



Saksdokumenter:

*One Baptism: Towards mutual Recognition*

Misjonsdokument fra KV: "*Together towards life: Mission and evangelism in changing landscapes*"

Knud Jørgensen og Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen: Rapport fra KVs misjonskonferanse, Manila, mars 2012

Invitation to The annual meeting of Nordic -Baltic Faith and Order, Oslo, September 2012

Berit Hagen Agøy: Rapport fra KVs Working Together- og Round Table-møter i Genève mai 2012 (*ettesendes eller rapporteres muntlig i møtet*)

## Saker i de økumeniske organisasjonene

### Kirkenes Verdensråd (KV)

#### Sammendrag

Mellomkirkelig råd (MKR) får to nye dokumenter fra KV som orientering. Det første er et studiedokument om dåpen. Det andre handler om misjon og er et ledd i forberedelsen fram mot KVs generalforsamling i Busan høsten 2013.

KVs Working Together- og Round Table-møter finner sted 8.-10. mai. Her møtes KVs største givere til felles rådslagning. Fra MKR deltar generalsekretæren. Også Kirkens Nødhjelp er representert på disse møtene.

KVs sentralkomité hvor Kjetil Aano er medlem, møtes neste gang 29.08.- 05.09. d.å. på Kreta. Dette møtet vil være viktig for å sette dagsordenen for generalforsamlingen i 2013. I skrivende stund foreligger ikke agendaen for sentralkomitémøtet, og MKR vil om mulig få en muntlig oppdatering på sitt møte.

MKR er vertskap for et nordisk-baltisk Faith and Order-møte i Oslo 10.- 11.09. d.å. Vedlagt finnes en foreløpig invitasjon til dette møtet.

Også styringsgruppen i EDAN (Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network), hvor rådgiver - funksjonshemmede i kirken, Torill Edøy, er med, vil møtes i Oslo i september.

#### Forslag til vedtak

Mellomkirkelig råd tar saken til orientering.

## Bakgrunn

### 1. Dåpsdokumentet

KVs Troskommisjon (Faith and Order Commission) har gitt ut et nytt studiedokument som heter *Towards One Baptism: Mutual Recognition*. Dokumentet tar utgangspunkt i Efeserbrevet 4,3–5 og en rekke Faith and Order-dokumenter som følger i arven etter det etter hvert godt kjente dokumentet *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM). Dette ble vedtatt i 1982 i Lima. BEM, ofte kalt Lima-dokumentet, er fremdeles et grunnleggende viktig teologisk dokument i økumenisk sammenheng. Etter tre tiår kan knapt noe dokument i ettertid sies å ha hatt samme betydning for arbeidet med kirkenes enhet som BEM.

Dåpen er et av BEMs hovedkapitler og omhandler kirkenes teologiske samtale om dåpen. *Towards One Baptism* følger i samme fotspor og peker på likheter og ulikheter i kirkenes forståelse av dåpen, men tar opp i seg kirkenes respons siden den gang. En kan merke at kirkene har tatt BEM-dokumentet på alvor fordi en ser en utvikling hvor flere kirker enn tidligere anerkjenner hverandres dåpssyn. Samtidig gjenstår store utfordringer.

Teologisk nemnd (TN) har på sitt første møte i en ny mandatperiode hatt dokumentet oppe til diskusjon. TN gjenkjenner at der dåp handler om enhet i Kristus, er det grunnlag for gjensidig anerkjennelse mellom Den norske kirke (Dnk) og mange andre kirker, noe Dnk også praktiserer. Samtidig gjenstår bl.a. noen hovedutfordringer, for eksempel i forhold til baptistenes dåpssyn. Forholdet mellom barnedåp, voksendåp og trosopplæring er viktige områder som diskuteres, og hvor det er behov for teologisk utdyping. TN tar gjerne saken opp til videre behandling i forhold til det MKR ønsker, for eksempel etter behandlingen i det nordisk-baltiske Faith and Order-møtet i september 2012.

KV har ikke sendt dokumentet på vanlig høring. Dokumentet er derfor å betrakte som et studiedokument. TN anser likevel at det er mulig å utgi en uttalelse til KV på bakgrunn av dokumentet.

### 2. Misjonsdokumentet

Det vises til vedlagte rapport fra Knud Jørgensen som deltok på KVs misjonskonferanse i Manila i mars. Konferansen drøftet et nytt dokument om misjon som er ment å legges fram på KVs generalforsamling i 2013.

KVs misjonsdokument er relevant i oppfølgingen av KM-sak 07/12 om misjon og i det videre arbeidet i Samarbeid Menighet og Misjon (SMM).

ONE BAPTISM: TOWARDS MUTUAL RECOGNITION



ONE BAPTISM: TOWARDS MUTUAL RECOGNITION

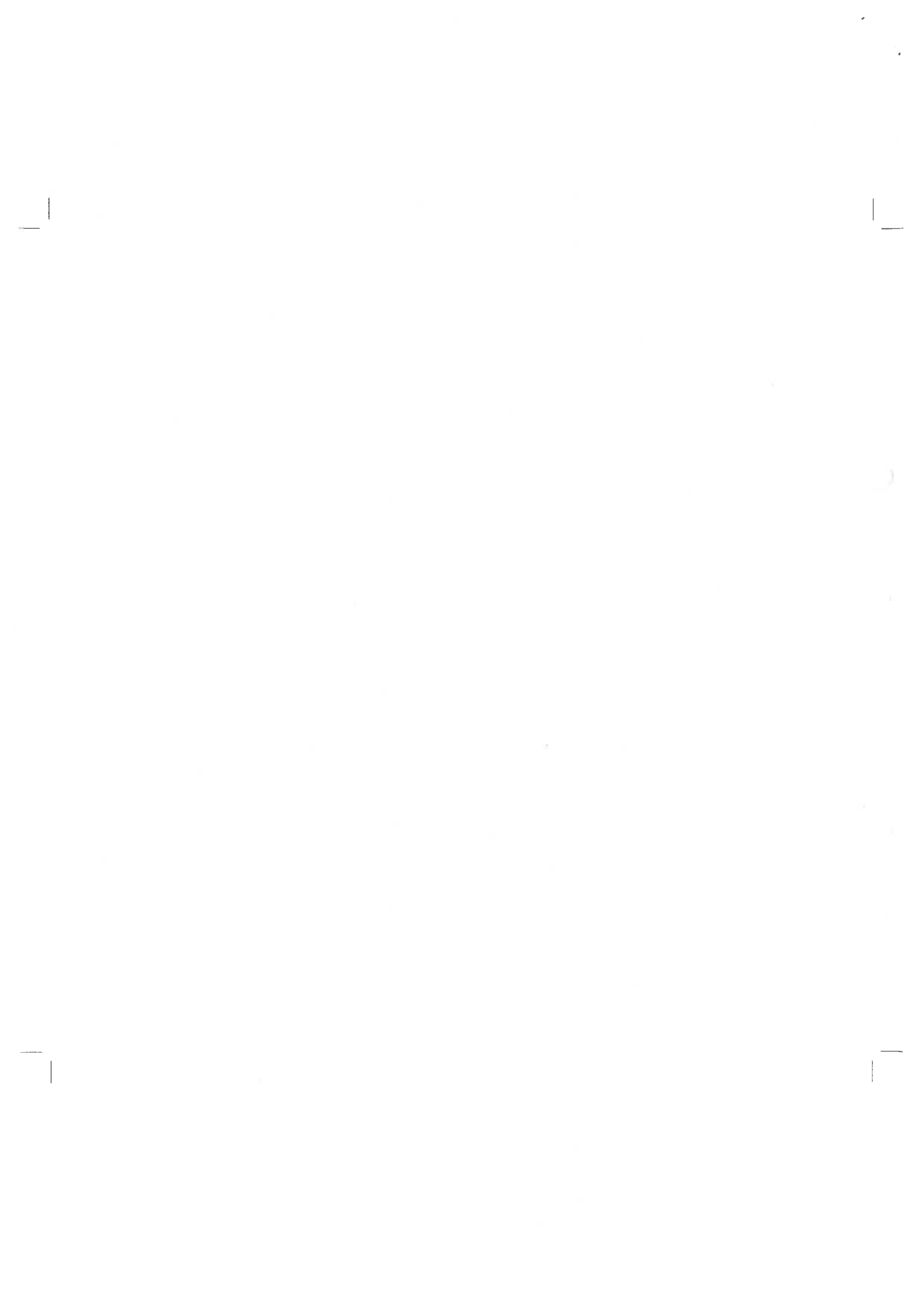
A STUDY TEXT

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# CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	vii
I. Introduction . . . . .	1
<i>A. The goal and perspective of this text</i> . . . . .	1
<i>B. The mutual recognition of baptism: a gift and challenge to the churches</i> . . . . .	2
<i>C. Mutual recognition and discernment</i> . . . . .	3
II. Baptism: symbol and pattern of the new life in Christ . . . . .	5
<i>A. Baptism and scripture</i> . . . . .	5
<i>B. Sacrament and ordinance</i> . . . . .	7
<i>C. The liturgy of baptism</i> . . . . .	8
<i>D. Baptism and life-long growth into Christ</i> . . . . .	9
III. Baptism and the church . . . . .	11
<i>A. Baptism as entry into the church.</i> . . . . .	11
<i>B. Baptism and the eucharist.</i> . . . . .	11
<i>C. Initiation, church membership, and baptism</i> . . . . .	12
IV. Baptism and faith. . . . .	13
<i>A. The faith of the believer and the faith of the church.</i> . . . . .	13
<i>B. The divine invitation and the human response in faith</i> . . . . .	13
V. Further steps for the journey towards mutual recognition: questions for the churches . . . . .	15
<i>A. Common baptismal practice and mutual recognition</i> . . . . .	15
<i>B. Baptism, the churches and the church</i> . . . . .	16
<i>C. Mutual recognition: practical consequences</i> . . . . .	16
<i>D. The renewal of baptismal faith</i> . . . . .	17
<i>E. Eucharistic communion before baptism</i> . . . . .	17
<i>F. Rebaptism.</i> . . . . .	18
<i>G. Baptism and faith</i> . . . . .	18
<i>H. Insurmountable obstacles?</i> . . . . .	19
VI. Conclusion . . . . .	20





## PREFACE

The study text *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* belongs to the biblical vision of Christian unity, "making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the one bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:3-5). The study text finds its place within the long lineage of Faith and Order Papers; more specifically, *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* continues in the direction of the 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. *BEM* affirms: "Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and space."<sup>1</sup> The commentary reflects more cautiously:

The inability of the churches mutually to recognize their various practices of baptism as sharing in the one baptism and their actual dividedness in spite of mutual baptismal recognition, have given dramatic visibility to the broken witness of the Church.... The need to recover baptismal unity is at the heart of the ecumenical task as it is central for the realization of genuine partnership within Christian communities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1982, "Baptism", §6.

<sup>2</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §6, Commentary.

The need for *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* arises from three different but interrelated contexts. The first is the responses to BEM from the churches. Most churches agree with BEM that baptism is the primary and fundamental sacrament of unity.<sup>3</sup> From this widespread response other questions arise. To what extent, for instance, does an emerging consensus within the churches on BEM's teaching on baptism imply a degree of mutual baptismal and ecclesial recognition? The responses on this question reflect a diversity of attitudes towards the recognition of baptism. For some churches, such recognition is relatively straightforward; for others, it is more difficult. What are the implications when Christians can, or cannot, recognise as authentic baptisms celebrated in divided churches? "For indeed, the 'implications' of this recognition are at the very heart of the churches' self-understanding in their search for visible unity."<sup>4</sup>

The second context is the ecumenical baptismal praxis that has emerged since 1982. In different regions and countries around the world today, there are many examples of churches agreeing to recognise one another's baptisms, including the use of a common baptismal certificate. This development may rightly be identified as an instance of the practical or lived reception of *BEM*.

The third context is the ongoing challenges to mutual recognition as well as new issues that equally impede recognition which can, in fact, reverse previous agreements on the mutual recognition of baptism. Faith and Order's 2005 text on ecclesiology, *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, carefully notes such historic and more recent areas of disagreement on baptismal practice and theology, including the question of baptismal formulae.<sup>5</sup>

As the text itself makes clear, *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* is a study document rather than a

common statement of the Commission on Faith and Order. It explores the close relation between baptism and the believer's life-long growth into Christ as a basis for greater mutual recognition of baptism. It also addresses issues in baptismal understanding and liturgical practice which cause difficulty within churches, and hinder the mutual recognition of baptism between them today. The study text is offered to the churches in the hope that fresh perspectives will help the churches to clarify the interrelated challenges of the mutual recognition of baptism and ecclesial recognition; to put the consequences of mutual recognition fully into practice; and to identify issues which still prevent such recognition. As such, *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* belongs to Faith and Order's ongoing work to call the churches to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship.

As this text was a decade in the making, we express our thanks and appreciation to the previous Moderators and Directors of the Commission on Faith and Order, with particular appreciation for work of commission members and consultants who worked so hard on this text.

The Revd  
Canon Dr John Gibaut,  
Director of the Commission  
on Faith and Order

Metropolitan Dr Vasilios of  
Constantia-Ammichostos,  
Moderator of the Commission  
on Faith and Order

<sup>3</sup> See *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry: 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*, Faith and Order Paper No. 149, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1990, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: 1982-1990*, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 198, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2005, grey box on Baptism following §77.

*ONE BAPTISM: TOWARDS MUTUAL  
RECOGNITION*

A STUDY TEXT

I. INTRODUCTION

*A. The goal and perspective of this text*

1. This is a study document rather than a convergence text. It explores the close relation between baptism and the believer's life-long growth into Christ, as a basis for a greater mutual recognition of baptism. It also addresses issues in baptismal understanding and practice which cause difficulty within churches and hinder the mutual recognition of baptism among churches today. It is offered in the hope that fresh perspectives will help the churches (a) to clarify the meaning of the mutual recognition of baptism, (b) to put the consequences of mutual recognition fully into practice, and (c) to clarify issues which still prevent such recognition.<sup>6</sup>

2. The text is organized in the following way:

- a) Section I (Introduction) begins by discussing the notion of recognition, principally but not only with respect to baptism.
- b) Section II (Baptism: symbol and pattern of the new life in Christ) explores the biblical language and the liturgical history of baptism, stressing the common dimensions of most churches' baptismal liturgies, including a discussion of the terminology of "sacrament" and "ordinance", and the relation of the event of baptism itself to the continuing, life-long process of growth into Christ.

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<sup>6</sup> The present document stands within Faith and Order's recent process of reflection on the role of worship generally, and now baptism in particular, in the search for Christian unity. This text was endorsed by the World Council of Churches' Standing Commission on Faith and Order, at its meeting at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, Republic of Armenia, 21-25 June 2010.

- c) Section III (Baptism and the church) notes the function of baptism as entry into the church, explores the relation between baptism and the eucharist, and raises issues about the relation of baptism to church membership.
- d) Section IV (Baptism and faith) addresses the relationship between God's initiative and the faith both of the individual and of the community. This section also addresses the context and content of Christian formation.
- e) Section V (Further steps for the journey towards mutual recognition: questions for the churches) focuses these themes and suggests steps which may be necessary on the way to a fuller mutual recognition of baptism. Questions in each area invite the churches to reflect on the developments in their own traditions, and in their relation with other churches, since the publication of *BEM*.
- f) Section VI (Conclusion) reminds readers and the churches of the wider goal of the ecumenical quest: full visible unity as realised in eucharistic fellowship.

3. The churches use terms related to baptism in a variety of ways. In this study document:

- a) *Christian initiation* refers to a process that begins with hearing the Gospel and confessing the faith, continues with formation in faith (catechesis), leads to baptism, resulting in the incorporation of the baptized into the Christian community, marked by the sharing of the eucharistic meal.
- b) *Baptism* is the central event of this process, in which a believer is incorporated into the body of Christ. This act includes profession of faith and is "administered with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit".<sup>7</sup>

It is acknowledged that some churches may not be familiar with the broader term "Christian initiation" and that for others, "baptism" includes the liturgical acts of anointing and/or the laying on of hands (cf. hereunder §§32-33). Despite this diversity in understanding and practice, churches are increasingly able to recognize, in the baptism

of other churches, the action of the triune God. At the same time, those reading the present text will naturally do so through the lens of their own tradition and experience.

#### *B. The mutual recognition of baptism: a gift and challenge to the churches*

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:4-6).<sup>8</sup>

4. According to this biblical witness, in baptism we are called into communion with the triune God. In baptism, Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, calls his followers and makes them his own, members of the one body and participants in the communion of his disciples. Echoing this, *BEM* says: "Therefore, our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship."<sup>9</sup>

5. *BEM* revealed considerable convergence on the understanding of baptism among churches, and identified areas where differences remain. The process of responding to *BEM*<sup>10</sup> spurred many churches to reflect on their own baptismal understanding and practice, and helped them to understand better the views and practices of others. On this basis significant steps have been taken towards a greater mutual recognition of baptism – towards, as *BEM*

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, 1989, 1995 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>9</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §6, p. 3. Also: "Mutual recognition of baptism is acknowledged as an important sign of expressing the baptismal unity given in Christ. Wherever possible, mutual recognition should be expressed explicitly by the churches", "Baptism", §15; and "Baptism, therefore, constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn by means of it": *Unitatis Redintegratio*, §22, in Walter M. Abbott, S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, New York, 1966, p. 364.

<sup>10</sup> See Max Thurian, ed., *Churches Respond to BEM: Official Responses to the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" Text*, Vols. I-VI, Faith and Order Papers Nos. 129, 132, 135, 137, 143, 144 respectively, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1986-1988.

<sup>7</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §17.

put it, "churches... recognizing one another's baptism as the one baptism into Christ".<sup>11</sup>

6. Formal agreements in local and national contexts<sup>12</sup> have established mutual recognition on an official basis, enabling and encouraging practical expressions of mutual recognition at the level of the local congregation. Bilateral discussions among Christian confessions at world level have reflected the fact that "the continued existence of common baptism is a decisive factor of unity beyond the divisions" of the churches.<sup>13</sup> Significant multilateral, ecumenical texts at world level have confirmed and extended these results, urging the churches to put mutual recognition into practice wherever possible.<sup>14</sup>

7. Another sign of progress has been a growing consensus concerning the fundamental unity in what some Christian traditions have called the "sacraments of Christian initiation" (baptism, chrismation/confirmation, eucharist).

<sup>11</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §15.

<sup>12</sup> For example at the state level the text "Baptism: Baptismal Practice in an Ecumenical Context" issued by the Massachusetts [U.S.A.] Commission on Christian Unity, revised edition, 2000; and at the national level the documents "The Sacrament of Baptism as a Sign of Unity" approved by the Theological Commission of the Roman Catholic Polish Episcopate Churches and the Polish Ecumenical Council in 2000; and the Mutual Recognition Agreement on Baptism signed by 11 churches (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant) in Germany on 29 April 2007.

<sup>13</sup> See the surveys of the treatment of baptism in the bilateral dialogues by Andre Birnclé, "Baptism in Ecumenical Dialogues," in Wilhelm Hüffmeier and Tony Peck, eds., *Dialogue between the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) and the European Baptist Federation (EBF) on the Doctrine and Practice of Baptism*, Leuvenberg Documents 9, Verlag Otto Lembeck, Frankfurt am Main, 2005, pp. 79-103, citation, p. 79; and the previous version, "Baptism and the Unity of the Church in Ecumenical Dialogues", in Michael Root and Risto Saarinen, eds., *Baptism & the Unity of the Church*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and WCC Publications, Geneva, 1998, pp. 104-129.

<sup>14</sup> See *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 198, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2005, §§74-77: "Called to be the One Church"; the Porto Alegre [WCC Assembly] ecclesiology text, World Council of Churches, 2006, §§8-9 and §14(c); and "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism: A JWG Study", in *Eighth Report: Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Geneva-Rome, 2005*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2005, pp. 45-72.

These have, in some traditions, been separated and performed at different points in the life of the believer, with each action acquiring a distinct and self-contained meaning. When the unity of these actions is acknowledged, differences in understanding and practice may no longer appear divisive (for example, the moment at which the Holy Spirit is invoked).

8. Another sign of progress is that churches have begun to take positive, practical steps to nurture and express mutual recognition. Examples are the common recovery of the catechumenate (instruction in the faith prior to baptism), including an ecumenical dimension in the preparation of catechists; the widespread generous use of water in baptism, including a more frequent use of immersion fonts; and the use of a common baptismal certificate recognized by different churches; and adult education done together by several churches.

9. Despite the signs of progress, the call to the churches "to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship" has become even more insistent since *BEM* was published in 1982. This question needs to be put sharply today: what does the "mutual recognition of baptism" actually mean, theologically, ecclesologically and pastorally? What are the full implications of that recognition, and how can each church live out those implications, both in its own life and together with other churches?

### C. Mutual recognition and discernment

10. This study text places the event of baptism within the broader context of Christian initiation, and places both within the context of the believer's life-long growth into Christ. This life-long process is marked by ongoing nurture within the Christian community, and comes to fulfillment only with the end of the believer's earthly life. It is hoped that consideration of baptism within this broader context will help the churches to discern common understandings and intentions within diverse practices, thus fostering mutual recognition.

11. In many cases churches do mutually recognize (as put by the fifth world conference on Faith and Order) "one

another's baptism as the one baptism into Christ".<sup>15</sup> and this has important consequences for the self-understanding and practice of *all* the churches. But it is also true that "not all churches are able to recognize other churches' baptisms, and not all agree entirely on the insights of *BEM* concerning baptism".<sup>16</sup> The situation is indeed complex, as the following instances make clear:

- mutual recognition of baptism may reflect a condition of full sharing in faith and life among the churches, marked by eucharistic communion, and including common discernment and decision-making, service and mission: or
- mutual recognition may exist together with significant limitations in sharing, particularly at the eucharistic table – raising questions for some about the meaning of recognition, if not of baptism itself: or
- mutual recognition may exist, but without further shared life and mission: or
- mutual recognition may be lacking, so that some churches (or congregations within them) require the baptism of all persons seeking membership, even if they have already been baptized in another church.

In any case mutual recognition of baptism varies from place to place depending on local circumstances, including the degree of local awareness, and acceptance, of the ecumenical dimension of the church's life.

12. Mutual recognition is one of the central aims of the ecumenical endeavour. There are at least three dimensions to mutual recognition. It may involve:

<sup>15</sup> See the *Worship Book, Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela, 1993*, Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1993: English, p. 12; Spanish, p. 32; German, p. 53; French, p. 74.

<sup>16</sup> "Faith and Order Work on Worship (with special reference to Baptism) in Relation to the Unity of the Church, Planning Meeting, Communauté de Grandchamp, July, 1998", Appendix III, in *Minutes of the Meeting of the Faith and Order Board, 15-24 June 1999, Toronto, Canada*, Faith and Order Paper No. 185, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1999, p. 101 (Report, pp. 100-110).

- churches recognizing one another as churches, that is, as authentic expressions of the One Church of Jesus Christ; or
- churches recognizing the baptism of a person from one church who seeks entrance into another church; or
- persons recognizing one another individually as Christians.

13. In all these contexts, recognition indicates that one party *acknowledges* an already-existing quality, identity or status which it has discerned in another. Recognition in this sense of "acknowledging" corresponds to the churches' realization that they already share an existing degree of *koinonia*. This grows with their experience in the ecumenical movement, as they are challenged to receive God's gift together more intensely and to make their communion ever more visible.<sup>17</sup> Recognition as acknowledgement intensifies the commitment of the churches to one another, on the basis of their shared convictions and values, as equal partners within the search for visible unity. This by no means excludes their calling one another to a fuller expression of "the faith of the Church through the ages", as the preface to *BEM* puts it.<sup>18</sup> Such respectful mutual encouragement and correction is natural, as each church seeks to discern in the other – as in itself – an authentic expression of the One Church of Jesus Christ.

14. Mutual recognition of baptism arises from an acknowledgement of apostolicity in the other. Apostolicity indicates coherence and continuity with the faith, life, witness and ministry of the apostolic community, chosen and sent by Christ.<sup>19</sup> This acknowledgement may occur in different contexts: with regard to the rite, with regard to the larger pattern of initiation, and with regard to the ongoing life and witness of the church. Thus recognition of baptism involves:

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, §§57-59.

<sup>18</sup> *BEM*, "Preface", p. x.

<sup>19</sup> See *Confessing the One Faith: An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, Faith and Order Paper No. 153, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1991, §241, pp. 89-90.

- a) discerning the apostolicity of the rite itself. The elements of the rite – proclamation, profession of faith, thanksgiving, the use of water, the triune name – function as signs of the *common faith* which Christians through the ages share. In particular, the use of water and the triune name of God as “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” is regarded by many if not most communions as the heart of the baptismal rite. The water rite initiates the believer into the wealth of meanings of the biblical teaching on baptism (cf. hereunder §§17-25, 49) and the trinitarian formula affirms the classic faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
- b) discerning apostolicity in the larger pattern of Christian initiation. In many Christian churches there is a rich pattern of initiation which includes formation in faith, baptism in water (and in some cases chrismation and/or the laying on of hands), leading to eucharistic communion.
- c) discerning apostolicity in the ongoing life and witness of the church which baptizes and forms the new Christian.

15. This text reflects the conviction that convergence in the understanding and practice of baptism “makes more urgent the achievement, by separated Christians, of a common understanding of the apostolic faith which the church proclaims and in light of which a person is baptized”. As significant as the mutual recognition of baptism is, it is important to note that it is not the only condition for full communion among the churches: churches need to discern apostolicity also in other dimensions of the life of other churches, for example in their faith, life, and witness.<sup>20</sup>

## II. BAPTISM: SYMBOL AND PATTERN OF THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

16. The churches, drawing upon scripture, historic texts and traditions, have formed various interpretations of baptism and its significance. This section examines biblical

<sup>20</sup> Quoted from “Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism: A JWG Study”, §56. Some churches, moreover, hold that the fundamental question is not finding similar patterns in baptismal practice (other than the normative use of water and the trinitarian formula), but the *prior recognition* of others as churches and as Christians.

material related to baptism, the use of symbol and sign as related to baptism, the nature of baptism as sacrament and ordinance, and the question of whether a common pattern may be discerned across the traditions.

### A. Baptism and scripture

17. For most churches, baptism actualizes the whole history of salvation. *BEM* presents the churches with a rich tableau of biblical language which expresses the reality of new life through Jesus Christ.

Baptism is participation in Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12); a washing away of sin (1 Cor. 6:11); a new birth (John 3:5); an enlightenment by Christ (Eph. 5:14); a re-clothing in Christ (Gal. 3:27); a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from the flood (1 Pet. 3:20-21); an exodus from bondage (1 Cor. 10:1-2); and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal. 3:27-28; 1 Cor. 12:13).<sup>21</sup>

18. In the celebration of baptism these images often point to stories in the Old Testament, understood as “types” (or prefigurings) of the salvation to be brought in Christ. Thus baptism joins the candidate not only to Christ but to the entire history of salvation, to the entire biblical account of God’s acting to give light and life, forgiveness, meaning and hope. Christians have understood that the waters of creation in Genesis (Gen. 1) prefigure the waters of the new creation in baptism; the destruction of sin through the flood (Gen.7) anticipates the washing from sin in baptism; the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14) foreshadows the exodus from bondage and the liberation into a new creation; the water from the rock in the wilderness (Ex. 17) prefigures Christ who gives the water of life. Similarly the act of covenant in circumcision (Gen. 17) has its parallel in the new act of covenant – baptism; and as God was able to bring new life to dry bones (Ezek. 37), so God, through the waters of baptism, brings new life to those who seek it.

<sup>21</sup> *BEM*, “Baptism”, §2.

19. Biblical descriptions of baptism and the baptismal relationship provide a foundation for baptismal theology and ecclesiology. Some biblical texts stress the pneumatological and trinitarian aspects of baptism: for example, the gift of the Spirit and the presence of the Father, Son, and Spirit at the waters of the Jordan.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven. "You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9-11, cf. synoptic parallels Matt. 3:13-17 and Luke 3:21-22)

In Christian baptism, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the baptized are incorporated into Christ (Gal. 3:27), adopted as heirs of the Father (Rom. 8:14-17), and become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17). By adoption and grace (Eph. 2:5-8), the baptized thus enter into the trinitarian life of God. The invocation of the name of God in the water rite, in the baptismal anointing, in the ecumenical creeds and in professions of faith, gives expression to a shared trinitarian faith.

20. Biblical passages also identify baptism as participation in the death and resurrection of Christ and stress the new life of the baptized.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Phil. 3:10-11).

21. The baptismal waters are both death-dealing to sin and life-giving (cf. Rom. 6:5-11); the act of baptismal submersion or

immersion<sup>22</sup> is a vibrant sign of the Christian dying and rising to new life in Christ. Baptismal dying and rising in unity with Christ is especially connected with the three-day observance of Christ's passage from death to life (the Triduum) that culminates in the feast of Easter. For this reason, Easter was from very early times the privileged occasion for the celebration of baptism. The presence of an Easter candle in the assembly serves as a constant reminder of this paschal reality.

22. Certain scriptural texts teach that baptism leads to the reconciliation of Christians with God and with one another, and that the church's task is to proclaim divine reconciliation to the world.

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 6:11b)

As many of you as were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female: for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:27-28)

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. (2 Cor. 5:18-19)

The sign of peace with which some congregations greet the newly baptized is one expression of the responsibility for reconciliation.

23. Through baptism each Christian is entrusted with the mission of the church to bring the good news to the world. Christians intercede for the life of the world, exercise ministries of discipleship and mission, and work for justice and peace. As *BEM* stressed, "baptism...has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realization of

<sup>22</sup> In baptism by *submersion* the entire body is placed under the surface of the water; in baptism by *immersion* a substantial part of the body (typically up to the waist) is placed under the water, and water poured (hopefully generously) over the head.



the will of God in all realms of life (Rom. 6:9ff, Gal. 3:27-28; 1 Pet. 2:21-4:6).<sup>23</sup>

24. Other biblical texts express the eschatological dimension of baptism.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Rom. 6:5)

If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. (2 Tim. 2:11b-12a)

Christians are reminded that their true citizenship is in the kingdom that is being established by God (cf. Phil. 3:20). At the eucharist, the church celebrates and anticipates God's reign, and receives a foretaste of the banquet to come.

25. Churches throughout the ages have drawn on such images with differing emphases, ignoring some and using others heavily. Some of these differences arise from the particular cultural contexts within which Christians and churches live; these have helped to form their theological outlook but have also resulted in certain limitations of understanding. *BEM* has helped many churches to discover anew the variety of scriptural language which has been used to interpret the meaning of baptism. When seen separately, each image risks presenting an unbalanced or monochromatic view of baptism; together, they portray a colourful mosaic of the reality of new life in Christ. Here the churches are challenged to listen to one another, and to benefit from the experiences of others, as they seek to understand the wealth of meaning in baptism.

#### B. Sacrament and ordinance

26. Many churches describe baptism as a *sacrament*, while others prefer the term *ordinance*.<sup>24</sup> These have sometimes been regarded as opposing terms, but historical reflection

may help clarify them, showing that they are not necessarily incompatible.

27. The early church used the Greek word "mystery" (*mysterion*) to refer to the unfolding of God's purpose of salvation in Christ (e.g., Mark 4:11; Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 1:9f; 3:1ff; Col 1:25-28, 2:2-3). The Latin term *sacramentum* was used to translate *mysterion*, and when applied to the acts of baptism and eucharist this was intended to mean that in these events God's work in Jesus Christ is effected by the power of the Holy Spirit. Gradually the terms *mysterion* and *sacramentum* came to refer to several rites of the church, including baptism and eucharist.

28. "Sacrament" (especially as developed in the scholastic tradition) has come to mean "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace", so that, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, God's saving work is communicated in a symbolic action. Though this term has been carefully developed theologically, it has sometimes been misunderstood to suggest that grace was conferred automatically through the sacraments. Churches which hold to this understanding of sacrament still differ about the way that God's gracious presence is related to the material elements, and about the way that salvation in the present is related to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

29. "Ordinance", on the other hand, indicates that certain acts are performed in obedience to the command and example of Christ (for example, the baptismal command in Matt. 28:18-20). Those who understand baptism as ordinance emphasize its scriptural warrant and divine initiative. This view has sometimes been misinterpreted in two ways: first, that God is not really present and active in the event of baptism and that grace is not really received; and second, that God's presence is "automatic", and independent of faith and grace.

30. Most traditions, whether they use the term "sacrament" or "ordinance", affirm that these events are both *instrumental* (in that God uses them to bring about a new reality), and *expressive* (of an already-existing reality). Some traditions emphasize the instrumental dimension, recognizing baptism as an action in which God transforms the life of the candidate as he or she is

<sup>23</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §10.

<sup>24</sup> See especially the Baptist-Roman Catholic dialogue (1984-1988) in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Harding Meyer, William G. Rusch, eds., *Growth in Agreement II. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations at World Level 1982-1998*, WCC Publications, Geneva, and William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000, pp. 373-385.

brought into the Christian community. Others emphasize the expressive dimension. They see in baptism a God-given and eloquent demonstration, within the Christian community, of the gospel and its saving power for the person who, being already a believer through his or her encounter and continuing relationship with Christ, is then baptized.

31. Those who prefer the language of sacrament often regard baptism also as an ordinance, recognizing that it is performed following Christ's command and example. Some – though not all – who prefer the term ordinance may, in fact, give the act a sacramental meaning. These two approaches represent different starting points in understanding baptism. They are not mutually exclusive, and may both be regarded as essential for understanding the full meaning of baptism.

### *C. The liturgy of baptism*

32. Baptismal practice has taken different forms in the history of the church. In its earliest practice, the rite of baptism typically included water, anointing with oil, and admission to the eucharist. Over time, and particularly in recent usage, the term "baptism" has been used for the water rite alone and the larger process has come to be referred to as "Christian initiation" (cf. above §3).

33. Following *BEM* the churches today largely affirm that "within any comprehensive order of baptism at least the following elements should find a place: the proclamation of the scriptures referring to baptism; an invocation of the Holy Spirit; a renunciation of evil; a profession of faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity; the use of water; a declaration that the persons baptized have acquired a new identity as sons and daughters of God, and as members of the church, [are] called to be witnesses of the Gospel."<sup>25</sup> Recognizing the original unity of the rite, *BEM* noted also that "some churches consider that Christian initiation is not complete without the sealing of the baptized with the gift of the Holy Spirit and participation in holy communion."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §20.

<sup>26</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §20.

34. As noted in §§17-25 above, the churches have incorporated into the celebration of baptism a wide range of symbols and symbolic actions based directly or indirectly upon scriptural images. Many of these images are based on materials from the natural world. Christians affirm that in Christ the whole creation is made new, is restored to God's original purposes and intends to convey the Creator's love for humankind. Therefore materials from the natural world may be used to convey the theological realities associated with baptism.

35. Integral to the practice of baptism is the use of water. Especially when used abundantly, water bears positive but also negative qualities: it can be seen as the means of participation in Christ's death, as if through drowning, but also as the means of new birth, as if from the waters of a womb. The use of water as a natural agent for washing is seen in some traditions as affirming God's cleansing of the candidate from his or her sin.

36. Some churches have understood water as a "sign", meaning that it points beyond itself to the realities of cleansing and new life in Christ. Other churches have understood water as an "effective sign" or "symbol", meaning that it bears within itself, by faith and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the reality of new life in Christ. With whatever nuances, the churches largely agree that the use of water indicates the believer's entry into a new life made possible by the gospel of divine grace, and pointing towards the fullness of the kingdom to come.

37. Other symbols and symbolic actions have been used to express and interpret the meaning of the baptismal act. These actions have varied with time, place and cultural context, and have done so from Christian beginnings. In many traditions, the thanksgiving over the waters of the font echoes and reflects the thanksgiving over the bread and wine of the eucharist, first in giving thanks to God for his mighty acts of salvation, and then in calling upon the Spirit also to make use of water in the transformation of the lives of those to be baptized.

38. Many churches have maintained, or recovered, the use of oil to symbolize the candidate's anointing with the Holy Spirit and incorporation into the royal priesthood

(1 Pet. 2:9). In some churches a baptismal garment symbolizes the "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:27), and the light of a baptismal candle symbolizes our sharing in Christ as "the light of the world" (John 8:12; Matt. 5:14-16). In some cases churches have recovered the catechumenate (a structured period of instruction in the faith before baptism), and use a wealth of signs and symbols to mark the journey to the font. Within all this variety, there appears a renewed appreciation of the importance of created elements in expressing the saving power of God (cf. 1 Tim. 4:4).

39. Where candidates offer a personal testimony at the time of their baptism this is seen as a powerful sign of the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives, thus revealing God's power to convert and to save. At the same time, the assembly which gathers to celebrate the act of baptism signifies the whole church into which the baptized are incorporated. The individual and communal confession of faith at baptism expresses the faith of the church, inspired by the Spirit, into which this candidate is now baptized.

40. As churches engage more closely with the cultures in which they live, there is today a new process of exploration as to how additional elements, held to be of symbolic importance in local cultures, can also be used to express the richness of the various dimensions of baptism. This opens the way to further creative developments in this area, but this process must be done critically and with caution, according to principles of faithful inculturation.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> For an extensive exploration of this see Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller, eds., *Becoming a Christian: The Ecumenical Implications of our Common Baptism*, Faith and Order paper No. 184. WCC Publications, Geneva, 1999, especially "III. The inculturation of baptism", pp.83-88. The following are identified as criteria for inculturation: "The inculturation of baptism needs fidelity to and preservation of the fundamental *ordo* [pattern] of baptism as it was developed in the tradition... No form of incultured baptism can dispense with the basic elements of the baptismal *ordo* [pattern]: formation in faith, washing in water and participation in the life of the community. The inculturation of baptism will look for gestures, signs and symbols in a specific culture which relate to the essential aspects of baptism, such as its meaning as incorporation into the body of Christ and as conferring a life-long new status", p. 86.

#### *D. Baptism and life-long growth into Christ*

41. "Baptism is related not only to momentary experience, but to life-long growth into Christ."<sup>28</sup> Most churches regard the baptismal event as an unrepeatable liturgical rite in which God acts and the Christian faith is professed. However, the unique event of baptism reflects and recapitulates the catechumenate, and the processes of nurture and growth guided by the Holy Spirit, that lead to and follow it. In the early church complex patterns of Christian nurture emerged, including instruction in faith before and after baptism, as well as an extended series of liturgical celebrations marking the journey in a growing faith. Later Christian history saw the development of even more diverse patterns of Christian nurture.

42. Within this diversity the churches have discerned three elements which encompass the believer's full incorporation into Christ: (1) formation in faith, (2) baptism and Christian initiation as explained in §3 above, and (3) participation in the life of the Christian community, fostering life-long growth into Christ.<sup>29</sup> These elements may be understood as follows.

##### 1) Formation in faith

43. Formation includes preaching and teaching about the faith of the church, and the appropriation of the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the Christian life before and after the act of baptism. In some traditions this takes formal shape in the catechumenate. The experiences of hearing, learning, and doing are intended to lead to conversion, appropriation of the faith in heart and mind, trust in the triune God, and baptism. In the case of a baptized infant, the faith claimed by parents, sponsors, and the whole church is professed by that person following formation and nurture. In some traditions this profession involves a formal rite, while in others it consists simply of conscious and active participation in the life of the local worshipping community. Formation in faith is a life-long process, ending with that final profession which is the testimony of a Christian death.

<sup>28</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §9.

<sup>29</sup> "Report of the Consultation: 'The common baptismal ordo'", in *Becoming a Christian, The Ecumenical Implications of Our Common Baptism*, §§17-24, pp. 78-81.

## 2) Baptism

44. "Baptism is a gift of God and is administered in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."<sup>30</sup> It is the central symbolic act within the whole process of Christian initiation, the act in which the local church, the body of Christ, gathers to incorporate new members.

45. Because water as symbol bears multiple meanings, its generous use allows for the fullest expression of the biblical images of baptism (cf. above §§17-25). Threefold immersion or submersion in water is the most widely attested practice in ancient Christian traditions, but there is also early evidence for pouring water over the head of the candidate. In more recent times, sprinkling has emerged as a practice in some churches.

46. The liturgical expression of the giving of the Holy Spirit has varied in the practice of the church. From early times this was seen in some churches to be associated with the baptismal water (Acts 19:5-6), in some with the laying on of hands (Acts 19:5-6), and in some with the anointing with oil. Within this diversity was a shared understanding that the Spirit was poured out in the context of the baptismal act, and belonged integrally to it.

47. Closely associated with the baptismal rites are other events, in various sequences: thanksgiving over the water, confession of faith, an array of interpretive signs and symbols (for example, the wearing of new clothing, the giving of a candle (cf. above §38)). The newly baptized are then welcomed for the first time to the Lord's supper. With their admission to the eucharistic table the newly baptized are fully integrated into Christ and the church, and set to continue on their process of life-long growth into Christ.

## 3) Participation in the life of the Christian community

48. With their admission to the eucharistic community, the newly baptized take their place in the "royal, priestly and prophetic" community that is the church, and so will exercise the spiritual gifts with which they have been endowed for service in the church and the world.

<sup>30</sup> BEM, "Baptism", §1.

49. The act of baptism is a new beginning; it marks a particular point on the journey with Christ and into Christ. The community of the disciples is assured by the love of God that its origin and eschatological completion rest in the community of the Holy Trinity (2 Cor. 1:21-22). The baptized look to this completion before having reached their goal. They must seek above all to grow in faith, and to become what they are: the children of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-3). The reality of baptism needs to be lived out as a daily experience; again and again, the baptized will need to repent and turn to Christ (Rom. 6:1-11, Eph. 4: 21-5:2).

50. Throughout the whole of their lives Christians are empowered by the Holy Spirit to seek faith, hope and love. God grants deeper insight, greater love and maturing faith as believers engage in the study of the scriptures, in prayer and worship, and in love of neighbour. In sufferings and other trials, faith is tested. Christians need constantly to renew their participation in the *koinonia*, the fellowship of the church, in which Christ is present in word and sacrament. Christians are to trust God's promises to feed his followers "on the way" with the bread of thanksgiving (John 6:51; 1 Cor. 11:23-25).

51. The local church needs to make specific provision for the nurture in faith of all the newly baptized. The ministry of bishops or other regional leaders has sometimes involved a recovery of mystagogy (post-baptismal catechesis) with regard to the newly baptized. Workers in Sunday schools or Christian education programmes need to be aware of their great responsibility for building up the congregation in faith, hope and love. In some places, the ministry of mentors (persons who accompany others on their journey in faith) is being discovered.

52. Some churches understand Christian nurture as a matter of providing instruction in Sunday schools or Christian education programmes. As important as this is, there is a broader perspective in which nurture has been a function of the whole worshipping assembly. Here Christians have received liturgical catechesis, and the mysteries of the Christian life have been spelled out in the reading and preaching of the word and the

celebration of the Lord's supper. Thus it is especially important that children be fully involved in the worship life of the congregation. The experience, in worship, of a living relationship with the triune God is the way in which all discover most deeply what it is to be a disciple of Christ.

53. Many churches are finding that both personal and corporate faith is strengthened by a more frequent practice of reaffirming baptism. The public celebration of baptism invites all the baptized to recall their own baptism. The regular celebration of the eucharist reminds the faithful of their own baptism, as do Sundays with strong baptismal associations (for example Easter, Pentecost, and Epiphany/Theophany (the Baptism of the Lord)).

54. Some churches mark particular stages in the continued growth into Christ with rites in which individuals profess or confess their baptismal faith. In many western churches this is known as "confirmation". This is a matter of discussion among and within churches which have different sources for, and understandings of, confirmation.

55. In some churches (e.g., Roman Catholic and Old Catholic) confirmation has its origins in the second post-baptismal, episcopal anointing in the Roman rite – an action which became separated in time from the other components of baptism. In other churches, particularly those whose roots lie in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, confirmation has its source in the more mature profession of faith expected of adolescents. For the former, confirmation is the sacramental completion of the baptismal action, at whatever age it is performed. For the latter, confirmation has assumed an independent life and is understood not as "completing" a person's earlier baptism but as a public profession in which a mature person witnesses to the Christian faith. Churches may find it easier to accept diverse practices if they remember that confirmation, at whatever point it is practised, is set within the process of life-long growth into Christ.

### III. BAPTISM AND THE CHURCH

#### *A. Baptism as entry into the church*

56. In Acts 2:16-42, in response to Peter's proclamation that God had made Jesus who had been crucified both Lord and Messiah, the people asked, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter replied, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Those who welcomed his message were baptized and "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." In drawing nearer to Christ, they drew nearer to each other. As John 17 witnesses, through the Holy Spirit Christ continues to be present in the life of the church after his ascension. The Spirit brings Christians into Christ and into a bond of unity with one another. All this is reflected in the events marking a person's entrance into the church, including: the proclamation of the Gospel, profession of faith, baptism and the gift of the Spirit, participation in the eucharist, and life within the community.

57. In baptism we are baptized into the one body and we become members of one another. The church is both the body of Christ and the people of God (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Baptism in Christ, and in the Spirit, is inseparable from Christian life in community (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

58. Baptism, however, always occurs in a particular local church which shares in a specific confessional identity. Thus it is the church in which a person is baptized that determines his or her confessional identity. But the local churches are, in too many cases, not in full communion with one another. This results in a paradox: while baptism brings Christians into the unity of Christ's body, which is one, the location of baptism within a specific confessional body means that the baptized experience disunity with many other Christians.

#### *B. Baptism and the eucharist*

59. Both baptism and the eucharist lead Christians into communion with the triune God and into communion with one another. In baptism and in the Lord's supper, we meet

the risen Lord to whom the scriptures bear witness. The central invitation which both sacraments extend, together with the word proclaimed and by the power of the Holy Spirit, is to know Christ and to live as his disciples: "Communion established in baptism is focused and brought to expression in the eucharist. There is a dynamic connection between baptism and eucharist. Baptismal faith is re-affirmed and grace given for the faithful living out of the Christian calling."<sup>31</sup>

60. The one unrepeatable baptism leads a Christian to the regular, repeated participation in the Lord's supper. The eucharistic meal marks the culmination of Christian initiation, leading into a new phase of continual growth into Christ and into the body of Christ. During this time of growth, the believer is repeatedly nourished through participation in the meal.

61. How far is this intimate and intrinsic link between baptism and Holy Communion maintained *across* churches so that a person baptized in one church is able to partake of the eucharist in another church? Churches respond to this question in several ways, depending on the situation.

- a) In some cases churches recognize one other as full expressions of the one church of Jesus Christ, sharing the same apostolic faith. In such cases of full communion, there is both mutual recognition of baptism and eucharistic fellowship.
- b) In other cases churches do not recognize one other as full expressions of the church of Jesus Christ. This arises from a perceived lack of apostolicity in some dimension(s) of the other church's life. Mutual recognition of baptism may be possible if a church discerns apostolicity in another's understanding and practice of baptism; but a common eucharist would still not be possible if apostolicity is not discerned in the understanding and exercise of ordained ministry.
- c) In some cases where mutual recognition of baptism does not exist, a common eucharist is still possible. For example, churches which do not recognize infant

baptism may offer communion to persons baptized as infants in another church. They do so in recognition of Christ's welcome to "all baptized Christians" to partake at his table.

### C. Initiation, church membership, and baptism

62. What constitutes full initiation into the Christian church? In Christian beginnings, "baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern".<sup>32</sup> It constituted in itself full incorporation into the church. Later, Christian initiation including baptism and anointing leading to participation in eucharist marked full entry into the church. In some cases, this ancient pattern of initiation remains today. However, as noted in §§32-33 above, in many churches the separation of the rites of Christian initiation has resulted in their being performed at different points over an extended period of time.

63. As a result of these historical developments, the relationship between baptism and church membership has become complex.<sup>33</sup> In current practice, "membership" is attained in a variety of ways. Some churches have developed rites for welcoming and blessing children as an initial step towards membership. In some communions, catechumens (persons being formed for baptism) are considered church members, as reflected in their right to a Christian burial. Some traditions consider faith to be sufficient for church membership, even prior to baptism. For yet others, full membership comes only with confirmation, even if this is separated from baptism by several years.

64. Theologically and liturgically, membership appears to be "incomplete" prior to admission to the eucharist; yet some baptized are barred from the eucharist because they have not reached a certain age or because they are not yet confirmed. The wide diversity of liturgical practice among – and sometimes within – churches

<sup>31</sup> *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, §78.

<sup>32</sup> BEM, "Baptism", §11.

<sup>33</sup> On the relation of baptism and church membership, see especially the Anglican-Reformed dialogue (*God's Reign and Our Unity*, 1984) in *Growth in Agreement II*, pp. 130ff.; and the Lutheran-Methodist dialogue (*The Church: Communion of Grace*, 1984), in *Growth in Agreement II*, p. 210.

indicates different understandings of the relationship between theology and practice.

65. Whenever it is said to be attained, "membership" needs to be understood in light of baptism as entrance into the body of Christ. Through baptism a person is drawn into the mystery of life in Christ. This challenges contemporary understandings of "membership" which sometimes suggest that the church is merely a human institution, rather than the *ekklesia* (assembly) of believers in communion with the triune God, and thus with one another. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:12-13)

#### IV. BAPTISM AND FAITH

66. In the search for unity, the churches together confess that "there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). All churches affirm that faith accompanies baptism. But what is the relationship between faith and baptism, and how is the faith of the community related to the faith of the baptized person?

##### *A. The faith of the believer and the faith of the church*

67. The source of faith is the triune God who calls each one "by name" (Is. 43:1; cf. Acts 9:4), and the freedom to respond in faith is God's gracious gift. Faith begins when God sows the seed of simple trust in the heart. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer grows up into Christ, in whom the fullness of God dwells (Col. 1:19). It is not on the basis of understanding or ability that human beings can receive God's gift, but only through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:26ff).

68. Faith is the response of the believer to the gospel proclaimed in the community of the faithful. The believer's faith grows and deepens in the relationship with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, and that faith discovers its harmony with the faith professed by the whole church throughout the ages. Thus, the faith which the believer comes to confess as his or her own is truly one with the faith of the apostles, so

that the "we believe" of the Christian community and the "I believe" of personal commitment become one.

69. In the early centuries of the church's life this convergence of the "we believe" and the "I believe" found expression in various ways, and especially in baptismal confession and in worship. Christian communities shared their baptismal creeds as a sign of their unity. Likewise, this unity was expressed in the eucharistic prayer, itself an ancient confession of faith made by the believing community in each Sunday worship. When the leaders of the various local churches met in councils, they expressed the same faith in the shape of more extensive formulations, notably the Nicene-Constantinopolitan and the Apostles' creeds. Significantly, neither of these creeds is specific to a particular communion. And the same profession of trinitarian faith often occurs in churches which do not formally use the words of a creed<sup>34</sup> but express their faith in a number of forms including hymns, vows and prayers.

70. The faith professed and recognized across the churches, and handed down by our mothers and fathers in the faith, is that which is celebrated in baptism. As a person is baptized into this trinitarian faith in a local assembly, that person is at the same time united with the one church of Christ that transcends geographical, social, ethnic and temporal boundaries. That person is brought into relationship with the whole body of Christ in all places and in all times.

##### *B. The divine invitation and the human response in faith*

71. The churches affirm the priority of the divine initiative in the process of Christian initiation, as in all aspects of the Christian life. God invites and enables a response in faith. These two aspects come to fruition in the act of baptism, which is the visible sign of belonging to Jesus Christ, and of the commitment to walk with the community which follows him.<sup>35</sup> The scriptures insist on the necessity of

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Confessing the One Faith*, §15.

<sup>35</sup> On the question whether baptism is a Divine or a human "action" see the Baptist-Reformed Conversation (1977) in Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, eds., *Growth in Agreement [I]*, Faith and Order Paper No. 108, Paulist Press, New York/Ramsey and World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1984, §§14, 21, pp. 131-151.

baptism (Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:4), and reflect and allow for a diversity of practice.

72. Until the sixteenth century a single unitary rite was used for the baptism of both infants and adults.<sup>36</sup> The divine initiative, and the human response in faith, were both encompassed within this theological understanding and liturgical practice. More recently the churches have distinguished between those who may profess faith for themselves, and those who cannot. In both cases, however, the churches agree that faith needs to be discerned and the divine initiative affirmed.

73. The person who asks for baptism asks to walk with the church on a life-long journey, trusting Christ in all things.<sup>37</sup> At this stage, faith may take only rudimentary forms, but the church needs to discern in these the call of the triune God. Central to this is repentance before God, the willingness to renounce evil and all the "principalities and powers" (Rom. 8:38, Eph. 6:12) which hold persons captive, the readiness to turn to Christ and to pledge faithfulness to the Holy Trinity. In all this, the church rejoices to see God's work, namely the divine invitation and the human response in faith.

74. "The consequence of sharing, through baptism, the death and resurrection of Jesus is that, as Paul emphasized, we might walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4)."<sup>38</sup> Because of this grace, we are called ambassadors of God's reconciliation to the world (2 Cor 5:18ff). This means that the baptized are called to minister to the world, to proclaim the good news of God's saving love. Baptism thus signals a critical starting point of the believers' engagement in God's mission through the church: "Those who through conversion and baptism accept the gospel of Jesus partake in the life of the body of Christ and participate in an historical tradition".<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> BEM, "Baptism", §12 and Commentary.

<sup>37</sup> The Armenian tradition provides an example. Someone who seeks baptism is asked "What do you seek of God's Church?" The reply is "Faith, hope, love and baptism!"

<sup>38</sup> *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology*, Faith and Order Paper No. 199, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2005, §103, pp. 43-44.

<sup>39</sup> *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1982, §20.

75. Baptism also signals a critical starting point in the believers' engagement with the ethics of the kingdom of God. "In the present, the solidarity of Christians in the joy and sorrows of their neighbours, and their engagement in the struggle for the dignity of all who suffer, for the excluded and the poor, belongs to their baptismal vocation. It is the way they are brought face to face with Christ in his identification with the victimized and outcast".<sup>40</sup> The baptized receive the calling to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (cf. Micah 6:8).

76. Among those whom God calls are some who are too young to articulate faith. The church welcomes them, through baptism, into the community of faith which lives in the love of God. It promises to nurture them towards maturity and then throughout life. Rejoicing that they belong to the kingdom of God, the congregation accompanies them on their journey of faith. In this way children are enabled, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, to express their Christian commitment in and through the fellowship of the community.

77. God calls others who, owing to certain disabilities, may never be able to articulate faith. Their physical or mental condition points to the plurality of human possibilities and experience, and reminds all persons of their participation in a "perfection of vulnerability and of openness to pain."<sup>41</sup> The testimony of the Ecumenical Disabilities Action Network (EDAN) is that God loves all disabled people and extends to all the opportunity to respond to that love, and that every disabled person has the opportunity to find peace with God.<sup>42</sup>

78. As a place and a process of communion, open to and inviting all people without discrimination on the basis of physical or mental ability, the church through baptism

<sup>40</sup> *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, §77.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Christian Perspectives on Theological Anthropology*, §§39-52, pp. 22-26.

<sup>42</sup> See "A Church of All and for All: An Interim Statement", a text prepared jointly by the Ecumenical Disabilities Action Network (EDAN) and the WCC and adopted for study and discussion by the WCC Central Committee in 2003, in Arne Fritzon and Samuel Kabue, *Interpreting Disability: a Church of All and for All*, Risk Book Series No. 105, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2004, §8, p. 67.



embraces also disabled persons in its life. In a sense, without the full incorporation of persons who can contribute from the experience of disability, the church falls short of the glory of God and cannot claim to be fully in the image of God.<sup>45</sup> In exercising special responsibilities for disabled persons, the congregation lives out its baptismal faith as a community of worship and service, so that everyone may grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the knowledge and love of God. The congregation has a duty to ensure that parents, godparents and sponsors each fulfill their responsibilities within this process.

#### V. FURTHER STEPS FOR THE JOURNEY TOWARDS MUTUAL RECOGNITION: QUESTIONS FOR THE CHURCHES

79. The mutual recognition of baptism is fundamental to the churches' search for visible unity. Insofar as it has been achieved, it has become a basis for the churches' increasing common witness, worship and service. As noted at the beginning of this text, issues of the mutual recognition of baptism have become more and more insistent in recent years. Churches have begun to take positive and practical steps to nurture and express mutual recognition. Such substantial progress encourages – and indeed challenges – the churches to take further steps in their mutual recognition of baptism.

80. Despite these developments, as the churches work on issues related to the mutual recognition of baptism they are hindered by difficulties of various kinds. Some involve fundamental questions of ecclesial recognition as well as the relation of theology to actual liturgical, pastoral, and congregational practice. Other difficulties relate to continuing differences in the practice of baptism. Insofar as these matters pose problems for the mutual recognition of baptism they need to be addressed by the churches, both individually and in an ecumenical context.

81. *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* is a study document rather than a convergence text. As such it seeks to encourage dialogue among the churches on differences

in baptismal understanding and practice which impede the mutual recognition of baptism. On the basis of the discussion to this point, §§83-108 address a range of such differences, in the following areas:

- a) baptismal practice in relation to mutual recognition;
- b) the relation between baptism, the churches and the church;
- c) the practical consequences of mutual recognition;
- d) the renewal of baptismal faith;
- e) admission to the eucharist before baptism;
- f) rebaptism;
- g) baptism and faith;
- h) insurmountable obstacles?

Each of these areas is addressed below. Not all areas are relevant for all churches and church dialogues: churches are invited to focus on those areas most relevant for their own lives and for their dialogues with other churches. In each area questions are posed which may help the churches to deepen – and express practically – their mutual recognition of baptism.

82. The following questions are posed for study purposes, rather than as questions addressed to the churches seeking formal responses.

#### *A. Common baptismal practice and mutual recognition*

83. This text has set baptism within the larger contexts of Christian initiation and the believer's life-long growth into Christ. This approach develops the suggestions in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* that churches might arrive at a greater mutual recognition of baptism through recognizing and affirming the similarity of wider patterns of initiation and formation in Christ.<sup>44</sup> There is consensus that this would be a better way towards unity than simply comparing practices of

<sup>45</sup> Cf. "A Church of All and for All: An Interim Statement", §§85 and 30.

<sup>44</sup> See also *BEM*, "Baptism" §15, §12 and Commentary. See *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry 1982-1990: Report on the Process and Responses*, Faith and Order Paper No. 149, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1990, pp. 109-110.

the water rite in isolation from the wider contexts. With this in mind, the following question is asked:

With baptism placed in the larger contexts of Christian initiation and the believer's life-long growth in Christ, can churches ask afresh the question, "Can we now recognize the baptism of other churches?"

84. A careful examination of the rites by which churches baptize makes it clear that much common material is used, and in many cases relatively little is peculiar to a specific Christian tradition. This raises the possibility of recognizing one another as churches on the basis of the degree of unity implied in the performance of similar baptismal rites, set within similar patterns of Christian initiation and on-going formation within the Christian community.<sup>45</sup> With this in mind, the following questions are asked:

How does the liturgical practice of your church reflect its theological understandings of baptism, Christian initiation, and the process of continuing growth into Christ?

How far does finding similar patterns in the life of other churches enable your church to discern common theological understandings which would lead to a mutual recognition of baptism?

#### *B. Baptism, the churches and the church*

85. Baptism occurs in a particular church (with its own history of ecclesial relations and divisions), but brings persons into the unity of Christ's body, which is one. With this paradox in mind, the following questions are asked:

How does the celebration of baptism in your church make clear that baptism is into the whole body of Christ, and not simply into a local congregation and a particular denomination?

How does your church's understanding of membership reflect this understanding of baptism as entry into the one body of Christ?

86. On certain conditions some churches recognize a person as a baptized Christian without, however, recognizing

<sup>45</sup> Cf. §15 of the present text.

either the baptism as it is exercised in that church, or the ecclesial character of that church itself. Some have asked whether this is possible ecclesiologically. With this in mind, the following question is asked:

How far does recognition of a person as a baptized Christian imply some recognition of the baptism which they received, and of the church in which it was performed?

#### *C. Mutual recognition: practical consequences*

87. It is important that churches celebrate the fact that in a great many cases they *do* recognize one another's baptisms. In some places, churches already express their mutual recognition of baptism by issuing Common Baptismal Certificates. These dare to emphasize that baptism is first into the one body of Christ, and second into a particular church or confession. Another – and bold and visible – sign of mutual recognition would be the commitment to a common catechumenate, to the common preparation of candidates for baptism. With this in mind, the following questions are asked:

How do congregations actually express the fact that they recognize the baptism of other churches?

How can a common baptismal certificate witness to the mutual recognition of baptism which already exists among the churches today?

Could a common catechumenate – the common preparation of candidates who will be baptized in their respective churches – be helpful, and how might it be implemented?

88. Many believers ask: why does the mutual recognition of baptism not lead, in some cases, to eucharistic communion? This raises the question of what additional requirements must be met for eucharistic sharing to take place. With this in mind, the following questions are asked:

Do churches which recognize the baptism of other churches, admit members from those others to eucharistic communion? If so, what further expression could this recognition find? If not, what additional requirements must be met for such admission to take place?

Can we speak of “degrees of communion”, or “degrees of recognition”, in which the recognition of baptism is the first step towards “full communion” marked by the sharing of the Lord’s supper?

*D. The renewal of baptismal faith*

89. The renewal of baptismal faith is a part of ongoing Christian life. This is becoming a more explicit feature in the life of many churches. It is baptism that leads to regular participation in the eucharist at which Christians celebrate the Easter mystery of Christ’s dying and rising into which they were incorporated at their own baptism. The regular public celebration of baptism helps all those present to recall their own baptism. Acts of community renewal of baptismal faith on days with strong baptismal associations (e.g. Easter, Pentecost, Epiphany/Baptism of the Lord) can be important if baptisms are not actually being celebrated. With this in mind, the following question is asked:

What patterns have developed in your church or local congregation that help it celebrate its baptismal foundations, and renew its commitment to its baptismal faith and mission?

90. Confirmation is one way some churches (particularly those whose roots lie in the Reformation of the 16th century) have asked those baptized in infancy to commit themselves to their baptismal faith. Recent years have seen considerable confusion develop as some churches, seeking to clarify their understanding and practice of confirmation, have drawn on the practice of others. In some cases this risks imposing incompatible theologies upon existing liturgical practice. It is unlikely, for example, that the various theologies of the Orthodox practice of chrismation will be able to help Western churches resolve their theological confusion over their practice of confirmation.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, some churches have created new interpretations

<sup>46</sup> See the Lutheran-Orthodox joint commission 2004 statement “The Mystery of the Church: Baptism and Chrismation”, in Jeffrey Gros, FSC, Thomas F. Best, Lorelei F. Fuchs, SA, eds., *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998-2005*, Faith and Order Paper No. 204, WCC Publications, Geneva, and William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007, pp. 29-32.

of confirmation which diminish the theological importance of baptism (for example, confirmation as “the ordination of the laity”). With this in mind, the following questions are asked:

If your church practises confirmation, how clearly does it understand its specific origins and development within the tradition of your church?

Have you developed your theology of confirmation in a way that reinforces, rather than undermines, the fundamental importance of baptism?

Can the mutual recognition of baptism be furthered by the awareness that confirmation, whenever it is practised, is set within the broader context of the believer’s life-long growth into Christ?

*E. Eucharistic communion before baptism*

91. In a number of churches the question of communion before baptism has become an important issue, for a variety of reasons. In some churches that practise believers’ baptism, children and young people not yet baptized are incorporated into the life of the community. They are regularly admitted to the Lord’s supper on the grounds that they are members of the community. In some churches which baptize infants there is a movement to communicate all persons, citing the radical openness of Jesus’ fellowship meals as justification. Both practices raise serious difficulties for some other churches.

92. Whatever the theological or pastoral reasons adduced for these practices, they result in a serious rupture between baptism and the eucharist, which threatens the integrity of both rites. As a general principle, the historic order of reception of baptism before reception of the eucharist should be observed for the sake of the unity of the church. With this in mind, the following question is asked:

How is it possible for a person to share in the constitutive meal of the church, the body of Christ, without having been incorporated into that body through baptism?

## F. Rebaptism

93. Most churches regard baptism as an unrepeatable event; nonetheless many churches find themselves confronted with the issue of rebaptism. In one case, churches require the rebaptism of persons baptized as infants in another church. This rests on the understanding that the baptism of an infant is not a true baptism, and that admission to the church requires baptism upon personal profession of faith. Understanding infant baptism in the context of the threefold pattern of formation in faith, baptism and Christian initiation, and the believer's life-long growth into Christ, the following question is asked:

Is it appropriate to require the baptism of those who, in their previous church, were numbered among the baptized?

94. In another case, churches require the rebaptism of persons who have been baptized as adults in another church. This rests on the understanding that membership in the new church requires, for its integrity, baptism within that church. Understanding infant baptism in the context of the threefold pattern of formation in faith, baptism and Christian initiation, and the believer's life-long growth into Christ, the following questions are asked:

How does membership in your church relate to membership in the body of Christ as a whole?

Does the requirement for rebaptism take sufficient account of God's action in a person's life, from the time of their prior baptism until now?

What pre- and post-baptismal catechesis is appropriate in cases of rebaptism?

95. In still another case persons baptized as infants, and wishing to remain in their present church, seek rebaptism in order to "experience" the baptism they do not remember from their infancy. Rebaptism may be sought from a pastor within the person's tradition or even, if this is refused, from a pastor in another tradition. While the need for a baptismal experience can be appreciated, both situations bring the person into serious difficulties within their own tradition. Recognizing the unique and unrepeatable character of

baptism, and for the sake of the unity of the church, pastors should not assent to requests for rebaptism. With this in mind, the following question is asked:

How can your church help such persons to find ways in which they may experience a renewal of their baptismal faith?

## G. Baptism and faith

96. A dynamic relationship exists between the faith of the believer and the faith of the church: the faith which the believer comes to own is that of the whole church of Christ. This process of growth into Christ, to which all believers are called, is the work of the triune God who, both in the church and in the believer, is the beginning and end of faith. The faith confessed in baptism, the faith of the church throughout the ages, is the faith that binds believers and their churches together.<sup>47</sup> This faith is necessary for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism.<sup>48</sup>

97. Churches baptize those who make a personal profession of faith. Some, agreeing that faith is a condition for being baptized, also baptize infants "brought by parents or guardians who are ready, in and with the church, to bring up the children in the Christian faith".<sup>49</sup> Where godparents are appointed, they need to be mature Christians, able to teach and care for their spiritual children. With this in mind, churches familiar with the tradition of godparents are invited to consider the following question:

In cultures where the choice of godparents has become a "favour" to family members and friends, or a matter of social custom, are there ways in which churches may explore the appointment of additional sponsors who are active within the life of the Christian community?

98. On the journey of faith, the Christian family is a small unit of the larger church, which is a foretaste of the kingdom. Parents have a special responsibility to give an

<sup>47</sup> See *Eighth Report*, §45 and "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism: A JWG Study".

<sup>48</sup> *BEM*, "Baptism", §8.

<sup>49</sup> "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism: A JWG Study", §48 and *BEM*, "Baptism", §11.

example of living faith to their children. The responsibility which devolves upon parents who come from different churches can be challenging. This is particularly so as they face decisions about the baptism and growth in faith of their children, especially when their respective churches have disparate understandings and practices of baptism of young children and their admission to the eucharist. With this in mind, the following question is asked:

Has your church developed sufficient ways to help families which embody different Christian traditions to deal with the baptism and Christian nurture of their children, in ways which respect the ecclesial traditions of both parents?

99. Many churches have become more aware in recent years of the special gifts which persons with disabilities bring to the life of the Christian community, and more attentive to their special needs as members of Christ's body, the church. Insofar as a personal profession of faith (whether at the moment of baptism or, in the case of infant baptism, at a later point in life) is integral to baptism, the question arises about the baptism of persons who, due to learning disabilities, are unable to make such a profession.

100. The churches need to reflect together on these issues, which have deep pastoral implications for the persons and congregations concerned but also raise profound theological and anthropological issues. These include: the relation of faith to intellectual capacity and the ability for self-expression; the variety of ways in which faith may be experienced and expressed; and how persons with special gifts and needs may be fully integrated into the life of the church.<sup>50</sup> With this in mind, the following questions are asked:

How can the church discern the faith of persons who are unable to articulate and communicate their faith verbally?

In what ways does your church provide for the incorporation of persons with disabilities into the life of the Christian community?

<sup>50</sup> See "A Church of All and for All: An Interim Statement", especially §§56-65, 74, 78, and 87. Cf. also *BEM*, "Baptism", §§11-12.

#### *H. Insurmountable obstacles?*

101. At the time of *BEM*, some understandings and practices with regard to baptism seemed to reflect irreconcilable divergences among the churches. In the process leading to this study document we have discovered that some of these no longer seem to be insurmountable – while others remain as serious sources of division.

##### 1) Sacrament and ordinance

102. The terms "sacrament" and "ordinance" have often been used to characterize what were thought to be mutually exclusive understandings of baptism, particularly between those churches which baptize infants and those which baptize only professing believers. From what has been said above (cf. §§26-31) these terms can no longer be used as the basis for division among the churches. With this in mind, the following questions are asked:

Has the use of the term "sacrament," or of "ordinance," by another church prevented your church from recognizing its baptism? If so, can the reflections in this study document help towards mutual recognition?

##### 2) Diversity and uniformity

103. The importance of common elements in the baptismal service (particularly the use of water and the trinitarian formula) for the mutual recognition of baptism has been stressed in §14 above, where it was noted that these elements function as signs of the common faith shared by Christians through the ages. Some churches, however, hold that the meanings expressed by these elements may also be conveyed in other ways. On the basis of their understanding of biblical texts, their traditional practice, or their effort to inculturate baptismal practice, such churches perform baptism in other ways. This raises serious questions of discernment within and among the churches. With this in mind, the following questions are asked:

Which variations in baptismal practice reflect a *healthy diversity* within the one body of Christ?

Which variations reflect a *significant divergence* from acceptable practice, a divergence which threatens the unity of Christ's body?

104. There are churches, members of the World Council of Churches and manifestly Christian in their witness and service, which perform baptism "in the name of Jesus", without reference to the traditional trinitarian formula. There are churches, members of the World Council of Churches and manifestly Christian in their witness and service, which perform baptism without water.<sup>51</sup>

105. There are churches, members of the World Council of Churches and manifestly Christian in their witness and service, in which entry into the Christian community is effected without baptismal rites.<sup>52</sup> As was made clear in the response process to *BEM*, most churches within the ecumenical movement regard the use of water and the trinitarian formula, administered in a liturgical rite, as a minimum requirement for baptism and membership in the church. Yet successive ecumenical texts, while acknowledging this understanding of baptism as normative, have sought also to honour the witness of churches which speak not of a specific rite but rather of Christian life as a whole being infused with the Spirit.<sup>53</sup>

106. There are churches, members of the World Council of Churches and manifestly Christian in their witness and service, which find evidence of valid baptism not so much in the use of traditional baptismal forms, but rather in the presence of the "fruits" of baptism in the life of the believer. Beginning early in the twentieth century, some churches began to use what they understood to be the earlier biblical form of baptism "in the name of Jesus" rather than the formula found in Matt. 28:19 of baptism "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *BEM*, "Baptism", §21, Commentary (c).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry 1982-1990*, pp. 53-54 and 147; "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling" [The Canberra Unity Statement], in Thomas F. Best and Günther Gassmann, eds., *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela, 1993*, Faith and Order Paper No. 166, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1994, §3.2, p. 270; and "Called to be the One Church", §8.

<sup>53</sup> See "The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling": "...we gladly acknowledge that some who do not observe these rites share in the spiritual experience of life in Christ", §3.2, p. 270; and "Called to be the One Church": "There are some who do not observe the rite of baptism in water but share in the spiritual experience of life in Christ", §8.

107. Questions of theological and liturgical language are particularly sensitive in some places today. There are churches, members of the World Council of Churches and manifestly Christian in their witness and service, which have offered as an alternate to the traditional trinitarian formula "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit", such words as "Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier". This has been prompted by a concern about exclusively masculine language for God. These changes, however, raise serious questions for the mutual recognition of baptism. In some places, the latter practice has resulted in the rescinding of already existing mutual recognition.

108. With the issues raised above in §§101-107 in mind, the following questions are asked:

How can churches discern and respect the authentic Christian witness of those who follow alternate baptismal practices?

How far are some churches prepared to modify their practice for the sake of the unity of the church?

## VI. CONCLUSION

109. The member churches of the World Council of Churches, gathered at their 9th assembly in 2006, affirmed together that baptism is the basis of their commitment to one another within the ecumenical movement. And more than that, they committed themselves to draw the full consequences from the existing mutual recognition of baptism. Thus they affirmed that "Baptism bestows upon the churches both the freedom and the responsibility to journey toward common proclamation of the Word, confession of the one faith, celebration of one eucharist, and full sharing in one ministry."<sup>54</sup>

110. We hope that the reflections in this study document will help your church put its existing mutual recognition of baptism more fully into practice. Where mutual recognition seems difficult due to differences in understanding and practice, we hope these reflections will suggest starting points for a fresh discussion of the issues involved. In

<sup>54</sup> "Called to be the One Church," §16 and note 15.

cases where mutual recognition seems impossible due to fundamental differences in the understanding of the faith, we hope these reflections will have clarified some of the issues which need to be addressed.

111. Baptism looks beyond itself. As the basis of our common identity in the one body of Christ, it yearns to be completed through the full eucharistic fellowship of all the members of Christ's body. We should be one at the one table of our one Lord. "All Christians who have received their baptism as the one baptism into the one church, have also received a radical calling from God to communion with all the baptized."<sup>55</sup> The churches are thus called to renewed efforts towards full ecclesial communion, in order that the unity which is theirs in Christ through the waters of baptism may find its fulfillment at his one table.

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<sup>55</sup> "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism: A JWG Study", §104.





## Misjonsdokument fra Kirkenes Verdensråd:

# Together towards life: mission and evangelism in changing landscapes

Proposal for a new WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism  
Toward WCC's 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly in Busan, Korea, 2013

### *Working Draft 11*

Approved by the CWME Executive Group, Geneva on 22 January 2012

To be presented to the CWME Pre-assembly Mission Event in Manila, 22-27 March 2012

Submitted by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME)

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

1. Together towards Life: Introducing the Theme
2. Breath of Fire: Transformative Spirituality
3. Salt of Earth: Mission from the Margins
4. Water of Life: Speaking the Truth in Love
5. Wind of Change: Church on the Move
6. Feast of Life: Concluding Affirmations

## 1) Together towards life: introducing the theme

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

world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit. How important it is to receive the Holy Spirit (John 20:22) to become living witnesses to the coming reign of God! From a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Spirit, how do we re-envision God's mission in a changing and diverse world today?

3. Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, and the core to why we do what we do, and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God's grace. How can we reclaim mission as transformative spirituality which is life-affirming?
4. God did not send the Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us a partial salvation. Rather the gospel is the good news for every part of creation and every aspect of our life and society. It is, therefore, vital to recognize God's mission in a cosmic sense, and to affirm all life, the whole *oikoumene*, as being interconnected in God's web of life. As threats to the future of our planet are evident, what are their implications for our participation in God's mission?
5. The history of Christian mission has been characterized by conceptions of geographical expansion from a Christian centre to the un-reached territories, to the ends of the earth. But today we are facing a radically changing ecclesial landscape described as world Christianity where the majority of Christians are either living, or have their origins in the global South and East. Migration has become a worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is re-shaping the Christian landscape. The emergence of strong Pentecostal and charismatic movements from different localities is one of the most noteworthy characteristics of world Christianity today. What are the insights for mission and evangelism "theologies, agendas and practices" of this shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity?
6. Mission has been understood as a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society. Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation. This reversal of roles in terms of envisioning mission has strong biblical foundations because God chose the poor, the foolish and the powerless (1 Corinthians 1:18-31) to further God's mission of justice and peace so that life may flourish. If there is a shift of the mission concept from mission *to* the margins to mission *from* the margins, what then is the distinctive contribution of the people from the margins? And why are their experiences and visions crucial for re-imagining mission and evangelism today?
7. We are living in a world in which faith in mammon threatens the credibility of the gospel. Market ideology is spreading the propaganda that the global market will save the world through unlimited growth. This myth is a threat not only to economic life but also to the spiritual life of people, and not only to humanity but also to the whole creation. How can we proclaim the good news and values of God's kingdom in the global market, or win over the spirit of the market? What kind of missional action can the church take in the midst of economic and ecological injustice and crisis on a global scale?
8. All Christians, churches and congregations are called to be vibrant messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the good news of salvation. Evangelism is a confident but humble sharing of our faith and conviction with other people. Such sharing is a gift to others which announces the love, grace and mercy of God in Christ. It is the inevitable fruit of genuine faith. Therefore, in each generation, the church must renew its commitment to evangelism as

an essential part of the way we convey God's love to the world. How can we proclaim God's love and justice to a generation living in an individualized, secularized and materialized world?

9. The church lives in multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts and is engaged with people of other religions and cultures in building societies of love, peace and justice. Such plural contexts are a challenge to the churches and serious commitment to inter-faith dialogue and cross-cultural communication is therefore indispensable. What are the ecumenical convictions regarding common witnessing and practising life-giving mission in a world of many religions and cultures?
10. The church is a gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God. Its mission is to bring new life and announce the loving presence of God in our world. We must participate in God's mission in unity, overcoming the divisions and tensions that exist among us, so that the world may believe and all may be one (John 17:21). The church, as the communion of Christ's disciples, must become an inclusive community and exists to bring healing and reconciliation to the world. How can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness?

## 2) **Breath of fire: transformative spirituality**

11. The Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost is more than a flickering candle but a breath of fire, present not only in mystical and charismatic experience, but in committed historical action. We cannot domesticate the mission of the Holy Spirit in terms of our own stories and institutions. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a baptism of fire that will burn up the chaff (Acts 2:3; Luke 3:16-17). We, therefore, need to discern together how the Holy Spirit and a pneumatological approach to mission exceed and subvert our theological and ecclesiological boundaries and move us into a new posture and practice of mission.
12. We rejoice that there are signs that the Holy Spirit is at work in our midst bringing about life in all its dimensions: biological, human, social and eternal. This life was lived on earth in its fullest sense by Jesus Christ.
13. However, the twenty-first century has dawned upon a very troubled world. The wide range of human relationships between individuals, communities and nations as well as with the whole of creation are undergoing profound and unprecedented crises. In our globalized world, a new transformative spirituality of mission can provide some of the greatest sources of hope for healing these broken relationships. This challenge demands a renewed appreciation of the gift of the life-giving Spirit of God, the Paraclete, who guides us in God's mission. Though for a little while we, and all creation, groan like a woman in childbirth, the Spirit is our midwife and when the mission is accomplished we believe that our sorrow will turn to joy (John 16: 20-22).
14. The reaffirmation of the importance of the Holy Spirit for mission theology in the last decades marks a new era in the history of Christian mission. It results from the concept of *missio Dei* or God's mission, which uses a trinitarian understanding of the divine reality and focuses on the world as the one household of God. Therefore, a pneumatological focus in Christian mission recognizes that mission is also christologically based and relates the economy of the Spirit to the economy of Christ, the Word. **The Mission of the Spirit**
15. God's Spirit "*ru'ach* in the Hebrew Bible " moved over the waters at the beginning (Genesis 1:2), being the source of life and the breath of humankind (Genesis 2:7). In the sufferings of the present time, the Spirit shares our groans and the childbirth pains of the whole of creation subjected to bondage to decay (Romans 8:23; 21-22). We look toward redemption with hope and joy (Romans 8:23). The same Spirit of God which swept over the face of the

waters in creation descended and remained on Jesus Christ (John 1:33), constitutes and empowers the church. The Holy Spirit works in the world often in mysterious and unknown ways beyond our imagination (Luke 1:34-35; John 3:8; Acts 2:16-21). Therefore, the universality of the Spirit's economy in creation and the particularity of the Spirit's work in redemption have to be understood together as the mission of the Spirit (*missio Spiritus*) for the new heaven and earth, when God finally will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

16. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary and caused Jesus Christ to be born among us, our Saviour and Lord. The Spirit anointed the Son of God to bring good news to the poor to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18). We are commissioned to continue seeking God's justice through a liberating and healing ministry. This involves bold proclamation of the liberating gospel to people bound by sin, a healing ministry to the sick and suffering, and the struggle for justice on the side of the oppressed and marginalized .[2]
17. Jesus Christ, full of the Spirit of God, died on the cross. He gave up the spirit (John 19:30) and the water of life poured from his side (John 19:34). In death, in the coldness of the tomb, by the power of the Holy Spirit "the breath of fire" he was raised to life, the firstborn from the dead (Rom 8:11). After his resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to his community and sent his disciples in mission. Jesus empowered them by breathing the Holy Spirit into them: As the Father has sent me, so I send you (John 20:21-22) and tongues of fire came upon their heads (Acts 2:3). In the Spirit of unity, the early church lived together and shared her goods among her members (Acts 2:44-45). By the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power from on high they were formed into a new community of witness to the hope in Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Even when scattered and displaced, the migrant church remained faithful and the churches worldwide supported one another and those on the margins (Acts 11:19-30).
18. Biblical witness attests to a variety of understandings of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. One perspective emphasizes the Holy Spirit as fully dependent on Christ, the Paraclete and the one who will come as Counsellor and Advocate only after Christ has gone to the Father. The Holy Spirit is seen as the continuing presence of Christ, his agent to fulfil the task of mission. This understanding leads to a missiology focusing on sending out and going forth. Another perspective emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth that leads us to the whole truth (John 16:13) and blows wherever he/she wills (John 3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos, therefore proclaiming the Holy Spirit as the source of Christ, and the church as the eschatological coming together (*synaxis*) of the people of God in God's kingdom. The second perspective posits that the faithful go forth in peace (in mission) after they have experienced in their eucharistic gathering the eschatological kingdom of God as a glimpse and foretaste of it. Mission as going forth is thus the outcome, rather than the origin of the church, and is called liturgy after the liturgy. This second relational and synergetic theology has resulted in an inclusive understanding of mission which does not insist on a universal proselytism but on the authentic witness of the church's eschatological experience in which all are invited to participate.
19. *Missio Dei* is a restatement of trinitarian theology: that God in God's own self is a life of communion and that God's involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion with God's very life (cf. John 21).[3] This ultimate expression of fellowship (*koinonia*) and love is transmitted to the whole world not as dogmas or ethical commands, but as a communion of love. This pneumatology results in a Christian witness that unceasingly promotes the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ, but also affirms God's dynamic involvement through the Holy Spirit in the whole created world.

## Mission with Creation at Its Heart

20. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom (Isaiah 11:3; Ephesians 1:17) and guides into all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit inspires human cultures and creativity, so it is part of our mission to acknowledge, respect and cooperate with life-giving wisdoms in every culture and context. We regret that mission activity linked with colonization has often denigrated cultures and failed to recognize the wisdom of local people. By attacking and contributing to the destruction of people's cultures, such mission activity has brought death rather than life. Local wisdom and culture which is life-affirming is a gift from God's Spirit. We lift up testimonies of peoples whose traditions have been scorned and mocked by theologians and scientists, yet their wisdom offers us the vital and sometimes new orientation that can connect us again with the life of the Spirit in creation, which helps us to consider the ways in which God is revealed in creation.
21. God's mission begins with the act of creation and therefore creation is at the heart of God's mission. Creation's life and God's life are entwined and God's mission encompasses us all in an ever-giving act of grace. Mission comprehends the whole of creation. We are called to move beyond a narrowly human-centred approach and to re-discover ways of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created life. We hear the cry of the earth as we listen to the cries of the poor and we know that from its beginning the earth has cried out to God over humanity's injustice (Genesis 4:10).
22. Mission, the ministry of God's Spirit seeks the redemption of creation, not humanity alone (Romans 8:19-22). Mission must not be separated from the context of creation, in which it is set, and whose transformation God seeks. We rejoice that mission with creation at its heart is already a positive movement in our churches in the form of campaigns for eco-justice and more sustainable lifestyles and responding through spiritualities that are respectful of the earth. However, our mission has sometimes failed to see creation as an integral part of the *missio Dei*, forgetting that the whole of creation is included in the reconciled unity we are all called toward (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). God's love does not proclaim an impending salvation from the earth, but invites our and earth's healing through participation in the Spirit's life. We do not believe that the earth is to be discarded and only souls saved; both the earth and our bodies have to be transformed through the Spirit's grace. As the vision of Isaiah and John's revelation testifies, heaven and earth will be made new (Isaiah 11:1-9; 25:6-10; 66:22; Revelation 21:1-4).
23. Our perspectives of mission, spirituality and creation therefore require a reorientation. Our participation in mission, our being in creation and our practice of the life of the Spirit need to be woven together for they are mutually transformative. We ought not to seek the one without the others. If we do, we will run many risks. We will risk an empty activism and mission that is not rooted in the spiralling communion of the Trinity. We will lapse into an individualistic spirituality that leads us to falsely believe we can belong to God without belonging to our neighbour. We will fall into a spirituality that makes us feel good while the rest of creation hurts and yearns. If we do, we will live without hope of a transformed creation.
24. We need a new conversion (*metanoia*) in our mission, which invites us to humble ourselves in God's mission. We generally understand and practice mission as something done by humanity to others. We are, however, invited to also wonder how the species of the wider creation act as partners in God's mission. Surely we can see the many ways creation is in mission to humanity, for instance the natural world has a power that can heal the human heart and body. The wisdom literature affirms creation's praise of its Creator (Psalm 19:1-4; 66:1;

96:11-13; 98:4; 100:1; 150:6) and the Creator's joy and wonder in creation is one of the sources of our spirituality (Job 38-39).

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

### **Spiritual Gifts and Discernment**

26. The Holy Spirit gives gifts freely and impartially (1 Corinthians 12:8-10; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11) which are to be shared for the building up of others (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:26) and the reconciliation of the whole creation (Romans 8:19-23). One of the gifts of the Spirit is discernment of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10).
27. The early Christians, like many churches today, experienced a world of many spirits. The New Testament witnesses to diverse spirits, including evil spirits, ministering spirits (i.e. angels, Hebrews 1:14), principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12), the beast (Revelation 13:1-7) and other powers "both good and evil. The apostle Paul also testifies to some spiritual struggle (Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:4-6) and the injunction to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8). The church is called to discern the work of the life-giving Spirit sent into the world and to join with the power of the Spirit in bringing about God's reign of justice (Acts 1:6-8).
28. The need for discernment is also a reminder that in our spiritual life we are sometimes bereft of the Holy Spirit. We cannot predict or demand the Spirit's presence, but live in constant and eschatological hope that the freedom of the Spirit is manifest and active in mission. The church, as a community that discerns together, needs to be open to the diverse voices within and beyond it: The church is equally in need of continuing renewal by the Spirit to be able to discern the mind of Christ as well as be convicted by the spirit of division and sin within (John 16:8-11) .[4]
29. Even if our encounter with the Triune God is at first inward and individual, it also directs us outward in missionary endeavour. The traditional symbols and titles for the Spirit (such as fire, light, dew, fountain, anointing, healing, melting, warming, solace, comfort, strength, rest, washing, shining) show that the Spirit is familiar with our lives and connected with all the aspects of relationship, life and creation with which mission is concerned. We are led by the Spirit into various situations and moments, into meeting points with others, into spaces of encounter and into critical locations of human struggle.
30. The claim that the Spirit is with us is not for us to make, but for others to recognize in the life that we lead. The apostle Paul expresses this by encouraging the church to bear the fruits of the Spirit which entail love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, self-control (Galatians 5:23). By living out these fruits, we hope others will discern the deeper love and power of the Spirit at work.
31. In the Spirit, we are enabled to affirm what is true and to discern what is false and evil. We discern the Spirit of God wherever life in its fullness is affirmed and in all its dimensions, including liberation of the oppressed, healing and reconciliation of broken communities and

the restoration of the creation. We also discern the evil spirits wherever forces of death and destruction of life prevail.

### **Transformative Spirituality**

32. Mission spirituality is always transformative. God's Spirit has the power to provoke and sustain the movement that goes from situations of death to new life in Christ. As Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ testified, the Mighty One lifts up the lowly and downtrodden. But at the same time God scatters the proud and brings down the powerful from their thrones (Luke 1:46-55). In the context of global imperialism " especially in the form of the hegemonic power of economic globalization " this self-emptying spirituality is a challenge to both the victims and perpetrators of systemic violence and injustice. In his struggle to reconcile Jews and Gentiles and other factions, the apostle Paul declared that God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9; 1 Corinthians 2:3-5) and the treasure we have is in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us (2 Corinthians 4:7, RSV). The church's mission is to empower the powerless and to challenge the powerful to empty themselves of their power and privileges for the sake of the disempowered.
33. Jesus has told us, You cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24, KJV). The policy of unlimited growth through the domination of the global free market is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature. It makes the false promise that it can save the world through creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance which amounts to idolatry . [5] This is a global system of mammon that protects the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of mammon.
34. Mission spirituality resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems. Our faithfulness to God and God's free gift of life compels us to confront idolatrous assumptions, unjust systems, politics of domination and exploitation in our current world economic order. Economics and economic justice are always matters of faith as they touch the very core of God's will for creation . [6] Mission spirituality enables us to re-connect ourselves with others. The African concept of *Ubuntu*, I am because we are, and we are because I am, and the Korean concept of *Sansaeng*, life together, are powerful examples of the cosmic vision in God's mission. Mission spirituality is faith that God will transform the whole world through our participation in God's life-giving mission. It motivates us to serve God's economy of life, not mammon, to share life at God's table rather than satisfy individual greed, to pursue change to a better world instead of keeping the status quo for our own self-interest.
35. Transformation can be understood in the light of the Paschal mystery: If we have died with Christ, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him (2 Timothy 2:11-12). The church is called to bear the cross of Jesus Christ by being with the suffering. In situations of oppression, discrimination and hurt, the cross of Christ is the power of God for salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is self-emptying and cross-bearing in order that the saving power of God may be demonstrated.
36. In the light of the cross, we are called to repent of both our misuse of power and our use of the wrong kind of power in mission and in the church. Furthermore, disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures. We are called to find practical ways to live as members of One Body in full awareness that God resists the proud, Christ welcomes and empowers the poor and afflicted, and the power of the Holy Spirit is manifested in our vulnerability. [7]

37. Authentic Christian witness is not only in *what* we do in mission but *how* we live out our mission. More than simple mission strategies, we need to develop mission spirituality. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and stimulates, motivates and gives dynamism to life's journey. It is energy for life in its fullness and calls for a commitment to resist all forces, powers and systems which deny, destroy and reduce life. It reveals to us a deepening sense of God who cares about all living things. Mission is the praxis of affirming and caring for life and spirituality is the sacred gift from the Creator, which makes mission possible.
38. Our participation in the *missio Dei* is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The church in mission can only be sustained by spiritualities deeply rooted in the Trinity's communion of love. The Spirit's transformative *presence* leads us to embody afresh Christ's mission in communion with Creator and creation. We know that there are spiritual forces at work that are filled with destruction and alienation, and which are governed by greed and fear and their fruit is death. We need to confront them wherever they are at work and where they possess our economies, our politics, even our churches.
39. Experiencing life in the Spirit is to taste life in its fullness. We are called to witness to and advocate for a movement towards life, regenerating hope and light, recreating what is destroyed or harmed, celebrating all that the Spirit continues to call into being, holding hands in order to cross the rivers of despair and anxiety (Psalm 23, Isaiah 43:1-5). Mission provokes in us a renewed awareness that the Holy Spirit meets us and challenges us at all levels of life, and brings newness and change to the places and times of our personal and collective journeys.

### 3) Salt of the earth: mission from the margins

40. God's purpose for the world is not to create another world but to re-create what God has already created in love and wisdom by effecting transformation. God's mission is not only redemption of the world from evil but also its restoration and transformation. Therefore, Jesus said, You are the salt of the earth, the light and leaven of the world and called on those who came to hear him to change and to be the ferment of change, witnessing to the transforming power of God through their lives and actions (Matthew 5:13; 14; 13:33). Jesus begins this mission of transformation by opting to be with those on the margins of society, not out of paternalistic charity but because of their yearning for justice and life with dignity. Therefore, mission is and has to be a process towards change not only at the inner core of human persons but also at the larger levels where life finds itself exposed both for celebration and abuse.
41. The former ways of understanding Christian mission have been inadequate insofar as they have failed to recognize that mission derives from an understanding of God as the One who is aligned with those consistently pushed to the margins. God is constantly at work on their behalf to heal and restore the brokenness of our world. Mission from the margins asserts and re-imagines mission as a vocation that God desires for a world in which the fullness of life is available for all, and in which God is constantly at work. Jesus brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; he frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind (Luke 4:18); he supports and protects the downtrodden, the stranger, the orphans and the widows.[8]
42. God calls us to hear the cries of the poor and the groaning of creation and to follow the public mission of Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (John 10:10). [9] Mission from the margins is an authentic call by Jesus Christ who relates to and embraces those who are marginalized in his society, with a view to confront and transform all that denies life for many. These include cultures and structures that generate and sustain massive poverty, discrimination and dehumanization, and exploit and destroy



people and the earth. Churches cannot claim any authenticity of their missional efforts if these yearnings do not shape their efforts.

### **Why Margins and Marginalization?**

43. Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life and in expressions of mission. It seeks to be a countercultural missional movement against missionary approaches and activities which contribute to the oppression, marginalization and the denial of the dignity of those on the margins. It recognizes that being in the centre for many today means having rights, freedom and individuality affirmed and respected, whilst living in the margins means for many exclusion from life in dignity and integrity and from accessing full life and justice, including among other things the systems that benefit those at the centre. Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. Those on the margins of what is sanctioned as the norm are in a unique position to see what is out of view for the people in the centre. Positions of marginality provide relevant insights toward the transformation of injustices and life-denying practices in the lives of those in the margins and those in positions of privilege.
44. Because the context of the recipients and agents of missional activity influences its scope and character, mission must be understood as contextual, thus referring to the social location of all those who are engaged in mission work. It is imperative to address the contextual realities which have shaped and which continue to shape and/or impede people's experiences of the fullness of life. Missiological reflections have to recognize the differences in perspectives and the consequent value orientations that shape missional perspectives.
45. The dominant expressions of mission, in the past and today, have often been directed *at* people on the margins of societies. These have generally viewed those on the margins as recipients and not active agents of missionary activity. Mission expressed in this way has too often been complicit with oppressive and life-denying systems. It has generally aligned with the privileges of the centre and largely failed to challenge economic, social, cultural and political systems which have marginalized some peoples. Historically, mission from the centre was motivated by an attitude of paternalism and a superiority complex, which often equated Christianity with, or subsumes it under, Western civilization and resulted in adverse consequences, including the denial of the full personhood for the victims of such marginalization.
46. A major common concern of people from the margins is the failure of our societies, cultures, civilizations, nations and even our churches to honour the dignity and worth of *all* persons. This is in spite of the biblical affirmation that humans are created in the image of God and despite the redemptive work of Jesus Christ who mixed with all "clean and unclean alike. Injustice is at the roots of the inequalities that give rise to marginalization, oppression, racism and sexism. God's desire for justice is inextricably linked to his nature and sovereignty: For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords....who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who also loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing (Deuteronomy 10:17-18). All missional activity must, therefore, safeguard the sacred worth of every human being and of creation (cf. Isaiah 58).
47. Mission from the margins is premised on the conviction that God is the source of mission. God has sent forth both the Son and the Holy Spirit in the process of creating, redeeming, and sustaining all of creation. In this perspective, the Triune God is thus best understood as the God who is present and active with those on the margins, and God who is revealed in the crucified and risen Christ who bears the marks of systemic oppression upon his own flesh.

Participating in God's mission, we should develop conscientizing strategies on the issues of the disenfranchised peoples and the systemic/structural nature of marginalization.

48. All who are marginalized know what affirms life and denies it; what helps communities and what hurts them; what contributes to well-being and what circumvents it. They and we bring and embody actual knowledge of the suffering that accompanies exclusionary practices as well as the capacity to unmask the forces that work against God's will in the world. All bring gifts that are under-utilized because of disempowerment, their denial of access to opportunities and/or justice. Through struggles in and for life, the marginalized hold forth what God wants in the world while also being reservoirs of the active hope, collective resistance, and perseverance and agency that is needed to remain faithful to the promised reign of God.

### **Mission as Struggle and Resistance**

49. The affirmation of *missio Dei* implies the belief in God as One who acts in history and in creation, in concrete realities of time and contexts, who seeks the fullness of life for the whole earth through justice, peace and reconciliation. Participation in God's ongoing work of liberation and reconciliation by the Holy Spirit, therefore, includes discerning and unmasking the demons that exploit and enslave, confronting and transforming cultures and sources of oppression, violence, abuse and destruction. Mission includes deconstructing patriarchal ideologies; it means naming the demon of caste, challenging its social embeddedness and advocating for the liberation of its victims; and it involves the acknowledgement of the right to self-determination of Indigenous peoples, freedom of cultural expression, a creation-centred spirituality and restitution for the losses they have endured through the sin of imperialism.
50. The hope we carry is rooted in the promised fulfillment of the reign of God. It entails the restoration of right relationships between God and humanity and all of creation. Even though this vision speaks to an eschatological reality, it deeply energizes and informs our current participation in God's salvific work in this penultimate period.
51. We affirm that the governance of God's world in no way mimics the manner of leadership found in socio-political realms, but follows the way of Jesus, who came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45); who tears down the mighty and powerful and exalts the lowly (Luke 1:46-55); and whose love is characterized by mutuality, reciprocity and interdependence. Participation in God's mission requires a commitment to struggle and resist the powers that obstruct the fullness of life that God wills for all; and the willingness to work with others in movements and initiatives committed to the causes of justice, dignity and life, even if they do not belong to the Christian fold.

### **Mission as Healing and Wholeness**

52. Included in mission which seeks the reign of God is the promotion of healing and wholeness for all of life. Healing was not only a central feature of Jesus' ministry but also a feature of his call to his followers to continue his work (Matthew 10:1). Healing is also one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:9; Acts 3). The life which the Spirit brings empowers the church for life-giving mission, which includes all aspects of holistic healing, such as prayer, pastoral care, professional medicine, prophetic denunciation of the causes of suffering, and the pursuit of scientific research.
53. Health is more than physical and/or mental well-being, and healing is not primarily medical. This understanding of health coheres with the biblical-theological tradition of the church, which sees a human being as a multidimensional unity and the body, soul and mind as interrelated and interdependent. It thus affirms the social, political and ecological dimensions

of personhood and wholeness. The Spirit actualizes Christ's solidarity with the suffering and witnesses to the power of God's grace.

54. Health, in the sense of wholeness, is a condition related to God's promise for the end of time, as well as a real possibility in the present.[10] Wholeness is not a static balance of harmony but rather involves living-in-community with God, people and creation. Individualism and injustice are barriers to community building, and therefore to wholeness. Discrimination on grounds of medical conditions or disability "including HIV and AIDS" is contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. However, whenever wholeness is experienced, when all the parts of our individual and corporate lives that have been left out are included, and wherever the neglected or marginalized are brought together in love, we may discern signs of God's kingdom on earth.
55. Societies have tended to see disability or illness as a manifestation of sin or a medical problem to be solved. The medical model has emphasized the correction or cure of what is assumed to be the deficiency in the individual. However, many who are marginalized do not see themselves as deficient or sick. The Bible recounts many instances where Jesus healed people with various infirmities but, equally importantly, he restored people to their rightful places within the fabric of the community. Healing is more about the restoration of wholeness than about correcting something perceived as defective. To become whole, the parts that have become estranged need to be reclaimed. The fixation on cure is thus a perspective that must be overcome in order to promote the biblical focus. Mission should foster the full participation of people with disabilities and illness in the life of the church and society.
56. Healing is for the good of the whole community and inclusive of all. Every woman, man and child has the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health without discrimination of any kind. Still, in spite of health being a human right, the majority of people in our world do not have access to that right. Christian medical mission aims at achieving health for all, in the sense that all people around the globe will have access to quality health care. Churches and mission organizations may contribute to this in many ways, such as creating and supporting health-related jobs, clinics and mission hospitals, as well as groups visiting sick congregation members, and the provision of counselling services, care groups and health programmes.
57. There are many ways in which churches can be, and are, involved in health and healing in a comprehensive sense. Healing processes include worship, the Eucharist, praying with and for the sick, confession and forgiveness, the laying-on of hands, anointing with oil, and the use of charismatic spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12). But it must also be noted that inappropriate forms of Christian worship, including triumphalistic healing services in which the healer is glorified at the expense of God, and where false expectations are raised, can deeply harm people. This is not to deny God's miraculous intervention of healing in some cases. The church as a healing community is not a community without problems and suffering but a group of imperfect human beings. It consists of people striving together to live with compassion, love and hope despite their many shortcomings. Being a community of imperfect people, and being part of a creation groaning in pain and longing for its liberation, the Christian community can be a sign of hope, and an expression of the kingdom of God here on earth (Romans 8:22-24).

#### **Mission as Seeking Justice and Inclusivity**

58. Inclusivity is one of the essential features of Christianity from its inception. Our baptism in Christ meant that the cultural barriers that promoted exclusion and division were dissolved (Galatians 3:27-28). The gospel condemns xenophobia, racism, classism, castism, sexism,

ableism, ageism and discrimination against people on any other grounds such as religion, sexual orientation, language, disability, incapacity or having a medical condition such as being HIV-positive. Under the reign of God, inclusion rather than exclusion is the goal of mission. Inclusivity fosters just relationships in the community of humanity and creation, with mutual acknowledgement of persons and creation, and mutual respect and sustenance of each one's sacred worth. It also facilitates each one's full participation in the life of the community.

59. To the extent that we care for the least, the lost, and the abandoned we see glimpses of the presence of the reign of God in our midst. To the extent that we practise radical hospitality toward the estranged in our societies, we demonstrate our commitment to embodying the values of the reign of God. To the extent that we denounce self-centredness as a way of life we make space for the reign of God to permeate our existence. To the extent that we renounce violence in its physical, psychological and spiritual manifestations both in our personal interactions and in the economic, political, social systems, we see glimpses of the kingdom of God at work in the world.
60. This understanding of mission places certain expectations on the church. The church is an inclusive body in which the active involvement of *all* people is affirmed, including the people on or from the margins, to ensure that all God's people participate fully in God's mission. The church is both the agent of the gospel and the place in which the gospel is incarnated. The church is called to make present God's holy and life-affirming plan for the world revealed in Jesus Christ. The church is called to reject values and practices which lead to the destruction of community. Christians are called to acknowledge the sinful nature of all forms of discrimination and transform unjust structures. The church must refuse to harbour oppressive forces within her ranks, acting instead as a counter-cultural community. The biblical mandate to the covenant community in both testaments is characterized by the dictum, It shall not be so among you (Matthew 20:26, KJV).
61. This ethical authenticity of the inner life of the community called church is an important expression of its mission, a living testimony for the marginalized. Christian life is grounded in conversion (*metanoia*). The church is to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. To be *of* the world is to accept the world's values, with its opposition to God, and to live under the conditions of human sinfulness. Rather, the church is called to repentance for her silence and complicity with oppressive structures, and challenged to move beyond recognition of past sins toward restitution, justice and reconciliation. This will bring healing and transformation to the perpetrators as well as the victims of oppression.

#### **4) Water of life: speaking the truth in love**

62. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing (Ezekiel 47:12). The prophet Ezekiel elaborates what God expects of God's beloved community that draws its strength and sustenance through the use of this image of water flowing from the temple. However, today we live in a world dominated by an excessive assertion of religious identities and persuasions that seem to break and brutalize in the name of God rather than heal and nurture communities. In such a context, how do we re-imagine evangelism, the call to proclaim the good news of God in Jesus Christ in ways that protect and nurture life, the way God intends for all of God's creation? The onus then is on us to explore that we become channels and not obstructions, so that the good news flows like water that heals, restores and refreshes.

## **The Call to Evangelize**

63. Christians believe that God's work in Jesus Christ is the good news of salvation for all. Witness (*martyria*) takes a concrete form in evangelism which is the communication of the whole gospel to the whole of humanity in the whole world. Its goal is the salvation of the world and the glory of the Triune God. Evangelism is mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God. It seeks to share this good news with all who have not yet heard it and invites them to an experience of life in Christ.
64. Evangelism, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship.[11]
65. While the Holy Spirit calls some to be evangelists (Ephesians 4:11), we all are called to give an account of the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Not only individuals but also the whole church together is called to evangelize (Mark 16:15; 1 Peter 2:9). When the church ceases to evangelize to share the good news in word and deed, it loses its primary reason for being in the world.
66. Evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him. [12] At Pentecost, the disciples could not but declare the mighty works of God (Acts 2:4; 4:20). They had experienced both the resurrected Jesus and the filling of the Holy Spirit and consequently discovered that the words of Jesus, you will be my witnesses (Acts 1:8) were not a command to be obeyed but a promise fulfilled.
67. Evangelism is not proselytism. The Holy Spirit chooses to work in partnership with peoples' preaching and demonstration of the good news (cf. Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 4:2-6), but it is only God's Spirit who creates new life and brings about rebirth (John 3:5-8; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6). On the one hand, evangelism is not only God's work, but also ours. On the other hand, we must not deceive ourselves into thinking that bigger and better human activity or more forceful pressure on those to whom we speak can be justified. We acknowledge that evangelism at times has been distorted and lost its credibility because some Christians have forced conversions by violent means or the abuse of power. It must, however, be acknowledged that accusations of forceful conversions in some contexts are motivated by the desire of the dominant groups to keep the marginalized living with oppressed identities and in dehumanizing conditions.
68. Evangelism is sharing one's faith and conviction with other people, inviting them to discipleship, whether or not they adhere to other religious traditions. Such sharing is to take place with both confidence and humility, and as an expression of our professed love for our world. If we claim to love God and to love our fellow human beings but fail to share the good news with them urgently and consistently, we deceive ourselves as to the integrity of our love for either God or people. There is no greater gift we can offer to our fellow human beings than to share and or introduce them to the love, grace and mercy of God in Christ.
69. Evangelism leads to repentance, faith and baptism. Hearing the truth in the face of sin and evil demands a response " positive or negative (John 4:28-29 cf. Mark 10:22). It provokes conversion which involves a change of attitudes, priorities and goals. It results in salvation of the lost, healing of the sick and the liberation of the oppressed and the whole creation.

## **Authentic Evangelism**

70. The gospel, with its message of grace, love and judgment, revolving around the person and work of Jesus Christ, must be proclaimed with love, truth and compassion at all times. To that extent, evangelism is a spiritual, life-giving activity.

71. Evangelism is sharing the good news both in word and action. Evangelizing through verbal proclamation or preaching of the gospel (*kerygma*) is profoundly biblical. Jesus was a highly gifted speaker as were both the apostles Peter and Paul. Over the past 2000 years the story of Jesus and the good news of God's saving grace has been told and retold, interpreted and translated in most languages in all parts of the world. However, if our words are not demonstrated through our actions, our evangelism is inauthentic. The combination of verbal declaration and visible action bears witness to God's revelation in Jesus Christ and of his purposes.
72. Therefore, Christians are called to follow Christ's way of proclaiming the good news. We affirm that Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1:1-4) who lived among us, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). We are called to witness to this love of God for the world. Regrettably, many methods and practices of evangelism have betrayed rather than incarnated the gospel. Evangelism, therefore, begins with repentance for the harm that has been caused, for not being done in humility and love for those who are the hearers of the good news, and for abusing the gospel for political purposes or for monetary gains. Christians are called to love their neighbour as themselves (Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15). Imitating Jesus Christ involves affirming the dignity and rights of others. They are called to acts of service and to serve others as Christ did (cf. Mark. 10:45; Matthew 25:45), without exploitation or offering any form of allurements, fully respecting human dignity.[13]
73. Authentic evangelism is grounded in humility and respect for all, and flourishes in the context of dialogue. It promotes the message of the gospel, of healing and reconciliation, in word and deed. There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the message of God's coming reign. [14] Evangelism, therefore, inspires the building of inter-personal and community relationships.
74. Evangelism is an invitation to experience God's salvation in Christ Jesus. It is witnessing to God's reconciling, restoring and healing activity in history. The church, as a community of believers, brings this message of healing to a broken world longing for healing and restoration. Authentic evangelism includes echoing the biblical call for justice and righteousness in society and love for the whole humanity and creation. It addresses the powerful and the political and economic structures as well as those who are disempowered and marginalized.
75. Authentic evangelism, in whichever form it is done, must be guided by life-affirming values. This implies:
- (1) Rejection of all forms of violence, discrimination and repression by religious and secular authority, including the abuse of power " psychological or social.
  - (2) Affirming the freedom of religion to practise and profess faith without any fear of reprisal and or intimidation. Mutual respect and solidarity which promote justice, peace and the common good of all.
  - (3) Respect for all people and human cultures, while also discerning the elements in our own cultures, such as patriarchy, racism, castism etc., that need to be challenged by the gospel.
  - (4) Renunciation of false witness and listening in order to understand in mutual respect.
  - (5) Ensuring freedom for ongoing discernment by persons and communities as part of decision-making.
  - (6) Building relationships with believers of other faiths or no faith to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.[15]

## **Evangelism, Interfaith Dialogue and Christian Presence**

76. Along our pilgrimage in mission, we encounter people of many different faiths, ideologies and convictions and engage with them in dialogue. Dialogue is a way of affirming our common life and goals which are the affirmation of life and the integrity of creation. Dialogue is possible only if we begin with the expectation of meeting God who has preceded us and has been relating with people within their own contexts of culture and convictions. God is there before we come (Acts 17) and our task is not to bring God along, but to witness to the God who is already there. Dialogue provides for an honest encounter where each party brings to the table all that they are in an open, patient and respectful manner.
77. Evangelism and dialogue are distinct but interrelated. Although Christians hope and pray that all people may come to living knowledge of the Triune God, evangelism is not the purpose of dialogue. However, since dialogue is also a mutual encounter of commitments, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ has a legitimate place in it. Furthermore, authentic evangelism takes place in the context of the dialogue of life and action, and in the spirit of dialogue: an attitude of respect and friendship.[16] Evangelism does not only entail the proclamation of our deepest convictions, it also involves listening to others, and being challenged and enriched by others (Acts 10). Without commitment to others as human beings, without love, evangelism becomes mere chatter or noise. Without recognizing the presence of the neighbour, it becomes worthless (1 Corinthians 13:1).
78. We particularly affirm the importance of dialogue between people of different faiths. It is important not only in multi-religious contexts but equally where there is a large majority of a particular faith. It is necessary to protect rights of minority groups and religious freedom and to enable all to contribute to the common good of all in the community. Religious freedom should be upheld because it flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). Followers of all religions and beliefs have equal rights and responsibilities.[17]
79. Evangelism is closely related to unity: The love for one another is a demonstration of the gospel we proclaim (John 13:34-35) while disunity is an embarrassment to the gospel (1 Corinthians 1). It is in that spirit, dialogue helps the cause of the gospel by nurturing attitudes and relationships based on respect, trust and larger common goals.
80. In all situations Christians are called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16) by practising love and justice and representing Christ. Sometimes silence is a powerful form of witness as many who follow the monastic life have discovered. Christian witness is as much by our presence as by our words. In situations where the public testimony to one's faith is not possible without risking one's life, simply living the gospel may be a powerful alternative.

## **Evangelism, Prophecy and Proclamation**

81. We live in a world strongly influenced by individualism, secularism and materialism, and other ideologies that challenge the values of the kingdom of God. Although the gospel is ultimately good news for all, it is bad news for the forces which promote falsehood, injustice and oppression. To that extent, evangelism is also a prophetic vocation which involves speaking truth to power in hope and in love (Acts 26:25; Colossians 1:5; Ephesians 4:15). The gospel is liberative and transformative and its proclamation must involve transformation of cultures with a view to creating just and inclusive communities.
82. Standing against evil or injustice and being prophetic can sometimes be met with suppression and violence, and thus consequently lead to suffering, persecution, and even death. Authentic evangelism involves being vulnerable, following the example of Christ by carrying the cross

and emptying oneself (Philippians 2:5-11). Just as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church under Roman persecution, today the pursuit of justice and righteousness makes a powerful witness to Christ. Jesus linked such self-denial with the call to follow him and with eternal salvation (Mark 8:34-38).

83. The gospel may seem to be ambiguous on secularism. Influenced by the Judeo-Christian religion, many forms of evangelism have found their expression separating the spiritual from the secular, existential realities of life. However, as the biblical witness asserts, worship is due to God alone and not to idols (Matthew 4:10), the preaching of the good news today must denounce the idols of power, wealth, consumerism and similar life-negating forces. The proclamation of the gospel must challenge secularism when it denies or rejects the transcendental significance of life and the spiritualities of people by employing the analytical tools and methods of some empirical sciences.

### **Evangelism and Cultures**

84. The contemporary context of evangelism is one of many cultures which overlap, interact and sometimes clash with each other. The gospel takes root in different contexts through engagement with specific cultural, political and religious realities. Respect for people and their cultural and symbolic life-worlds are necessary for the gospel to have a better reception. Inculturation, or the embodiment which the Word assumes in a particular community or culture, therefore is necessary. Its source and inspiration are in the mystery of the incarnation.[18] Wherever the gospel is expressed “east, west, north or south“ it is the story of God’s dealings with a particular people and creation, in a particular context and coming to us in the historical person of Jesus Christ.
85. The connection of evangelism with colonial powers in the history of mission has led to the presupposition that western forms of Christianity are the standards by which other’s adherence to the gospel should be judged. Evangelism by those who enjoy economic power or cultural hegemony is exposed to the danger of distortion of the gospel. Therefore, it must seek the partnership of the poor, the dispossessed and minorities, and be shaped by their theological resources and visions.
86. Sometimes some of those who share the gospel are tempted to control the outcome of their evangelistic work. This can be seen in their coercive attempts to convert others to expand their churches, and consequently their power bases, or in their reluctance to evangelize some, especially those from different ethnic backgrounds, or the poor and the marginalized out of fear of threat that such option may pose to the existing power structures and status quo within the congregation.
87. Jesus calls us out of our narrow concerns of *our* own kingdom, *our* own liberation and *our* own independence (Acts 1:6) by unveiling to us a larger vision and empowering us by the Holy Spirit to go to the ends of the earth as witnesses in each context of time and space to God’s justice, freedom and peace. The evangelistic work to which we are commissioned is to point all to Jesus, rather than to ourselves or our institutions, looking out for the interests of others rather than our own (cf. Philippians 2:3-4).
88. The enforcement of uniformity discredits the uniqueness of each individual created in the image and likeness of God. Whereas Babel attempted to enforce uniformity, the preaching of the disciples on the day of Pentecost resulted in a unity in which personal particularities and community identities were not lost but respected “ they heard the good news in their own languages.



## 5) Wind of change: church on the move

89. We live and move in the love of the Triune God who communicates the dynamic divine life as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is love (*Deus caritas est*, 1 John 4:8). Mission is a response to God's urging love shown in creation and redemption. God's love invites us (*Caritas Christi urget nos*). This communion (*koinonia*) opens our hearts and lives to our brothers and sisters in the same movement of sharing God's love (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Living in that love of God, the church is called to be the first community experiencing this love and in return is called to become the good news for all. The church is called to offer to the whole of humanity and creation the fullness of life in reconciliation, justice, and peace, as the ultimate objective of her existence, of her very nature. God's overflowing sharing of love is the source of all mission and evangelism.
90. God's love, manifest in the Holy Spirit is an inspirational gift to all humanity in all times and places [19] and for all cultures and situations. The powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, revealed in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, initiates us into the fullness of life that is God's gift to each one of us and the Holy Spirit precedes us in witnessing to it. All this is prior to the mission activities of the church. Jesus Christ breathed the Holy Spirit on his disciples and then sent them out to be his witnesses in the world (John 20:19-23). Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, revealing God's purposes for the world, and empowering and enabling its members to participate in the realization of those purposes. As the church discerns and derives its direction and energy from that source, it is the wind of change that brings about new life and possibilities for creation to flourish.

### Changing Landscapes of World Christianity

91. In some important respects, the landscape of world Christianity in which the church engages in mission today is strikingly different from that of a century ago. For example, the global demographics of Christianity have changed significantly. At the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 there was a prevailing optimism that Western Christian civilization had both the mandate and the means to convey the Christian message to the majority of humankind within a foreseeable period of time. On the one hand, the expectations of the participants of the conference have come true in a sense: Christianity is now a world religion with a majority either living, or having their origins, in the global South and East. On the other hand, what were formerly called Christian nations have witnessed a significant decline and now need re-evangelization.[20]
92. Migration, as the movement of peoples either forced or by choice in search of livelihood, is a worldwide phenomenon. But a rise in right-wing conservatism, coupled with xenophobic attitudes and the persistence of racism has contributed to a rhetoric that demonizes the migrant. Women, children and undocumented workers are the most vulnerable among the migrants in all contexts. Migration also affects the Christian landscape. There are now many migrant Christian populations attempting to settle in other societies. This situation challenges both the host Christian community and the Christian migrant community. The migrant community may find its place within an existing local church, or set up new networks and congregations, migrant and multicultural churches. The existing community needs to engage with migrants and immigrants and to discover appropriate forms of intercultural ministry. The gifts and challenges of these new churches demand a re-imagining of mission, evangelism and being church, and reflection on what kind of cooperation and also what kind of intercultural ecclesial relationships and structures are appropriate in such situations.
93. Another phenomenon that merits missional attention is the emergence of strong Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christianity. The exponentially growing Pentecostal movements, and the charismatic groups within the traditional, established churches, show a strong

missionary fervour. Therefore, they can flourish in places where the traditional churches in the North/West have lost energy. Many are able to reach out to poor communities, and their missionary activity often results in massive grassroots movements. Some Pentecostal movements from the global South are reversing the traditional direction of mission by evangelizing the global North as well as within the global South itself. But evangelizing activities can cause tensions between different churches, especially when one church grows at the expense of another. These new forms of Christianity have led to an unprecedented growth in the number of Christian denominations. This diversity of world Christianity is an important challenge when doing mission in unity today.

94. Activities of individuals, congregations and organizations in the name of Christian mission are constantly diversifying and an increasing number are independent of the mission work sponsored by churches. While much of this is an expression of initiative and creativity in mission, difficulties arise when such para-church activity is highly individualistic and unaccountable to a wider Christian community or church. Among the new types of mission activities are short-term mission trips which can help to build partnerships between churches in different parts of the world but in some cases place an intolerable burden on poor local churches, or disregard the existing churches altogether. The challenge is to find ways of exercising spiritual gifts which build up the whole church in every part (1 Corinthians 12-14).
95. The winds of change in today's world certainly call the church to be a wind for a better world by being led by the Holy Spirit. Such a re-imagination of the church is only possible through the church being incarnated anew in the life of the world, especially in contexts where people are clamouring for God's saving grace to make life with freedom and dignity possible for all. A key underlying ecclesial challenge is the question of power. The voices and agenda of the churches in the global South, beyond the mainstream or on the margins have not yet been fully recognized within the structures of international mission and ecumenical cooperation.

#### **Mission in Humility and Respect**

96. As disciples who have been sent by Christ to proclaim his good news, we have to follow in his footsteps by embracing all humanity and creation in humble service, solidarity, love and compassion, and witnessing to the good news of partaking in God's glory. We believe in Christ who made himself nothing (Philippians 2:7) through incarnation up to the consequences of suffering death on the cross as well as in the resurrected Lord who was raised from the dead. Jesus became our Christ not through power or money but through his self-emptying (*kenosis*) and death on the cross. This humble understanding of mission does not merely shape our methods, but is the very nature and essence of our faith in Christ. The church is a servant in God's mission and not the master. The missionary church glorifies God in self-emptying love.
97. Christian witness, through its life-bearing message of the resurrection is an invitation to come to communion (*koinonia*) with God and the entire creation in service, fellowship and proclamation. As we do so, we become partakers in God's saving work for humanity. In the church, God is glorified in worship and liturgy, in spiritual and sacramental life, in social action, in solidarity with all humanity and with the created world, and in proclaiming the good news. This makes liturgy the source and starting point of the church's mission. The church draws its strength from its encounter with the living God in worship and prayer. Christian liturgy, therefore, is not only a springboard for mission, but a surprising manifestation of God's reign, and an offering and thanksgiving for the entire world.
98. Some missionary movements have fallen prey to the temptation of triumphalism. Mission in the twenty-first century has to overcome this image of winners and conquerors through

common witness in humility. Authentic witness presumes a missionary ethos that is respectful of others and all that belongs to them. It is incompatible with expansive tactics aiming primarily at the numerical growth of Christians around the world, or with competitive attitudes.

99. The enticement of Christians who already belong to a church to change their denominational allegiance, through ways and means that contradict the spirit of Christian love, violate the freedom of the human person and diminish trust in the Christian witness of the church [21] shares nothing in common with genuine conversion to Christ. It is important for Christians to embrace and act upon the imperative of religious freedom, which is a cornerstone of our humanity. Christ, with his life and resurrection freed the entire creation from all bondages, even from the ultimate bondage for humanity which is death.
100. We live in the highly competitive environment of the free market which reinforces unlimited growth, and attitudes of competition and winning over and against others. This has influenced many churches and para-church movements in their perception of mission too. As such, many think that they must recruit new customers, while retaining the old ones. This has resulted in claiming success in mission on the basis of numerical growth of converts and new churches, rather than on the basis of the transformation that has taken place in people and contexts.
101. The mission of God (*missio Dei*) is the source of and basis of the church. Mission is the overflow of the infinite love of the Triune God, who created the whole world out of nothing and then proceeded to create all humankind in his image and likeness, so as to make us partakers of this ineffable love.[22] The Father then sent the Son to fulfil the plan of God's salvific work. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was sent to enlighten the apostles and to empower them for their missionary ministry. This active communion of the Holy Trinity is the source of the unity of the church. The aim of God's mission is to invite every human being to experience fellowship with God and with one another according to the inner unity of the One God in three persons (John 17:21).[23]
102. A theology that starts from the participation of the church in God's mission cannot fail to point out that the church was born in the context of the mission of Jesus Christ. Therefore, from a missiological perspective, the church in history has not always existed but, both theologically and empirically, came into being for the sake of mission. It is not possible to separate church and mission in terms of their origin or purpose. To fulfil God's missionary purpose is the church's aim. The relationship between church and mission is very intimate because the same Spirit of Christ who empowers the church in mission is also the life of the church. At the same time as he sent the church into the world Jesus Christ breathed the Holy Spirit into the church (John 20:19-23) Therefore, the church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. If it does not engage in mission, it ceases to be church.
103. Starting with God's mission leads to an ecclesiological approach from below . Such an approach promotes an inductive, contextual understanding of theology of the church, instigating a fresh look at ecclesial phenomena and the changing landscape of world Christianity. In this approach it is not the church that has a mission but rather the mission that has a church. Mission is not a project of expanding churches but of the church embodying God's salvation in this world. Out of this follows a dynamic understanding of the apostolicity of the church: apostolicity is not only safeguarding the faith of the church through the ages but also participating in the apostolate. Thus the churches mainly and foremost need to be missionary churches.
104. Practically, as well as theologically, this means that church and mission need to be united. The integration in 1961 of IMC and WCC was a significant step in this direction. This

historical experience encourages us to believe that mission and church can come together. However, this aim is not yet fully accomplished. We have to continue this journey in our century with fresh attempts today so that the church becomes truly missionary.

105. The missionary nature of the church also means that there must be a way that churches and para-church structures can be more closely related. On the one hand, para-church structures, by pursuing mission, are inevitably ecclesially moored and this constitutes an already existing link between churches and mission organizations. Furthermore, the churches may have a positive impact on para-church structures in facilitating their work and providing accountability. On the other hand, para-church structures help churches not to forget their dynamic apostolic character. The integration of IMC and WCC brought about a new sort of culture in approaching the topic of church unity and mission; while discussions of unity have been very concerned with structural questions, the mission agencies represent flexibility and subsidiarity in mission.
106. The churches realize today that in many respects they are still not adequate embodiments of God's mission. Sometimes there is still a sense of separation of mission and church prevailing. And the lack of full and real unity in mission still harms the authenticity and credibility of the fulfilment of God's mission in this world. Our Lord prayed that they may all be one...so that the world may believe (John 17:21). Thus mission and unity are intertwined. Consequently there is the need to open up our reflections on church and unity to an even wider understanding of unity: the unity with the poor and needy and even the cosmic unity of the whole of God's creation.

### **Common Witness in Diversity**

107. Mission is a response in love to the call of the Triune God for a journey in faith and hope for a new world of justice, peace and life for all. Therefore, authentic mission makes the other a partner in, not an object of, mission. It views all people to whom the Christian witness is rendered as co-workers in God's mission. They assist in the realization of the work of the Holy Spirit for a new world order, a new world economy based on the biblical truth that the earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Psalm 24:1, NIV) and care for the fullness of life. While many forms of Christian witness seek to proclaim the saving power of God through Jesus Christ, this should not obscure belief in the dynamic involvement of God's Spirit throughout the whole creation.
108. Living out our faith in community is an important way of participating in mission. It is not possible to be a Christian without being a part of the Christian community, whether organized or informal: Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another (Hebrews 10:25, NIV). And the church is an inclusive community that welcomes all. Through word and deed and in its very being, the church foretastes and witnesses to the vision of the coming reign of God. The church is the *coming together* of the faithful and their *going forth* in peace.
109. Just as the world in general and humanity in particular is blessed with a great variety of diverse and complementary gifts that are expressed in a multiplicity of cultural and historical contexts, it is God's design that such colour and variety does not lead to separation and hostility, but to interdependence and harmony.
110. The Christian communities in their diversity are called to identify and practise ways of common witness in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, including through mutually respectful and responsible forms of evangelism. Common witness is what the churches, even while separated, bear together, especially through joint efforts, by manifesting whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already share and experience in common. [24]

111. Hospitality, together with humility, makes mission possible. In the history of mission, the hospitality of Indigenous people who welcomed the gospel carried by strangers has been neglected while the glory of mission success was credited to foreign missionaries. We have to learn how to exercise such hospitality today, particularly to practise common witness in multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts.
112. As communities of faith, we believe that the church is called to reframe the rhetoric of migration and address the causes that displace populations. Churches and communities that open themselves to receive migrants should receive encouragement and support. This necessitates a new paradigm for mission and ecumenism that takes seriously the need to be inclusive and collaborative. We are told: Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:2, NIV). It is imperative that existing churches and mission bodies create space for migrant communities as equal partners in their life, programmes and ministries.[25] The churches are called to be one to serve God's mission beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries and ought to create multi-cultural ministry and mission as a concrete expression of common witness in diversity.
113. Within the framework of the CWME, churches and mission agencies have a structure to seek ways of expressing and strengthening unity in mission. CWME is the direct heir of the initiatives taken at Edinburgh 1910 in order to facilitate the quest for unity in mission. Being an integral part of the WCC, the CWME has been able to encounter new understandings of mission and unity from Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Indigenous churches from all over the globe. The context of the WCC has also facilitated close working relationships with the Roman Catholic Church.
114. A growing intensity of collaboration with Evangelicals, especially with the Lausanne Movement for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Alliance who also represent stakeholders in the Edinburgh 2010 centenary project, has also abundantly contributed to the enrichment of ecumenical theological reflection on mission in unity. Although our approaches to mission in unity have different foci, there is overlap in our membership in that the CWME also includes Evangelicals. Together we share a common concern for evangelism and that the whole church should witness to the whole gospel in the whole world.[26]
115. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of unity, unites people and the church too, to celebrate unity in diversity both proactively and constructively. The Spirit helps to transform the problem of difference into a reason to celebrate diversity. The Spirit provides both the dynamic context and the resources needed for people to explore differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment in order to grow into an inclusive and mutually responsible community.

### **God Empowers the Church in Mission**

116. The history of the church is marked by divisions and exclusions that have often harmed its status as the body of Christ. Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, empowering and energizing its members. Thus mission becomes for Christians an urgent inner compulsion (1 Corinthians 9:16), even a test and criterion for authentic life in Christ, rooted in the profound demands of Christ's love; to invite others to share in the fullness of life Jesus came to bring. Participating in God's mission, therefore, should be natural for all Christians and all churches, not only for particular individuals or specialized groups.[27] It fills us with joy but also with a sense of need for repentance when facing our shortcomings and the challenges of today.
117. What makes the Christian message of God's abundant love for humanity and all creation credible in the encounter between the faithful of different religions is their ability to speak with one voice, where possible, and to give common witness and an account of the hope that

is in us (1 Peter 3:15). If Christians do what they proclaim and live out unity among themselves, among their different communities and traditions, they become a sign to the world and an example to the faithful of other religions (John 13:35). At the same time a commitment to religious freedom constitutes the key to establishing credibility in ecumenical actions and in relationships with other faiths.

118. In their response to Christ's prayer that all might be one, the churches have produced a rich array of common declarations, some of them resulting in uniting or united churches, and of dialogues, seeking to restore the unity of all Christians in one living organism of healing and reconciliation. Healing and reconciliation as the restoration of right relations with God is the source of healing and reconciliation with oneself, with people of our own faith and other faiths, and with the whole of creation. A rediscovery of the work of the Holy Spirit in healing and reconciliation, which is at the heart of today's mission theology, has significant ecumenical implications.
119. While acknowledging the need of and efforts towards visible structural unity among churches, it must also be said that unity need not be sought only at the level of organizational structures. From a mission perspective what is important is to discern what helps the cause of the mission of God. In other words, unity in mission is the basis for the structural unity of the churches. Attempts towards unity must not be at the cost of the biblical call to seek justice which may sometimes imply breaking false unities that silence and oppress. Genuine unity is possible when inclusivity and respect for the other are the guiding norms.
120. The church, as a community of believers, brings the message of healing to a broken world longing for hope to overcome despair. In order to bring God's healing to others, the church needs first to be a recipient of divine healing power and grace. The credibility of the healing and reconciling ministry of the church is rooted in a demonstration of resurrection of life, that is, restored wholeness and unity within.

## **6) Feast of life: concluding affirmations**

121. We are the servants of the Triune God, who has given us the mission of proclaiming the good news to all humanity and creation, especially the oppressed and the suffering people who are longing for fullness of life. Mission "as a common witness to Christ" is an invitation to the feast in the kingdom of God (Luke 14:15). The mission of the church is to prepare the banquet and to invite all people, especially the the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame to the feast of life (Luke 14:21). The feast is a celebration of creation and fruitfulness overflowing from the love of God, the source of life in abundance. It is a sign of the liberation and reconciliation of the whole creation which is the goal of mission.
122. **We affirm that the purpose of God's mission is fullness of life (John 10:10) and this is the criterion for discernment in mission.** Therefore, we are called to discern the Spirit of God wherever there is life in its fullness, particularly in terms of the liberation of the oppressed peoples, the healing and reconciliation of broken communities and the restoration of the whole creation. We are challenged to appreciate the life-affirming spirits present in different cultures and to be in solidarity with all those who are involved in the mission of affirming and preserving life. We also discern and confront evil spirits wherever forces of death and negation of life are experienced.
123. **We affirm that mission begins with God's act of creation and continues in re-creation, by the enlivening power of the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit, poured out in tongues of fire at Pentecost, fills our hearts and makes us into Christ's church. The Spirit which was in Christ Jesus inspires us to a self-emptying and cross-bearing life-style and accompanies God's people as we seek to bear witness to the love of God in word and deed. The Spirit of

truth leads into all truth and empowers us to defy the demonic powers and speak the truth in love. As a redeemed community we share with others the waters of life and look for the Spirit of unity to heal, reconcile and renew the whole creation.

124. **We affirm that spirituality is the source of energy for mission and that mission in the Spirit is transformative.** Thus we seek a re-orienting of our perspective between mission, spirituality and creation. Mission spirituality that flows from liturgy and worship reconnects us with one another and with the wider creation. We understand that our participation in mission, our existence in creation and our practice of the life of the Spirit are woven together for they are mutually transformative. Mission that begins with creation invites us to celebrate life in all its dimensions as God's gift.
125. **We affirm that the mission of God's Spirit is to renew the whole creation.** The earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Psalm 24:1, NIV). The God of life protects, loves and cares for nature. Humanity is not the master of the earth but is responsible to care for the integrity of creation. Excessive greed and unlimited consumption which lead to continuous destruction of nature must end. God's love does not proclaim a human salvation separate from the renewal of the whole creation. We are called to participate in God's mission beyond our human-centred goals. God's mission is to all life and we have to both acknowledge it and serve it in new ways of mission. We pray for repentance and forgiveness, but we also call for action now. Mission has creation at its heart.
126. **We affirm that today mission movements are emerging from the global South and East which are multi-directional and many faceted.** The shifting centre of gravity of Christianity to the global South and East challenges us to explore missiological expressions that are rooted in these contexts, cultures and spiritualities. We need to develop further mutuality and partnership and affirm interdependence within mission and the ecumenical movement. Our mission practice should show solidarity with suffering peoples and harmony with nature. Evangelism "the sharing of the person and work of Jesus Christ and the values of God's kingdom" is done in self-emptying humility, with respect towards others and in dialogue with people of different cultures and faiths. It should, in this landscape, also involve confronting structures and cultures of oppression and dehumanization that are in contradiction to the values of God's reign.
127. **We affirm that marginalized people are agents of mission and exercise a prophetic role which emphasizes that fullness of life is for all.** The marginalized in society are the main partners in God's mission. Marginalized, oppressed and suffering people have a special gift to distinguish what news is good for them and what news is bad for their endangered life. In order to commit ourselves to God's life-giving mission, we have to listen to the voices from the margins to hear what is life-affirming and what is life-destroying. We must turn our direction of mission to the actions that the marginalized are taking. Justice, solidarity and inclusivity are key expressions of mission from the margins.
128. **We affirm that the economy of God is based on values of love and justice for all and that transformative mission resists idolatry in the free-market economy.** Economic globalization has effectively supplanted the God of life with mammon, the god of free-market capitalism that claims the power to save the world through the accumulation of undue wealth and prosperity. Mission in this context needs to be counter-cultural, offering alternatives to such idolatrous visions because mission belongs to the God of life, justice and peace and not to this false god who brings misery and suffering to people and nature. Mission, then, is to denounce the economy of greed and to participate in and practise the divine economy of love, sharing and justice.

129. **We affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news in all ages and places and should be proclaimed in the Spirit of love and humility.** We affirm the centrality of the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection in our message and also in the way we do evangelism. Therefore, evangelism is pointing always to Jesus and the kingdom of God rather than to institutions, and it belongs to the very being of the church. The prophetic voice of the church should not be silent in times that demand this voice be heard. The church is called to renew its methods of evangelism to communicate the good news with persuasion, inspiration and conviction.
130. **We affirm that dialogue and cooperation for life are integral to mission and evangelism.** Authentic evangelism is done with respect to freedom of religion and belief, for all human beings, as images of God. Proselytism by violent means, economic incentive or abuse of power is contrary to the message of the gospel. In doing evangelism it is important to build relations of respect and trust between people of different faiths. We value each and every human culture and recognize that the gospel is not possessed by any group but is for every people. We understand that our task is not to bring God along but to witness to the God who is already there (Acts 17:23-28). Joining in with the Spirit we are enabled to cross cultural and religious barriers to work together towards Life.
131. **We affirm that God moves and empowers the church in mission.** The church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit is dynamic and changing as it continues the mission of God. This leads to a variety of forms of common witness, reflecting the diversity of world Christianity. Thus the churches need to be on the move, journeying together in mission, continuing in the mission of the apostles. Practically, this means that church and mission should be united, and different ecclesial and missional bodies need to work together for the sake of Life.
132. The Triune God invites the whole creation to the Feast of Life, through Jesus Christ who came that they may have life, and may have it in all its fullness (John 10:10, REB), through the Holy Spirit who affirms the vision of the reign of God, Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth! (Isaiah 65:17, KJV). We commit ourselves together in humility and hope to the mission of God, who recreates all and reconciles all. And we pray, God of Life, lead us into justice and peace!

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

[2] Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation , Â§ 8.

[3] Ion Briaed, *Go Forth in Peace*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986), p.3.

[4] Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation , Â§ 24.

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

[6] *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE): A Background Document*, WCC, Justice, Peace and Creation Team (Geneva: WCC, 2005), p. 13.

[7] Edinburgh 2010, *Common Call*, Â§ 4.

[8] *The San Antonio Report. Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way*, Frederick R. Wilson, ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), p.26.

[9] *The Accra Confession*, Â§28.

[10] *Healing and Wholeness: The Churches' Role in Health*, WCC, 1990, p. 6.



[11] It is important to note that not all churches understand evangelism as expressed in the above. The Roman Catholic Church refers to evangelization as the *missio ad gentes* [mission to the peoples] directed to those who do not know Christ. In a wider sense, it is used to describe ordinary pastoral work, while the phrase new evangelization designates pastoral outreach to those who no longer practise the Christian faith. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, No.12, 2007, pp. 489-504.

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

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

[14] *The San Antonio Report*, p.26; *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, Â§34; The Salvador Report , *Called to One Hope. The Gospel in Diverse Cultures*, Christopher Duraisingh, ed., (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), p. 38.

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

[16] Vatican, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, 1991, Â§9.

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

[18] *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* , Â§26.

[19] ***Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper no.111, 1982, Â§19.***

[20] Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

[21] *Mission and Evangelism in Unity* , Â§71.

[22] Cf. *Ibid.*, Â§10-13.

[23] *Ibid.*, Â§15.

[24] Thomas F. Best, Günther Gassmann eds., *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela 1993*, World Council of Churches, Commission on Faith and Order, Faith and Order Paper 166, (Geneva: WCC Publications 1994), p. 254.

[25] Report of WCC Consultation on Mission and Ecclesiology of the Migrant Churches, Utrecht, the Netherlands, 16-21 November 2010 , *International Review of Mission*, 100.1. (2011), pp.104-107.

[26] Cf. *The Whole Church Taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World: Reflections of the Lausanne Theology Working Group*, 2010.

[27] *Mission and Evangelism in Unity* , Â§13



## Rapport fra KV's misjonskonferanse, Manila, mars 2012 v/ Knud Jørgensen og Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen

På en konference i **Manila** sidst i mars måned blev det ellefte udkast til et nytt missionsdokument fremlagt. **Her drøftede to hundrede kirkeledere og missionsteologer fra hele verden dokumentet.** Det endelige udkast til et nyt missionsdokument vil senere på året blive præsenteret for centralkomiteén i Kirkernes Verdensråd, og dersom de antager dokumentet, vil det blive præsenteret på Kirkernes Verdensråds tiende generalforsamling i Busan i Sydkorea, som afholdes fra den 30. oktober til den 8. november næste år.

Det er tredive år siden, Kirkernes Verdensråd sidst udarbejdede et missionsdokument. Verden har ændret sig afgørende siden da, og derfor ændrer betoningerne i mission sig også. Det forsøger det nye missionsdokument at afspejle ved at tale om "mission i nye landskaber".

De seneste årtier har mission og evangelisering ikke spillet nogen markant rolle i Kirkernes Verdensråd. Eksempelvis var mission ikke et toneangivende tema på generalforsamlingerne i Harare i Zimbabwe i 1998 eller i Porto Alegre i Brasilien i 2006. **Kommission for Verdensmission og Evangelisering har derfor arbejdet på, at mission bliver et centralt tema på generalforsamlingen i Busan.**

Missionsdokumentet er femogtyve sider langt og knytter til ved Johannesevangeliet kapitel ti, hvor Jesus siger: "Jeg er kommet, for at I skal have liv og have det i overflod." Termen *liv* er helt central for dokumentet og udtrykker en holistisk tilgang til mission. Mission gælder alle aspekter af livet. Grundtonen i dokumentet er da også, at mission og evangelisering har med livsfylde og livsrigdom at gøre, og at diakoni ikke kan adskilles fra forkyndelse, men at begge aspekter ved mission fik et kraftfuldt udtryk i Jesus Kristus

Dokumentet funderer virkningsfuldt sin holistiske forståelse af mission i en stærk skabelsesteologi. Gud har skabt en overvældende smuk verden, som er skabt til at blomstre og udfolde sig i al sin mangfoldighed. Gud vil liv, liv i overflod!

Det mest omdiskuterede hovedafsnit af dokumentet var ***Jordens salt: Mission fra margin af samfundet.*** Det blev anført, at mission i dag som oftest ikke længere er mission fra centrum til margin, og at en sådan strategi også ofte er endt med utilsigtet undertrykkelse. I stedet blev det betonet, at kirken må forene sig med, og i øvrigt ofte *er* forenet med mennesker, som er marginaliserede i samfundet, og at kirken netop fra periferien af samfundet må være engageret i mission.

Kirkernes Verdensråd er jævnligt blevet beskyldt for at være utydelig i sin forståelse af evangelisering og at forvandle evangelisering til kamp for retfærdighed og fred. I hovedafsnittet *Livets vand: Sandheden tro i kærlighed*, er det nye missionsdokument befriende modigt i sin udfordring af alle kristne og kirker til at være levende og dynamiske budbringere af evangeliet og i sin understregning af, at de gode nyheder ikke først og fremmest er alle vore diakonale og politiske

handlinger, men Guds gerning i Jesus Kristus. På den baggrund definerer dokumentet evangelisering således:

**“At dele sin tro og overbevisning med andre, at invitere dem til efterfølgelse, hvad enten de tilhører andre religiøse traditioner eller ej. At dele evangeliet skal ske med både overbevisning og ydmyghed og som et udtryk for vor kærlighed til verden.”**

I dette afsnit finder man i øvrigt også formuleringer, som lægger sig tæt op ad Lausanne-bevægelsens evangelikale sprogbrug om evangelisering.

Vanskelighederne i religionsteologien undviger man behændigt. I stedet vælger man at lægge sig op ad en formulering fra en konference i San Antonio i 1989, hvor det hedder, at Jesus Kristus er den eneste vej til frelse, som vi ved om, men at der samtidig ikke kan sættes grænser for Guds frelsende nåde.

Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen er ansvarshavende redaktør for Dansk Tidsskrift for Teologi og Kirke og adjunkt ved Menighedsfakultetet i Aarhus.

**Knud Jørgensen** er adjungeret professor ved Lutheran Theological Seminary i Hong Kong og ved Menighedsfakultetet

## INVITATION

### To the annual meeting of Nordic -Baltic Faith & Order

### Welcome to Oslo 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> September 2012!

The program is in the making.

- But we will focus on the **Study Text “One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition” (WCC 2011)**, and hope everyone has been able to read and work on this study document before we meet. (If you don't yet have a hard copy, please find the document attached (link) here:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/ii-worship-and-baptism/one-baptism-towards-mutual-recognition.html>

From the preface we read: “The study text is offered to the churches in the hope that fresh perspectives will help the churches to clarify the interrelated challenges of the mutual recognition of baptism and ecclesial recognition; to put the consequences of mutual recognition fully into practice; and to identify issues which still prevent such recognition”

- An idea is to bring up Christian Education and its relation to Baptism.
- In the context of the 30th anniversary of the BEM-document (Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry, 1982) we suggest a session on the effects of BEM and its on-going significance in the Nordic region, probably together with the Theological faculties.
- There will also be reporting from the WCC Central Committee regarding Faith and Order, notably its restructuring, and the completion of a new text on Ecclesiology.
- The Revd. Dr. John Gibaut, Director of the Commission on Faith and Order, WCC, will attend.

**Please note time and venue. And main topics for discussion! We will come back with more detailed program and practicalities later on.**

On behalf of the host,

Rev. Einar Tjelle  
Deputy General Secretary Church of Norway  
Council on Ecumenical and International Relations  
phone: +47 23081272 mobile: +47 92828461  
e-mail: [einar.tjelle@kirken.no](mailto:einar.tjelle@kirken.no)  
Address: Rådhusgata 1-3 (visit)  
P.O.Box 799 Sentrum, N-0106, Norway

