teach to reach". On the other hand, theological education is fundamental in ensuring the continuity of holistic and prophetic ministries that strengthen the church's mission of reconciliation. Recent missiological awakening among theological seminaries and Bible schools has caused a shift in curriculum, no longer considering mission as an elective course but as an integral part of all core courses.

For the worshipping and nurturing community, **prayer** is at the centre of all that it does. Prayer is the medium through which the church places its trust in the "calling, sending and accompanying" God, a trust constantly renewed and strengthened by an ever deepened sense of mission spirituality. Prayer, however, is also the medium through

which God brings transformation, reconciliation, empowerment and healing into the world (Matt. 21: 22; John 14: 12-14; 15: 16). A church in mission, indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit, is a praying church.

3.2.1.3. The church in mission is a *messenger community*. The apostolicity of the church is based primarily on the fact that it is a messenger community, God's "*chosen people, ... [to] proclaim the mighty acts of him who called [them] out of darkness into his marvellous light*" (I Peter 2:9). The church in mission is apostolic, not only because it delivers the message entrusted to it, but also because it is faithful to the integrity of the message. The message is centred on God's reconciliation and salvation in Jesus Christ and, thus, also points to God's gracious act of transformation of the whole person and of all people in all places at all times. While announcing the in-breaking of God's reign, the message is also prophetically denouncing oppressive, hierarchical and patriarchal structures and destructive violent systems, as well as sinful interpersonal relations.

The messenger community understands that the message of the breaking in of God's gracious reign can be conveyed in different ways: in verbal proclamation, by living the call to be a good neighbour, through *diaconal* services and advocacy for justice and peace. In the past, many churches had a rather restricted definition of mission as basically **evangelism**, an encounter of unbelief and faith. While proclamation or evangelisation is at the core of mission, it is not the whole of mission. Since the 1970s, churches, especially from the South, understand mission in a more holistic and comprehensive way. The messenger community bears witness to the Good News in word and deed, making the life promised by the gospel concrete in the experience of people in their own contexts, affording opportunities for the wider community to also share in God's gracious invitation to the "wedding feast" (Matt. 22:1-12).

The messenger community knows of different ways of inviting people to the feast, a gracious feast that already takes place in the here and now and yet also tends towards its consummation in the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19: 5-9). Churches thus far have embarked on evangelistic "campaigns", either in a stadium, a tent, on a street corner or moving from village to village. Progress has been made in the use of modern media technology like radio, audio and videocassettes and television. Many churches nowadays are exploring effective use of the Internet for sharing God's message. These communication tools, though effective in reaching wide and secularised audiences, are rather impersonal and tend to emphasise the individual rather than the community. The church is, therefore, challenged to reconsider traditional forms and means of communication.

One still effective approach practised worldwide is the "house church" where the **one on one**, face to face, cross-generational and cross-cultural means of sharing the Good News is practised. This approach is open, flexible and affordable to all messengers, although more and more Christians are reluctant to share their faith openly with others. It is still a very effective way of inviting people to experience the surprising and good news of God's grace experienced and shared together, and thus a way of being the church in community seven days a week.

3.2.1.4. The church in mission is *a serving community* in the image of its Lord who said that he came, "*not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*" (Matt. 20: 28). Mission as service has touched people's lives in different ways in different contexts. On the one hand, churches have been engaged in services such as schools, hospitals, orphanages, and nursing homes. These have been categorised by some as "evangelistic". In spite of the benefits that society at large gained from such services, they have been criticised as being closely linked to proclamation and church nurturing. The church, through its services, bears

witness to the reality of God's in-breaking reign, whether the service is for the community at large or for the church's own nurturing. However, it realises that such service can become paternalistic and proselytising, and should be the object of continuous reflection and discernment.

On the other hand, the serving community is known for its engagement in services (diakonia) aimed primarily at relieving human and/or community needs, effecting transformational processes in structures, as well as in the lives of communities, **without any strings attached** (religious or otherwise). The primary aim is to share with all people, in concrete ways, the abundant life promised by the Gospel without necessarily "vocalising" or verbalising it in any way. Since such services aim at transforming communities and societies, advocating for justice and calling for alternative sustainable communities, they go deeper than charity and thus, are impact-conscious. This unconditional and non-discriminatory diaconal service takes shape usually through the church's development projects: emergency work, humanitarian aid, rehabilitation work after a catastrophe, community development work, and different care activities.

The concept of development is considered by its detractors as incompatible with the mission of the church, as denoting a western political economic theory based on a specific understanding of social relation and using modernist views. The understanding of the meaning and aim of development, however, has now changed drastically. Development has been re-focused to aim at the emancipation of the individual and the transformation and liberation of society, encompassing the social, cultural and spiritual well-being of people. It is no longer focused solely on economic and material wealth. In this understanding, development work, as part of the process of transformation and empowerment, is an integral part of the mission of the church. In many parts of the world, at the grass roots level, the church as a

serving community is recognised to be an effective agent of in-depth social transformation.

3.2.1.5. The church in mission is *a healing community*. From the very beginning, the church has understood its calling and sending to be a healing community as an integral part of its service in community (Matt. 10: 1, 8; Mark 16: 15-18), following in the way of its Master (Acts 4: 30), and itself being a community in the process of healing. Healing takes place at the **personal and societal** levels. The missional church has been endowed with various spiritual gifts for the healing of **persons**. On the one hand, persons are cared for and receive treatment and cure in church medical institutions for physical, mental and even relational ailments. Medical hospitals, clinics and emergency medical help are means through which the church has shown the mission of love and empowerment. One of the challenging tasks of the church in the present day is to address the complex issue of HIV/AIDS. On the other hand, the church also continues the apostolic practice of healing through prayer and laying on of hands. Through this ministry, cure and healing, well-being and wholeness are prayed for, but the emphasis is on wholeness. Thus, the whole person, together with her/his relationships, is addressed, cared for and transformed.

The church also looks at the problems and illnesses of society. As a nurturing, messenger and servant community, the missional church works towards healing the deep wounds and lasting hurts caused by greed for power and materials, prejudice and violence in the world. As we move into the 21st century, many countries still carry in their memories the scars from, shame and resentment of colonialism, ideological conflict, racism and genocide. Atrocities have been committed and suffered, humiliation imposed and endured, resources, both material and human, plundered and lost. People from the sides of both the former victims and victimisers, who share in the same healing community, wish to be relieved

of such painful memories. Healing of memories, removing internalised guilt and the shames of the past and finding paths together between countries, people and churches should be a major challenge for church mission in this decade.

3.2.2. An oikumene community

The church in mission is an *oikumene* community. As it participates in God's mission, the church cares for the world as its "*oikos*", house or home. It is also characteristic of the missional church that though not of this world, it is **in** and **with** the world (John 17:15-18). The mission engagement of the church covers three aspects of the *oikos*: **ecumenical**, **economic** and **ecological**. An expanded understanding and usage of the ecumenical household comes in also as **dialogical engagement**, fruitful dialogue with all people who call the earth their home.

3.2.2.1. Ecumenical engagement

Any church engaged in holistic mission in today's globalised contexts soon realises that mission encompasses the "whole inhabited world" – not only selected areas, and best carried out ecumenically by the whole household of God – beyond denominational demarcations. The inability of churches to achieve unity in diversity or to engage in joint mission ventures has jeopardised the credibility of the church in mission. Likewise, the many conflicts and dissension among churches and between church-related organisations affect negatively the life and witness of the church. Energy, time, and resources are spent in trying to mediate and reconcile dissenting factions, rather than being focused on the well being of the world.

A missional church as an *oikumene* community puts priority on bringing peace, justice, health and abundant life to the "*oikos*". Inspired by the spirit of reconciliation, it engages prophetically the increasing political and social instability and violence in different places in the world.

Both at the national and international levels, churches have courageously offered mediation between conflicting and warring parties. On many occasions, they have called even the most belligerent to the negotiation table and were able to reach peaceful settlements between factions. Thus, it is imperative for the missional church that understanding, solidarity, patience and love are established among the churches. While church unity is one of the aims of mission, ecumenical dialogues between Christian denominations need to have mission at the centre of their focus.

3.2.2.2. A dialogical engagement

An *oikumene* community gives high consideration to people of other religions and convictions that also call this world their home. They are part of the world that God has loved so much as to give his Son to die for it, so that it can be reconciled with God. This reconciliation can take different forms in time. Through different styles of dialogue, the missional church seeks to achieve, among other things, peaceful coexistence among people living in a multi-religious community. Peaceful coexistence in itself is no small achievement, yet inter-religious dialogues also aim to reach beyond peace to understanding and truth.

Interfaith dialogue comes in different forms and at different levels of participation. In Malaysia and other places in Asia, for instance, Christians and Muslims engage in a “dialogue of life”. In the daily life of the community, people accept each other as people of faith and live together and interact with each other in peace. Life is the medium of dialogue. In other places like in Nigeria, and in multicultural cities in the North, Christians and Muslims engage in a dialogue seeking understanding. Understanding of the other side’s religious belief helps build mutual respect and trust, which facilitate cooperation for peace and development in society. Another form of dialogue consists in the search for truth. This involves mostly

scholars and religious leaders. At this level, partners in dialogue should be open, in all objectivity and honesty, to the truth presented by the other with the clear possibility of changing sides if what is presented shakes the foundation of their faith.

Moreover, the church is constantly called to dialogue with different NGOs and civil societies on important issues contributing to the wellbeing of people and relations in society. Transformation, reconciliation and empowerment can and do take place in society through the church’s encounter and dialogue with groups engaged in social, economic and ecological concerns and agendas.

3.2.2.3. Economic engagement

At different times and in different places, the church as an *oikumene* community has raised its prophetic voice to address political and economic situations in the world, especially against oppressive and unjust structures and systems. At the level of the congregation and, simultaneously, at the level of world communions and international ecumenical organisations, churches have strategised together to advocate for the establishment of justice and peace and the eradication of poverty and killer diseases. The *oikumene* community is engaged in mission in a world which can destroy itself many times over and is also capable, but unwilling, to eradicate poverty and hunger for all its population. Thus, the church prays for God’s empowerment and guidance. It also searches for ways to empower the victims of injustice and engages proactively in ways to transform the adverse effects of neo-liberal economic globalisation with various groups of people of good will.

One example of joint ecumenical action is the call for a “globalisation of solidarity”. The call aims at fostering and promoting common strategies in advocating for debt cancellation for impoverished countries, in protecting vulnerable economies from

powerful transnational corporations and in supporting alternative south-south trade agreements. Another example is the effort to nurture a “spirituality of resistance” as an accompaniment to global solidarity. Churches might not always find an effective alternative to perverse neo-liberal economic globalisation, but they can draw on their spiritual heritage to unmask it and denounce its destructive effects. Though it might not be realistic for the *oikumene* community to de-link effectively from this perverse economic system, the church can prayerfully promote resistance to it and solidarity among the exploited. The Emmaus road story provides a powerful paradigm of accompaniment for the church in the journey of economic engagement.

3.2.2.4. Ecological engagement

The *oikumene* community believes strongly in the goodness of God’s creation. It is first and foremost God’s creation and only then received with gratitude as an *oikos* (home) for all people. The first step in the church’s **ecological mission engagement** is that of confession and repentance. For centuries, the church’s otherworldly outlook and its emphasis on human dominion or domination over creation paved the way for over exploitation and destruction of nature. As described earlier in the section on Contexts of Mission, the *oikos* earth is in agony.

The church as a healing community, in every place, needs to look for ways to restore this planet to health for the sake of God’s creation. The world is not primarily a human environment, or simply the stage for the drama of human salvation, but is in and of its own an active participant in God’s mission. In the apostle Paul’s vision, “*creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God*” (Rom.8: 20-21). The church as *oikumene* community, with its world-wide networks like the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, should further and prioritise its participation in the process of rehabilitating the earth and preventing further ecological

destruction. Together with civil societies and voluntary groups concerned about the integrity of the earth, there is an urgent need for the church to raise its prophetic voice in naming and denouncing destructive actions against the *oikos*. Local projects dealing with ecological rehabilitation should be encouraged and supported financially by all partners. Ecological engagement is an urgent mission call for all.

3.3. New challenges and opportunities for mission

The section on *The Context of Mission* describes in vivid terms the challenges and opportunities that the changing contexts of mission present. As the process of globalisation rapidly reaches the different facets of human life with the help of high technology, the market mentality with its attendant consumerism has already conquered all spheres of life. It is tragic that the very things that promote globalisation (e.g. wealth, information technologies and skill) are precisely those which divide the world by excluding the majority. Moreover, it is ironic that in a world of high technology and great abundance of information and knowledge, violence has reached an unprecedented level of intensity, quantity and ubiquity. As the contexts have changed radically, and as mission should always be contextual, there is a need for the missional church to scrutinise, make an inventory and re-shape its mission practices, and aim at making them relevant and effective in and for today’s contexts.

3.3.1. Mission to the “end of the earth”

Jesus promised his disciples that empowered by the Holy Spirit they would be his witnesses even “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). There are very few places on earth, if any, where the gospel of Christ has not been proclaimed, but there are many areas where Christ is no longer recognised as Lord and Saviour. With the shifting of Christianity’s centre of gravity from the North to the South,

the majority of people in what were known as “Christian countries” have become indifferent or even hostile to the church’s witness to the gospel. In countries such as these, there are spheres of life where Jesus Christ is no longer known. The “end of the earth” may not be far geographically, but may offer new challenging opportunities to witness (*martyria*) to the Lord of history.

Since the second half of the 20th century, with the rapid changes in technology and growth of entertainment industries, the church has been removed from the centre of big cities (in the real and metaphorical sense of the term). At the fringes of urban life and businesses, the church has had no significant influence on the life and future of urban communities. In the best of situations, the church has confined its mission to the care of individuals exasperated by urban demands. What new opportunities for mission do cosmopolitan cities with their multi-million inhabitants (e.g. Sao Paulo, New York, London, New Delhi, Nairobi) offer to the church? How can the church regain a meaningful presence in and relevant influence on the life of the city?

The point is not for the church to be in competition with politics, economics and entertainment businesses for a sphere of influence on the life of a city or of a nation. Among the challenging opportunities for the missional church in the first two decades of the 21st century is to accompany communities and nations in “end of the earth” areas and situations and to dare to be the church “where no has gone before”. These are not necessarily “places”, but may be spheres of life or interest groups, or ideologies. For example, one of the common denominators in influencing and changing people’s lives today is high technology. High tech, when rightly used, affords more comfort and helps save lives, but in some cases artificial intelligence may rob people of their human dignity. Research into advanced information technology, genetic manipulation, safe reusable energy sources, and many others, is underway. What would it

take for the missional church to be at the birthing place of technology to make it more humane? Formulating ethical responses to the use of technology is necessary for the church but not sufficient. The mission of church as transformation, reconciliation and empowerment calls for more pro-active accompaniment.

There are challenging opportunities for the church in accompanying people to face the onslaught of thriving, destructive underground businesses, such as trafficking of drugs, arms and women and children, and pornography through the Internet that is pervasive, but privatised and, therefore, hard to contain. More elusive but real are exploitation in professional sports, spiritism, and secret cultic societies (which have a significant influence on international politics), etc. The missional church in every locality/nation is best placed to identify those “end of the earth” areas and to design appropriate mission accompaniments.

3.3.2. Mission and the challenge of information technology (IT)

The rapid changes in the areas of communication and information technologies also influence mission contexts. There is a need for the church to reflect on the new challenging opportunities that such changes bring to people’s lives and to its mission in particular. Information technology (IT), for example, has revolutionised not only the way people communicate with each other, but also the way they think and live and, eventually, their way of being.

Many churches around the world are already using Internet creatively for mission, e.g. use of virtual or cyber-space church as a way to reach unchurched people or creating on line worship services for Internet surfers. The challenge facing the missional church, however, is monumental. Internet and the whole panoply of electronic “toys” (video games, DVD, CD, etc.) are often misused to promote a culture of violence. They also affect deeply the way the users live and think

because of the dependency they create, especially among youth. Moreover, the missional church has to take seriously the challenge that the Internet culture presents to the way theology, theological education and the nurturing of the baptised for discipleship and mission are done. This would constitute a “end of the earth” situation. As theology was once challenged in the North to measure up to philosophical presuppositions and norms, it is now challenged to keep pace with science.

The challenge is not only to make theology survive the Internet culture’s constant filtering of data in search of new, up-dated and marketable information, but also for IT to be a useful tool for sharing the “old” but powerful story of Jesus Christ. The rapid development of information technology has increased the gap between the “haves and the have-nots”; many people in the South are still waiting for their first telephone call or access to a computer. The church needs to address this situation urgently as part of its mission strategies.

3.3.3. Mission resources

The call to mission is good news to the church, hence the church must plan for it carefully. Stewardship of resources for the mission of the church is an important element in mission planning. At all church levels, starting with the congregation, allocation of resources for mission - human, material and financial - should have high priority. Since mission is contextual and is carried out by every church in every place, local congregations play a crucial role in mission, especially in developing resources for mission. A strong stewardship program at the congregational level, aiming at mission resources development, is the basis for reversing the dependency syndrome that has paralysed many churches in debt-ridden countries. The contextual nature of mission calls on every congregation and national church to design mission activities purposefully based on available resources (e.g. human or material), while working for

ways to increase access to other resources (e.g. technological, financial). A contextualised mission endeavour, with a strong sense of stewardship, avoids imported approaches that incur high overheads.

Moreover, as the missional church develops its stewardship program for mission resources, it needs to take a hard look at church structures to determine whether or not they facilitate the mission of the church. Church structures should be flexible and appropriate to the contexts and resource realities of each church and not duplicates of foreign structures. Rigid and top heavy church structures stifle the life and mission of the church in such a way that mission is reduced to only supporting church structures. Many churches in the South still suffer from dependency on overseas subsidies, mainly for structural support.

The practice of mission as a communion of churches calls on churches to be dependent on each other in terms of mission resources, namely, spiritual, human, material and financial resources. Mission resources are primarily God’s gifts, thus all churches are receivers and stewards of these gifts. On the one hand, therefore, interdependency in mission is for mutual empowerment and transformation based on mutual trust and accountability. The aim of this interdependency is not to ensure the well being of the churches, but to strengthen their capacity for and competence in carrying out their mission. On the other hand, many churches in the South are faced with overwhelming challenging opportunities for mission (economic disaster, war, displaced population, famine, etc.) that stretch beyond local and national means. Churches in wealthier countries and their related agencies and mission departments, as stewards of God’s gifts of mission resources, need to rethink of interdependency as an urgent mission challenge today. Engaged in a mission of transformation, reconciliation and empowerment, these churches and their related agencies, when dealing with project applications from poor countries and

churches should challenge and expose the predatory thinking, consumerist language and dehumanising ways of the market economy. They should help build a communion in mission that would be an alternative community, a haven of hope, empowering and supporting the victims of the adverse effects of globalisation in all its expressions.

of the time and to prophesy (point to) the breaking in of God's reign.

3.3.4 Mission pilgrimage

Recently, the practice of pilgrimage has received much interest among churches in Europe and the Nordic countries. Thousands of people, young and old, women and men, have taken time out of their busy schedules to commit themselves to a week of spiritual experience of prayer, scriptural reading, singing and silence (listening). In the past, individuals or small groups of individuals made pilgrimages for their own spiritual needs, and mission was not the primary aim. Nevertheless, churches and people encountered on the way by the pilgrims were also spiritually uplifted.

A revival of pilgrimage as a mission practice could be extremely beneficial for today's churches. It could serve as a practical way for pilgrims to learn, experience and form solidarity; be an effective means to nurture and promote a "spirituality of resistance" as the church faces the onslaught of materialism, secularism and consumerism; and present a great opportunity for mutual spiritual strengthening and witnessing together in word and deed. Mission pilgrimage can be organised at the local, national, regional and global levels, as well as across generation and denomination lines.

The mission pilgrimage concept and practice help highlight a fundamental vision of the church as being in transformation, a nomadic church. The church in mission is a church in pilgrimage. The church moves not only from place to place, but also from the present to the future and from this "age" to God's new aeon. As a nomadic, pilgrim church, it is gifted by the Holy Spirit to discern the signs

Conclusion

The purpose of this document is twofold. First, the document is “*to help Lutheran churches throughout the world become more deeply aware of God’s mission to the world and the role of the church as the body of Christ as a part of that mission*”. Transformation, reconciliation and empowerment aptly describe mission as the church’s participation in the mission of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. They also reflect the characteristics of mission as holistic and contextual, namely, a mission led by the Holy Spirit to walk in the “way of the Son”, the way of Incarnation, the Cross and Resurrection. Mission is the *raison d’être* of the church. It flows from the nature of the church as a witnessing community, a gift of God’s gracious justification for and invitation to mission.

Second, the document is “*to serve as a tool to accompany Lutheran churches in their self-analysis and reaffirmation of mission in their respective contexts*”. For this document to be such a tool, the churches are called to animate the hermeneutical spiral in real mission praxis. In order to reaffirm their mission meaningfully, the churches need to undertake serious analysis of their mission contexts, practices and theology.

The context needs constant scrutiny and naming. The church at every level is called to discern the needs for transformation, reconciliation and empowerment. In doing such analysis, the church will be called to stand with the victims of injustice and violence and thus expose and denounce evil powers and situations that distort and disrupt creation and dehumanise life in society.

The church needs to take a critical look at how mission is practised. Is mission a real praxis of faith, that is, intentionally aimed at effecting transformation, reconciliation and

empowerment in society, or is it simply practice? In the light of this document the church can examine how holistic and contextual its mission practices are. In fact, the church can conduct a mission practice assessment to determine, for instance, whether the whole church is engaged in the whole mission, or the different elements of mission (e.g. proclamation, service, advocacy, care of creation) bring forth transformation, reconciliation and empowerment or whether resources are provided locally for the mission of the church. The church can thus identify new opportunities for mission and the resources and partnership needed to address them effectively.

Finally, this document calls on the church to reaffirm its mission by reflecting ever anew on its mission theology. Theology should empower the church for mission, a mission that points to the reality of and participates in the in-breaking reign of God. Using the Emmaus road story as a model for mission as accompaniment, this document invites Lutheran churches and other churches to engage in a theology that reflects on and draws from their contextual mission experience. Only such a theology could empower churches to unfold their holistic mission as accompaniment to people in every place, in their ever-changing contexts, that is, a transforming, reconciling and empowering mission.

Utkast

Comments from Church of Norway on Mission: Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment An LWF Contribution to the Understanding of Mission (draft February 2003)

Introduction

The Church of Norway has received the draft revised mission document of the LWF with thankful appreciation. The document has been presented for the LWF National Committee, and on the background of a consultation with leaders of mission and diaconal organisations, expert theologians and other interested parties, the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations would like to contribute the following comments for consideration by the editorial committee.

General Remarks

The document, as did the mission document of 1988, has a potential for contributing significantly to the understanding of mission in our church as well as in other LWF churches and the wider ecumenical context. The issues discussed are highly relevant and often contribute valuable new insights. The document is, and should be, not only an exposition of missiological issues, but also inspirational for a wider readership of interested pastors and other members of local congregations.

In particular we commend the methodology that structures the document: Borrowing from liberation theology, the document takes a description of the context for mission as a starting point and develops further theological reflection on this background. This approach adds valuable insights to the debate on mission.

We also appreciate the comprehensive approach to mission, which springs from the understanding of "Missio Dei". An understanding of mission that includes proclamation and evangelization as well as diakonia and advocacy challenges – in a welcome and positive way – traditional discourse and terminology on mission in our church.

On a general note we should also say that we recognise the importance of keeping the document as short as possible, and welcome the fact that the present draft is considerably shorter than earlier versions. This will contribute to its reception in member churches. We do realise that our further suggestions to a certain degree stand in opposition to this comment. It is easier to suggest new insertions than to advise on further reductions.

On this background of thankfulness for the work that has already been done, we venture to draw attention to some issues that we feel would further enhance the value of the document. We will present them as comments first to section 1 and then to sections 2 and 3, and give references to subsections where appropriate. To summarize the concerns, their main thrust is (1) that we find that issues related to inter-church and inter-faith relations should be elaborated further, considering their primary importance in many contexts, (2) that the issue of ecclesiology is insufficiently dealt with, and (3) that the document would be more useful to the Lutheran communion if it engaged Lutheran tradition in more explicit dialogue.

Chapter 1: The Context of Mission

This section gathers together a number of different observations and analyses of the world we live in, all of which we recognise and appreciate. Most of the issues mentioned are negative in character; they are problems that need to be solved. In short: They are expressions of sin.

However, in general, we feel that the chapter could benefit from the inclusion of some more positive observations as well. Our times also show a number of signs of hope. In some fields progress is made, and some changes open up new possibilities for God's mission. Section 1.3.3, for example, could easily be supplemented by descriptions of considerable progress which has been made in the field of medicine and caring. These often benefit the rich, but their wider benefits must not be overlooked. Further, a greater openness for the ambiguity inherent in many developments (globalisation, new technologies) would also add more of a dynamic to the understanding of the many different types of context – and their rapidly changing nature – in which the church lives.

The religious context (1.3.5): As the encounter with other religions and with the religious sensibilities of people must be at the core of a discussion of mission, we strongly feel that this section should be broadened. The discussion in the present text is limited to two issues: 1) fundamentalism and 2) pluralism. Practical consequences of the encounters – both enriching and challenging – deserve further discussion, and a deeper analysis of the various religious traditions that are involved in this encounter seems to be required.

Further, section 1.3.5 (or a new one, relating to the church) ought to include a discussion of the ecumenical situation; the fragmentation of the church in different confessions. This is essential as it has bearings on the effectiveness of the mission of the church, an issue to which we will return later.

Subsection 3.2.1.3 builds on certain observations of church life (for example the assertion that many church members are reluctant to share their faith openly) which could also be dealt with in a new section on the church in chapter 1. We also feel that section 3.3.1 obscures the fact that many people still have not had the chance to respond to the Gospel. Some suggest that this applies to as many as one to two billion people. This also belongs in a description of the context.

A general remark is related to the description of women: We are concerned that though the document repeatedly makes reference to women's concerns, there is still a tendency of depicting women as victims and "others".

As a concluding remark, we would like to comment on the type of issues that are highlighted in the chapter. The great majority of these relate to the social ethical or political field. However, many people seek the church with wounds of a more individual or existential nature. These could be issues of broken relationships, a feeling of not belonging and of low self-esteem, and identity crises in a rapidly changing world. This is the case not least in Western societies. By not including any of these issues, the document risks – unwittingly – to be sending the message to many people in the West that to them the church is only an arena for living out concerns for other more marginalized people. This, indirectly, could reinforce traditional and highly problematic notions of people in the North as helpers and people in

other parts of the world as recipients. It may also be contrary to the conviction that the church's message must be contextual – in all contexts.

Chapter 2: Theology of Mission and chapter 3: Practice of Mission

Following the methodology of the document, according to which theology must spring from an engagement with the context, we recognise the very difficult task undertaken in this chapter: Theology is contextual, and yet we seek to find expressions which are recognisable in very different contexts. We therefore acknowledge that some aspects of this chapter, which we find difficult may be highly meaningful in other contexts, and also that our comments may seem redundant to others.

Ecclesiology

Our foremost concern about this chapter is the absence of reflection on the role of the church in God's mission, in other words we call for a clearer ecclesiology. To stay with the Emmaus story: The story is cut short before its last turn: The disciples, on recognising the risen Christ, return to Jerusalem and the fellowship of the other disciples.

The aim of the church is mission, as is made so clear in the text. But we would also contend that in a certain sense the aim of mission is to build church. The church in mission should invite people to baptism and communion with Christ, in life and in death. Mission and church are mutually dependent. We believe that parts of God's mission may find other vehicles than the church (see below), but God's mission through the church requires a place for healing and communion to take place.

The church can be described in a triumphalist way in which the church and its mission is seen as the solution to all challenges in the world, a view that would undermine our understanding of God as present with the world before the church. On the other hand the church could also be seen as so insignificant and sinful that it is useless in God's mission. That too would be contrary to our teaching. Not least in the Lutheran tradition we have tools that help us to understand the church as both sinful and essential to God's plan for the world (see related issues on the Lutheran tradition below).

Terminology

To navigate through the many issues in the document, a consistent terminology is required. We recognise, as stated earlier, how the document challenges traditional terminology in our context. However, we believe the text would benefit from, implicitly or explicitly, defining some central terms.

The term "mission" seems to be clear as it includes more or less all God's activity in the world, or at least God's activity through the church (see below). The terms "witness" and "proclamation", however, are more loosely defined. We find that "proclamation" is used alternately in a broad sense, as "witness", and in a narrower sense close to "evangelisation" or even "evangelism" (terms that could also be deployed to some effect). In addition to these terms, we would suggest that the term "discipling" be considered to cover some of the same realities as "witnessing", though with a clearer reference to its ecclesiological implications.

"Dialogue" is a central issue in the document. We miss a clear definition, or description, of what is meant by this. It is of the utmost importance that dialogue is not understood in any way as a tool for conversion, though conversion (in any direction) is a possible outcome of

any dialogue. We believe that the Study Book for the Tenth Assembly, in the chapter on the Mission of the Church in Multi-Faith Contexts, has a valuable discussion on this issue which should be reflected.

Exploring the Lutheran tradition

In order that the document be a useful tool for the LWF member churches we believe it ought to contain some more reflection on traditional Lutheran teaching and concepts. A number of the issues dealt with in the text relate to themes that are central in the Lutheran tradition.

One of these is the Kingdom of God, whose “in-breaking” occurs repeatedly in the text. This raises questions as to the relationship of the Kingdom over against God’s presence in the world from creation. To what extent does the Kingdom of God bring something qualitatively new and to what extent is the Kingdom linked to soteriology as different from creation. The latter question leads on to the issue of the possibility of being outside of the Kingdom, by one’s own choice. The model of “in-breaking” as presented in the text, appears to identify the Kingdom of God with God’s presence from creation without much more discussion. We are not in a position to insist on a different model, but we think it would be useful to highlight the issue as a point for discussion in the document.

Likewise we think that traditional Lutheran teaching such as the Law and Gospel distinction and the Two Kingdoms (which maintain that God is active in the world both through the Church and in other ways) could still contribute insights into some of the issues under discussion. We do *not* contend that such teaching should remain unchallenged within the Lutheran communion, and we concede that it can sometimes lead to a lack of dynamism in the church’s interpretation of, for example, the Kingdom of God. However, we find it essential that a document aimed at the Lutheran churches at least is in active dialogue with these core concepts.

Having said that, we also recognise the strengths in the Trinitarian approach of the document, but would still like to see an explicit dialogue with other aspects of Lutheran teaching.

Uniqueness of Christ

We acknowledge that the uniqueness of Christ is a contentious issue in many churches within the Lutheran communion as it is in ours. The document appears to solve tensions by being intentionally unclear (e.g. in 2.2.3.4). We think that the Message of the Tenth Assembly with its reference to the San Antonio and Salvador mission conferences (“we cannot point to any other way to salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time we cannot set limits to the saving power of God”) contains material that could be reflected in a discussion of the issue.

Generally, as we pointed out also in relation to the chapter 1, we think issues of multi faith encounters deserve more attention and deeper reflection in the document. After all, this is a field where changes happen fast and thus a field that is in urgent need of ongoing theological reflection.

Ecumenism

Also referring back to our discussion of chapter 1, we see a need for deeper reflection on ecumenical concerns. The “catholicity” of the church is discussed in 2.2.1.2, but the discussion does not lead to any conclusions as to how Lutheran churches therefore should relate to other Christian churches.

Related to this, and of great importance in ecumenical discussion, is the issue of proselytism. We would think it irresponsible to issue a document on mission which does not reflect the grievances of some churches, particularly Orthodox churches in Eastern Europe, Asia and the Middle East, at some western churches' mission activities.

Following up from this discussion, we also think the document should state more clearly the need for dialogue with the church traditions outside of the so-called "mainline churches". Churches of the neo-pentacostal tradition are fast growing and therefore an important part of the religious context. With their active – sometimes aggressive – missionary zeal they pose a challenge to other ways of understanding the mission of the church. On the one hand this can create problems for Lutheran churches and their ways of going about mission, but on the other we also have to find ways of relating to these groups as long as we confess that we share with them in the faith in Jesus Christ.

Diakonia

We are very appreciative of the way diakonia is seen as at the core of mission (2.2.3.1). The issue re-appears in 3.2.1.4. We think it would be natural and useful to use the term "diakonia" as the key word also in that section, and generally to speak even more boldly of diakonia and its positive content.

Religious freedom

In a discussion on inter faith encounters we would have liked to see more explicit references to religious freedom. Ensuring religious freedom for Christians under oppressive regimes is one issue that should not be overlooked. But it is of equal importance to acknowledge the right of other religions to continue their missionary activities. This would belong in the context of 2.2.3.4.

