

Called to God's Mission



**Report of the Third Round of the International Dialogue
Between Representatives of the
World Communion of Reformed Churches
and
Representatives of the Pentecostal World Fellowship
2014-2020**



**World Communion
of Reformed Churches**



**Pentecostal
WORLD FELLOWSHIP**

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Introduction

Scripture:

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)

¹⁴But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ¹⁵And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” (Romans 10:14-15)

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

- 1) We live in exciting times! Many are responding to the gospel and many more are engaged in God’s mission (*missio Dei*) among all people. How can we engage in God’s mission authentically? What constitutes mission today? How does mission engage people in our communities? How do we read the signs of our times in a way that helps us respond to God’s call to mission? This document is a testimony to how Pentecostal and Reformed Christians respond together to God’s mission into which we have been called. We are exploring together what we think is important for the mission of the Church today.

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- 2) The Reformed and Pentecostal representatives, meeting from 2014-2020, are grateful to God and are encouraged by what we share in our vision of God's mission and how we respond to it. Through these years, the Rev. Dr. Karla Ann Koll served as the Co-Chair for the Reformed team, while the Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. served as Co-Chair on behalf of the Pentecostals. Given the topic of "Mission," the dialogue members thought it was essential to experience something of different parts of the world where mission is an ongoing reality. As a result, they met at the Reformed retreat center, Megbékélés Háza, in Berekfürd, Hungary, 16-21 November 2014; at the St. Paul Cultural Center in Antalya, Turkey, 1-7 December 2015; at the Latin American Biblical University in San José, Costa Rica, 2-6 December 2016; at the Alphacrucis College in Parramatta, Australia, 1-5 December 2017; in Legon, Accra, Ghana, 29 November-4 December 2018; and at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines, 23-30 October 2019. On two occasions, drafting groups met, first from 18-22 August 2019 at the home of Jean-Daniel and Susan Plüss, in East Booth Bay, Maine, to begin a draft for use in Baguio, and then at the World Communion of Reformed Churches office in Hannover, Germany, 5-8 March 2020 to complete the drafting process.

- 3) Participants have wrestled with their differences and engaged in a process of discovering commonalities regarding their participation in God's mission. As we have spent several years together on our common journey, we have been surprisingly encouraged by the realization that we have sensed the Holy Spirit moving among us. The Lord of the Church prayed that his followers should be one for the sake of the one mission. Yet very often, what the world experiences is our divisive tendencies in mission, leading to confusion and apathy. In addition, religious sentiments have often been drawn into conflicts and violence in the world today in a manner which beckons us to come to new understandings of engagement in God's mission. With so much at stake, the different Church families in the world cannot

afford to engage in mission in a manner that promotes division and competition.

- 4) This report builds upon the work of the first two rounds of the Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue, "Word and Spirit: Church and World (1996-2000)," and "Experience in Christian Faith and Life (2001-2011)." Both of these reports briefly mention the importance of God's mission in the world (*missio Dei*). This document takes the focus on mission further.
- 5) Reformed and Pentecostal churches have a rich history of engaging in mission. They have responded in their own ways to the task to which they were called and the challenges they have met. Much has changed in the field of mission over the past century. For instance, mission no longer originates largely with professional missionaries. Mission is no longer viewed according to a "sender-recipient" paradigm. It originates everywhere and it goes everywhere. Like much of the Church, the centre of gravity for Reformed and Pentecostal churches now lies in the Global South. Today, the whole church is involved in mission, which is multidirectional. Since the world of the 21st century is interconnected, Pentecostal and Reformed churches increasingly face similar issues. With such changes in mind, participants in this third round of our dialogue decided to offer a more globally inclusive and theologically nuanced understanding of mission that takes seriously these and other recent changes in mission thinking and practice.
- 6) At its best, all theology, including a theology of mission, needs to be dialogical. By recognizing this fact, we become more aware of how we use words to describe our theological understandings. In listening carefully to one another, sometimes we find that we use words differently, often leading to different practices. Thus, participants have tried to engage each other's theological language with great care and mutual respect. Each Christian and each church perceives God's call to mission

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within a particular context, a particular theological tradition, and within a particular ecclesiastical structure. Reformed and Pentecostal Christians have sometimes perceived God's call to mission differently and have acted accordingly. At times, this has generated tensions between them. Even within both church families, the understanding and practices of mission may vary widely. Yet, we realize that God's mission is one because God is one. This dialogue process has offered us the opportunity to explore different understandings and practices of mission. It has allowed us to identify points of convergence as well as tension, to ask questions of one another, and to encourage one another to greater faithfulness.

- 7) We began our work together, reading the signs of the times as we thought about the mission in which we are engaged. This led to the formulation of the following questions, which guided the discussions and that appear in the four sections of this report:
 - How does our understanding of the nature and scope of salvation influence the way we think about and practice mission?
 - How do we view the issue of power and the role of the Holy Spirit when we speak about mission?
 - In what way does the unity of the Church impact the nature and effectiveness of mission?
 - How do our views of eschatology affect our practice of mission?
- 8) Since both traditions embrace a diversity of missiologies, we have tried to formulate a vision of the mission of God (*missio Dei*) that Pentecostal and Reformed Christians can live out together. We wish to encourage other Pentecostal and Reformed Christians to join us and engage with this vision. We need one another and we want to encourage further dialogue and common witness as we live toward the Kingdom of God.

I. Mission and Salvation

Scripture:

⁹...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. ¹⁰Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)

Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. (Mark 16:15)

¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:19-23)

¹⁶When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." ²⁰And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:16-21)

Question: How does our understanding of the nature and scope of salvation influence the way we think about and practice mission?

Affirmation of Fundamental Principles

- 9) We believe that salvation and mission are at the heart of Christian faith, which has led us to raise the following questions: Do we mean the same thing when we talk about salvation? What role does evangelization play in our understanding of mission? Is mission limited to ensuring the salvation of people?
- 10) Both the Reformed and Pentecostal participants agree on the following: Salvation comes to us by grace through faith. It is the work of God, accomplished through the redemption of Christ, and its completion or application by the Holy Spirit. This means that it is always God who takes the initiative in creation and in salvation. Salvation is something that God does in and for us, but also through us for the sake of the whole world. Once we have received this free gift of salvation, our gratitude is expressed in faithfully responding to God's mission to witness in life, word, and deed "the mighty acts of God who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). This means that mission is primarily the activity of God, and not merely a

human response to God's wonderful deeds. Such mission leads to discipleship and human flourishing. By participating in God's mission, we are fulfilling our Lord's call on us to be the salt and light to the world. (Matthew 5:13-16)

- 11) God's mission has always been done in particular cultural, economic, political, religious, social, etc. contexts. Many of these contexts have greatly changed, having been shaped by newer global and local realities. These changes hold implications for the mission of the church: it is challenged to read the signs of the times, understand them, and take seriously the changing contexts, in order to remain faithful to its engagement in God's mission.
- 12) Mission has often been done in a context of survival, which has been expressed in different ways historically, geographically and culturally. Older fears and anxieties of survival have sometimes found new forms and ways of expression. Today, in some contexts, survival means dealing with difficult economic challenges, as well as climate change, and other ecologically related challenges. In other contexts, survival is defined by persecution or suffering for the faith. In still other contexts, survival means wrestling with dwindling church membership in the midst of secularization and challenges posed by social issues.
- 13) The mission of the church is first God's mission, the *missio Dei*. It is to embody and proclaim the gospel, the "Good News" about the restoration of God's rule over all human life and all of creation. The Church is a sign, a foretaste, and a servant of the Kingdom of God in the world. While realizing that the Kingdom of God is God's initiative, the Church can testify to its nearness in its life, words, and deeds. When the Church strives to reflect the community of love, justice, freedom, and peace, it lives up to fulfilling its mission.
- 14) God's plan of redemption embraces all humanity and all creation (Mark 16:15; Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah. 49:6; 52:7-10; John 3:16;

12:32; Colossians 1:19-20; 1 John 2:2; Revelation. 5:9). Because salvation relates to all of life, mission is best understood as an all-encompassing life ministry, an invitation to life in Christ. "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). In other words, the mission of God is holistic and comprehensive; it takes care of the totality of life—including human life and that of all creation. This means that salvation has individual, communal, and cosmic dimensions. To emphasize one over the others leads to serious errors in our understanding of salvation and in the way we conduct mission. Salvation is a spiritual reality that impacts life as a whole. As a divine intervention into the world, it has material, physical, social, economic, and political consequences. Salvation cannot be understood only in this-worldly terms, only in otherworldly terms, or only in future terms. Salvation has a past, present, *and* a future reality. The mission of God embodies and mediates that reality in the world. The purpose of mission is not only the salvation of all humanity and all creation but above all serving God's glory. (Romans 11:33-36).

Misunderstandings and Stereotypes

15) The reconciling love of God moves us in our response to the mission of God, which has many dimensions in different contexts. Evangelism in its different forms is one dimension of mission. It includes proclaiming verbally, the Kingdom of God, the "Good News" of the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16) to people who have not heard, or who have heard but have not yet accepted, or who have been alienated from God, and inviting them to participate in God's marvellous light. It means being contextually aware and being sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 11:1-18; 15). Paying attention to the contexts must give room for openness to imagination inspired by the Holy Spirit in Christian witnessing that takes seriously the cultures and realities of the different communities of the recipients of the gospel. If the gospel of the Kingdom of God is to address real needs and to be heard as "Good News," it needs

also to challenge and confront every idol in all of our societies (e.g. mammon, Matthew 6: 24) and invite people to conversion in Christ.

- 16) *Evangelism* of individual people, that is, proclaiming the message about the gift of being “born again” (John 3:5-8) is part of the mission of the church, but it cannot be limited only to that. *Evangelization* includes evangelism, but it is more than evangelism. Evangelization also includes proclaiming the message about God’s rule or reign over the whole of human life, and the message about the possibility of human flourishing as a gift from God in the midst of suffering, weakness, poverty, and illness. It also includes the call to act responsibly for our fellow human beings and for all of creation.
- 17) In both of our traditions, there have been misunderstandings of salvation and misguided practices in mission. We have often reduced the gospel to individual and future salvation, separating soul and body, the spiritual from the physical, time and eternity, history and Kingdom, salvation and social action, earth and heaven. We have tended to label particular evangelizing attitudes and practices too quickly, as otherworldly and indifferent to social concern, just as we have tended to label concepts of holistic mission and forms of social concern and care too quickly, as merely social or ideological programs. Both of our traditions should avoid such dichotomies, any dualism that separates the various aspects of human life.
- 18) Both of our traditions point towards a need to confess and repent from our stereotypical misreading of each other’s concepts and practices by which we have tried to justify our own concepts and practices as superior to those of the other. We are able to confess together that all of human life arises from creation; all of human life has been overwhelmed by sin; all of human life is being restored in Jesus and by the work of his Spirit. Thus, the Church proclaims this comprehensive restoration in its life, words and deeds.

19) Witnessing to God's justice is an essential dimension of mission: mediating life and contributing to life-giving and life-flourishing initiatives and structures. In many communities, people have very little opportunity to experience the fullness of life for which Jesus Christ came, often because of the selfish or uncaring actions of people in their locality or nation, and sometimes from faraway lands. The pattern for mission follows Christ as "Prophet," "Priest," and "King." Thus, God's mission always includes the prophetic activity of exposing the injustice, oppression and violence that rule in all domains of human life, and of challenging societal values and realities that go against God's will and therefore contradict life. Following the Lord Jesus's reading of the Isaiah passage in Luke 4:16-21, God's mission always includes generating justice, freedom, peace, and life-flourishing vision and the priestly activities of forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing. God's mission always includes the royal activity of being a protector and advocate of the weak and lowly, of the powerless and the marginalized. This entails commitment to transformation in educational, health, and other social spheres.

Differences in Emphasis

20) While Reformed and Pentecostal Christians affirm the understanding of salvation and mission together, in our dialogue it became clear that at times, our traditions express themselves using different vocabularies. Christians in the other group do not always understand this. In the course of this dialogue, we encountered the richness of both traditions and learned a great deal from each other. We believe that these different emphases can enrich one another's perspectives in their common witness.

Justification and Justice: The Reformed Understanding of Mission and Salvation

21) For the Reformed, there is an integral relationship between justification and justice. This has been prominently expressed

in the association with the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*.¹ Reformed Christians express the strong conviction that the renewal of life (sanctification) that accompanies justification strengthens us to live (more fully) in gratitude and joyful obedience to God. This is a gift of God's grace at work in our lives. We may have confidence that the good work that God has begun in us, will be brought to completion (Philippians 1:6). We have nothing that we have not received. Even our capacity to respond to God is God's gift to us. So also is our perseverance in faith. Good works reflect the effect of God's grace in us, faith that is active in love.

- 22) Justice is not simply the ethical outworking of justification as a kind of second step; rather it is already entailed theologically in justification, as such. Justification is both a "declaring righteous" and a "setting right." This insight may be at the root of John Calvin's insistence that justification and sanctification are inseparable (*Institutes*, III.2.1); they are to be thought of as a two-fold grace (*duplex gratia*).²
- 23) In their emphasis on the sovereignty of God, Reformed believers affirm that God is sovereign over all of life, not just the narrowly religious or spiritual aspects of individual lives. They assert with the Psalmist that, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Psalm 24:1). God has entered into covenant with all of creation (Genesis 9:8-12), and God's covenant of grace intends a "setting right" that is world embracing, including even political, economic, and ecological realities. All of God's covenantal acts are acts of justification and justice.³

1 In the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) the Roman Catholic Church, Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed, and Anglicans express a fundamental consensus on one of the most contentious theological conflicts of the Reformation. In the letter of association with that document, the World Communion of Reformed Churches laid out the integral connection of justification, sanctification, and justice according to Reformed understanding. Their ecumenical partners welcomed it. See <http://wcrce.eu/jddj>.

2 WCRC JDDJ Association §16.

3 WCRC JDDJ Association §17.

24) We acknowledge that justice, like justification, is God's work in and among us. Our understanding of justice has been obscured and our enactment of justice hampered by our sin. It is God, who will bring about the fulfilment of justice. Even so, we understand ourselves to be called to join in God's world-transforming work. This has been underscored in such modern-day confessions as the Accra Confession (Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth) and the Belhar Confession.⁴

Holistic Salvation: The Pentecostal Understanding of Mission and Salvation

25) Pentecostal thinking regarding salvation leads to the view that the saving of souls is the most urgent and priority task of mission. This includes an emphasis on salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing, and the in breaking of the coming Kingdom. Believers are constantly urged to experience the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, as well as to become committed evangelists instrumental in the conversion of others. Healing and miracles play a significant role in mission and point towards a holistic understanding of salvation, which has been labeled an example of the "materiality of salvation." What this means is that for Pentecostals the body is significant, hence, the emphasis upon divine healing, and this points toward their holistic understanding of mission.

26) Pentecostals employ the term holistic salvation to refer to the spiritual-bodily-social-political-economic dimensions of the abundant life. Grounded in the love of God, holistic salvation takes seriously the plight of the "least of these," that is, the most vulnerable among us, as central to Christ's message of hope and healing. As we are called to feed the hungry and house the homeless, we seek to empower them to provide for themselves and their families as well as to join with those who are most marginalized and

⁴ WCRC JDDJ Association §§ 17, 20. The Accra Confession was adopted in 2004, while the Belhar Confession was developed in South Africa during the Apartheid era. Both are faith-based confessions intended to counteract injustice.

vulnerable in ending hunger and homelessness (Luke 4:18-19; Matthew 25:34-40).

- 27) As the Church lives out its mission in the world, it engages in ministries of compassion, serves others, and participates in works of justice that seek to transform the societal structures by the power of the Holy Spirit. Committed “not only to the task of making prophetic denouncement,” the Church is called fully to “support and encourage those among us who are attempting change”⁵ in and social transformation of the society towards a just order. *Social holiness* and *just compassion* are terms that capture the multiple dimensions of holistic salvation. “Social holiness” is a phrase that holds together “righteousness and justice” (Proverbs 21:3). “Just compassion” refers to how compassion and justice are interrelated, as expressed in Jeremiah 9:24, which links compassion or “kindness, justice and righteousness.”

Common affirmation

- 28) These differences in emphases on mission and salvation among Reformed and Pentecostals are not issues that divide us. They are sources of mutual enrichment of our understanding of salvation and mission, and they lead us towards a future together in which we can be more faithful witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ. Both Reformed and Pentecostal Christians recognize and affirm God’s grace in salvation, and the way we understand justification and justice and holistic salvation point in the same direction. It is clear that we have more elements that we can affirm together. Many Pentecostal and Reformed Christians may not be as aware of this fact in the communities in which we live and engage in mission. Therefore, the way ahead includes sharing these affirmations widely and in formats that can communicate our understanding of our calling into mission and our common witnessing.

5 Racial Reconciliation Manifesto, viii, adopted by the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, in 1994, <http://pccna.org/documents/1994manifesto.pdf>. Accessed March 7, 2020.

II. The Holy Spirit and Mission

Scripture:

He said to me, 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' (Acts 1:8)

¹⁷"In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." (Acts 2:17-18)

⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. (1 Corinthians 2:4-5)

For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. (1 Thessalonians 1:5)

The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.' And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. (Revelation 22:17)

Question: How do we view the issue of power and the role of the Holy Spirit when we speak about mission?

Affirmations

- 29) As members of Reformed and Pentecostal churches, we affirm the following claims together:
- 30) The work of the Holy Spirit needs to be understood within the context of the Triune God. God is one, and the mission of God cannot be divided. The highest way to affirm the work of the Holy Spirit is to acknowledge that it is the Spirit of Christ that is revealed, the Lord and Giver of Life (John 16:14; 1 Corinthians 12:3). Just as God has been self-giving in the incarnation of Christ, so also is God self-giving in the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Just as Jesus Christ was given to the world (John 3:16-17), the Spirit of God is promised to be poured out upon all flesh (Acts 2:17). The Holy Spirit is the gift of God for the reconciliation of the world (2 Corinthians 5:18-19) so that in the end God may receive all glory.
- 31) "Life in the Spirit is at the core of the Church and is the essence of its mission."⁶ The Holy Spirit is sovereign over mission: the Spirit pursues the mission of the Triune God in space and time and calls "Christian communities to respond with personal conversion, and [...] discipleship" that collaborates "with God for the transforming of the world (1 Thessalonians 3:2)."⁷ When the disciples met Jesus Christ as their risen Lord, he promised (Acts 1:5, 8) and gave them the Holy Spirit as the gift of God, an advocate and enabler to be witnesses to the end of the earth (John 16:7-15; 20:22, Acts 2). The account of the first Christian Pentecost reveals God's Spirit as a gift to the church and to the life of the world.
- 32) It is in Christ and through the Spirit that believers receive God's loving grace as a gift (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 2:8). Gratitude for

6 Together Towards Life, §3.

7 "Moving in the Spirit: Called to Transforming Discipleship: The Arusha Call to Discipleship," published by Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. See: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/the-arusha-call-to-discipleship>.

salvation received calls for a response. This is how God sent the disciples out into the world to God's mission (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8; Romans 10:13-15). As the priesthood of all believers, we are called to proclaim the mighty acts of God in word and deed (1 Peter 2:9; Acts 2:11).

- 33) One can describe both of our theologies as theologies of *encounter*. In the Spirit, people are called to an encounter with God through Jesus Christ, which is life transforming. The transformation to a life that enables us more and more to become Christ-like continues in the process of discipleship,⁸ experiencing and practicing reconciliation, the call to be faithful witnesses, and the call to serve others, as we follow Jesus in God's mission. Pentecostal and Reformed Christians emphasize their personal relationship with God in their confession of Jesus Christ. They also underscore the importance of a communal relationship with God. Reformed Christians express this in the language of the covenant that is professed in baptism and deepened in the life of the communion of believers. In each case, discipleship is affirmed as communities of believers hold that the Holy Spirit nurtures them through the life of the Church.⁹
- 34) Pentecostal and Reformed Christians acknowledge individual and collective responses to the Holy Spirit's leading. Either of these Christian families would want to state that both aspects are important. The individual response recognizes the Spirit's leading in the experience of a personal calling and gifting by the Triune God. At the same time, the collective response sees the individual believer as a member of a community of faith that is formed by discerning, confessing, and witnessing God's will, and by striving to be reformed together according to the Word of God. We see that both responses are provoked by the urgencies of the call to

8 For more on discipleship see the document of the second round of the Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue: "Experience in Christian Faith and Life," Section II, § 44-72

9 The second round of the Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue focused on "Experience in Christian Faith and Life" and referred to the work of the Spirit guiding the church in worship, Section I, § 32-43.

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mission. They are part of the larger conversation of the Church, which draws upon the narrative of the Holy Spirit's mission in history. Through the Holy Spirit all believers are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses in heaven and on earth, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of their faith (Hebrews 12:1-2; Acts 5:31).

- 35) When God sends, God also gifts. Gifting is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, an act of God, gifting us to the world. In the mission of God (*missio Dei*) all followers of Christ are gifted in one way or another, and like "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" we serve others (1 Peter 4:10-11). We agree that all gifting comes from the self-giving God, and we receive it for service to all creation and for the glory of God.
- 36) Even as God sends and gifts, God also empowers (Acts 1:8; Romans 15:17-19; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11). Our churches speak about empowerment in mission. However, we also call for caution, since power can be corrupted in the actions of believers, or even confused with very selfish human claims of power. Power is expressed in various dimensions, such as spiritual, ecclesial, emotional, psychological, cultural, political, economic, and military. Hence, we believe that we need careful discernment (Romans 12:2)¹⁰ (a) of the understanding of empowerment, (b) of the social context of empowerment, and (c) of past shortcomings. This discernment regarding power is guided by God's authority (1 Corinthians 12:10), as a self-emptying power that brings wholeness to life (Philippians 2:5-11).
- 37) All claims to empowerment require discernment in connection and keeping with God's mission. The Holy Spirit empowers the community of believers to live out the Christian life in witness and service in the Church and in the world. Empowerment is reflected in a spirituality that grows out of the ongoing encounter of the believers with the Triune God, taking seriously the presence and the authority of the Holy Spirit at many levels.

10 See "Experience in Christian Faith and Life" § III, ¶ 73-116.

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The encounter with the Holy Spirit provokes a profound transformation wherever the people of God gather in Jesus' name (Matthew 18:20). The Holy Spirit has the power to change how one lives one's life and how one ministers to others, both inside and outside the believing community. In consequence, the spirituality of encounter lives out the priesthood and prophethood of all believers for mission.

- 38) God has given gifts to all Christians. They are empowered both as individuals and as Christian communities. In becoming empowered, individual believers and communities of faith learn to become attentive and sensitive to the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit in areas where they do not necessarily feel at home. The mission of God empowers believers to enable contextualization. God has been self-emptying in the coming of Jesus Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit, so also the Church in mission is to be self-emptying; it does not attempt to impose its own cultures on others (Zechariah 4:6). The mission of God transcends all cultural and political identities.
- 39) It would be a fallacy to understand empowerment in an exclusively individual way. Likewise, all discernment of this power will take into account the social context in which this power is exercised. God invites Christians to participate in God's mission, which aims at the transformation of the life of the world in its entirety. Christians are empowered to be witnesses, to proclaim the gospel in word and deed. They evangelize, engage those with means to share power and resources, and cry for justice. They care for the vulnerable. They educate, and make space for those whose voice is muted. The context shapes the way Christians are called, respond, and participate in God's mission. In impoverished communities especially, whether rural or urban, ministries of empowerment often serve as lifelines. Empowerment is informed by the reading of biblical texts that proclaim the imminence of radical transformation, such as Acts 2:17-21; Luke 4:18-20; or Matthew 25:31-46. Ministries of healing, deliverance, and liberation allow new communities of life to come

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into existence, embracing relationships between those who are hungry, ill, incarcerated, or homeless and those who are not. Ministries of empowerment proclaim the hope of Christ and the hope of God's world-to-come to those who are marginalized. The Holy Spirit fosters hope-bearing and life-giving practices of faith for individuals and communities, where God's wonder is displayed.

- 40) The Holy Spirit empowers individuals and churches to engage in advancing justice, reconciliation and peace. As witnesses to the life affirming and reconciling work of the Holy Spirit, communities of faith offer glimpses of God's Kingdom. Within large parts of global Christianity, churches address unjust social, racial, economic, and political systems. They challenge racial, ethnic, gender, and class exclusions (Galatians 3:28). When the congregations participate in God's mission in the world, the Holy Spirit works through these believers and the community of faith on their life-affirming pilgrimage toward the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). As Pentecostal and Reformed Christians, we encourage others to join with us in these actions.

- 41) It is always important that we take the time to discern our past shortcomings: Although we see the Holy Spirit leading God's mission in the world, we must confess that our mission endeavours have often fallen short of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Missionary zeal does not automatically sanctify either its means or ends. The colonial entanglement of the Western churches has sadly marred the Church's mission by the political, economic, and cultural ambitions of the Western churches in which the power exercised was not God's power (Matthew 6:10, 13). Similarly, any self-centered accumulation of wealth or power (social, political, personal, etc.) by Christians and their leaders must be addressed critically. When power appears in new guises, such as in neo-liberal capitalism or in cultural or even religious imperialism, the Church is called to vigilance.

- 42) When “empowerment” language is used in the pursuit of mission, we must carefully discern whether we refer to human power or are embracing the power that is a gift from God for the life of the world (John 6:51). As the Pentecostal and Reformed participants of this dialogue, we affirm together God’s authority as a self-emptying power to bring wholeness to life.

Differences in Emphasis

- 43) While there is far-reaching consensus on the understanding of mission, there are still differences of emphasis that *affect* the practice of mission. Pentecostal and Reformed Christians follow distinctly different traditions to discern God’s guidance for the work of mission. While Pentecostals tend to cherish gifts as imminent expressions of divine power, *exousia* (Mark 6:7), Reformed Christians take a more critical perspective on power. For both traditions, the final authority rests with God. Any form of human power must, therefore, be carefully scrutinized to determine whether it is really ordained by God, because power can be corrupted and can even become an exercise in human idolatry.
- 44) This difference of emphasis has led to differences in the ways that we conduct mission. Historically, Pentecostal mission has been much more fluid than their Reformed counterparts have; it still allows for many more initiatives that are spontaneous. Even when Pentecostal churches have established mission boards, they still emphasize the urgency to proclaim the gospel. Where there is a possibility to proclaim the gospel, the opportunity should be used. Pentecostals embrace the expectation that something extraordinary will happen because of their encounters with God. They know that these experiences can inspire spontaneous mission work by individuals as well as entire congregations. Such “faith mission” is often borne by personal initiative, and, at times, it has demonstrated astonishing and positive results. The Reformed members of the dialogue team realized that Reformed congregations also respond to the encounter with

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God spontaneously, and they saw how the too scrupulous weighing of pros and cons could jeopardize opportunities for mission.

- 45) In some situations, however, such activities, borne out of the sense of urgency, demonstrate limited sensitivity to cultural and political contexts. They may also display limited accountability with regard to the use of resources and the implementation of programs. Here, the Pentecostal members of the dialogue joined the Reformed members who call for the need for greater discernment by the larger Church. The mixed experiences of the history of mission have led both traditions to increased scrutiny of their own mission work. Even so, discernment has become broader and deeper. Reformed missions today aim at processes of global discernment that privilege the voices of those who, in the history of mission, have not been heard. People must not anymore be seen as "objects of mission." They must be heard and recognized as partners. These processes of discernment are demanding and often conflictual. They slow down decisions and may appear to delay the progress of the Kingdom. Likewise, the Pentecostal participants encourage their churches and mission boards to increase their engagement in such processes of discernment and the God-given transformation they enable.
- 46) The Pentecostal and Reformed participants in this dialogue wholeheartedly rejoice over the consensus they have achieved around the subject of mission. Both traditions see their churches as collaborators in the mission of the Triune God. The Holy Spirit calls into discipleship and empowers individuals and communities to witness the coming of the Kingdom in words and deeds. God has been self-emptying in the coming of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit empowers us toward a self-emptying mission, which forsakes our own interests and overcomes all cultural, political, and religious prejudices. Both Pentecostal and Reformed participants acknowledge God's presence in the advancement of justice, reconciliation, and peace, and in their mission, they strive to overcome unjust social, racial, economic, and political systems.

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47) In the dialogue, we have discovered that the two approaches are not contradictory and they can even become mutually enriching. The Pentecostal sense of urgency that is prepared to take risks for the advancement of the Kingdom often excites Reformed Christians. At the same time, Pentecostal Christians understand that there is a serious commitment in the Reformed processes of discernment that might be worth exploring. Here Pentecostals and Reformed can learn from and correct each other.

III. Mission and the Unity of the Church

Scripture:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

¹ I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

²⁰ “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17:20-23)

Question: In what way does the unity of the Church impact the nature and effectiveness of mission?

48) Both the churches of the Reformed family and those that are part of the Pentecostal family have long histories of evangelization and of mission. Jesus linked the unity of his followers, the Church, and its mission to the world, in his prayer to the Father recorded in John 17:21-23. All participants in this dialogue are motivated by the instructions that Jesus first gave to his disciples. They were told, “Go therefore and *make disciples of all nations*,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). Mark's account expands the scope of our mission, when it records Jesus's command, "Go into all the world and proclaim the "Good News" to the whole creation (Mark 16:15). Shortly thereafter, the Holy Spirit gave the Church the power necessary to fulfill the divine mission that God gave to them (Acts 1:8). The transformation of their lives provided strong evidence of the power that the "Good News" of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection had brought to them. As a result, they became compelling witnesses to what Jesus had done. They began in Jerusalem, moved through Judaea and Samaria, traveling in ever expanding circles, while turning the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

- 49) Our churches, therefore, believe and teach that our engagement in mission is central to our own discipleship. As a result, we have sent missionaries everywhere. Our message, the "Good News," which is the actual meaning of the term "gospel," is a message of reconciliation. God has provided for our reconciliation to God as well as with each other, through the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet almost from the time they came together, followers of Jesus found differences among them that threatened their unity and the mission to proclaim the "Good News" to the world. The apostles reminded the followers of Jesus repeatedly how important their unity was to their message. They urged love, patience, gentleness, and humility as characteristics intended to preserve and nurture their unity (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:1-3). Still, the history of the Church through the centuries has all too often stood out in stark contrast to the message of reconciliation. For a variety of reasons, our churches, Reformed and Pentecostal, have had little to do with one another. The task before us, then, asks us to reflect on the nature of the Church, and to determine whether, or to what extent, our actions that seem to exclude one another have an impact on the message of reconciliation that we proclaim in word and deed.

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- 50) The Greek word *ekklēsia*, translated “church,” derives from the verb *kaleō*, meaning “to call.” Thus, the word *ekklēsia* refers not primarily to a static structure or to an institution. It refers to all those who God calls out from the world through Jesus Christ, and by the one Spirit, places them into the one body, a dynamic body called the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13), before sending them into the world. As a result, the Church is sometimes described as the “Body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 4:12; Romans 12:4-5). It is like a living body with many members, each of whom play a specific or unique role. Collectively these members are also called the “people of God” (1 Peter 2:9). Christ expected the Church to live and work together as one body, that is, as one people, with all of them working *together* with Christ’s one purpose in mind. As such, the Church is made up of reconciled people who now follow Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22), for Christ alone is head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).
- 51) Jesus, the head of the Church, calls his followers to be alert to the many biblical signs that surround them (Luke 21:25-36), including false and deceptive messianic claims, wars and rumors of wars, pestilence, famines, and earthquakes (Matthew 24:4-8). Today the world is experiencing things that have not occurred before within human memory—issues like the recent and extraordinary changes in the worldwide climate, the most massive migration of people the world has ever seen, and the spread of newer nationalisms, just to name a few. Jesus calls upon us to discern such phenomena, to ask ourselves what their meaning might be, and to make appropriate responses. All too often, people respond to these challenges by retreating into the “safety” of their own cultural groups, which isolates them from one another, yielding fear and mistrust between them. It is the missionary calling of the Church to reflect and act against such isolation in the light of the coming Kingdom of God.
- 52) Within this new or current context, the Church has a powerful, alternative message to proclaim. It is a message of “Good News!”

While the world responds to these challenges with division and animosity, God calls the Church to proclaim with a single voice and purpose, the "Good News" of God's reconciliation supported by their transformed lives, which has brought them together as the one "people of God." It speaks to the deepest needs, hopes, and dreams of people who are in crisis. As the Apostle Paul wrote, Christ Jesus "has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us...that he might create in himself one new humanity...thus making peace..." (Ephesians 2:14-15). In Christ, we are all children of God—"neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free nor is there male and female"—we are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26-28). This is the "Good News" of the gospel, a foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God.

53) The prophet Isaiah rejoiced over those "who bring good news, who announce salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isaiah 52:7). Jesus claimed that "the Spirit of the Lord" was upon Him, and the Spirit "had anointed him 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 favor" (Luke 4:18-19). As a result, Jesus went throughout Galilee, "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness among the people" (Matthew 4:23). This message, given to the Church, is surely "Good News," a refreshingly new message to be proclaimed to the world through word and deed.

54) The Church was born on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41). The earliest followers of Jesus quickly recognized that Peter's proclamation on that day, the "Good News" he brought regarding Jesus, had transformed them, and the Holy Spirit had formed them into a new community, empowered and sent throughout the world as witnesses of the "Good News." They wanted to be with one another and learn together at the feet of the apostles, in preparation for the missionary task. They found it important to break bread together (Acts 2:42). They engaged in prayers and in mutual sharing; they found themselves strengthened by

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one another in unity. They were a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) and a new people (Ephesians 2:15) who lived under a new commandment, the commandment of love (John 13:34; 1 John 3:23-24) that compelled them to move out and into the world. Jesus had passed along to his followers both the message of salvation that caused Isaiah to rejoice, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 2:4) such as he received, to proclaim the "Good News" to the "poor." "Go into all the world and proclaim the "Good News" to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15; cf. Matthew 28:19), Jesus commanded them. Now it was their task, and the Spirit gave them the ability to proclaim that message through their words and actions. They took the "Good News" to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

- 55) This important account regarding the birth of the Church reveals the simplicity that marked the Church when it began. Their earliest confession became "Jesus is Lord," made possible only by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). They had the Torah, the prophets, and the teachers of wisdom on which to draw, but they gathered at the feet of those who had walked, lived and worked with Jesus. They worshiped and lived together. They sang and embraced the charisms of one another (1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 5:17-20). While all of these things remain essential to the Church, many of them have become sources of division. Baptism serves as a sign of incorporation into the community of faith, into the one Body of Christ, yet disagreements over issues of practice obscure its intended purpose. Likewise, the Lord's Supper or Eucharist, which was intended to serve as a visible sign of corporate "communion" marked by grace as they "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes," often acts as a wall of separation (1 Corinthians 11:20). It is little wonder that we find many believers today yearning for the rediscovery of our unity in forms that challenge us to greater faithfulness, and add to the integrity of the "Good News" that God has made possible, our reconciliation to God and to one another.

- 56) We may be separated from the earliest disciples by 2000 years, but through their faithfulness and perseverance in bringing the message of "Good News," the Church has spread around the world, and come to us. Jesus's command to "Go" has now come down to us, his followers today. We still have the "Good News" to impart. It is the message of God's love, grace, peace, hope, and justice, a proclamation that the Kingdom of God is coming, indeed, that it has begun to penetrate the world through the Word and Spirit, and in signs and wonders. From that perspective, God calls the Church to bear witness to the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God. The Church is God's means to carry out his mission to reach the world with this amazing news! We have a privilege and a challenge before us. Either we are missional or we are not. The question is, "Are we up to the task?"
- 57) If Scripture teaches us that there is only one Church, it also suggests that within that one Church there is great diversity. One way the Apostle Paul described the Church was as a single body, with Christ as the head. He noted that we are each members of that body with different roles to play, different functions to fulfill, and that we possess the Holy Spirit's power to fill those roles appropriately and effectively (1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:11-15). On a larger scale, we see that the Church spread across the world as seen through the eyes of the biblical writers, just as it continues to spread today. It encountered different cultures in the ancient world, Jewish, Greek, Roman, Ethiopian, and Egyptian. The followers of Jesus engaged with men and women, rich and poor, slave and free, and the "Good News" transformed all of their cultural differences in such a way that they became one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).
- 58) Although the simplicity of the gospel was intended to bring freedom and newness of life, it was compromised by setting up boundaries of communion that need review. Through the centuries, we have divided into many thousands of churches, thereby denying both the unity and the catholicity of the Church. We

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have too easily become satisfied to live as the Church in division. We have grown so used to living this way that we have lost the common memory of the oneness of the Church and the urgent need to resolve our differences. Jesus prayed for the oneness of those who follow Him (John 17:21-24). Paul repeatedly addressed disunity in the Church (1 Corinthians 1:13; Galatians 2:11-3:5; Philippians 4:2-3, etc.). John addressed the issue (3 John 9-11). Moreover, the writer to the Hebrews exhorted, "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many (Hebrews 12:14-15).

- 59) Through the centuries, the growth and power of the institutional Church came under increasing scrutiny and suspicion. In spite of the efforts that the Reformers made to renew the one Church, even their work has fragmented over time. The Apostle Paul celebrated diversity in the Church as a positive feature, when all members worked together for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Ephesians 4:11-16). Together, we recognize that institutional or denominational boundaries are often helpful because they provide accountability. Yet, we have seen a growing movement into various forms of diversity that are completely independent of one another. We have seen the spread of individualized forms of spirituality designed for different age groups, different educational backgrounds, different cultures, races and ethnicities, different liturgical preferences, different economic levels, and the like. Today, instead of recognizing one Church working together in multiple congregations, a form of unity in reconciled diversity, each "church" justifies its own *raison d'être*. The result is that we have become isolated from one another in our discrete and unconnected ecclesial cultures in much the same way that the world has gone.
- 60) Recent decades have seen phenomenal growth among the churches, especially in the Global South, with many churches and agencies engaged in mission. On the one hand, mission has

been a uniting force, bringing Christians with different doctrinal perspectives and forms of ecclesial organization together in common witness, as was experienced in the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, and in many subsequent gatherings, as well as local endeavors. On the other hand, many times mission efforts have been carried out in ways that deny the unity of Christ's Church. Some groups have spent more energy attacking the beliefs and practices of other Christians than in announcing the "Good News" of the gospel.

- 61) The Reformed participants in this dialogue reminded the Pentecostal participants that the unity of the Church is both a gift and a calling from God. It was purchased through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God has given this unity to us freely. The Pentecostal participants noted that many early Pentecostal leaders, such as William J. Seymour, yearned for unity between all the People of God, claiming, "The Apostolic Faith Movement (an early self-designation for Pentecostals) stands for the faith once delivered unto the saints...and Christian unity everywhere."¹¹ Yet, all of us have allowed this unity, this gift, to be mutilated by our actions and our inaction. The result is that we have compromised both the mission that we are supposed to carry out, and the message that Jesus gave us to proclaim and embody, the "Good News" that reconciliation is now here and available to all who will accept it! That is the message of the gospel. Yet, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin pointed out long ago,

The disunity of the Church is a denial of the promise and a contradiction of the purpose for which the Church is sent into the world. How can the church give to the world the message that Jesus is able to draw all men to Himself, while it continues to say, "Nevertheless, Jesus is not able to draw us who bear his name together"? How

¹¹ William J. Seymour, "The Apostolic Faith," *The Apostolic Faith* [Los Angeles, CA] 1:1 (September 1906), 2. This statement was published numerous times in subsequent issues, and in tract form, signed by William J. Seymour.

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will the world believe a message, which we do not appear to believe ourselves?¹²

- 62) Jesus prayed for our unity “so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me (John 17:24). We recognize that in Christ, we share a unity that many describe as spiritual. Still, we believe that while our life “in Christ” provides the *basis* for our unity, we are called to *manifest* that unity before the world. This is why we work toward a growing collaboration with one another, engage in theological dialogue, and cooperate on missional projects from, with, and between local congregations. Together, we support those groups that organize to provide aid to the needy, work to end world hunger, support the care and nurture of children, work in peace-making endeavors, provide for the care of God’s creation, and many other things. We are grateful for the improving relationships that makes cooperation and partnership in such ministries possible!
- 63) Together, we realize that the Spirit of God is at work in the world, calling people to follow Jesus, gathering them, sometimes in new ways that we do not always understand or appreciate. The Bible itself is deeply contextual. It is received and applied in consistent ways and manifested through thousands of cultural expressions. The Word of God goes its own way and creates new contextual churches, and expressions of worship and spirituality. It has the power to transform lives, and it calls each of us to participate in the lives of one another, to love one another in ways that stretch us (Leviticus 19:18; Luke 10:27; 1 John 4:20-21; James 2:15-16). In so doing, it encourages us to recognize the significance of the ongoing transformative work of the Spirit that brings the gospel close to the hearts, communities, and cultures of humankind.
- 64) Today, we observe the development of Christian expressions in wide variation. There are historic churches with well-developed

12 Lesslie, Newbigin, *Is Christ Divided? A Plea for Christian Unity in a Revolutionary Age*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), 9

forms and rituals. There are churches that appear to be free-wheeling, though the insider can explain the order that may look like chaos to others. There are large churches and small churches, cathedrals, and house churches, emerging and emergent churches, churches without walls, growing numbers of migrant churches, legal churches and those neither recognized, nor allowed, persecuted churches, networks of Christians concerned about the same issues, digital churches, churches focused on evangelization or healing or creation care or peace making. Different contexts demand or result in different manifestations of the one Church. In many places, especially where churches represent a minority religion, where laws exclude them, even where they are explicitly persecuted, they may organize themselves in different ways, but they still bear witness to the power of Christ in their lives, making them one people. They often bear witness to the "Good News" in surprising and creative ways. In short, there are a multiplicity of churches, in any number of formats through which Christians desire to do the will of God.

- 65) These myriad manifestations of the gospel are contextualized and the movement of the communities of God's people may at times make it difficult for us—as a part of the variety of Christians in the world—to recognize, accept, and feel at home among all these manifestations of the Body of Christ. They challenge us to learn to be cautious in our condemnations and aversion against the broad spectrum of churches, and to discern where the Spirit of God is at work and active, empowering the people of God to declare in word and deed the "Good News" of the gospel. More than ever, we need the gift of the Spirit to recognize our sisters and brothers, to help each other in a common way of discipleship, and to be able in a pastoral attitude to build each other up in communion. Thus, we will be able "to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:18-19).

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66) What do we have when everything is said and done? Does the unity of the Church affect the effectiveness or the nature of mission? Absolutely! All of these expressions of the Church, working together come under the mandate, "Go and make disciples." Everyone is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God. All of us are calling people to be reconciled with God and with one another. As Reformed and Pentecostal followers of Jesus, we are part of the "All." Our common task is to carry the "Good News" to everyone, informing them of the reconciliation that Jesus paid for, through his death and resurrection, and demonstrating the power that we have received through the Holy Spirit, to make a difference in the lives of all with whom we come into contact, and beyond. By bearing witness to our unity, we will make a difference in the world.

IV. Mission and Eschatology

Scripture:

¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:18-20)

¹⁸I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; ²³and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Romans 8:18-25)

³⁶“But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. (Matthew 24:36-37)

¹¹Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹²waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set

*ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire?
13But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new
heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.
(2 Peter 3:11-13)*

Question: How do our views of eschatology affect our understanding of mission?

- 67) God's purpose, the *missio Dei* is to reconcile all things on heaven and on earth (Colossians 1:20). Eschatology, the study of the last things, attempts to describe the actualization of God's intentions toward creation, the future reality of God's salvation. The vision the Church proclaims of God's future determines the way the Church understands its participation in God's mission. How the Church perceives what God has done, is doing, and will do, shapes how the Church lives out its role in God's mission today. Indeed, mission engagement needs an eschatological horizon that communicates hope in a world marked increasingly by fear and despair. We affirm that the future belongs to God and this affirmation allows us to engage confidently in mission.
- 68) Jesus entrusted the mission to his followers and he promised to return (Matthew 28:19-20; John 14:3; Acts 1:11). The context of mission today is marked by contrasts. More people from more cultures and in more places in the world are followers of Jesus Christ than ever before. A larger percentage of the world's population claims the name of Jesus than at any point in the past. At the same time, violence of different kinds continues to cut lives short. Millions flee their homes and their countries in search of refuge. In many parts of the world, people are suffering because of their faith. In secular societies, meaninglessness plagues young and old alike. Changes in climate are yielding devastating consequences for the earth's inhabitants. All of creation is, indeed, groaning with the sufferings of this present age. Yet we know that God's liberating work continues and we are called to be a part of it (Romans 8:18-25).

- 69) The first Christian communities lived, expecting Christ's imminent return. The only New Testament book written in the apocalyptic genre is Revelation. It begins with the words, "The Revelation (*apocàlypsis*) of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1). Yet, an apocalyptic worldview infuses the entire New Testament. In this worldview, often expressed through an array of figures, symbols, colors, and signs, hope is focused upon a transcendent reality beyond time and space, from which God will ultimately act in a dramatic way to set all things right. Believers looked through and beyond calamities and current sufferings to God's promised future. Within the New Testament, it is possible to trace theological shifts as communities wrestled with the delay of the expected *Parousia* and learned to live their faith in the resurrected Christ into the future. Those who were watching for the return of the Son of Man in the clouds were admonished also to see the Son of Man in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, and the prisoner (Matthew 24:30, 25:31-46). Communities suffering persecution were admonished to hold fast and await God's coming by leading lives of holiness (2 Peter 3: 11-12). Followers of Jesus carried the "Good News" of the gospel to other peoples and places, making disciples and forming communities (Matthew 28:19-20).
- 70) The social upheavals in Europe at the time of the Protestant Reformation raised fear and anxiety about the coming end of history as well as expectations of dramatic interventions by God. Calvin, himself a refugee, preached in the context of this apocalyptic fervor to a congregation in Geneva composed of many refugees and the Christians who had welcomed them. Calvin assured those fleeing persecution that their eternal destiny was in God's hands, not under the control of any political or ecclesiastical authority. Trusting in Christ's return to bring the fullness of God's Kingdom, Christians would be able to persevere through any hardship. In the meantime, the Church was to focus on the preaching of God's Word and caring for people's well-being, offering hospitality, and organizing the community to protect and promote the common good. In subsequent centuries, among members of Reformed churches in many places

who gained positions of political and economic power, the focus on transforming culture remained, while the longing for Christ's return faded. Other Reformed Christians, especially those who lived in marginalized communities, continued to look for Christ's second coming.

- 71) Pentecostalism was born at the beginning of the twentieth century with a heightened expectation of the Lord's imminent return. They viewed the outpouring of the Spirit, evidenced by gifts such as speaking in tongues, as one of many signs of the latter days. Early Pentecostals understood themselves as a Restorationist movement living as the earliest followers of Jesus did in New Testament times. The brevity of time remaining before the end of history made the work of mission an urgent necessity to reach as many as possible with the word of God's salvation, following the risen Christ's command to preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15). Indeed, Pentecostals soon organized beyond the level of the local congregation to engage in global mission efforts. Many early Pentecostal congregations were multi-ethnic and multiracial communities that included immigrants who were often instrumental in spreading the Pentecostal messages to their home countries and beyond.

- 72) Today, both church families find their concepts of God's time being challenged. After the first generation, Pentecostals began to navigate the tension between their belief in the imminent second coming, the biblical command to evangelize the world, and their willingness to join society with biblical convictions. With a firm belief in the "Blessed Hope," Pentecostals engage increasingly in holistic missions, from building schools, colleges, rescue shelters, and hospitals, to establishing ministries that serve and empower people on the margins of society as Christ rebuilds new lives. The notion of intensifying crises throughout the world have led the Reformed to a rediscovery of the apocalyptic worldview of the New Testament. The Accra Confession states that we "live in a scandalous world that denies God's call to life for all" (§7). As increasing economic inequality demonstrates, economic

systems defended and protected by political and military might, are matters of life or death. The confession therefore responds with a sense of eschatological urgency and rejects any claim of economic, political, and military power which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule (§19).¹³

73) Eschatology attempts to describe the points of continuity and discontinuity between the present and the future. Jürgen Moltmann has used the Latin term *futurum* to describe the future that develops out of the dynamics of the present, whereas *adventum* refers to that which is completely new and breaks into the present from the future.¹⁴ For Christians, the completely new thing that God has done is to raise Jesus from the dead. The surprise of Easter is that God raised not just any man, but this Jesus, condemned and crucified by the imperial power of Rome. The risen Christ, as the first fruit of the new creation, comes to us from the future that God has for all of creation (I Corinthians 15:20).

74) The surprise of Easter is followed by the surprise of Pentecost, when the disciples spoke in tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4), and people from many places and cultures heard the manifold deeds of God preached in their own languages (Acts 2:11). This inbreaking of God's Spirit created a new community that broke bread together and shared all things in common (Acts 2:42-45). All participants in the dialogue agree that the Holy Spirit was sent to empower the Church to witness to Christ as they go to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). We are called into mission by God, and commissioned by the risen Christ, to preach the "Good News" of God's salvation to all nations by the power of the Spirit.

75) We recognize that, at times, eschatological theories have played an important role in our respective traditions. However, Jesus

¹³ The Accra Confession (Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth): <http://wcrce.eu/accra>

¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, Kindle location 496

IV. Mission and Eschatology

reminded his followers that only the Father knows the day and hour of his return (Matthew 24:36). Our dialogue stressed our need for an eschatological vision that shapes how we are to live out God's mission in the world today as we await Christ's coming. Like the first Christians, we are asking how we should live in a world filled with uncertainty and missed expectations. We are called both to lead lives of personal holiness and to challenge both personal and corporate sin as we wait for the new heavens and the new earth (2 Peter 3:8-13), striving to be light and salt in the world (Matthew 5:13-14). In Christ, we are already part of the new creation that God is bringing about (2 Corinthians 5:17).

- 76) Our traditions have understood the relationship between eschatology, God's judgment and mission in different ways. The Church is called to remain faithful to the end and to share the "Good News" of God's salvation through Christ with all who will hear. Thus, Pentecostal mission efforts have focused mainly on evangelism even as they have pointed to the return of Christ. Pentecostals understand that as they follow Christ, they are to take note of their lives, measuring them by the expectations that God has revealed in Scripture. In this way, they walk daily along a path of self-discernment and judgment, so as not to live and act in a manner unworthy of their calling (Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27; 1 Corinthians 11:27). At altar calls and during times of self-examination before communion, Pentecostals repent, knowing that Christ "who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Furthermore, they understand that Christ condemns all corporate sins and systemic evil (Colossians 2:8-15). As a result, they also remind us of the final judgment and the separation that will occur when Christ returns (Matthew 7:21-23, 25:31-46; Luke 13:22-30).
- 77) Reformed churches have emphasized that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The focus for Reformed Christians is on the judgment that has already taken place on the cross of Jesus, God's "no" to human endeavors. In the resurrection of Jesus, God's new life breaks into the world.

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In the expectation of the second coming, we anticipate the triumph of God's justice as we engage in mission. Every move toward justice is an inbreaking of God's life, a foretaste of God's just Kingdom that will come in fullness when Christ returns. Thus, a commitment to justice is at the heart of a Reformed understanding of mission. In spite of our differences in emphasis, together we look for the triumph of God's justice.

- 78) As followers of Christ, we share one hope. We pray together to God, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The Kingdom of God has come near in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through Christ, we have been reconciled to God and are now ambassadors of reconciliation and agents of healing, inviting others to share our hope in Christ as we work for justice. As in Jesus's ministry, we look for signs of God's Kingdom wherever the sick are healed, captives are freed (Luke 11:12), and the "Good News" is preached to the poor (Luke 4:18-19). With joy and thanksgiving, we participate in God's mission, knowing that our efforts alone will not bring the Kingdom of God to fruition. We trust in God's promises and his trust opens us up to be surprised by God as we wait with patience for that which we cannot yet see (Romans 8:25; 1 Corinthians 13:12-13).
- 79) God is faithful! Christ is coming! To live eschatologically is to celebrate God's new creation of which we are a part. As ambassadors of God's future, we work ceaselessly for transformation in our confidence that God's justice will triumph. We invite others to place their trust in Jesus and to live their lives in service to God's coming Kingdom to participate with us in fulfilling our call to the *missio Dei*.

V. Where Do We Go from Here?

Commitments on the Way Ahead

80) The Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 brought together Protestant and Anglican ecumenists, theologians, and missionaries from much of the world to review the current state of mission and the Church and to plan for the twentieth century. One of their significant emphases was their call for unity in mission. While Pentecostals were not present in that conference, we who participated in this round of dialogue believe that our respective Church families would do well to follow the hope of those conference participants, and work together as mission-oriented churches, wherever possible. All Christian ecclesial families have learned much from this important missionary conference, lessons that may be used as we work together to spread the “Good News.”

81) As Pentecostal and Reformed brothers and sisters, who have come to know and respect one another, together, we commit ourselves:

- To encourage and promote dialogue among Reformed and Pentecostal Christians in different contexts.
- To follow the Holy Spirit in embracing God’s mission as God gives it to us, and not expect the Spirit to follow us, or our ideas.
- To learn from others regarding what the Holy Spirit is doing among them, in order to obtain a more holistic understanding of mission
- To discern the work of the Holy Spirit together, within the context of the broader Church (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1-6) in order to discover where God is leading us in accord with the Divine mission.

Called to God's Mission

- To discern and study issues surrounding injustice and the exercise of power, in order to distinguish more clearly between the authority or power that originates with God, and the claims to power that human beings sometimes make, especially when they abuse power in the name of God.
- To be more faithful to God in our engagement in mission for transformation as both Church families agree that the way we understand justification and justice, and holistic salvation point in the same direction.
- To participate together in a Holy Spirit related mission that relies upon:
 1. Relationship building. We are only one Church if we are consciously in relationship with each other;
 2. Integrity in discipleship (being one in Christ; as a spiritual practice as well as in submitting to the teachings of Christ);
 3. Serving one another and others through God-given gifting, our histories (experiences) and common witness/action.

Opportunities for Further Agreement

82) While the time that the dialogue teams spent together in this round of discussions allowed them to address a number of important issues related to the subject of mission, we are well aware that we have only scratched the surface. There are many issues which we believe would offer rich and worthy opportunities for further agreement. We note, for example, the following four items that emerged from our discussions, but which were beyond the present scope of our dialogue.

- God's sovereign rule over history.
- The discernment of manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the public square.
- Issues of justice, especially the points where it is more important to obey God rather than any human authority.

- The vision of society, religious freedom, and fundamental values.
- 83) We agree that while we did not address these issues substantially in this document, at times only mentioning them, we believe that had these issues been discussed, they could make a substantial contribution to our understanding in future conversations between our Church families or in discussions that might take place at local, regional, national, or global levels.

Thanksgiving

- 84) During our final year together, Professor Teresa “Tess” Chai — who contributed substantially throughout these years, presenting a paper that helped to set the stage for our initial discussions, and offering occasional devotionals, wisdom, and humour — passed away. We wish to thank God for Tess’s faithfulness among us and commend her to God’s care.
- 85) We also wish to glorify and to proclaim our praise to Christ Jesus, who has called us together to work on this project. As we spent time together in prayer, Bible study, and discussion, we enjoyed a level of fellowship that we had not anticipated. As we reflected theologically on our subject, we found much more in common than we had expected. Even where we disagreed with how the other understood things, we enjoyed a level of respect that we did not foresee. We believe that these experiences were gifts that God gave to us as we worked to follow his leading. Our prayer is that the Lord will now quicken the hearts of our readers, as they join us in following the mission to which he has called all of us.

APPENDIX

Pentecostal Participants

Rev. Dr. Teresa Chai, 2014^P-2015, 2017-2018 (Malaysia/Philippines)

Rev. Dr. Shane Clifton, 2017^P (Australia)

Bishop Dr. David Daniels, 2016-2020 (USA)

Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Grey, 2014-2018, 2020 (Australia)

Rev. Dr. Harold D. Hunter, 2014-2017 (USA)

Rev. Dr. Van Johnson, 2018^P (Canada)

Rev. Dr. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, 2015^P (Finland/USA)

Rev. Dr. Wonsuk Ma, 2016^P (South Korea/USA)

Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss, 2014^P-2020 (Switzerland)

Rev. Dr. Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., (Co-chair) 2014-2020 (USA)

Dr. Olga Zaprometova, 2014, 2016-2017, 2019 (Russia)

Reformed Participants

Rev. Dr. Carmelo Alvarez, 2014, 2016 (Puerto Rico)

Rev. Dr. Dario Barolin, 2016 (Argentina)

Rev. Fundiswa Kobo (WCRC Intern), 2014^P (South Africa)

Rev. Viktória Kóczyán, 2014 (Hungary)

Rev. Dr. Karla Ann Koll, (Co-chair), 2014-2020^{P(2018)} (USA/Costa Rica)

Rev. Dr. Hanns Lessing, (WCRC Staff) 2017-2020

Rev. Dr. Nadia Marais, 2014-2017^{P(2016)}, 2019 (South Africa)

Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi, 2015^P-2020 (Ghana)

Rev. Dr. Bas Plaisier, 2014-2019 (Netherlands)

Rev. Dr. Anna Quaas, 2014 (Germany)

Rev. Dr. Gabriella Rácsok, 2014-2019^{P(2017)} (Hungary)

Rev. Dr. Douwe Visser (WCRC Staff), 2014^P-2015 (Netherlands)

P Presented the position paper on behalf of their team in that year.

The process for this round of dialogue began with papers that were presented and discussed each year from 2014-2018. In August 2019, Karla Koll and Gabriella Rácsok, representing the Reformed team, and Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. and Jean-Daniel Plüss, representing the Pentecostals, met to develop a preliminary draft for the third round of the dialogue. In October 2019, all participants met to discuss the draft, make amendments, and determine that another drafting session was necessary. To that end, Cecil M. Robeck, Jr., Jean-Daniel Plüss, and David D. Daniels met in Hannover, Germany, for the Pentecostals with Karla Koll, Setri Nyomi, and Hanns Lessing. They revised the draft, and in March 2020, sent it to both teams for final review before making final edits and publishing it.

—Easter 2020.



WCRC

Called to communion, committed to justice

About the World Communion of Reformed Churches

The World Communion of Reformed Churches is comprised of more than 230 churches in Congregational, Presbyterian, Reformed, United, Uniting, and Waldensian and other pre-Reformation traditions in over 105 countries. As a global koinonia marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed together, the WCRC strengthens and deepens unity among its members and coordinates common initiatives to increase its impact around the world.



Pentecostal
WORLD FELLOWSHIP

About the Pentecostal World Fellowship

The Pentecostal World Fellowship is a cooperative body of Pentecostal churches and groups worldwide. It is a coalition of commitment for the furtherance of the Gospel and functions as a service agent of support and cooperation. The PWF is a platform for sharing mutual concerns relating to crucial spiritual and temporal issues of the church, promoting exchange, and disseminating helpful information. It is a voice to the world and government in defense of the faith, social justice, and persecuted believers.

About this book:

The international dialogue between the World Communion of Reformed Churches and classical Pentecostals began in 1996. At the end of the first round of talks a common document was released in 2001: "Word and Spirit: Church and World." The second round produced a report entitled "Experience in Christian Faith and Life" in 2011. Both of these reports briefly mention the importance of God's mission in the world (*missio Dei*).

This report takes the focus on mission further. It highlights the context in which mission is relevant to both ecclesial traditions. Since both traditions embrace a diversity of missiologies, the report works to formulate a vision of the mission of God (*missio Dei*) that Pentecostal and Reformed Christians can live out together.

It demonstrates that Reformed and Pentecostal churches have an obligation to avail themselves to engage in God's mission for common witness and service, for justice and peace wherever the opportunity arises.
