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AIM AND SCOPE

Reformed World is an international journal that provides a forum for sharing and debating theological studies and prophetic witness that seek to engage and transform the realities of our time. The journal draws on, widens, and deepens the treasures of Reformed sources, past and present. *Reformed World* purposefully and joyfully embodies a diversity of voices and contextual perspectives, inspired by ecclesial, academic and grass roots communities. In the understanding of *Reformed World*, theological studies include the biblical, historical, systematic, and practical, as well as reflections on visual art, music, poetry, and other expressions of the human mind and soul that aim at the transformation of the world.

In doing so, *Reformed World* is committed to the mission of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) to be a global *koinonia*, covenanting for justice, and marked by discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed together. The journal also strives to receive impulses from and give impulses to the wider ecumenical movement, working together with all the partners God provides.

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CONTENTS:**Editorials and History**

Editorial - *By Hanns Lessing* P. 2

A Short History of the Journal *Reformed World* - *By Hanns Lessing* P. 5

From the Editorial Board - *By Heleen Zorgdrager* P. 11

Ecumenical Dialogues: Process, Introductions, Reports

Introduction to the Ecumenical Dialogues - *By Hanns Lessing* P. 14

A Shared Imperative for Justice - *By Reinerio Arce-Valentín* P. 25

Report of the Fourth Phase of Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue P. 30

Intra-Communion Discord as a Starting Point for Ecumenical Dialogue
- *By Aimee Moiso* P. 76

Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling, The Hiroshima Report of the
International Reformed–Anglican Dialogue P. 80

The Relevance of Ecumenical Dialogues in Times of Crisis
- *By Setri Nyomi* P. 112

Called to God's Mission: Report of the Third Round of International
Dialogue: Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed
Churches and Pentecostal World Fellowship P. 117

Critical Reflections and Practical Engagements

Will "Justification and Sanctification" Preach? Homiletical Offerings
from Justification and Sacramentality - *By HyeRan Kim-Cragg* P. 149

Can *Koinonia* Heal the Depredations of COVID-19? Continuing the
Dialogue with *Koinonia* - *By Yvette Noble-Bloomfield* P. 154

Reformation Day Today: On Being Evangelisch Together
- *By Margit Ernst-Habib* P. 161

Koinonia, Mission and Justice: A Triangular Conceptual Framework for
Ecumenical Dialogues - *By Jooseop Keum* P. 166



Editorial

Hanns Lessing

It is with great joy and gratitude that with this edition we announce the appointment of an editorial board of the *Reformed World*. We welcome a group of dedicated people from many areas of the life of our communion (see inside front cover). After the 2017 General Council in Leipzig, the strategic planning committee, which was tasked to translate the decisions of the General Council into guidelines for the work of the WCRC, strongly engaged with the question on how best to “communicate the communion.”

In the tradition of the Presbyterian commitment to joint discernment, communication is much more than information on what is happening. Joint discernment is a truly theological process in which what we as Reformed Christian call communion comes into being.

Many of the readers of the journal *Reformed World* will have participated or have heard about the discernment process of the Leipzig General Council. More than 800 delegates, consultants, GIT students and advisors gathered in discernment groups and discussed all the relevant decisions. This methodology allowed the participants to contribute qualitatively to the process of discernment.

Joint discernment is particularly essential in response to challenges that cannot be dealt with by adapting traditional patterns of theological thinking, moral conviction, or political persuasion. We live in times where things are happening, which—even a few years ago—we would have considered unimaginable. New questions require new and prophetic answers that—as Reformed Christians believe—can be found in robust engagement with the Word of God. In this spirit, the General Council found far-reaching consensus on contentious topics like racism, authoritarianism and nationalism, human sexuality, and the situation in Palestine.

Many delegates described this experience of joint discernment as a convincing adaptation of the principles of Presbyterian church polity on a global level: In the covenant between God and the church a purely private relation with God is necessarily incomplete. Individuals are created to live in relationships; they therefore express their relationship to God through their participation in the covenant community. Communal bodies can therefore express the covenant relationship far more convincingly than by any individual. The more representative the body—the more inclusive—the more likely it will be able to

express God's will.¹ The South African theologian Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel, who died much too early in May 2020, argued in the tradition of the 1571 Synod of Emden that "no church should have dominion over another church," that the authority of "major assemblies" is not based on a higher rank, but on the "broader" participation they can gather in the discernment.²

The journal *Reformed World* is published by the WCRC and committed to its mission. The terms of reference of the work of the editorial board describe the journal as a "forum for sharing and debating theological studies and prophetic witness that seek to engage and transform the realities of our time."³

In the spirit of this mission, the WCRC highly appreciates the commitment of the editorial board to "actively pursue, explore, and stimulate topics for theological reflection that are important for WCRC to hear, see, address, be challenged with, and consider." We believe that the engagement with these voices will significantly contribute to the process of discernment that constitutes the WCRC as a communion.

The editorial policy of the *Reformed World* adheres to the values of the WCRC, particularly to those that commit us to always ensure diversity and just participation in all activities of the communion. *Reformed Word* identifies as a theological journal, but it is committed to publish texts and other material from different spheres of the life of the communion, e.g., "reflections on visual art, music, poetry, and other expressions of the human mind and soul that aim at the transformation of the world." In accordance with the WCRC's commitment to just representation, the journal will provide space for a "diversity of voices and contextual perspectives, inspired by ecclesial, academic, and grass roots communities."

The current strategic plan of the WCRC stands under the heading "Confessing the God of Life in a World Falling Among Thieves" and describes the WCRC as a global *koinonia* based on four verbs and five actions. The *four verbs*—"discerning," "confessing," "witnessing," and "being reformed together"—taking

1 Historic Principles, Conscience and Church Government: Adopted by 195th General Assembly (1983) Presbyterian Church (USA) (Louisville, KY: The Office of the General Assembly, 1983).

2 Mary-Anne Plaatjies van Huffel, "The Relevance of Reformed Church Polity Principles: Revisiting the Concept," in Allan J. Janssen and Leo Koffeman (eds), *Protestant Church Polity in Changing Contexts I: Ecclesiological and Historical Contributions. Proceedings of the International Conference, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 7-10 November, 2011* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2014), 29-48. Ecclesiological and historical contributions, Wien, p. 39.

3 This is part of the "Aim and Scope" statement included on the inside front cover of this publication.



up the theological trajectories that have guided the work of the World Alliance and the World Communion of Reformed Churches from the beginning. The *five actions* describe the areas in which the WCRC will strive to confess the God of life: “cultivating a just communion,” “covenanting for justice,” “doing theology for transformation,” “engaging God’s mission in contexts of crisis,” and “working with all the partners God provides.”

We hope that the *Reformed World* will play an important role in all these areas and look forward to a stimulating engagement with important topics.

A Short History of the Journal

Reformed World is one of the oldest theological journals in the world, published under several names since 1879. Its original title, *The Catholic Presbyterian*, demonstrated the high aspirations of the churches that had founded the The Alliance of the Reformed Churches throughout the World Holding the Presbyterian System in 1875. These churches wanted to create a world body that should extend beyond narrow ecclesial or doctrinal limitations and therefore be truly ecumenical. In his editorial on the first issue, editor William Garden Blaikie explained: “Catholic Presbyterianism cannot be a very exclusive Presbyterianism. Certainly, our Presbyterian Alliance repudiates any such exclusivism.... For our past... we regard other evangelical communions as part of the one Church Catholic.”¹

Like all developments in the history of the church, the expectations connected with this title were complex and—from the vantage point of today—one can already recognize important tenets of the self-understanding and the mission, but also some tensions that mark the history of the WCRC to the present day.

Criticizing Dominion

The end of the nineteenth century was the climax of European and American colonialism. Several countries in the Global North had established empires and ruled over the largest part of the earth. These developments also motivated a period of massive ecclesial globalization. Several denominational communions claimed global authority and established themselves as world churches: In 1867 the first Lambeth Conference gathered all Anglican Bishops across the world. In 1870 the Vatican Council ended with the declaration of the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope.

In this context, the foundation of the Alliance of Reformed Churches took place. In his Introductory Narrative to the first General Council, which took place 1877 in Edinburgh, William Garden Blaikie, the convenor, reported a “longing for a Pan-Presbyterian Council” that drove the formation of the Alliance.² This language related the project of the Alliance to the many pan-movements that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century all over the world to unify

1 Edmont Perret, “Signposts for a Centennial,” *Reformed World* – Centennial Issue, vol. 35.5 (1979): 195.

2 William Blaikie, “Introductory Narrative,” *Report of Proceedings of the First General Presbyterian Council: Convened at Edinburgh, July 1877* (Edinburgh: Thomas and Archibald Constable 1877), 2.



people of the same ethnicity, language, culture, geographical location, or religion beyond nationalist boundaries (pan-Slavism, pan-Germanism, pan-Americanism, pan-Asianism, pan-Africanism, pan-Islam, etc.) As different as they are, pan-ideologies share the aspect of essentialism and, therefore, usually do not accept the complicated intermingling of identities occasioned by mixing ethnic and linguistic groups, "race," gender, religion and "culture."³

And in the first issues of *The Catholic Presbyterian*, one finds some texts that naturally use the colonial concepts of the time. The first editor, William Blaikie, who was the author of a very popular biography of David Livingstone⁴, included a text in which Livingstone praised the growth of empires as the glorious consummation of Christianity. In the Centennial Issue of *Reformed World* in 1979, then WARC General Secretary Edmond Perret stated with a sense of slight despair: This "could hardly be published again as the missionary is presented as if he belonged to a superior race!"⁵

But such imperial ideology did not express the main thrust of the message of *The Catholic Presbyterian*. Many articles engage much more subtly with the challenges for church and mission in the imperial era. From the very beginning the Reformed Alliance was committed to the principle of the "naturalization of the Church in every country."⁶ The core principles of Presbyterian church polity based on the conviction formulated at the Emden Synod (1571), that "no church should have dominion over another church"⁷ fostered the development of an Empire-critical identity.

In its rejection of any form of dominion, the Alliance committed itself to the principle of equality among churches. Every member church was to be received in its own right. When, for example, in the 1890s, the Anglo-Saxon churches felt committed to support the fragile Reformed churches and congregations in Southern Europe, it was argued in *The Catholic Presbyterian* that assistance must

3 Tilman Lüdke (2012), "Pan-Ideologies," *European History Online* (EGO), Mainz: Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG) (2012), <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/transnational-movements-and-organisations/pan-ideologies>.

4 William Garden Blaikie, *The Personal Life of David Livingstone: Chiefly from His Unpublished Journals and Correspondence in the Possession of His Family* (London: Murray, 1880).

5 Perret, "Signposts for a Centennial," 197.

6 Marcel Pradervand, *A Century of Service: A History of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (1875-1975)* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1975), 35; quoting *The Catholic Presbyterian*, vol. II (1890), 347.

7 Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, Gillian Lewis, trans. and ed., *Calvinism in Europe: 1540-1619* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 158.

never be used to take control. The foundation of a Presbyterian mission for Southern Europe was therefore rejected.⁸

With regard to the mission work in the Global South, the journal called for a similar restraint. One early article in *The Catholic Presbyterian* called for the “entire ecclesiastic severance” of the mission churches from their “parent Churches in Europe and in America.”⁹ According to the Emden principle, the emerging churches in the Global South were seen as equals, and authors who set out to formulate the goals of mission developed a vision according to which churches all over the world would fully participate in the Alliance.

The way in which the principles of Presbyterian church polity were taken up in the life and the structure of the Alliance allowed different churches to constructively engage with each other, even if the same churches had earlier split because of theological divisions. The Reformed movement was always much less monolithic than other Christian world communions. The nineteenth century was a time of schisms, particularly in Scotland and in the United States. Still, the Alliance was a way to maintain a relationship, even if the fellowship of synods and assemblies had been broken. And *The Catholic Presbyterian* was a forum that encouraged the exploration of forms of unity, which allowed churches to keep in touch despite all the differences they had with each other.

This particular identity that cherished diversity was based on the conviction that the God’s Church always extended the limitations of a congregation or a regional denomination. This persuasion made the Alliance susceptible to a wider ecumenical horizon. One of the first articles in *The Catholic Presbyterian* explicitly repudiated any form of Presbyterian exclusivism and stated, “we regard other evangelical communions as part of the one Church Catholic.” This statement is an early expression of the conviction that to be Reformed is to be ecumenical. In this consciousness, the Alliance became one of the strongest proponents of the emerging ecumenical movement.

This openness did not prevent the Alliance to take a clear stand on controversial matters. Several positions were quite contrary to the contemporary elite discourse in the churches of the Global North. In the early issues of the journal, one finds remarkable statements on workers’ rights and world peace.¹⁰

8 Marcel Pradervand, *A Century of Service*, 64.

9 Ibid., 36.

10 Ibid., 35, 57.



Discerning and Confessing: Ottawa, Accra, and Beyond

The Catholic Presbyterian was a very ambitious project. From 1879-1883 under the editorship of William Garden Blaikie it was published monthly; each issue had eighty pages. The following publications were much less aspirational in scope and size. The publication was reduced to four issues a year. The names given to the journal were descriptive and raised only limited programmatic expectations. From 1886-1936 the journal was called *Quarterly Register* and from 1937-1948 *Presbyterian Register*. After the move of the alliance to Geneva in 1948, the journal was renamed *The Presbyterian World*. In 1956 after some discussion about what constituted the core identity of the World Alliance (church polity or theological tradition), the title was changed to *The Reformed and Presbyterian World*. Since the merger of the World Alliance and the International Congregational Council, the journal has been published under its current name, *Reformed World*.

In all the year of the publication's existence, the authors of *Reformed World* have engaged controversial issues (the authority of Reformed confessions, the exploitation of the working class, the impact of the First and the Second World War, the relationship to the ecumenical movement and particularly to the WCC). In the 1960s, one sees an increase in the number of authors from the Global South. With their contributions, the journal starts to meet the self-set expectation to be a global forum to discuss matters of relevance for the Alliance.

Throughout the many decades of the journal's existence, this engagement was conducted in the language of a carefully argued theological discourse. Controversial themes were presented in a manner that accepted that one could be of a different opinion about the matters concerned. This changed drastically when the Alliance in the 1980s started to discuss the apartheid system in South Africa as a matter that required a decision in the form of a confession. The Ottawa General Council stated in 1982: "In certain situations the confession of a church needs to draw a clear line between truth and error."¹¹

Such situations arise when the integrity of the Gospel itself is at stake. The General Council in Frankfurt had already stated in 1964 that racism is nothing less than a betrayal of the Gospel because the unity in Christ of members of different nations and races points to the fullness of the unity of all in God's coming kingdom. "Therefore the exclusion of any person on the grounds of race, colour or nationality, from any congregation and part of the life of the church

11 "Resolution on Racism and South Africa," *Reformed World: General Council Ottawa '82: Papers and Reports* (World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1982), 37, 3-4, 77.

contradicts the very nature of the church.”¹² At the 1970 Nairobi General Council the Reformed Alliance moved that the church “that by doctrine and/or practice affirms segregation of peoples (e.g. racial segregation) as a law for its life cannot be regarded as an authentic member of the body of Christ.”¹³ The 1982 Ottawa General Council declared “that apartheid (‘Separate Development’) is a sin and that the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the Gospel, and in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy.” In consequence of this decision, the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk and the Nederduits Hervormde Kerk van Afrika were suspended “until such time as the WARC Executive Committee has determined that these two Churches in their utterances and practice have given evidence of a change of heart.”¹⁴

In the issue of *Reformed World* that reported the actions of the Ottawa General Council General Secretary Perret commented in his Editorial: “What is of extreme importance is that a new awareness of what it means to belong together in the Reformed family became evident.... It is a new awareness of what the Reformed family is and what it can accomplish in the sphere of world affairs as well as on the ecumenical scene. I tried to emphasize in Ottawa that, in order to be relevant, all our discussions had to take place... right in the midst of the present situation.”¹⁵

This new awareness would shape the identity and the ambition of *Reformed World* ever since. Theology should be transformative and should have an impact on the life of the world. The relevance of contributions was assessed by the criteria that they addressed situations of real pain and suffering and called for justice and liberation. *Reformed World* articles began to discern the signs of the times in different conflictual areas and assessed whether a confessing response was needed. Different issues of *Reformed World* engaged with topics of relevance for the Alliance.

Three General Councils (Seoul in 1989, Debrecen in 1997, and Accra in 2004) engaged with the question of economic justice. The Accra Confession declared that “global economic justice is essential to the integrity of our faith in God and our discipleship as Christians. We believe that the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of

12 Ibid, 76f

13 Ibid, 77.

14 Ibid, 39.

15 Ibid, 1.



neoliberal economic globalization.”¹⁶ The General Council consequently rejected the “current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God’s covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life.”¹⁷ This reflected in the themes of the Reformed World issues: e.g., *The Crisis in World Christianity and the Challenges to Mission in the 21st Century* (vol 54.3), *Reformed Faith and the Rejection of Economic Injustice* (vol. 55.3), *Empire* (vol 56.4), *Do Not Submit again to the Yoke of Slavery* (vol. 58.1). This shift of focus also shaped the way in which traditional theological themes were discussed: e.g., *John Calvin. What Is His Legacy?* (vol 57.4).

Continuity in Changing Contexts

In the course of this discussion the Alliance engaged again with its relationship to the Empire, which it had already dealt with at the beginning of its history. Already at the end of the nineteenth century, the Alliance had interpreted the imperial claim of nations from the vantage point of God’s sovereignty and consequently dismissed any form of hierarchy, authoritarian rule, and persecution in matters of the church. In the period between Ottawa and Accra this principle was applied to the analysis of power in the world. The Accra Confession declares: “We reject any claim of economic, political and military empire which subverts God’s sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God’s just rule.”

This confession guided WARC and WCRC through the 2010 Grand Rapids and the 2017 Leipzig General Councils. In this period, *Reformed World* has been the medium to discuss (often also critically), deepen, and advance this discourse. The new editorial board, appointed in 2020, is taking up this tradition. The terms of reference of *Reformed World* commit the journal to be a “forum for sharing and debating theological studies and prophetic witness that seek to engage and transform the realities of our time.”¹⁸

¹⁶ Accra Confession, §16.

¹⁷ Accra Confession, §19.

¹⁸ This is part of the “Aim and Scope” statement included on the inside front cover of this publication.

From the Editorial Board

Heleen Zorgdrager – Moderator of the Editorial Board

It might not be too much to say that we live in a conjunctural moment marked by unprecedented crises. The threat of the COVID-19 pandemic intersects with the harmful effects of economic injustice, religious nationalisms, racial violence, and the undeniable climate crisis, to name some of the major challenges. People are tempted to withdraw into their own “bubbles,” in which algorithms ensure that they are fed only news and information that affirms their own views. It gives people something to hold on to in uncertainty. In our days, the “bubble” has become the metaphor for encapsulating yourself in your own truth, ignorance, and isolation, thereby fueling further division and polarization.

In such a time, a new editorial board of *Reformed World* takes on the task of continuing a journal that has as its core aim “communicating the communion.” The journal has a long and wonderful history, as we can read in the brief overview Hanns Lessing provides in this volume. However, why should we continue a journal when social media continuously spit out an overwhelming amount of information and opinions? And why a shared journal when we can happily live in our “bubbles”? As members of the editorial board, we believe that precisely in times like this it is of utmost importance to keep a sense of belonging beyond ourselves. We believe that the journal *Reformed World* can serve to strengthen this sense of a broader belonging, to hear voices other than our own—both from other contexts and from a long tradition—and to stay committed to the principle of mutual accountability within the global family of Reformed churches.

The history of *Reformed World* shows that there have always been moments of critical discernment and renewed orientation. The principle of equality among churches, which was grounded in the belief that the final authority is with the sovereign God, appeared to be a motivational factor to come to discernment by listening to each other. Again at a defining moment in the history of *Reformed World*, we as newly appointed editorial board set out to continue this theological journal as a global forum to discuss matters of relevance for the whole communion. We see the journal doing so, as it has done before, by engaging a diversity of voices, by ensuring that prophetic voices that call out for justice are being heard, by facilitating vigorous inquiry and debate, and by retrieving wisdom from the past, from Bible and tradition, for reflection on the challenges today.



In the spirit of Leipzig 2017, Grand Rapids 2010, and the Accra confession 2004, we understand the journal as a platform and meeting place for embodying together the mission of WCRC: called to communion, committed to justice. Such is the experience we have shared in General Councils and consultations: when we come together, we are reminded about who we are. Discernment is found especially when we come together. Critical voices in our midst remind us of our calling and identity as an ecclesial communion, and help us to discern in a self-critical way how we shall engage the world and witness and confess today. An Empire-critical identity, shaped through exposure to internal and external conflicts and controversies and coming to characterize the communion throughout our history, will nourish and guide us in future discernments.

In this spirit, the editorial board hopes to embody the liveliness of the communion, its visionary aspects, its struggles, and its hopes. We will actively pursue challenges and give impetus to theologically urgent topics. As a team that enjoys in itself a diversity of members—in gender, age, background, geography—and blessed with various experiences within WCRC, we want to reach out to a wide and diverse circle of readers and authors.

Working within the aim and scope of the journal, it is our intention to seek conversation with all branches of WCRC work, to communicate between churches, grassroots, and academia, and to engage theologians and other thinkers from all over the world, young and old, junior and established, academics and practitioners, for communal reflection. We wish to engage with developments in the wider ecumenical and interreligious movement, with grassroots movements of faith as well as with academic Reformed theology, such as—with a global scope—the International Reformed Theological Institute (IRTI). We want to carry forward the idea of a theology of transformation, embodied in lived practices and seeking fullness of life for all. While affirming this, we acknowledge that theology can be done in many imaginative and creative ways, not only in the style of sophisticated scholarly articles, and that a journal that wants to “communicate the communion” and gather all voices should be open to such novel expressions.

Among the materials we would like to publish are current discussion papers from WCRC consultations that deal with urgent and real topics, including deepening and broadening reflections; theological papers of young people who participate in youth summits or the Global Institute of Theology; reflections on visual art, poetry, music, and other artistic forms; reports of ecumenical dialogues with critical reflections how to take these forward to churches on the

ground and to the future of becoming (more) church together; essays on liturgy and on biblical exegesis; and, in every volume, the header “Communion Notes,” under which current theological projects and activities of WCRC in the regions can be highlighted.

In the practical sense, we will continue editing a paper journal, with a frequency of two issues a year. Over the last years, the issues have already been published in a digital form as well, as a PDF file on the website of the WCRC (wrcr.ch/theology/reformed-world). In the coming months, the online availability will be enhanced with the ability to search and download articles. This will make it possible for articles published in *Reformed World* to be included in and found through databases of library systems worldwide. It will increase the benefits to authors of publishing in *Reformed World*, and make it easier for readers to find articles of their special interest.

We have been looking forward to getting started with the journal, in the above described spirit of community and continuity. Our thanks go to all our predecessors. It is our sincere hope that we may continue the work in a way that will be recognized and appreciated by you, the readers of *Reformed World*, whom we cherish and without whom the journal would never exist.



Introduction to the Ecumenical Dialogues

Hanns Lessing

In this edition of *Reformed World*, we are pleased to publish and discuss three dialogue reports. The Report of the Fourth Phase of Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue on justification and sacramentality already dates from 2015.¹ The reports of the dialogues with the Anglican Communion and the Pentecostal World Fellowship were finalized in 2020. They engage with the themes of “koinonia”² and “mission.”³

The themes of the dialogues already point to a characteristic that lately has marked several dialogue processes among Christian world communions. Besides the desire to overcome the doctrinal differences that have separated churches for centuries, dialogues nowadays are very much aware of the context in which churches actually live and the challenges that they are facing. Justice, *koinonia*, and mission are themes in all Christian world communions. The dialogues provide a space to apply the theological traditions of the churches to questions of today. Such conversations aim to discover doctrinal traditions of the different churches as living resources of contemporary faith. In this perspective, dialogues have become exercises of mutual inspiration and shared learning that nourish the whole Church in its attempts to come to terms with the challenges of today.

***Reformed World*: A Forum for Debating Ecumenical Dialogue Reports**

The newly appointed editorial board of *Reformed World* has chosen the opportunity to relate the latest thinking on ecumenical dialoguing in the World Communion of Reformed Churches to the visions formulated in these dialogues. This approach takes up the self-understanding of *Reformed World* as it is formulated in the Aim and Scope paragraph that you find on the inside cover of

1 Report of the Fourth Phase of Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue “Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice,” http://wrcr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Catholic-Reformed_Dialogue_Report.pdf.

2 “Koinonia: God’s Gift and Calling. The Hiroshima Report of the International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue” (IRAD) 2020, <http://wrcr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/IRAD-Koinonia-Gods-Gift-and-Calling.pdf>; also available as Amazon print-on-demand publication.

3 “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,” <http://wrcr.ch/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CalledToGodsMission.pdf>; also available as Amazon print-on-demand publication.

each issue. This definition describes *Reformed World* as “an international journal that provides a forum for sharing and debating theological studies and prophetic witness that seek to engage and transform the realities of our time.”

Taking up this idea, the current issue engages with the latest reports in light of the principles set by the 2017 General Council in Leipzig to guide ecumenical dialogues. In Action 21, the Council decided that dialogues should be of “relevance for the WCRC and its member churches’ mission of unity”; they should pursue a “global perspective rooted in contextual realities” and should strive for “the application of methodologies and content of the dialogues in discussions within the Communion.”⁴

In the spirit of this commitment, the current issue of *Reformed World* attempts to provide a space for a constructive appraisal. Introductions written by members of the Reformed dialogue teams highlight those dimensions of the report that are of particular interest for churches looking for inspiration in their endeavours to be the Church in the challenges of the world of today. In the second part, we have included articles that from different critical perspectives engage with the reports and interrogate the approach of the WCRC to ecumenical dialogues in more general terms.

Engaging the Dialogue Reports

In his introduction, **Reinerio Arce-Valentín** emphasizes the significance of the Catholic-Reformed report on “Justification and Sacramentality” for the process that in 2017 allowed the WCRC to associate with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). This declaration was originally signed by Lutherans and Catholics in 1999. With the association by Methodists (2006), Anglicans (2016), and the Reformed (2017), this document became the point of departure for a dynamic ecumenical process. Based on the consensus on the understanding of the doctrine of Justification, the five communions today look attempt to coordinate ecumenical processes. They develop a mechanism that allows them to engage in acts of common witness and search for forms of visible unity that express the level of unity they already have achieved.

Aimee Moiso’s introduction of the latest IRAD report interprets the dialogue as a learning experience that engages the Reformed and Anglican traditions in the present tense. In their attempt to overcome church-dividing differences,

4 “Proceedings of the 26th General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches,” Leipzig, Germany, 29 June-7 July 2017, 12.



they also encourage the communions to be transformed internally by the new insights found in the encounter.

The IRAD report builds on the ecumenical understanding of *koinonia* and emphasizes that churches that base their being on God's Word and Sacrament are never out of communion. Because *koinonia* is a divine gift that churches are called to receive, communion might be impaired, but it cannot be destroyed.

The commitment to this conviction proves to be fruitful to express the foundations of the relationship between Anglicans and Reformed, and can inspire new approaches to deal with the challenges of *intra*-communion discord that challenges Christian world communions. The IRAD report calls upon the two communions to embrace this understanding of *koinonia* to contain conflict so that it loses its power to divide.

Setri Nyomi, in his introduction to the latest Pentecostal-Reformed dialogue report, points to the significant amount of consensus on the understanding of mission, which allows Pentecostals and Reformed Christians to overcome the situation of "social distancing" that very often characterizes their relationship today. Both traditions base their understanding of mission on the mission of God, the *missio dei*, which they understand a divine intervention into the world that has spiritual but also material, physical, social, economic, and political consequences. Mission is not what Christians and churches do by their own initiative but a divine action that calls upon the churches to join into. In this perspective, the classical antagonism between positions that emphasize a "this-worldly" or "other-worldly" understanding of mission loses its theological foundation. The mission of God calls upon Christians to engage in a holistic mission that aims at the transformation of the world.

Pentecostals and Reformed do not differ in their interpretation of the theological foundations, but rather how they understand Christian agency in 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, which calls for thorough scrutiny of intentions and context. Both views have their strengths. The difference, therefore, requires continuous common discernment of Pentecostals and Reformed, to which the current report hopes to provide a solid foundation.

At the end of the issue, members of the editorial board of the Reformed World engage the Reformed approach to ecumenical dialogues on the basis of the vision and the self-understanding of the WCRC.

HyeRan Kim-Cragg scrutinizes the Roman Catholic-Reformed report under the question: “Will Justification and Sanctification preach?” She answers the question in the affirmative. The relationship between justification and justice that the report explores places the theological concepts of justification and sanctification in the context of the pressing problems of our time. In her perception, the report offers the opportunity to give contemporary meaning to the inseparability of justification and justice, which both Catholics and Reformed are affirming (§30): “Justification, in a nutshell, means ‘acceptance, belonging, recognition, and inclusion’ owned and claimed by God despite who we are. However, this realization of justification does not remove the pain of marginalization and oppression. To remove marginalization and oppression, one must work painstakingly and diligently practice a new kind of life. That is where the doctrine of sanctification comes to the fore.” Thus, Kim-Cragg concludes, not taking up the content of this dialogue would represent a “loss of a theological and intellectual resource which could help Christians in the struggle to address issues of dehumanization, division and discrimination.”

Margit Ernst-Habib, in her article “On Being ‘*Evangelisch*’ Together” highlights the significance of the consensus on the understanding of justification and sanctification not only for the theological understanding among Catholics and Reformed, but also for spirituality and Christian life: “the understanding of sanctification, as being made holy for living a life according to the Gospel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, provides a common ground and fundament for those two churches for journeying together.” Ernst-Habib describes this willingness of Catholics and Reformed to proclaim God’s peace and justice as a “new kind of Reformation Day for both traditions..., which aims to not focus on demarcation lines and what separates us, but on the Holy One who binds us together in order to serve and collaborate in promoting what the Hebrew Bible knows as *shalom*.”

Yvette Noble-Bloomfield’s contribution mainly focuses on the IRAD report “Koinonia – God’s Gift and Calling.” She applies the question “Can *koinonia* heal the depredations of COVID-19?” as the yardstick of her investigation and concludes that in the situation of the pandemic, any meaningful proclamation of *koinonia* “must enable a prophetic voice to rise with healing in its wings.” In her assessment, the Church and the world can benefit from the notion of *koinonia* as outlined in the report. She emphatically affirms one of the main convictions of the dialogue: “Because *koinonia* is a radical and primary gift of God, we believe it has the power to transform conflict. As disciples, we carry an abiding hope for healthy, just, and whole relationships with others, as well as an earnest desire for reconciliation and the healing of divided and broken communities.”



Jooseop Keum finally engages with all three reports and concludes that the themes “justice,” “koinonia,” and “mission” form an ecumenical agenda that must be taken up even more radically. Future dialogues should apply the agenda of “transformative ecumenism,” which “as a faith-driven movement towards justice and life requires a shift of location—in hermeneutical as well as in geographical terms: from the board rooms to the streets and from dogma to life.” For future dialogues he suggests the following themes: “*Status confessionis* on climate change and ecological diversities”; “Re-imagining ecumenism as a movement from the margins beyond institutionalism”; “Nurturing a spirituality of the interconnectedness of Life and solidarity of hope”; “Exploring theologies of Life and fostering partnerships among the vulnerable” and “Shifting the centre of ecumenism from the euro-centric to world Christianity.”

“Never an End in Itself”: Reformed Approaches to Ecumenical Relationship Building

The critical reflection of ecumenical relationship building has a long tradition in the World Alliance and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. Odair Mateus, Executive Secretary of WARC’s department of theology 2000-2007, in his book, *Beyond Confessionalism: Essays on the Practice of Reformed Ecumenicity*,⁵ traces the origins of a mission-driven ecumenical ecclesiology back to the beginnings of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System at the end of the nineteenth century. In his Introductory Narrative to the first General Council in 1877, William Blaikie defined the Alliance as a “Pan-Presbyterian Council” that exhibits the “substantial unity” among the churches and promotes “harmony of action” in mission. While the Alliance gathered churches “holding the Presbyterian system,” it was never understood as an exclusive entity. Its purpose was to witness the unity and mission to which God calls the whole Church. As the Swiss-American theologian Philip Schaff pointed out in 1877:

A confession which would intensify Presbyterianism and loosen the ties which unite us to the other branches of Christ’s kingdom I would regard as a calamity. ...We want a declaration of union, not a platform of disunion. Much as we esteem doctrinal unity, there is a higher unity, the unity of spiritual life, the unity of faith, the unity of love which binds us to Christ, and to all who love him, of whatever denomination or creed.⁶

5 Odair Mateus, *Beyond Confessionalism: Essays on the Practice of Reformed Ecumenicity* (Sao Paulo: Emblema, 2010), https://www.academia.edu/4849582/Beyond_Confessionalism_Essays_on_the_Practice_of_Reformed_Ecumenicity.

6 Ibid., 9.

William Blaikie reemphasized this message in his presidential address to the third General Council in Belfast, 1884:

I, for my part, never desired that this Alliance should end, as it were, with itself: but rather that it should be a step towards an Alliance that one day would have a vastly larger constituency, and that would form a more important contribution than we can make toward the swifter fulfilment of our Saviour's prayer—"That they all may be one."⁷

In correspondence with these principles, the Preamble of the 1875 Constitution of the Presbyterian Alliance resolves:

It is agreed to form a Presbyterian Alliance to meet in General Council from time to time in order to confer upon matters of common interest, and to further the ends for which the Church has been constituted by her Divine Lord and only King. In forming this Alliance, the Presbyterian Churches do not mean to change their fraternal relations with other churches, but will be ready, as heretofore, to join with them in Christian fellowship and in advancing the cause of the Redeemer.⁸

The conviction that churches are instruments of God's glory and, therefore, must never become ends with themselves formed the pillar of Reformed ecumenical self-understanding. It was repeated in several important documents of the World Alliance in the time of the formation of the ecumenical movement after World War 2.

In his address to the Princeton General Council, 1954, President John Mackay emphasized the sovereign rule of God in the affairs of men and the servant role of the Church:

Men and nations owe their health and stability, and also their security, to the attitude which they take up towards God's eternal righteousness as set forth in Holy Scripture and in Jesus. ...The Christian and the church belong to God, are the servants of God. They can never be an end in themselves. The church is most truly the church when it is God's servant, the medium whereby he expresses his redemptive love to mankind.⁹

7 Ibid., 10.

8 Ibid., 37.

9 Ibid., 50



In this spirit, the Alliance repudiated “ecclesiastic tribalism” as well as the “idea of a super church.”¹⁰ The *raison d’être* of the Church was seen in “missionary action”¹¹ and not in its structure:

The visible structure of the church is not identical with the unity of the church. The living adaptation of structures to Christ’s mission in the world and in the church is an expression of the living relation between Christ, the head of the church and the members of the body.¹²

The emphasis on “living relations” also informed the Reformed approach to engaging with other Christian world communions. When, after the Second Vatican Council, the Roman Catholic Church began to invite other churches for ecumenical dialogues, the World Alliance responded with reluctance. WARC representatives had actively participated in the Vatican Council. The Alliance highly welcomed the improvement of Catholic Reformed relations. However, it regarded the instrument of ecumenical dialogue as detrimental to the cause. Mateus quotes the assessment of Hendrikus Berkhof:

Conversations with the Roman Catholic Church on a world level must necessarily have a somewhat abstract if not ghostly character. They were in danger of reinforcing denominational characteristics which are no longer the live issues in the actual Churches.¹³

Several meetings of the WARC Executive Committee expressed the concern that bilateral dialogues focusing on doctrinal matters could strengthen the exclusive denominational identities, which they seek to overcome.

WARC’s preferred model would have been that the global dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church would be conducted under the auspices of the World Council of Churches: “Geneva and not Rome should be the centre of all ecumenical discussion.”¹⁴

However, after several Christian world communions had started individual dialogue processes with the Roman Catholic Church, WARC reconsidered its position noting, as the theological secretary, Richmond Smith, put it in 1968:

10 Ibid., 51

11 Ibid., 52

12 Ibid., 54

13 Ibid., 80.

14 Ibid., 83.

The reality of the present ecumenical context is such that the original Alliance motive not to proliferate bilateral dialogue in order to strengthen the WCC position may now paradoxically be best served by entering the field in such a way that the WCC, along with the Confessional Families of Churches, may be able to coordinate effectively the total work of dialogue with the RC Church on the international level.¹⁵

Slowly, WARC also realized the potential of a bilateral Reformed-Catholic conversation. The Scottish theologian Thomas F. Torrance argued:

There could be some real point “in discussions that were designed to penetrate beneath and behind these areas of disagreement into the basic inner connections with a view to clarifying the deeper divergences and to reaching, if possible, deeper agreement.”¹⁶

In 1968 Catholic and Reformed representatives met for a meeting in Geneva to prepare the first dialogue and agreed unanimously:

Conversations on a world level are now desirable and feasible. ...The Catholic-Reformed dialogue must reflect not only “the peculiar tensions between the two Churches” but also their common concern to make manifest the relevance of Christ in the world today.¹⁷

The insights discovered in this discernment inform the WARC/WCRC approach to ecumenical dialogues ever since.

Cherishing the Ecumenical Penultimate

The dialogue reports published in this issue testify to the ecumenical potency of the Reformed approach to ecumenical relationship building. In contrast to the enthusiasm of the early decades of the ecumenical movement, today there is only little indication that grand visions of Church unity will materialize soon. At a time like this, the Reformed emphasis that the Church is always reforming appears to be a valuable resource for deepening ecumenical relationships. Its de-emphasizing doctrinal identity and instead focusing on the mission of the Church help to give visibility to the many penultimate aspects of unity Church that dialogues and other ecumenical initiatives have helped to achieve.

¹⁵ Ibid., 77.

¹⁶ Ibid., 80.

¹⁷ Ibid., 85.



In the 2017-2024 Strategic Plan that implements the action of the 2017 General Council in Leipzig, the WCRC understands itself as a “global *Koinonia*”, marked by “discerning, confessing, witnessing and being reformed together”. The verbs “discerning,” “confessing,” “witnessing,” and “being reformed together” form the theological core of the work of the WCRC. They also help to define the WCRC’s principles for ecumenical relationship building, of which the dialogues are an essential part:

Discerning: The non-hierarchical Presbyterian tradition emphasizes the significance of conciliar discernment to counter the human tendency to abuse positions of power and privilege: No member of the body of Christ can say to the other “‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect” (1 Corinthians 12:21-23).

These convictions inform the way of how the WCRC attempts to compose dialogue tables:

- Dialogue teams should represent the global Communion in its diversity. Expert advice by specialized theologians is very welcome. But the dialogue teams should also include members from areas where Christian attempt to use the Reformed tradition to come to terms with very challenging situations.
- Dialogues should be a space that allows mission from the margins and—following Paul’s emphasis in 1 Corinthians 12—prioritize voices that are disempowered in ordinary church discourse.
- The methodology of the differentiating consensus resonates deeply with fundamental principles of the Reformed tradition. The *ecclesia semper reformanda* is not built upon eternally fixed definitions but allows fluidity and encourages transformation and diversity. In applying differentiating consensus methodology, the ecumenical engagement can transcend binary truth claims, reaching agreements that contend that existing differences are not church-dividing.
- The WCRC gives preference to multilateral formats because such forums are less inclined to focus on identity questions. According to the Presbyterian conviction, wider conciliar bodies also have higher authority. The collaboration of the JDDJ group is a good example.

Confessing: After several attempts in the first 50 years of its history, the

Reformed Alliance engaged in producing a unified Reformed confession of faith. These processes did not lead to a widely received document. Since the 1920s, the Alliance/Communion has moved towards an understanding that the Church should emphasize confessing its faith in the present tense. In this process, the Church robustly engages its beliefs with the Word of God and asks, as the current Covid-19 and Beyond process proposes: “What does God require of us” (Micah 6:8)? The Belhar (1986) and Accra (2004) confessions are prominent recent results of processes where churches in all seriousness engaged with this question.

The seriousness of this question also impacts on the goals of ecumenical dialoguing. Ecumenical engagement would aim far too low if it limited its objective to reaching a superficial consensus. Dialogues should ask the question, “What does God require of us?” and should strive to reach the level of confessing what the Church at a particular time, confronted by a particular challenge, is called to affirm and what it is called to reject.

The dialogue reports published in this issue wrestle with this call. They are contextual in pointing to the challenges that the churches are facing. And they attempt to formulate responses that have authority in the communions engaged in the dialogue.

Witnessing: Confessing in the Church is not limited to speech acts or adopting documents but is called to be lived out in acts of witness. All three dialogue reports have a missional focus and define communion and justice as divine callings to the life and mission of the Church.

This emphasis on mission also informs the understanding of reception of ecumenical dialogue reports. Traditionally, reception is taking place in processes of discernment that assesses the truth claims of ecumenical dialogue reports in the light of the theological fundamentals of the particular tradition. From the Reformed perspective, this discernment is essential but not sufficient. Visible unity is not limited to questions of church order. Dialoguing should enable the churches to together become living confessions.

Being reformed together: According to Reformed understanding, this penultimate understanding of being and mission of the Church is not deficient. The vibrancy of discerning, confessing, and witnessing together is an expression of a living Church moved by the Holy Spirit. Christians will be both encouraged and challenged to live life fully as an anticipatory Maranatha of what is to come.



Reformed engagement in ecumenical dialogues aims for this spiritual vibrancy of the life of the Church. As the General Council in Princeton resolved in 1954:

“The unity of the Church is a gift to the Church in Jesus Christ her Lord. Whenever and wherever Jesus Christ is present and active in the community of believers so that they are transformed and made fully human in and through their fellowship with one another, there the Church is one and holy, catholic and apostolic. Jesus Christ Himself breaks down all barriers of separation and, in obedience to Him, the various forms of faith and life become means of serving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid., 110.

A Shared Imperative for Justice: An Introduction to the *Report of the Fourth Phase of Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue*

Reinerio Arce-Valentín

As I write this, two weeks from now will mark another anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. What better moment to present the result of the last dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Reformed World Communion? This dialogue, in which I was a Reformed representative, took up the theme of justification by faith. This issue was in fact the church-dividing issue in the debates and divisions of 500 years ago. As the report notes, “The aim was to consider this topic within several fresh perspectives that have perhaps not been sufficiently explored by us or by other ecumenical participants up until now” (§76). The work of our dialogue was especially timely at this juncture, since we were nearing 2017, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. We were seeking to find fitting ways to commemorate the Reformation. We were hoping to lift up the best insights of the Reformers while making clear that the Reformers deemed the division of the church to be scandalous. Calvin wrote in a 1552 letter to Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, that the division of the church “is to be ranked among the chief evils of our time.... Thus it is that the members of the Church being severed, the body lies bleeding.” The Reformers were committed to the restoration of unity in the church.

The Urgency of More Visible Unity

At this time of the Reformation Commemoration there was a feeling of urgency to redouble efforts for more visible unity. This was a culmination of ongoing dialogues. For more than forty years, both communions have been engaged in official conversations with one another at the international level. This journey traces its origin to informal discussions between members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church during the Fourth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1968. Subsequent meetings led to the decision to initiate a series of theological conversations concerning three topics: Christology, ecclesiology, and the attitude of Christians in the world.

This most recent phase of Reformed-Catholic dialogue sought to deepen the common understanding of the doctrine of justification in its relation to the sacramentality of the Church and to show the Church’s role as an agent



for justice in the world. Both partners in the dialogue are very clear in their commitment to justice. This is evident in the Accra Confession¹ of the Reformed communion and in the recent papal encyclicals *Laudato Si* and *Fratelli Tutti*. In the latter, Pope Francis says, “In today’s world, many forms of injustice persist, fed by reductive anthropological visions and by a profit-based economic model that does not hesitate to exploit, discard, and even kill human beings. While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its own dignity denied, scorned, or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights discarded or violated. What does this tell us about the equality of rights grounded in innate human dignity?”²

Intersection with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

The five week-long sessions of this fourth phase of dialogue (2011-2015) took place against the backdrop of The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification³ (JDDJ), signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church on October 31, 1999, in Augsburg, Germany. This statement represents a far-reaching consensus on the doctrine of justification and is regarded as a significant milestone on the ecumenical journey on which the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation have traveled together.

This historic consensus was recognized to have important ecumenical repercussions even for other churches that did not participate directly in the preparation of JDDJ. For this reason, its signatories invited the World Methodist Council (WMC) and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (now World Communion of Reformed Churches), together with observers from the World Council of Churches (Faith and Order) to a theological consultation in Columbus, Ohio, in 2001. At that time, the invitation was to join the agreement by simply signing the JDDJ. We have the following eye-witness account from one of our representatives to the meeting in Columbus: “Reformed representatives puzzled over what it would mean to sign an agreement written by others. Our sense of

1 The Accra Confession (World Communion of Reformed Churches, 2004), <https://wcrch.ch/accra/the-accra-confession>

2 Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* of The Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship (Dicastero per la Comunicazione–Libreria Editrice Vaticana), http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html, §22

3 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, The Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church, 20th Anniversary Edition. Including statements from the World Methodist Council, the Anglican Consultative Council and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation–A Communion of Churches, 2019) https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/2019/documents/190603-joint_declaration_on_the_doctrine_of_justification_20_anniversary_edition-en.pdf.pdf

the matter was that we wanted to do more than that.”⁴

Part of the genius of the JDDJ is its differentiated consensus approach. In the spirit of differentiated consensus, we desired to add our distinctive/differentiated Reformed voice to the agreement. We began reflecting upon what that would entail. While we were in this stage of reflection, a member of our delegation posed the question, “What does justification have to do with justice?” At the time, we were well along in a process that at General Council 2004 issued in the Accra Confession, “Covenanting for Justice in the Economy and the Earth.” It was clear that for the Reformed, justice was the heart of the matter. We made a decision to associate with the JDDJ, not by simply signing on, but by adding a distinctive Reformed contribution insisting that justice and justification are inextricably connected. God’s work of “setting right” in the lives of believers extends to a “setting right” that is world embracing—including even political, economic, and ecological realities.

Justification, Sacramentality, and Justice

WCRC has shared decades of dialogue with the Catholic Church. These have been marked by steady advance toward one another. This most recent phase of the Catholic-Reformed dialogue issued a final report that makes a significant contribution: “Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent of Justice.” There Catholics and Reformed have together affirmed that “the theological doctrine and reality of justification by faith and sanctification impels the Christian community to act on behalf of justice. The imperative for justice flows necessarily from justification and from the call of the whole Church to holiness” (§79). From this statement and others like it, it is clear that Reformed churches share a conviction that justice and justification are inextricably joined in life of faith. We stand together here.

Other key insights of this paper commend it. The paper articulates well the indissoluble link between justification and sanctification affirmed in both traditions. Our two visions of the church as “creature of the Word” and a “sacrament of grace” are shown to be not only complementary but also even inseparable in God’s work of justification and sanctification. The paper gives explicit attention to the ministry of word and sacrament as vehicles of God’s grace. It shows how the church’s role as an agent of justice is intimately connected to justification/sanctification. The doctrine of justification cannot

4 As reported by Anna Case-Winters, one of the Reformed representatives to the meeting in Columbus; The Accra Confession, §17.



be seen in the abstract or divorced from the reality of injustice, oppression, and violence of today's world. We cannot speak of God's justice if the loving and graceful God is not seen as the God who works for justice in all aspects of the lives of human beings and in the whole creation. We cannot speak of the doctrine of justification without speaking of God's justice in the broadest sense, including economic, social, political, gender, and ecological justice. Likewise, we cannot speak of sanctification as a transforming act for the practice of love and reconciliation only from a spiritual point of view; it must be seen in concrete actions grounded in God's own action for justice in the whole creation through human beings.

Approach and Methodology

The preliminary plan for the five years of dialogue was as follows: A first meeting, held in Rome, from April 4 to 8, 2011, explored the topic "Justification: Reformed and Catholic Perspectives (Historically and Currently)." The second year treated the theme "Justification and Sacramentality," with emphasis on such rites as baptism, Eucharist/Lord's Supper, marriage and confirmation, and the ordering of the sacraments. It took place from April 27 to May 2, 2012, at Columbia Theological Seminary, in Decatur, Georgia. Year three, hosted by the University of Notre Dame in Indiana from April 7 to 13, 2013, again took up the topic "Justification and Sacramentality," now giving attention to the relation of justification and sanctification and to the role of leadership and teaching authority in the Church. A fourth week of dialogue reflected upon how the Christian community must strive to bring about a just world, thus relating justification to commitment in the area of specific justice issues. It was hosted by the Church of Scotland at Conforti Institute, Coatbridge, Scotland, from April 6 to 12, 2014. A final week-long session was held in Ghent, Belgium, February 22 to 28, 2015, providing the opportunity for further discussion concerning the issues listed above, as well as to continue work on the draft of this report and strategies for its reception.

The methodology for each year included the presentation of two or more papers by each partner in the dialogue, followed by extensive discussion and the preparation of an *aide memoire* to assist in the process of producing our report. The group was aware that, at times, the customary patterns of thinking and doing theology can be quite different and that each may assign different meanings to terms such as "justification," "sacraments," and "justice." Therefore, it was important to work to listen carefully to one another and to reach a more adequate mutual understanding through dialogue, with the hope that the

convergences and divergences would come into sharper relief. We also hoped that freed from the one-sided, polemical approaches that have at times plagued the interaction with one another in the past, some of those convictions that seemed to be in contradiction might more accurately come to be understood as complementary ways of considering the same reality. By the third session in 2013, there was enough progress to be able to sketch out a preliminary outline for the report. A first chapter would then address the topic “Justification and Sanctification,” followed by separate chapters on “Justification and Sanctification through Word and Sacrament” and “Justification, Sanctification, and Justice.”

The Imperative to Act on Behalf of Justice

Throughout the paper you can find a nuanced treatment of points of divergence and how they arise. The discussion demonstrates how these differences may still be compatible with a broader agreement: “We discovered a very substantial agreement that justification and sanctification cannot be separated. This means that justification will make possible and lead to the fruits of virtuous action. The justified believer enters into a journey toward that holiness to which he or she is called by the Lord and enabled by the grace of the Holy Spirit” (§77). “We also discovered a very substantial agreement that justification and sanctification are brought about by the Holy Spirit by means of Word and sacrament.” “Finally, we discovered full agreement that the theological doctrine and reality of justification by faith and sanctification impels the Christian community to act on behalf of justice. The imperative for justice flows necessarily from justification and from the call of the whole Church to holiness” (§79). At the end of the document the “members of the bilateral international commission unanimously encourage the two communities to continue on the path of dialogue” (§80).

The members of the bilateral commission strongly believe that widespread study and reflection upon what we have affirmed together here will be helpful to member churches, and especially beneficial in their ecumenical conversations and cooperation with the Catholic Church in their contexts. It is clearer now than ever before that the Reformed self-understanding of being “called to communion, committed to justice” has deep resonances with this dialogue partner.



Report of the Fourth Phase of Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue¹

Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice

Introduction

1. “Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice” constituted the theme of the fourth phase of the international Catholic-Reformed dialogue, which was held under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) between 2011 and 2015. In these meetings, representatives of the Catholic Church and the Reformed churches came to explore various dimensions of this theme. At Rome, Italy, in 2011, “Justification: Reformed and Catholic (Historically and Currently)” introduced the discussions. “Justification and Sacramentality” with emphasis on the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper provided the agenda for the meeting at Decatur, Georgia (USA), in 2012. In 2013 at South Bend, Indiana (USA), the topic “Justification and Sanctification” in the context of the teaching authority of the church continued the conversations. At the fourth meeting at Coatbridge, Scotland, in 2014, the dialogue team explored the relationship between justification and justice, discussed preliminary drafts of the first chapter, and proposed the outline for the entire text. At Ghent, Belgium, in 2015, after several short papers on particular points that had been identified as needing further consideration, the initial drafts for the entire report were carefully revised, tasks were assigned and a plan was agreed for the final revision and completion of the report.
2. This most recent phase resumes a dialogue that originated in informal discussions between members of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Catholic Church during the Fourth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) held in Uppsala, Sweden in 1968. Both communions were convinced that in the context of the new situation created by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) the time was auspicious to move forward with official conversations at

¹ Following the request of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, in this report the title “Catholic Church” refers to that community that is also known as the Roman Catholic Church, while the word “catholic” in small case refers to the whole church as included in the creed.

the international level. The theme chosen for their first meeting was “The Presence of Christ in Church and World” (1970-1977), which addressed the topics of Christology, ecclesiology, the Eucharist, and ministry. The second phase of the dialogue, “Towards a Common Understanding of the Church,” (1984-1990), sought to extend the conversation on ecclesiology, focusing especially on the relation between the gospel and church in its ministerial and instrumental roles. These roles were seen to consist in the proclamation of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments. The former has assumed central importance for the Reformed churches and determined their understanding of the church as “creature of the Word” (*creatura verbi*). The category of sacrament has been decisive for the Catholic understanding of the church, defined here as “sacrament of grace” (*sacramentum gratiae*). The signal achievement of this phase was the mutual recognition that these two conceptions of the church are complementary: Word and sacrament are necessary for any adequate conception of the church. In the third phase, “The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God” (1998-2005), the two communions sought to shed further light on ecclesiology and Christian witness through an extended biblical investigation into the kingdom of God. At least two reasons – methodological and thematic – lay behind this choice. First, the ecumenical movement had already by this time begun to ask about the aims of dialogue: how does the struggle to overcome Christian divisions in faith and order relate to the struggle to overcome what divides societies, nations, cultures and religions in today’s world?² Since the kingdom of God, the universal reign of peace which is the destiny of the whole creation, embraces in a mysterious way all cultures, societies, nations, and religions, the theme was considered responsive to this concern. Second, the theme proved appealing in light of its biblical and patristic roots, its relative neglect by both sides of the Reformation divide, and its helpfulness in addressing the hopes of contemporary Christians for a greater measure of peace, justice and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17) in a turbulent world.³

3. How then does the theme “Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as Agent for Justice” continue and build on what has preceded? To answer this question, it is necessary to note developments in the first decade of this century, especially since the end of the third phase of our dialogue in 2005. These developments in large part influenced the choice of this theme.

² *The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God*, 7, http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/r-rc/doc/e_r-rc_2-menu.html (accessed 11 November 2015).

³ *Ibid.*, 17.



4. On 31 October, 1999 the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)* was signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Augsburg, Germany. As the outcome of thirty years of bilateral dialogue on a doctrine regarded as one of the most important disputes of the Reformation era, the consensus statement was then and is still regarded now as a significant milestone on the ecumenical journey which Catholics and Lutherans have traveled together. But this historic event has had ecumenical repercussions for other churches that did not participate in the process culminating in *JDDJ*. For this reason, its signatories invited the World Methodist Council (WMC) and WARC, together with observers from the Commission on Faith and Order of the WCC, to a theological consultation in Columbus, Ohio (USA), in 2001. The purpose of the invitation was twofold: (1) to submit *JDDJ* to these churches for theological evaluation; and (2) to determine ways to involve them in ongoing discussion with the ultimate aim of inviting them to associate with *JDDJ*. For their part, the delegates of the WMC received the content of *JDDJ*; the WMC associated itself with *JDDJ* at its world conference in July 2006 at Seoul, Republic of Korea.
5. The WARC took a somewhat different approach in responding to *JDDJ*. Because of their historical commitment to the doctrine of justification and to its implications for individual and social life, the Reformed were invited to participate in a quadrilateral study commission, in which their perspective was expected to contribute to a wider ecumenical understanding of justification. This commission was not constituted at the time. Non-official responses to *JDDJ*, however, include three Reformed presentations given at Columbus.⁴ In addition, the European Area Committee of WARC appointed a Theological Subcommittee following the Columbus consultation to address the doctrine of justification from the Reformed perspective, with particular attention to the relation between justification and justice. These reports were later compiled in a volume published in 2009.⁵ No official action on *JDDJ*, however, was taken by WARC.
6. The following year witnessed a significant event in the history of the worldwide Reformed family of churches: in 2010 WARC and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) organized a Uniting General Council (UGC) in Grand Rapids, Michigan (USA), to merge the two bodies into the World

4 See Páraic Réamonn, "Introduction," *Reformed World*, vol. 52 no. 1 (2002), 1-4.

5 Michael Weinrich and John P. Burgess, eds., *What is Justification about? Reformed Contributions to an Ecumenical Theme*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2009.

Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). This new fellowship of Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, Waldensian, United and Uniting churches was the outcome of a process that began for WARC in Accra, Ghana in 2004 and for REC in Utrecht, the Netherlands in 2005.

7. This event provided an opportunity to the new WCRC to learn the mind of its member churches about a number of issues affecting them. To give concrete responses to these issues each of the delegates was appointed to a thematic section, including one on "Christian unity and ecumenical engagement." Here the delegates urged that future ecumenical encounters should emphasize the implications of theological positions for action on behalf of justice in the world. Having the proposed theme of the upcoming phase of the Catholic-Reformed dialogue on justification before them, the delegates observed that there is a necessary relationship between justice and justification. In Jesus Christ the "setting right" which is accomplished in God's work of justification calls and commits the justified to the work of justice in the wider world. For the Reformed churches today, "justification" and "justice" are integral to each other. Therefore, the latter cannot fall outside a doctrinal consensus on justification in any agreed statement. Even *JDDJ* itself speaks of the need to clarify further issues of doctrine, not least the relation between justification and social ethics.⁶ In this spirit there was some willingness on the part of the delegates to investigate what it may mean for the Reformed to associate with *JDDJ*. A new statement on justification could serve as a theological foundation of the Reformed churches' commitment to justice. In addition, attaching such a statement to *JDDJ* in the act of associating with it would be symbolically significant in view of the 500th anniversary in 2017 of the beginning of the Reformation.
8. Since the signing of the *JDDJ* in 1999, several significant events have occurred also in the Catholic Church related to the theme of this phase of the dialogue. First of all, the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 gave special attention to ecumenical relations and, in his post-Jubilee apostolic exhortation *Novo millennio ineunte* (2001), Pope John Paul II expressed hope for a renewed ecumenical commitment in the post-Jubilee pilgrimage. Second, the first decade of the new millennium provided many occasions for further reflection on the *JDDJ* both within the Catholic Church and with various other Christian communities, as mentioned above. Third, that decade was also marked by synods of Catholic bishops devoted to the Eucharist (2005) and to the Word of God (2008), both of

⁶ *JDDJ*, 43. For the complete text, see http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/l-rc/doc/i_l-rc_just.html (accessed 20 February 2016).



which resulted in important theological literature and official teaching on Word and sacrament. Fourth, the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013), included not only many ecumenical meetings and initiatives but also three encyclical letters (*Deus caritas est* (2005), *Spe salvi* (2007), and *Caritas in veritate* (2009), which provided substantial biblical and theological material relevant to the themes chosen for the present phase of our dialogue. For example, the attention given by the last of these to Catholic social teaching and to the theological foundation of a just society paralleled the concerns of the third phase of the dialogue and one of the more important emphases of Reformed churches in recent years. Moreover, the special Pauline Year (June 2008-June 2009) provided numerous opportunities for reflection on the writings of Saint Paul, particularly Pope Benedict's cycle of catecheses on Paul's doctrine of justification.⁷ Subsequently, the interventions of Pope Francis confirmed some of the themes mentioned here.

9. Thus, various developments in both communions opened the way for beginning a new, fourth phase of bilateral dialogue between us. The theme of justification by faith naturally presented itself as an obvious and preferred topic in light of the various unfinished conversations between us in relation to the *JDDJ* during the first decade of the new century, as reported above. Furthermore, the convergence claimed and deepened by our two preceding phases of dialogue concerning the complementarity of Word and sacrament offered the intriguing prospect of exploring how these two essential dimensions of ecclesial life might relate to justification by faith and sanctification. The fact that both Reformed and Catholic believers see an indissoluble link between justification and sanctification, both of which are intimately related to Word and sacrament, promised to open new levels of convergence between us. Finally, the keen interest by both of our communions in the role of

7 During the "Year of Faith" called by Pope Benedict to mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Francis' first encyclical, *Lumen fidei* (2013), not only supplemented Pope Benedict's letters on charity and hope but also resonated well with the theme of justification by faith. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013), Francis called for a renewed proclamation of the gospel in the context of the many social challenges facing today's world, devoting the entire fourth chapter of this document to "The Social Dimension of Evangelisation" (176-258). He writes that "All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world," a task in which the Catholic Church unites "its own commitment to that made in the social field by other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, whether at the level of doctrinal reflection or at the practical level" (183). http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#The_Church%E2%80%99s_teaching_on_social_questions (accessed 20 February 2016). For full text of *Lumen fidei*, see http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html.

the church as an agent for justice led to the tantalizing intuition that justification and Christian action on behalf of justice in the world must be intimately connected to each other. These considerations prompted the choice to explore the connections between justification and sanctification and the ministry of Word and sacrament with a view to clarifying the role of Christians and the church as a whole as agents for justice in the world.

10. The foregoing reflections on these developments explain the decision to dedicate this fourth phase of dialogue to an exploration of the theme: "Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice." Accordingly, the structure of the following report consists of the following chapters: I. "Justification and Sanctification"; II. "Justification and Sanctification through the Church's Ministry of Word and Sacrament"; and III. "Justification, Sanctification and Christian Action on Behalf of Justice in the World."

Chapter One: Justification and Sanctification

11. Central to the disputes at the time of the Reformation was the understanding of the doctrine of justification by faith. The centrality of this doctrine was reaffirmed in the *JDDJ*, signed by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church on 31 October 1999. Several member churches of WARC offered varying and even critical reviews of the document. The newly formed WCRC later concurred with its insistence on the importance of the doctrine of justification by faith. An earlier phase of the Catholic-Reformed dialogue registered agreement between us about the Trinitarian and Christological foundations of justification and sanctification, which we determined to be a helpful starting point for our own reflections:

Before all humankind, sisters and brothers, we announce the death of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26) and proclaim his resurrection from the dead (cf. Rom. 10:9; Acts 2:32; 3:15). In the mystery of his death and resurrection we confess the event which saves humanity, that is, it liberates it from the distress in which it is imprisoned by sin and establishes it in communion with God. . . . In his life and in his death Jesus is revealed as the Son par excellence of God, the one alone who knows the Father and whom the Father alone knows (cf. Matt. 11:27), who can address himself to God saying "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36). . . . Finally, the work of Jesus, the Son, reveals to us the role of the Spirit who is common to him and to the Father: it reveals to us that God is triune. By the life, death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit becomes the common gift of the Father and the Son to humanity.⁸

⁸ *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, 60, 73-75, <http://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia->



12. Subsequent paragraphs of the same report⁹ present material pertinent to justification and sanctification. From Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and humankind, comes the grace by which we are justified through faith and thereby brought into communion with God in the one Holy Spirit. That dialogue team further confessed that the acceptance in faith of justification is itself a gift of grace. "To rely for this salvation on anything other than faith would be to [detract] from the fullness of salvation accomplished and offered in Jesus Christ."¹⁰
13. This faith through which we receive our justification, our "pardon, our liberation, our life with God,"¹¹ is a "living and life-giving faith,"¹² that is, it is a faith that "receives grace freely" and "bears testimony actively" as it works itself out in love (cf. Gal. 5:6). Justification can thus be seen to issue in good works. "Justified by the free gift of faith, [we] can henceforth live according to righteousness"¹³ and "committed to gratitude and service, we bear fruits worthy of the grace" we have received. In this connection, this previous phase of the dialogue stated that "justification by faith brings with it the gift of sanctification, which can grow continually as it creates life, justice and liberty."¹⁴ Thus, Jesus Christ is not only the one Mediator but also the "unique way" by which we may lead lives pleasing to God.

A) Justification and Sanctification: Reformed Perspective

14. The Reformed tradition developed its understanding of justification initially in the 16th century, in agreement with Martin Luther's emphasis that Christ alone is our righteousness, which we receive by faith alone and not through any works of our own. John Calvin even called justification "the main hinge on which religion turns."¹⁵ In addition, in the work of Calvin and such confessional documents as the *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566), and the *Westminster Confession* (1647) there is evident a deep concern for sanctification, that process of growth in holiness which Reformed see as a vital, but distinct aspect of Christian life. From

int/r-rc/doc/e_r-rc_2-menu.html (accessed 20 February 2016).

9 *Ibid.*, 77-79

10 *Ibid.*, 77

11 *Ibid.*, 78

12 *Ibid.*, 77

13 *Ibid.*, 79

14 *Ibid.*, 79

15 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1960, 3.11.1, 726

the 16th century to the present, this “double grace” of justification and sanctification has characterized the Reformed understanding of salvation, and the two should be considered as distinct but never as separate from one another. Recent confessional documents have continued this dual emphasis, but have tended not to use those specific terms, preferring instead language such as “deliverance” and “service.”¹⁶

15. Jesus Christ is the basis and content of our justification. The starting point for the Reformed understanding of justification is that Christ himself is our righteousness (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30). For the Reformed tradition, the righteousness of Christ that we receive is grounded in his perfect obedience, which is defined as both active and passive. By his active obedience he perfectly fulfilled the law through his life of love toward God and human beings, especially those in dire need. This is precisely the life for which God created us, yet because we fail to live it in greater or lesser degrees we stand condemned as sinners before God’s just judgment. But for this very reason, Christ’s obedience is also passive. By his passive obedience Christ consented to bear, in his passion and death on the cross, the just penalty of the law against sin in order that we might be pardoned.
16. Christ was delivered over to death for our sins, but raised to life for our justification (Rom. 4:25). In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are at once judged and condemned for our sins and accepted in grace, placed in a new life before God and with God. On the basis of what Christ has done and undergone for us and in our place, God is merciful with respect to our sins and does not impute them to us, but rather imputes to us the righteousness of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19).¹⁷ In this event consists the mystery of the “wonderful exchange” (*commercium admirabile*). On the cross Christ has taken our sin and death to himself (cf. Rom. 8:3, 4), and in rising again from the dead he gives us his righteousness and life.
17. Christ’s righteousness and life are given to us whole and entire by faith, which unites us with Christ and makes us members of his body the church. They are given to the believer once and for all, in and with baptism, and then ever anew day by day. To believe in Jesus Christ is to receive him as he has given himself to us. According to John Calvin, Christ has given himself not only to deliver us from sin and death and restore us to favor with God, but also to regenerate us by his Spirit, so that we

¹⁶ *The Theological Declaration of Barmen, 2* and *The Confession of 1967* (Presbyterian Church (USA), Section C, resp. For these and all subsequent references to the Reformed confessional documents that appear in this report, cf. *Book of Confessions*, Louisville, KY, Geneva Press, 1996.

¹⁷ *Second Helvetic Confession*, 15



may live a new life of love and righteousness.¹⁸ In virtue of our union with Christ through faith we therefore have received a twofold benefit (*duplex gratia*), namely, justification and sanctification.

18. Like justification, sanctification is entirely a gift of grace received by faith. The sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit is reflected in a faith that is living, because it “apprehends Christ who is alive and makes alive and shows that it is alive by living works.”¹⁹ It is impossible for true faith to be unfruitful, because it is a faith that works itself out in love (cf. Gal. 5:6) and engenders a desire to do those works that God has commanded in his word.²⁰ Thus the new life of faith is characterized by a “complete joy in God through Christ and a strong desire to live according to the will of God in all good works.”²¹
19. This is not to suggest that our walk in obedience is anything more than a small beginning in this new life of faith.²² Though sanctification is given to us whole and entire, we never succeed completely in overcoming all sin here and now. There remains a continual struggle between the flesh, which desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit, which desires what is contrary to the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:17). Therefore, the new life of faith consists not only in works of love and justice, but also in lifelong repentance. Though the power of sin is broken, we have still to pray for forgiveness for the sins that we daily commit as those who are both righteous and sinful (*simul iustus et peccator*). We have constantly to die (*mortificatio*) to sin in order that we may live (*vivificatio*) to God in the power of the risen Christ (cf. Rom 6:11). “For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).
20. God continues to forgive the sins of those who are justified, and they can never fall ultimately from the state of justification.²³ Since the gifts and call of God are irrevocable (cf. Rom. 11:29), the gift of faith includes the assurance of salvation; faith without assurance is deficient. Nevertheless, our assurance does not come from anything in ourselves, much less from our good works; rather, it is based on Christ and the promises of God.

18 *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.3.1., 592-93

19 *Second Helvetic Confession*, 15

20 *Belgic Confession*, 24

21 *Heidelberg Catechism*, 90

22 *Ibid.*, 114

23 Cf. *Westminster Confession* 11, 5

Our perseverance is based on the promise of God to be faithful to us in Christ to the end. "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). For this reason we are confident as we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in us according to his good pleasure (Phil. 2:12-13).

B) Justification and Sanctification: Catholic Perspective

21. A presentation of the Catholic doctrine of justification and sanctification requires a consideration of the teachings of the Council of Trent (1547), the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the *JDDJ* (1999). Catholics believe that doctrine undergoes development and deepening in the course of history in a way that is both faithful to Scripture and tradition, on the one hand, and responsive to the needs of new contexts and questions, on the other. While the teaching of the Council of Trent is the first official, normative Catholic presentation of the doctrine of justification, Vatican II provided a solid Christological, anthropological and ecclesiological basis for this teaching and the *JDDJ*, as its official explanation within the context of the ecumenical dialogue, is an authoritative interpretation of it.
22. Critically responding to the Reformers, the Council of Trent assumed the Pauline category of "justification," but previously that same salvific event was also described in terms of new life, re-creation in Christ, sanctification. The essential content of the decree affirms that justification depends entirely on the grace of God that we receive through Jesus Christ, in continuity with the teaching of the first millennium against the errors of Pelagius. Self-justification is excluded from the outset, and salvation is said to be offered to the whole world through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: "But even though 'Christ died for all' (cf. 2 Cor. 5:15), still not all receive the benefit of his death, but only those to whom the merit of his Passion is imparted."²⁴ The merit of Christ effects "the transition from the state in which one is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace and adoption as [children] of God (cf. Rom.

²⁴ *Decree on Justification*, 3 (1523). For this and all subsequent references to sources of Catholic doctrine, see Henrici Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum, editio XLIII. ET* Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, eds., Peter Hünermann, Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash, 43rd edition, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2012



8:15) through the second Adam Jesus Christ our Saviour."²⁵ In adults, the beginning of justification is attributed to God's prevenient grace through Jesus Christ. By turning away from sins, adults assent to and cooperate with God's grace and so prepare for the sacrament of baptism, which bestows the gift of justification.²⁶

23. Trent uses the language of causality to describe justification in a way that gives emphasis to the priority of the divine action.²⁷ The aim of justification (its "final cause") is the "glory of God and of Christ, and life everlasting." The agent ("efficient cause") "is the merciful God who gratuitously washes and sanctifies (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11), sealing and anointing with the promised Holy Spirit...." The meritorious cause "is the most beloved only begotten Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ who, 'while we were enemies' (Rom 5:10), 'out of great love with which he loved us' (Eph. 4:2) merited for us justification by his most holy Passion on the wood of the Cross and made satisfaction for us to God the Father." Baptism plays an instrumental role; for this reason it is considered the "sacrament of faith," since without faith "no one has ever been justified." Finally, the formal cause of justification is "the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which he makes us just."
24. Justification remains a free gift of grace, since "nothing that precedes justification, neither faith nor works, merits the grace of justification."²⁸ During the course of life, one can "increase in the very justice . . . received through the grace of Christ,"²⁹ seeking to live a godly life (cf. Tit. 2:12), obeying the commandments (cf. 1 Jn. 5:3) and performing good works (2 Pet. 1:10). Nevertheless, one must not be presumptuous about salvation but rather ask for the grace of perseverance.³⁰ Finally, God rewards those who "abound in good works" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 6:10; 10:22; 2 Tim. 4:7), which are never independent of Christ. As the life of the vine flows into the branches (cf. John 15:5), so the power of Christ "always precedes, accompanies, and follows [our] good works, which, without it, could in no way be pleasing to God and meritorious."³¹ Sanctifying grace

25 *Ibid.*, 4 (1524)

26 *Ibid.*, chapters 5 and 6. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* interprets the meaning of this "cooperation" in the following way: "Justification establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom. On man's part it is expressed by the assent of faith to the Word of God, which invites him to conversion, and in the cooperation of charity with the prompting of the Holy Spirit who precedes and preserves his assent." Liguori, MO, Liguori Publications, 1994, 1993

27 All quotations in this paragraph are taken from Decree on *Justification*, 7 (1528-31)

28 *Ibid.*, 8 (1532)

29 *Ibid.*, 10 (1535)

30 *Ibid.*, 12-13 (1540-41)

31 *Ibid.*, 16 (1545)

is lost by mortal sin, even though faith might not be lost. This grace can be restored to the repentant sinner through the sacrament of penance instituted by Christ for this very purpose.

25. The affirmations of the Second Vatican Council that Christ is the “focal point and goal” of human life and that in him alone is revealed the mystery of human dignity, community, and action address to some extent the Christological concerns expressed in the Reformation slogan *solus Christus*. The Church likewise believes that the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of human history is to be found in its Lord and Master. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfillment of all aspirations.³² In addition, faith is understood as a commitment of one’s entire self to God in response to God’s self-revelation. God reveals himself, not just some truth or knowledge about himself. Faith is then the willing response to this self-revelation.

“The obedience of faith’ (Rom. 16:26; cf. 1:5; 2 Cor. 10:5-6) is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals,”³³ and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. To make this act of faith, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving “joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it.”³⁴ To bring about an ever deeper understanding of revelation, the same Holy Spirit constantly brings faith to completion by his gifts.³⁵

The church is the people of God, the community of believers who have responded to God’s self-revelation in faith under the influence of the grace of the Holy Spirit.³⁶ These teachings of Vatican II represent

32 Cf. Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 10 and 45 (4310, 4345); see also 22, 32 and 38 (4322, 4332, and 4338)

33 Vatican Council I, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, 3 (3008)

34 Synod of Orange II, can. 7 (377); Vatican Council I, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith *Dei Filius*, 3 (3010).

35 Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation *Dei verbum*, 5 (4205). See also the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church *Verbum domini* (September 30, 2010) of Pope Benedict XVI, especially on the God who speaks (6-16), our response in faith to the God who speaks (22-25) and all of Part Two on the Word of God in the church, *Verbum in ecclesia* (50-89). http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html (accessed 20 February, 2016)

36 Cf. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 9 (4122-24)



a deepening of Trent's vision of faith, relating it to the Christological, anthropological, and ecclesiological doctrines of the Catholic Church. Faith is no longer considered merely as the first step in the process of justification that leads to the reception of baptism.

26. The principal elements of an authentic interpretation of justification, as officially embraced by the Catholic Church in the *JDDJ*, include the following affirmations: "sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ" and "whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it."³⁷ Renewal of life "necessarily follows from justification"; without such renewal "faith does not exist."³⁸ Therefore, when claiming that the renewal of the person takes place through the reception of grace, Catholics do not thereby deny that God's gift of grace in justification remains independent of human cooperation."³⁹ Human participation in preparing for the reception of justification is itself "an effect of grace" and "not an action arising from innate human abilities."⁴⁰ While not using the language of "assurance of salvation" (perhaps because of Trent's caution against rash presumption), still Catholics affirm that, in spite of human weakness, a believer cannot "at the same time consider the divine promise untrustworthy."⁴¹

C) Consensus and Convergence

27. Regardless of the differences which appear in the previous two sections, our exploration of this theme, together with the common confession from the second phase of our dialogue, allows us to claim full agreement with the consensus formulated in *JDDJ*:

In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together we confess: By grace alone, in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while

³⁷ *JDDJ*, 25

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 26

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 24

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 36

equipping and calling us to do good works."⁴²

28. We also affirm together that the doctrines of justification and sanctification must be seen within the whole scope of Christian revelation. Scripture and its faithful interpretation in the course of the life of the church confess the saving activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in bringing about the redemption of human beings from sin and death and their sanctification by means of this same divine economy. We firmly agree that there are a plurality of images and metaphors used both in Scripture and our respective traditions to describe this saving activity and that justification cannot be separated from many other ways of speaking about salvation, including redemption, reconciliation, regeneration, forgiveness, new creation, and kingdom of God, among others. Nevertheless, we agree that the doctrine of justification is of particular significance in expressing the very heart of the gospel.
29. We also affirm together that justification and sanctification are free gifts received by faith, not earned by us.
30. We also affirm together that justification is inseparable from sanctification, which involves the transformation of the sinner and the commitment to live a life of righteousness and love, a life characterized by obedience to the commandments and to the teachings of Jesus. The council fathers at Trent taught that Christians must strive to live in charity. They emphasized this calling to counter what they perceived to be a teaching that rendered unnecessary the pursuit of a life of holiness because of the assurance that salvation is based on faith alone. Calvin's teaching of the double grace of justification and sanctification that we receive in virtue of our union with Christ shows that the position rejected by Trent is not applicable to him. Since justification and sanctification are so intimately united for the Reformed, they cannot be said to have denied the need for the pursuit of holiness that Trent was so concerned to defend.

D) Points Needing Further Clarification

31. Our dialogue has acknowledged that there are different conceptions at work in our thinking about justification which, however, appear to be compatible with our agreement with the fundamental statement of the *JDDJ*. We are agreed that we are justified only in virtue of the passion and resurrection of Christ for the glory of God, the honor of Christ, and eternal life. The major remaining divergence seems to be that for the Catholic justification refers to a process while for the Reformed

⁴² *Ibid.*, 15



it indicates a status. Trent and classical Catholic teaching speak of an “increase” or “growth” in justification.⁴³ For the Reformed, justification refers to the new standing we have before and with God, in union with Christ by grace through faith, as pardoned and reconciled sinners. This standing is whole and complete and so cannot admit of a “more” or a “less.” Reformed, however, do speak of increase and growth in sanctification.

32. Trent maintains that one can lose the grace of justification after serious sin. Nevertheless, Catholics affirm that one cannot believe in God and at the same time consider the divine promise untrustworthy. No one may doubt God’s mercy and Christ’s merit.⁴⁴ The Reformed insist that one cannot lose the gift of justification. The assurance of salvation is rooted in the calling and gifts of God, which are irrevocable. The Reformed affirm that assurance of salvation rests not in themselves but in the promises of God who is faithful. Still, in the Reformed tradition there have been some who have raised the question of this absolute assurance of salvation over against serious sin committed by the justified believer.⁴⁵
33. Trent finds the concept of “merit” helpful for understanding what the New Testament affirms about God’s promise to reward good works, even using the concept with respect to eternal life. The Reformed tradition, concerned to safeguard a proper understanding of salvation by grace alone, has preferred to apply the concept to Jesus Christ. Thus, we are justified not on the basis of our works and merits (*propter opera et merita nostra*) but on the basis of Christ’s merit (*propter meritum Christi*). The Reformed do not deny that God rewards good works (cf. Matt. 5:12; 10:42 *et passim*), but they do not ascribe the reward to the person who receives it; it is ascribed rather to the “goodness, generosity and truthfulness of God who promises and gives it.”⁴⁶ As St. Augustine wrote: “God crowns in us the gifts of His own mercy.”⁴⁷ Above all, for the Reformed eternal life is not seen as a reward dependent on good works, but as a free gift given in

43 *Decree on the Sacraments, Foreword* (1600). While Trent speaks of an “increase” in justification, the more common Catholic way of expressing progress in discipleship is in terms of growth in grace. All followers of Christ “must steadfastly advance along the way of a living faith, which arouses hope and works through love. . . . But if charity is to grow and fructify in the soul like a good seed, each of the faithful must willingly hear the word of God and carry out his will with deeds, with the help of his grace. . .” *Lumen gentium*, 41, 42 (4166)

44 *JDDJ* 36

45 See G.C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Sin*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971; James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. John Wain, New York, Penguin Books, 1983

46 *Second Helvetic Confession*, 16

47 Augustine, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Tractatus 3, 10: “*coronat autem in nobis Deus dona misericordiae suae*” cited in “Nuova Biblioteca Agostiniana 24,” Roma 1968, 56; cf. *Second Helvetic Confession*, 16

justification by grace through faith alone.

Chapter Two: Justification and Sanctification through the Church's Ministry of Word and Sacrament

34. The previous chapter pointed out agreement between the Reformed and Catholics that justification and sanctification cannot be separated. The present chapter seeks to integrate that agreement with an important achievement claimed by two earlier phases of dialogue between our communities. They had stated that a typical way of contrasting our respective visions of the Church as "creation of the Word" (*creatura verbi*) for the Reformed and as "sacrament of grace" (*sacramentum gratiae*) for Catholics was insufficient, because this does justice neither to the Christian understanding of the Word of God nor to that of sacrament, which always comprises both performative gesture and accompanying word. In 1990, the final report of our second phase of dialogue noted:

The two conceptions, "the creation of the Word" and "sacrament of grace," can in fact be seen as expressing the same instrumental reality under different aspects, as complementary to each other or as two sides of the same coin. They can also become the poles of a creative tension between our churches.⁴⁸

Subsequently, the final report of the third phase, issued in 2007, stated:

We can now affirm, in light of our investigation both of the kingdom and of the patristic literature, not only that these visions are mutually informative and complementary but also that neither is fully adequate without the other. A "sacramental" church that does not give proper place to the Word of God would be essentially incomplete; a church that is truly a creation of the Word will celebrate that Word liturgically and sacramentally. If our churches differ according to these two visions, perhaps it is less because either church is convinced that the church is only *creatura verbi* or only *sacramentum gratiae* and more because each tradition has emphasized one aspect to the point of de-emphasizing or neglecting the other. In such a case, arriving at full communion will amount to a process in which each community recovers the full scope of God's provision for the life of the church.⁴⁹

48 *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, 113

49 *The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God*, 193



How do justification and sanctification relate to the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments within the ongoing life of the Christian community? Because the specific theme of this fourth phase of dialogue between our communities concerns the relation of justification to the “sacramentality” of the church and to the church’s action on behalf of justice, the present chapter will concentrate on the relation of justification and sanctification to Word and sacrament, while the final chapter will consider the relation of justification and sanctification to action on behalf of justice.

35. Our experience has confirmed what a recent ecumenical report pointed out about one result of the long division of Christian communities from one another:

Dialogue demonstrates that the partners speak different languages and understand the meanings of words differently; they make different distinctions and think in different thought forms. However, what appears to be an opposition in expression is not always an opposition in substance. In order to determine the exact relationship between respective articles of doctrine, texts must be interpreted in the light of the historical context in which they arose. That allows one to see where a difference or opposition truly exists and where it does not.⁵⁰

Perhaps this is especially important to remember when discussing the relation of justification to Word and sacrament or when asking whether the church as a whole may be considered in some sense to be “sacramental.” John Calvin and many other leaders of the 16th century Reformation had no hesitation in speaking about the necessity of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper within the life of the church. Yet they placed more emphasis upon Christ as the ground and content of justification and sanctification and upon the Holy Spirit’s use of the proclamation of the Word to impart saving faith than upon the role of the sacraments or that of the church as a whole. For the Reformed, however, the church is the ordinary setting where the proclamation of Christ’s gospel of salvation takes place. For their part, Catholics have tended to emphasize the close union between Christ and

⁵⁰ Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, From *Conflict to Communion*, 33. For full text see <https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/From%20Conflict%20to%20Communion.pdf>

the church in such a way as to see Christ's saving activity through the Church's proclamation of the Word and celebration of the sacraments; nevertheless, for them Christ remains the unique foundation and author of justification and sanctification. Both views can call upon Scripture for support – that there is salvation in no one else but Christ (cf. Acts 4:12 and 1 Cor. 3:11) and that Christ is intimately united through the Spirit with his body, the Church (cf. Eph. 1: 22-23; 4:15-16). But the customary language, thought and exegetical patterns of both churches emphasize these truths in different ways. As a result, the language of “sacraments” and of “sacramentality” sounds different to Reformed believers than it does to Catholic believers.

36. Can one delve underneath such language to ask whether there is a real difference in substance between our communities? Both profess that the actions of the church in proclaiming the Word and in celebrating the sacraments are not on the same level as the saving activity of Christ but are dependent on his gift of grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. The heart of the question seems to concern whether – and, if so, how – one may speak of a certain “instrumentality” or “cooperation” on the part of the church. An important consensus on this point has already been reached in Catholic-Protestant dialogue in France: “The divergence . . . does not pertain to the fact of the instrumentality of the Church in the transmission of salvation, but to the nature of this instrumentality: is the Church sanctified in such a manner so that she can herself become a sanctifying subject?”⁵¹ A further question is whether priority in such a role should be given to the proclamation of the Word, to the celebration of sacraments, or to neither, both being equally necessary. The Appendix to the *JDDJ*, a document which has served as one of our sources in the present dialogue, includes the words: “The working of God’s grace does not exclude human action: God effects everything, the willing and the achievement, therefore, we are called to strive (cf. Phil 2:12 ff.). As soon as the Holy Spirit has initiated his work of regeneration and renewal in us through the Word and the holy sacraments, it is certain that we can and must cooperate by the power of the Holy Spirit.”⁵² As long as the recognition of the Holy Spirit’s agency is assured, many Reformed

51 Comité mixte catholique-protestant en France, *Consensus œcuménique et différence fondamentale*, Paris, 1987, § 11 [our translation]: “La divergence . . . ne concerne pas le fait de l’instrumentalité de l’Église dans la transmission du salut, mais la nature de cette instrumentalité: l’Église est-elle sanctifiée de manière à devenir elle-même sujet sanctifiant?”

52 *Joint Declaration*, Annex 2C, quoting “The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration,” II. 64f. in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2000, 566



Christians are able to agree with Lutherans and Catholics in that statement.

A) Justification and Sanctification in the Church of Word and Sacrament

37. We note that the second phase of the Catholic-Reformed dialogue registered agreement about how justification – and, in light of our first chapter, we would add sanctification – relates to Word and sacrament.

Justification by grace through faith is given us in the Church. This is not to say that the Church exercises a mediation complementary to that of Christ, or that it is clothed with a power independent of the gift of grace. The Church is at once the place, the instrument, and the minister chosen by God to make heard Christ's word and to celebrate the sacraments in God's name throughout the centuries. When the Church faithfully preaches the word of salvation and celebrates the sacraments, obeying the command of the Lord and invoking the power of the Spirit, it is sure of being heard, for it carries out in its ministry the action of Christ himself.⁵³

38. The New Testament suggests that justification and sanctification, on the one hand, and the proclamation and celebration of Word and sacrament, on the other, are intimately related within that profound mystery of salvation in Christ. Some passages highlight the importance of the Word as a means by which Christ bestows the gift of saving faith. Such faith, according to Paul, comes from hearing the Word: "But 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?" (Rom. 10:14). This leads Paul to conclude: "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). This faith is the means of our justification: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Other passages speak of rites such as baptism and the Eucharist as means of the saving action of Christ in the Spirit. "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3:4-7). John's Gospel includes passages which seem to point to

⁵³ *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, 86

the saving effect both of baptism – “Jesus answered, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit’” (Jn. 3:5) – and of the Eucharist – ‘Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day’ (Jn. 6:53-54). In the account of the day of Pentecost and in the summary of ecclesial life which immediately follows, we read: “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” Peter said to them, “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.... So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:37-38, 41-42). The importance of the audible word and the visible rite for the life of the church reflects the essentially incarnational nature of the mystery of salvation in Christ.

39. A contemporary ecumenical presentation of salvation history, which seeks to clarify the notion of sacrament, can at the same time illustrate the importance of the Word. One such attempt was offered in a summary of the responses to the convergence text *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC.

In the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has communicated effectively the mystery of his saving love to the world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the risen Christ continues his saving action of God by being present and active in our midst. For this purpose God continues to act through human persons, through their words, signs and actions, together with elements of creation. Thus God communicates to the faithful, and through their witness to the world, his saving promise and grace. Those who hear and receive in faith and trust this gracious action of God are thereby liberated from their captivity to sin and transformed in their lives. Those who receive this gift, respond to it in thanksgiving and praise, and are brought into a *koinonia* with the Holy Trinity and with each other and are sent to proclaim the gospel to the whole world. Through this sacramental action, communicated through words, signs and actions, this community, the church, is called, equipped and sent, empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit to witness to God’s reconciling and recreating love in a sinful and broken world. And so all who in faith long for fullness of life in Christ may experience the first-fruits of God’s kingdom – present and yet to be fully accomplished in



new-heaven and earth.⁵⁴

This description expresses how God makes use of words, signs and actions in the economy of salvation. Since our current phase of dialogue focused in a special way upon sacramentality, the following section will consider one of the sacraments that we both celebrate: Baptism. The subsequent section will address sacraments in general. Because the dialogue considered Eucharist mainly in connection with justice, this report will treat it in chapter three. Nevertheless, there are some general aspects that pertain to both sacraments.

a) Justification, Baptism and Incorporation into the Church

40. Both Catholics and Reformed acknowledge “one baptism for the forgiveness of sins” and so recognize the importance of the celebration of baptism.⁵⁵ Indeed, on the acknowledgment that the appropriate formula and practice are being used, there is now a long established practice of mutual recognition of baptism between the Catholic and Reformed churches.⁵⁶ This expression of the faith of the ancient church is in harmony with Paul’s interpretation of baptism as a “participation in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ”.⁵⁷ Even though they explain differently the relation between the unique justifying act of Christ and the ecclesial sacramental action by which this new life is signified, Catholics and Reformed alike can confess together, with the words of the *JDDJ*, “that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in

54 *Baptism, Eucharist & Ministry 1982-1990. Report on the Process and Responses*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1990, 143-144. Henceforth the convergence statement *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* will be referred to as BEM

55 A fine multi-lateral exposition of the meaning and importance of Baptism can be found in: *Confessing the One Faith. An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is Confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)*, A Faith and Order Study Document no. 153, New Revised Edition, Geneva, WCC Publications 1991, 90-96

56 Recent Catholic-Reformed national dialogues in the United States and Scotland have brought to light similar concerns for both traditions in terms of the pastoral demands for those requesting baptism for their children, while not even in the widest sense being active members of the church, as well as the urgent need for contextually appropriate baptismal education. For the United States dialogue report, entitled *These Living Waters*, see <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/reformed/upload/These-Living-Waters.pdf> [accessed September 11, 2015]. The Scottish text is entitled *Baptism: Catholic and Reformed*, which can be obtained at http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/3115/Baptism_document.pdf [accessed September 11, 2015]

57 Cf. Rom. 6: 3-11; Col. 2:12; *BEM 2. BEM* also recalls other biblical expressions for baptism: a washing away of sin (1 Cor. 6: 11); a new birth (Jn. 3: 5); an enlightenment by Christ (Eph. 5: 14); a re-clothing in Christ (Gal. 3: 27); a renewal by the Spirit (Tit. 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, race or social status are transcended (Gal. 3: 27-28; 1 Cor. 12: 13)

Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life⁵⁸; and that “in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person.”⁵⁹ This is the reason why it is so important to explore the relations between justification, sanctification, the celebration of baptism and its significance for the justified person. It is worthy of note that the baptismal liturgies as practiced both in the Catholic Church and the Reformed churches do not reflect the language of justification. Here it might be of interest to pursue further some of the theological reflection expressed in the national Catholic-Reformed dialogue that took place in the United States, which focused its attention on the relationship between baptism and grace rather than that of baptism and justification.

60

41. Given the emphasis in the Reformed tradition not only upon *sola scriptura* but also *tota scriptura*,⁶¹ it is not surprising that its theology of baptism has sought to interpret the meaning of this sacrament in the context of the covenant witnessed to in the Old and New Testaments. Baptism is the sign of the covenant (*signum foederis Dei*), grounded in God’s promise to Abraham, which is confirmed to him and his descendants in the rite of circumcision. Baptism stands in analogy to circumcision, signifying inclusion in this one covenant and a share in its blessings.⁶² Baptism is the sacrament that makes salvation personal: “holy baptism reminds and assures us that Christ’s one sacrifice on the cross benefits us personally.”⁶³ The administration of baptism symbolizes that our sins are washed away. But it is not the water of baptism that effects this reality: “Only Jesus Christ’s blood and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins.”⁶⁴ Baptism means not only the washing away of sins but also a rebirth: “God saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that

58 *JDDJ*, 25

59 *JDDJ*, 28. Here it is important to note that the Reformed would not say that it is in the strict sense the Holy Spirit who justifies. For the Reformed God the Father justifies the sinner in virtue of the redemption accomplished by the Son (see, e.g., Rom. 8:31-32), a redemption that includes justification and sanctification. But since these gifts do not benefit us unless the Spirit unites us with Christ so that he and these gifts become ours, it is not inaccurate to say that the Holy Spirit plays a role in our justification.

60 See Section 5, 70-73 of *These Living Waters*, available at the website indicated in note 48 above.

61 Paragraphs 24-25 of the report of the first phase of the Catholic-Reformed international dialogue *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* registers some important convergences between us on the relation between Scripture and Tradition. Such a convergence is one of the fruits of many bilateral dialogues; see W. Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, London/New York, Continuum, 2009, 102, 197-198.

62 *Heidelberg Catechism*, 74

63 *Ibid.*, 69

64 *Ibid.*, 72



we had done, but according to his mercy through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:5). On the relation between sign and the reality signified in the administration of baptism, there is a difference of opinion within the Reformed tradition; generally, however, it is held that grace is given by the Holy Spirit who acts in the Spirit’s own time. Only those who believe in Christ will benefit from baptism. That is why children are baptized after the parents have professed their faith and adults are baptized only after a similar personal profession. Nevertheless, baptism is not reducible to the personal, but includes also a strong communal dimension, since those who are baptized are incorporated into the body of Christ, made visible through their assembling together as his church.⁶⁵ “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). Finally, baptism has moral consequences: “To be washed with Christ’s Spirit means that the Holy Spirit has renewed and sanctified us to be members of Christ so that more and more we become dead to sin and live holy and blameless lives.”⁶⁶

42. According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, baptism is the sacrament of faith that plunges us into the paschal mystery⁶⁷; without faith no one is ever justified. The celebration of baptism, as a profession of faith, is not only a personal confession of the faith of the believer but also a confession of the faith of the church as the community of believers.⁶⁸ This is especially evident in the baptism of an infant, which also expresses the Catholic understanding that the celebration itself of the sacrament, and not the subjective state of the recipient or the celebrant, is determinative of validity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that “our Lord tied the forgiveness of sins to faith and Baptism” (citing Mk. 16: 15-16), adding that “Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification.”⁶⁹ Catholics believe that baptism is “necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament” and “the means that assures entry into eternal beatitude”.⁷⁰

65 *Ibid.*, 74

66 *Ibid.*, 70

67 Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium* 6 (4006)

68 *Lumen gentium* 7 (4112)

69 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 977

70 *Ibid.*, 1257. The catechism goes on to speak of “baptism of blood” regarding those who are martyred for the faith (1258) and “baptism of desire” regarding catechumens who die before having the opportunity to receive the sacrament (1259). The sacrament of baptism is treated in paragraphs 1213-1284 of the catechism. Much of what is written here about baptism is taken, often quite literally, from paragraphs 1265-1271.

The effects of baptism are signified by the perceptible elements of the sacramental rite. Immersion in water symbolizes not only death and purification, but also regeneration and renewal. In baptism one becomes a new creature, an adopted child of God, a “participant of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4), a member of Christ, co-heir with him and temple of the Holy Spirit.

43. Thus, the whole of Christian life has its roots in baptism. Finally, baptism makes one a member of the body of Christ, incorporating one into the church. From the baptismal font is born the one people of God of the new covenant, which transcends all natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races, and sexes. By means of baptism, Christians become living stones to be “built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:5), participating in the priesthood of Christ and in his prophetic and royal mission. Baptism precedes the apostolic and missionary activity of the people of God. “Incorporated in the Church through Baptism, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as children of God they must confess before men and women the faith which they have received from God through the Church.”⁷¹ As Vatican II’s Decree on Ecumenism states, baptism “establishes a sacramental bond of unity which links all who have been reborn by it.”⁷²

b) The Relation between Justification and Sanctification and the Understanding of Sacraments in General

44. There has been considerable agreement among Christian churches about baptism, even though practices such as re-baptism are evidence that some communities have not recognized this rite of initiation as practiced in other communities. The specific sacrament of baptism was chosen for consideration in the foregoing section because it most clearly offers an opportunity for exploring the particular relation between justification and sacraments, which is the central theme of the present chapter. In the following paragraphs, the Reformed and Catholic reflections concerning the relation between justification, sanctification and baptism will now be considered in relation to sacraments in general. A first section will present material suggestive of possible convergences between us regarding the relation of justification and sanctification to the sacraments. A second section will identify several differences, which call for further exploration and dialogue.

⁷¹ *Lumen gentium* 11 (4127)

⁷² *Unitatis redintegratio* 22; cf. also 3 (4188)



c) Areas of Converging Understanding Concerning the Sacraments

45. The Reformed tradition, insisting on God's sovereign grace and the freedom of the Spirit, is careful about language or thought patterns that would deny or compromise them. God is not bound by the sacraments. Nevertheless, God instituted the sacraments to seal and confirm the promise of the gospel proclaimed in the Word, "making it more evident to us and in a sense ratifying it."⁷³ The *Geneva Catechism* affirms that the sacrament is the "outward attestation of the grace of God, which, by a visible sign, represents spiritual things to imprint the promises of God more firmly in our hearts, to make us surer of them."⁷⁴ By giving us signs tangible to the senses God condescends to us in order to accommodate our human weakness, that is, our corporeality. Sacraments, just as the proclamation of the Word, are indeed means of grace, but the Reformed reject the view that grace is somehow "contained" in the elements used in their celebration. The *Westminster Confession* insists that "the grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them."⁷⁵ On the other hand, the connection between the sacramental sign and the thing signified is so close that the Reformed do not hesitate to refer to a "sacramental union" (*unio sacramentalis*). According to the Westminster Confession, "there is in every sacrament a spiritual relation or sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other."⁷⁶ In this perspective, it is not inappropriate to say that the waters of baptism wash away sins and grant a participation in Christ; or that the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper nourishes Christians with the body and blood of Christ, uniting them more and more with his glorified body as well as with members of his body the church. It has always to be borne in mind, however, that it is the Holy Spirit that communicates Christ and his benefits to those who receive them by faith. The Holy Spirit is the sole cause of the efficacy of the sacraments. This is not to deny the fact that they remain sacraments even if they are received by the unbelieving. Together with the Word, the sacraments are objective means of grace appointed by God and used by the Holy Spirit to grant us a participation in Christ and to confirm our faith in his promises. Because these are the principal activities of the worship of God's people, the Reformed emphasize the indispensability of the church. Following the famous phrase of St. Cyprian that one cannot

73 Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.14.3., 1278

74 310

75 27.3

76 27.2

have God as one's father if one does not have the church as one's mother, Calvin prized the image of the church as a mother, who conceives and nourishes each of her children.⁷⁷

46. Catholics would concur in substance with many of these Reformed perspectives on Word and sacrament. They too affirm the uniqueness of the salvific activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the sovereignty of God, the centrality of union with Christ and the importance of the proclamation of the Word. However, their emphasis upon the close unity between Christ and the church leads them naturally to stress the notion of efficacy in their sacramental language and practice in a way that is quite different from that of the Reformed. After offering its teaching on justification and prior to treating each sacrament individually, the Council of Trent promulgated a decree on the sacraments in general (*sacramenta in generale*), explaining how they relate to justification: "For all true justification either begins through the sacraments, or, once begun, increases through them, or when lost is regained through them."⁷⁸ The teaching that justification begins, increases, and can be regained reflects the Catholic understanding of the close relation between justification and sanctifying grace, which connotes as well the inseparability, in Catholic thinking, of justification and sanctification.
47. The sacraments are prepared for by the Word of God and by the faith which assents to this Word. Therefore, they are called sacraments of faith. According to Vatican II, "Sacraments not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called 'sacraments of faith'.⁷⁹ This presupposes a close relatedness of Word and sacrament: "The people of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God.... The preaching of the Word is required for the sacramental ministry itself, since the sacraments are sacraments of faith, drawing their origin and nourishment from the Word."⁸⁰
48. In addition, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has outlined the Christological foundation of the sacraments.⁸¹ They are founded in the mysteries of Christ's life, and are effective, not on the basis of their own "power" but thanks to that power that comes forth from the body

⁷⁷ See *Institutes* IV.1.1.4

⁷⁸ Council of Trent, *Decree on the Sacraments*, Foreword (1600).

⁷⁹ *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 59.

⁸⁰ Vatican Council II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum ordinis* 4

⁸¹ Much of the material in this paragraph is taken from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1115-1123.



of Christ, through the action of the Holy Spirit at work in the church. The Spirit manifests and communicates to human beings, especially in the Eucharist, the mystery of communion with the God who is love. Their purpose is to sanctify human beings, to build up the body of Christ, and to glorify God. In this context the language of sacramental efficacy needs to be carefully understood; in fact, the sacraments “are efficacious because in them Christ himself is at work. It is he who baptizes, he who acts in his sacraments in order to communicate the grace that each sacrament signifies. The Father always hears the prayer of his Son’s Church which, in the epiclesis of each sacrament, expresses her faith in the power of the Spirit.”⁸² Sacramental grace is that grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament, by which the Spirit heals and transforms the recipients, making them “become participants of the divine nature” (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4). Clearly the celebration of the sacraments entails the reception of the Word in faith and of that sanctifying grace which is the very heart of justification and sanctification.

d) Areas Calling for Further Dialogue

49. Many Reformed believers concur with much of the above. What differences then remain between our churches regarding the individual rites known as sacraments? One area concerns the question of the efficacy of the sacraments. The fact that it is Christ himself who baptizes and celebrates the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist (and Catholics would add – who presides at the other sacraments as well) has led Catholics to emphasize forcefully the efficacy of the sacraments, as suggested by the expression that they are effective *ex opere operato*, that is, “by the very fact of the action’s being performed,” not depending upon the subjective state of those conferring or receiving them.⁸³ While Catholics would also affirm that a sacrament does not bear fruit in the life of a person who does not receive it in faith, nevertheless, the meaning of the expression *ex opere operato* has been misinterpreted as suggesting an efficacy that is mechanical or automatic and insufficiently respectful of the agency of the Holy Spirit through the celebration of the sacraments. Calvin noted

⁸² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1127

⁸³ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1128: “This is the meaning of the Church’s affirmation that the sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: ‘by the very fact of the action’s being performed’), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that ‘the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God’ (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III, 68, 8). From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them.”

that “We must not suppose that there is some latent virtue inherent in the sacraments by which they, in themselves, confer the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon us...since the only office divinely assigned to them is to attest and ratify the benevolence of the Lord towards us; and they avail no farther than accompanied by the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts, and make us capable of receiving this testimony in which various distinguished graces are clearly manifested.... God, therefore, truly performs whatever he promises by figures and by signs; nor are the signs without effect, for they prove that he is their true and faithful author.”⁸⁴ From what has been said above, what is being criticized here is not the view that the Catholic Church actually holds. It would seem that both positions seek to affirm both the primacy of divine agency in the sacraments and that they are effective signs. Still they seem to differ in nuance, emphasis and the language used to express these convictions.

50. Another area of disagreement concerns the identification of those rites which are properly designated as “sacraments.”⁸⁵ Our differences here depend in part on different notions of what a sacrament is and upon different understandings of their “institution.” Calvin identifies baptism and the Lord’s Supper as the two sacraments instituted by Christ, adding that he would have no objection to calling the laying on of hands a sacrament but for the fact that it is not meant for the use of the whole church.⁸⁶ Later, however, he devotes an entire chapter to argue against the “five sacraments falsely so called.”⁸⁷ While the Council of Trent, for its part, teaches that Christ instituted seven sacraments, it immediately rejects the notion that they are all of equal importance.⁸⁸ Such qualitative differentiation makes it possible for Catholics to maintain the traditional view which has always recognized the prominent significance of baptism and Eucharist as *sacramenta maiora* or *principalia*, in contrast to the other five sacraments.⁸⁹ At the same time, it is true that the Reformed celebrate a number of those rites which Catholics call “sacraments,” such as confirmation, reconciliation, marriage and ordination, without designating them with that term. In some contexts, these rites are known

⁸⁴ *Institutes* IV, 14, 17

⁸⁵ Cf. *The Presence of Christ in the Church and in the World* (1977), 98; *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* (1990), 140

⁸⁶ *Institutes* IV, 14, 20, see also IV, 14,22; 18,20

⁸⁷ *Institutes* IV, 19

⁸⁸ Council of Trent, *Decree on Sacraments*, (1601 and 1603)

⁸⁹ Cf. Related with this idea is Thomas Aquinas’ expression “*potissima sacramenta*” (*Summa theologiae* III, q. 62, a. 5; cf. also *Summa contra gentiles*, IV, 72). See also Y. Congar, “The idea of ‘major’ or ‘principal sacraments,’” *Concilium* 4 (1968), no. 1, 1, 12-17



as “ordinances of God.”⁹⁰ In some ecumenical dialogues, criteria have been proposed in order to overcome the historical divergences.⁹¹

B) The “Sacramentality” of the Church in Relation to Christ’s Salvific Activity in Justification and Sanctification

51. The following section will explore the possibility of applying what has been said so far concerning the sacraments to the wider topic of the nature and mission of the church as a whole. This will build upon the agreements of our earlier phases of dialogue concerning the church as a community of Word and sacrament and will hopefully serve as a good transition to our third and final chapter on the church as an agent for justice in the world.
52. During the twentieth century, some Catholic theologians began to develop the theological notion of “sacrament” as a way of interpreting the salvific activity of Christ and the Spirit in and through the Church as sign and instrument.⁹² The divine economy of salvation takes place within the conditions in which human beings live, through audible words and visible signs. Already creation reflects and speaks of its divine author. With the incarnation and paschal mystery of the Son of God, redemption brings to fulfillment God’s saving design for creation. This echoes a principle dear to medieval scholastic theologians, that is, that grace perfects nature, now reinterpreted more broadly. If a sacrament may be considered to be a visible encounter with grace in history, then, always depending upon Christ and recognizing that he continues to work in history through the Holy Spirit, it becomes possible to speak analogously of the sacramentality of the church as a whole, not only in celebrating particular sacramental rites, but also in proclaiming the Word of God and in the

90 The *Second Helvetic Confession* for instance reads under chapter 19 entitled ‘Of the Sacraments of the Church of Christ: “There are some who count seven Sacraments of the new people. Of these we acknowledge that repentance, the ordination of ministers (not indeed the papal but the apostolic ordination), and matrimony are profitable ordinances of God, but not Sacraments.”

91 Some ecumenical dialogues involving the Reformed and Catholics have suggested that a promising approach to addressing disagreement about the number of sacraments may be found in distinguishing between a broader and a narrower usage of the term “sacrament” (cf. Lehmann, K. and Pannenberg, W., Hrsg., *Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend?*, Band I: *Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt in Zeitalter der Reformation und heute*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder/Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985, 77-88, I. 1.2) or between two “sacraments” and five “sacramental (ecclesial) acts” (cf. *Groupe des Dombes, The Holy Spirit, the Church and the Sacraments* (1979), 32.

92 This development was anticipated in the 19th century by Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838) and Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835-1888). Yves Congar and Karl Rahner, both of whom played influential roles at the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council, acknowledged an intellectual debt especially to the former

witness of Christian life. This is what was meant when Vatican II opened its Constitution on the Church by claiming that the church “is in Christ like (veluti) a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.”⁹³ Our dialogue has seen such a designation of the church as a welcome change from the largely institutional self-understanding which dominated Catholic ecclesiology in the centuries following the Reformation. The conviction that the church, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is called to bring healing to a world wounded by sin resonates to some degree with a Reformed emphasis on the witness which the Christian community, as the prophetic people of God, is called to give in history.⁹⁴

53. Through justification and through the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, the church, as the body of Christ, is emboldened to continue Christ’s offices of prophet, priest, and king in keeping with its unique calling to be a sign and sacrament of the kingdom of God. According to the *Heidelberg Catechism*, Jesus is called the Christ because he was ordained by the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit to be our chief prophet and teacher, our only high priest and our eternal king.⁹⁵ Moreover, every Christian by faith shares in this anointing and in this threefold office.⁹⁶ The value of this triple office was acknowledged by Vatican II when it described not only individual members of the ordained clergy⁹⁷ and the laity,⁹⁸ but the entire people of God as a prophetic, priestly and kingly people.⁹⁹ This suggests the possibility of an important convergence between us regarding the nature of the church. Those who are justified by grace through faith and sanctified by the Holy Spirit through Word and sacrament are invested with the prophetic office of proclaiming the gospel message of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God in speech and action. They offer their lives as a living sacrifice of praise (cf. Rom. 12:1) and dedicate themselves to action for justice and peace in accordance with the demands of the kingdom. Justification grounds the lifelong process of sanctification in which the prophetic, priestly and kingly

93 *Lumen gentium* 1 (4101)

94 See e.g. K. Barth, *The Humanity of God*, Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 1996: “The Church is the special race of men, the congregation, or to use Calvin’s expression, the compagnie, which has been constituted, appointed and called to be His witness in the world by a knowledge of the gracious God manifest in Jesus Christ, as knowledge which is rather miserable, but which is invincible because the Holy Spirit has the making of it.

95 31

96 32

97 *Lumen gentium*, 25-28 (4149-53)

98 *Ibid.*, 34-36 (4160-62)

99 *Ibid.*, 10-13 (4125-32)



people of God commit themselves to share in the offices of Christ by acting as he did. During our dialogue, we on occasion referred to sanctification as the “middle term” between justification and justice, which finds expression in social action and the promotion of human dignity. This was a brief, useful way for the dialogue to express the interconnectedness of justification, sanctification and social action.

54. Seeing the Church as a prophetic, priestly, and kingly people on the basis of Word and sacrament also provides a framework for understanding the relation between prophetic voices and authority within the life of the community. It is the Holy Spirit who inspires believers to deepen their understanding of the good news of Jesus Christ and to discern ways of applying the gospel to the needs of time and place according to the signs of the times.¹⁰⁰ It is the same Holy Spirit who is invoked to assist those charged with roles of authority and leadership within the community. Our dialogue did not touch on the significantly different ecclesial structures and understandings of authority, accountability, and discernment in our two traditions. It would be mutually enriching to take up such themes in future phases. Only some very general comments can be offered here. In the Catholic Church there has been a tendency to locate the role of authority, leadership, and discernment within individual offices, although since Vatican II conciliar structures have been fostered at various levels of the life of the Church inviting the participation of all according to their specific vocation within the people of God.¹⁰¹ The Reformed tradition invests authority in conciliar processes, which are found at local, regional, and national levels and which interact with each other. Within these conciliar processes the decision making authority on all matters of the church is vested not only in ordained members

100 *Lumen gentium* teaches that “discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God. Through it, the people of God adheres unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints, penetrates it more deeply with right thinking, and applies it more fully in its life” 12 (4125)

101 Such participation includes all of all of the baptized, including those who, in Catholic parlance, are called the laity. As *Lumen gentium* states: “But by reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will. They live in the world, that is, they are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit to the Gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within like leaven, by fulfilling their own particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so closely associated that these may be effected and grow according to Christ and may be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer” 31 (4157)

of the clergy but, on a level of parity, also in elders, deacons, and their equivalents. In particular situations such decision-making authority can be vested in all members of a congregation.

Chapter Three: Justification and Christian Action on Behalf of Justice in the World

55. Our first chapter explored our agreement that justification and sanctification are indissolubly linked in Reformed and Catholic thought. The second chapter related justification and sanctification to the ministry of Word and sacrament, giving an opportunity, first, to explore points of convergence and difference between us regarding these essential dimensions of the life of the Christian community and, second, to consider the service of the church as a whole in God's saving action in history. This final chapter will explore how the acceptance of God's pardon in justification and the ongoing sanctification of believers by the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, impel Christians to commit themselves to participate in the kingdom of God already inaugurated by Christ Jesus.
56. The very similarity between the words "justification" and "justice" in almost all languages invites Christians to reflect upon whether and how the realities they express are related. The New Testament makes use of the very same word – *dikaïosynē* – to express both the quality of upright behavior and the state of being freed from sin through the mercy of God.¹⁰² That both of these meanings are conveyed with the same word reflects the fact that they are profoundly related. The one who is justified by faith is called to act in a righteous way. As a consequence, the doctrine of justification cannot be seen in the abstract, divorced from the reality of injustice, oppression, and violence in today's world. The report of phase three of the dialogue between WARC and the Catholic Church noted that "Jesus, the Word made flesh, proclaimed that the kingdom is at hand and the community of disciples is that group of human beings which, under

¹⁰² The noun *dikaïosynē* can be translated either as "justice" or as "righteousness." In the New Testament it can express simply the quality of upright behavior, as in the verse "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). A central theme of Pauline theology, however, is to employ this word in his reflection about the relation between faith and the works of the law: "But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe." (Rom. 3:21-22). For its part, the noun justification, in today's vernacular languages, refers either to God's activity of reconciling sinners to himself or to the experience of being reconciled to God. Paul uses this verb (*dikaîûn*) to express God's gracious saving action in Christ: "Therefore since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1)



the influence of grace, has responded in faith. ... This response of saving faith impels them, for their part, to proclaim the Word of salvation and commissions them to witness to the kingdom values that Jesus taught."¹⁰³ The tragic abundance of economic injustice, oppression, racism, sexism and abuse of the environment is all too evident in our world today; these evils are present even within the Christian community. In the face of this, there have been repeated calls in both of our communities for commitment to work for change. The church is nourished to work on behalf of justice, peace and the protection of creation through the ongoing encounter with Christ in the Spirit through Word and sacrament. As the previous phase of our bilateral conversations noted:

The transformation of the world occurs in part through efforts to create a more just and peaceful society. But Christians also believe that this transformation is realized now, in an anticipatory way, in that communion between God and human beings which takes place in the church, especially through the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist and other sacraments or rites. As sacrament of the kingdom, the church is and must be both creation of the Word and sacrament of grace.¹⁰⁴

Justice is a complex reality, having various meanings depending upon the perspective from which it is viewed. But we found the greatest convergence about it by starting with the revelation of the loving and graceful God, who expresses justice-seeking action in all facets of the lives of human beings and of creation.

57. God makes and declares human beings just not only to be saved individually within the community of the church, but also so that they can participate in God's work of healing and transforming their unjust world. In this sense, one can talk of the ethics of justification. This is beautifully expressed in the parable of the separation of the sheep and the goats, where Jesus states that at the last judgment he will say "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." (cf. Matt. 25:31-46). The God of the Bible is a God of righteous mercy¹⁰⁵ who takes human misery to heart, entering into it and overcoming it from within. God establishes justice for the innocent who are threatened, the poor, the alienated and the oppressed. God stands unconditionally and passionately on their side: "he has brought

103 *The Church as a Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God*, 190

104 *Ibid.*, 191

105 Cf. the Hebrew word *tzedakah*, the primary meaning of which is "righteousness."

down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly" (Luke 1:52). God's concern for us in our distress cannot be taken seriously without assuming responsibility for all those who are poor and wretched.¹⁰⁶ The believer is summoned to accompany and defend those who suffer wrong. Conformity to Christ means attending to the needs of those excluded by society. The poor, the marginalized and the victimized, together with the whole groaning creation, require the special attention of the Christian¹⁰⁷

A) Justification, Sanctification and Action on behalf of Justice

58. For the Reformed, justification is always accompanied by sanctification; they are two inseparable aspects of the saving activity of Christ granted to believers in virtue of their union with Christ that as a result they may live in holiness. The Second Vatican Council entitled an entire chapter of its Constitution on the Church the "universal call to holiness," proposing that the church is holy "because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy,' loved the Church as his Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her (cf. Eph. 5:25-26); he joined her to himself as his body and endowed her with the gift of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. Therefore all in the Church ... are called to holiness, according to the apostle's saying: 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification' (1 Th. 4:3; cf. Eph. 1:4)."¹⁰⁸ True sanctification always manifests itself in the fruits of the Spirit, outstanding among which is love. Thus the Council affirms that "the first and most necessary gift is charity, by which we love God above all things and our neighbor because of him."¹⁰⁹ Such love for God and for neighbor will impel the Christian to seek to rectify situations in which human beings suffer under conditions of oppression, injustice or the destruction of the environment on which we all depend. In this perspective, justification and sanctification of necessity call for and lead naturally to action on behalf of justice. One national dialogue between our two communions affirms:

The people of God are called in every age to proclaim righteousness, to struggle against injustice, and to care for one another, for the structures of civilization, and for creation. In our age, "human rights" is a particular way of speaking of the ethical demands of righteousness and justice under God's rule. At their deepest point, all human rights are grounded

106 Cf. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, II/1, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 386-387.

107 See Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, 197-201; *Laudato si*, 17-19.

108 *Lumen gentium*, 39.

109 *Ibid.*, 42.



in nothing else than God's righteousness, which we know through Jesus Christ. It is under the grace of God's righteousness that humans speak of a universal and reliable moral law that is known by revelation and reason. It is engraved on the human heart in such a way that no one and no group is excused from recognizing the claim that other humans must be treated with justice, and that societies must be arranged on the basis of freedom and equity....¹¹⁰

The statement reinforces the Christian mandate to do justice by pointing out that it is engraved on every human heart, a claim that accords with the Catholic understanding of natural law. Though the Reformed have varying perspectives on the concept of natural law, they do affirm that God's law given at creation is consistent with God's law revealed to Moses and embodied in Jesus Christ. As those renewed by the Holy Spirit and thereby empowered to obey this law more completely, Christians have a special interest in pursuing justice.

B) The Word of God and Commitment to Justice

59. The Word of God – incarnate, written, and proclaimed – founds the Christian pursuit of justice. The incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, embodies God's justice most fully, as we see in his proclamation in the synagogue at Nazareth: "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, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' And 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. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'" (Lk. 4:18-21, quoting Is. 61:1-2).
60. The righteousness proclaimed and embodied by Jesus presupposes the Old Testament tradition that testifies to God's justice. God is the just judge (Ps. 7:10; 11:7; Jer. 11:20) who rules and orders all things with righteousness (Dt. 32:4; Ps. 119:137; Is. 5:16). God's righteousness lasts forever (Ps. 119:142) and brings about the deliverance of the people Israel, in fulfillment of the promise (Ps. 103:6; Is. 42:6-7; 45, 13:24-25 and, in general, Is. 40-66). Justice is also a human moral virtue which designates the observance of God's commandments so that one does justice or acts with righteousness (Gen. 18:19; Ps. 106: 3; 119:40,106; Prov. 21:3; Is. 56:1; 58:2). In the Old Testament, God's good gifts of heaven and

¹¹⁰ "The Statement on Human Rights" from Reformed-Roman Catholic USA consultation on "Ethics and the Search for Christian Unity," (1980), available at: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/reformed/upload/Ethics-and-the-Search-for-Christian-Unity.pdf> (accessed 18 February, 2015).

earth, seas and dry land, vegetation and animals, and God's promise of land to Israel, beckon us to seek not only just human relations, but also the care and protection of God's whole creation.

61. While one dimension of biblical justice is captured in the "golden rule" ("Do to others as you would have them do to you," (Luke 6:31), the New Testament encourages an even more radical form of righteousness, following the very example of Jesus: "Live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (Eph. 5:2). In this way, scripture asks not simply that people act fairly and consistently, treating others as they hope that they might themselves be treated, but to treat others as they themselves have already been treated. Christ delivered us at great cost from the peril of eternal death. We have been spared from a condemnation that would otherwise have been ours. From now on there is nothing for us but to live a life of gratitude. The standard of behavior is set not by our wishes to be treated fairly but by Jesus' saving act of radical, self-sacrificing love.
62. We hear and respond to God's Word most frequently in and through the church's proclamation of the good news of God's righteous action in Christ, which is: "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed" (Rom. 3:23-25). Christ's death for us on the cross is for the sake of our salvation as well as an indication of the depth of his suffering love on behalf of the oppressed and marginalized.
63. Proclamation of this gospel has obvious implications for the social commitment of Jesus' followers. Faith engendered by hearing the Word heals the person wounded by sin and moves him or her toward justice both within and beyond the bounds of the church. As Pope Francis noted in his exhortation on the joy of the gospel:

Reading the Scriptures also makes it clear that the Gospel is not merely about our personal relationship with God. Nor should our loving response to God be seen simply as an accumulation of small personal gestures to individuals in need, a kind of "charity à la carte" or a series of acts aimed solely at easing our conscience. The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world.¹¹¹

And as the *Belhar Confession*, of the Uniting Reformed Church in South

111 *Evangelii gaudium*, 180



Africa, states:

*We believe that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ; that the church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells.*¹¹²

Both these statements underline our shared conviction that the church is directed beyond itself toward the world, to which it is called to bear witness about the good news of God's reign of love and justice.

C) Sacraments and Commitment to Justice

64. Sacraments, as expressions of faith, both clarify the meaning of justice and call believers to commit themselves to pursuing its realization in the world. An essential aspect of the believer's response of gratitude for what God has done in his or her life is to live a life worthy of the call to sanctification and holiness. The sanctification of believers by the Holy Spirit impels them to promote that justice which scripture relates with the kingdom of God. "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). Baptismal liturgies in our churches tend to emphasize biblical themes related to salvation in Christ, especially those of participation in the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection and birth in Christ to become a new creation. Dying and rising with Christ, sharing his life through life-giving grace, becoming an adopted child of God – these fundamental dimensions of baptism impel Christians to be conformed to Christ, whose mission and identity are so devoted to the relief of human misery. An essential characteristic of baptismal life in the pattern of the Trinity is that it is oriented to mission. The Father sent the Son to give the Spirit. Jesus' baptism inaugurated his mission. Anointed with the Spirit at his baptism, Jesus was tempted in the wilderness and then returned to Galilee proclaiming the advent of the kingdom of God (cf. Mark 1:9-15; Luke 3:21-4:14). Similarly, the Christian, conformed to Christ in baptism and anointed by the Spirit, is sent to serve the coming of the kingdom of God, to participate in Christ's mission while manifesting the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit and thus to transform the world. In the end, the establishment of the kingdom is the work of God:

¹¹² *The Confession of Belhar* (September 1986), 3. The confession was adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in 1986. In 1994 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa united to form the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). This inclusive language text was prepared by the Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church (USA). For full text see http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/theologyandworship/pdfs/belhar.pdf.

Certainly we cannot “build” the Kingdom of God by our own efforts—what we build will always be the kingdom of man [sic] with all the limitations proper to our human nature. The Kingdom of God is a gift, and precisely because of this, it is great and beautiful, and constitutes the response to our hope. And we cannot – to use the classical expression – “merit” Heaven through our works. Heaven is always more than we could merit, just as being loved is never something “merited,” but always a gift.¹¹³

D) The Eucharist and Justice in the World

65. It is with regret that we must acknowledge that, even though we agree on the implications of the Eucharist for justice, our two communions still cannot celebrate the Eucharist together. The reasons for this situation have not yet been addressed by dialogue between our churches at the international level, though we hope that this will be taken up in the future.¹¹⁴ With this in mind we are nevertheless able to say together the following.
66. The Eucharist by its very nature leads to sharing and caring for the poor and disadvantaged. One of the earliest accounts of the Eucharist – 1 Cor. 11:17-34 – is a good point of departure for considering its social significance. Paul writes to admonish the Corinthians to correct certain abuses, such as disparities in food and drink, with some persons having more than enough while others had very little. The community was torn apart by conspicuous consumption at the expense of the poor and needy. Its celebration of the Lord’s Supper stood in contradiction to that communion which is the very meaning of the Eucharist. In John’s Gospel, Jesus’ miracle of multiplying the loaves and his discourse on the bread of life make explicit reference to the feeding of the Israelites with manna – bread from heaven – during their journey through the desert to the promised land (cf. Jn. 6, 31-33 and Ex. 16). This feeding of the people during their exodus from Egypt was a miraculous experience of solidarity and sharing, in which those who gathered much had nothing left over and those who gathered little had no shortage (Ex. 16, 18). The Eucharist, like the manna in the desert, is food for people on the march toward the true promised land, revealed by Jesus to be the kingdom of God. The

¹¹³ Spe salvi, 35.

¹¹⁴ The 7th round of Reformed-Catholic dialogue in the United States (2003-2010) did spend significant time exploring convergences and divergences in Eucharistic theology and practice. This work helps to illuminate the continuing limits of our Eucharistic sharing, as well as suggesting areas for future dialogue. See the dialogue’s final report *This Bread of Life*, esp. section 3c “Presence of Christ” and section 3d “Offering and Sacrifice”, as well as section 4 “Pastoral Implications.” http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/worship/pdfs/this-bread-of-life.pdf



Eucharist is essentially a shared meal which scholarship has shown to be deeply associated with the paschal celebration; it is one of the culminating moments of the ministry of Jesus, who often shared meals with his followers and with publicans and sinners and who encouraged his disciples to invite the poor, crippled, lame, and blind who were unable to repay one's generosity (Lk. 14:13-14). Furthermore, the Eucharist is the expression of the self-giving, sacrificial love of Christ, who says "this is my body given for you" (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24), "this is my blood poured out for you" (Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:19), verses which reflect the suffering servant hymn of Is. 53:4-6. The celebration of the self-sacrificing love of Christ in the Eucharist invites those who participate to do as he has done, offering their own action on behalf of those in need. In this way, one can see that a deep meaning of the Eucharist is charity. Charity is at the very heart of the social commitment of the Church:

Charity is love received and given. It is "grace" (châris). Its source is the wellspring of the Father's love for the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Love comes down to us from the Son. It is creative love, through which we have our being; it is redemptive love, through which we are recreated. Love is revealed and made present by Christ (cf. Jn. 13: 1) and "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5: 5). As the objects of God's love, men and women become subjects of charity, they are called to make themselves instruments of grace, so as to pour forth God's charity and to weave networks of charity. This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church's social teaching, which is caritas in veritate in re sociali: the proclamation of the truth of Christ's love in society.¹¹⁵

67. The connection between the Eucharist and love was also nicely underlined by some of the earliest Christian writers. According to the *Didache*, the Eucharist was expected to express the overcoming of every cultural division, especially those rooted in enmity, while at the same time committing all who partook of it to sharing with the poor.¹¹⁶ Concerning Christian worship in the second century, Justin Martyr wrote:

And on the day named after the sun, all, whether they live in the city or countryside, are gathered together in unity.... Those who are prosperous and who desire to do so, give what they wish, according to each one's own choice, and the collection is deposited with the presider. He aids orphans and widows, those who are in want through disease or through another cause, those who are in prison, and foreigners who are sojourning here. In short, the presider is

115 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 5

116 Cf. Kenneth W. Stevenson, *Eucharist and Offering*, Pueblo: New York 1986, 15

*a guardian to all who are in need.*¹¹⁷

Several decades later, Tertullian speaks of the Eucharist in contexts where it appears associated with the practice of the works of love that the Christian community practiced, especially for the weak and persecuted.¹¹⁸ Perhaps even more important is the actual practice of some of the various churches about which we have some information.

68. From this one can see that the church, in various contexts, drawing much good from cultures as well as challenging what is contrary to the gospel, is called to be a transforming community that cares for the poor, the needy, and the humiliated. It needs to reflect Jesus' words at the last supper: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:35). The Eucharist points to and embodies real reconciliation. The third phase of dialogue between our communities pondered the role of the Church during the situation of apartheid in South Africa, where a provoking stimulus to reflection on the system of separation of the races began precisely because of the refusal on the part of some to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a way that included all believers.¹¹⁹ The Eucharist impels the Christian community to overcome such division. The Eucharist points out, in a most eminent way, what it means to be a Christian. Its celebration necessarily implies a certain way of life. Regarding justice, the Eucharist recalls and manifests that, in Christ, the righteousness of God has been revealed, as a gift and human response. In the offering of his body and the shedding of his blood, a new order has been definitively established. Each celebration of the Eucharist introduces us into the dynamic of justification, reconciliation and re-creation of humankind. But the witness character of the sacramental symbols does not end with human re-creation. Immersed in the waters of baptism and transformed by sharing the manna of Christ, fruit of the earth, and work of human hands, we are also thereby called to be responsible stewards of the environment. Our sharing of a meal must also be extended to the responsibility to safeguard that the earth be habitable for all. In the face of so many structures and mechanisms of injustice and exclusion, the Eucharist should be a true sign of the coming kingdom of God.

117 *First Apology*, 67, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers I: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. 9 vols., 1885; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1996, 186. Hereafter referred to as ANF.

118 Cf. especially *Ad uxorem*, II,4: CSEL 70, 117 and II,8: CSEL 70, 124. ET in ANF 4, 46-48

119 See *The Church as a Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God* (2007), 82-101



E) Authority and Action on Behalf of Justice

69. It is the church as the whole people of God that is called to advance and promote those things that lead towards the establishing of a more just world. In order to avoid that such advancement and promotion be conditioned by any cultural, social or political context alone, this requires continuous processes of discernment under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. At the same time it involves the openness to be challenged to live the Christian witness as appropriate to different contexts.
70. In the church there are different ministries and areas of service, both those that hold formal authority and those that manifest themselves prophetically/charismatically from time to time. Care must be taken not to create any false dichotomies between institutional and prophetic/charismatic authority nor between clerical and non-clerical voices. The collaboration between prophetic voices within the Church and the voices of those in roles of formal institutional authority needs to find expression within the formal structures of the church as well as beyond those structures.
71. Experience shows that such collaboration produced by the Spirit can be preceded by tension and conflict. Dialogue and discernment through humble, prayerful listening to one another under the guidance of the Holy Spirit provides the church with good cause for hope that the level of agreement needed for carrying out its mission as the prophetic, priestly and kingly people, can be reached, without prejudice to the legitimate variety of insights and proposals that emerge within the community.
72. Formal authority and leadership within the church are ordered very differently in our respective traditions. The dialogue team did reflect on some matters relating to this difference but not sufficiently so to report on it. It would therefore be useful to take up an exploration of the structures and ordering of our churches together with their respective decision-making processes at a future point. In particular, the better understanding of the location of formal authority and leadership within the respective ecclesial structures might prove itself to be ecumenically fruitful.¹²⁰

F) Building on our Previous Phase: Church as “Sacrament” of the Kingdom

¹²⁰ See paragraphs 142-144 of the report of the second phase of our dialogue *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church* and especially chapters 2 and 3 of the report of the third phase of our dialogue, *The Church as a Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God* on case studies of common action on behalf of justice and on structures and processes of discernment

73. 73. The kingdom of God was at the heart of the ministry and activity of Jesus. In The Lord's Prayer, Reformed and Catholic Christians pray together, "Thy kingdom come." We acknowledge that Jesus and the kingdom are one. There is no kingdom without Jesus, and no Jesus without the kingdom. When we pray for God's kingdom to come, we are praying for the coming of Jesus at the same time. As this divine kingdom comes to us in the person and work of Jesus, we would note that it has three tenses. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God's kingdom has come once and for all. In the proclamation of the Word of God and the celebration of the sacraments, this kingdom enters into our midst here and now. At the end of history, when Jesus will be revealed in glory, this kingdom will reach its fulfillment in universal thanks and praise for the mercy and justice of God.
74. Phase three of our dialogue explored in depth the meaning of this kingdom as revealed both in scripture and in subsequent tradition. Here we affirm together that reception of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist calls Christians to a firm commitment to serve the cause of the justice of the kingdom of God in today's world. Baptism anoints the Christian community to become the priestly, prophetic and kingly people of God. The Lord's Supper forms us into a just, reconciled, and loving communion and strengthens the bonds of communion between and among the members of the body of Christ, thereby impelling them to become agents of justice, reconciliation, and love within the church and the world. Our earlier phase has spoken of the church as a kind of sacrament of the kingdom of God.¹²¹ In its focus on the implications of the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist for the justice of this kingdom, our current phase has sought to deepen and extend reflection on this image of the church. Together we affirm the hope, expressed in our earlier dialogue, that our

*articulation of the church's ministerial and instrumental role, in total dependence on the Spirit of Christ and directed toward God's kingdom, can make a contribution to Christian unity that reaches beyond our own communities. The ecumenical movement as a whole may be understood as participation in the movement of the Holy Spirit, who calls and inspires us to seek the kingdom of God together, and to commit ourselves to one another. If churches find new ways to give shape to this mutual support and accountability, then we pray that the result will be greater visibility for the church as sign and instrument of God's kingdom.*¹²²

121 Cf. *The Church as a Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God*, 190-193

122 *Ibid.*, 197



In this light, we recognize that the relation of eschatology and justice could serve as an important topic for the future of ecumenical exploration.

G) Inseparability of Doctrinal and Practical Ecumenism

75. There has been a classic conflict among ecumenically minded Christians between those who insist that the path toward unity requires a focus upon doctrinal questions which have been at the root of historic divisions, such as justification by faith, sanctification, and sacraments, and those who insist that such issues are less important today and that the focus of work for unity should be directed toward collaboration between the churches for the betterment of society. This is the tension, which can be expressed as that between doctrinal ecumenism and social ecumenism and was represented by the distinct efforts of the ecumenical movements of "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work." Our work in this dialogue has hopefully shown that theological agreement about the Holy Spirit's saving activity of justification and sanctification by grace through faith. Sanctification by the Holy Spirit through Word and sacrament is precisely what impels believers and the Christian community as a whole to action on behalf of justice in the world. These classic doctrinal themes provide a broad theological basis for the action of the Christian community on behalf of justice, peace, and the protection of creation. The specific issues addressed in the Church's social action also need to be grounded in a solid theological reflection. Commitment to and work for social justice in our world finds an important and irreplaceable foundation in agreement about the theological doctrines of justification and sanctification, which are generated in believers by the Holy Spirit through the Church's ministry of Word and sacrament.

General Conclusion

76. Approaching the Reformation anniversary year of 2017, we have taken up the theme of justification by faith, which was so important in the debates and eventual divisions between Christians five hundred years ago. Our aim was to consider this topic within several fresh perspectives that have perhaps not been sufficiently explored by us or by other ecumenical participants up until now. The three chapters of our report consider the relation of justification, respectively, to sanctification, to Word and sacrament and to action on behalf of justice in the world.
77. We discovered a very substantial agreement that justification and sanctification cannot be separated. This means that justification will

make possible and lead to the fruits of virtuous action. The justified believer enters into a journey toward that holiness to which he or she is called by the Lord and enabled by the grace of the Holy Spirit. As a result, the teaching that human beings are saved by grace through faith and not through works, which St. Paul proposed within the precise conditions he faced when gentiles entered into the Christian community, does not serve as a reason for division between us regarding the meaning of salvation by faith and the importance of good works. There seem to remain some differences between us in that the Reformed, for their part, see justification as complete and irrevocable, based on their confidence of the faithfulness of God to his covenant, while Catholics, for their part, closely associate justification with sanctifying grace, which they understand as lost when a believer falls into grave sin. Future dialogue toward greater doctrinal agreement and full communion between us should take up the themes of divine election and the possibility of falling into and of overcoming serious sin.

78. We discovered a very substantial agreement that justification and sanctification are brought about by the Holy Spirit by means of Word and sacrament. This allowed us to bring our theme of justification and sanctification into contact with an important advance registered by two earlier phases of dialogue, that is, our agreement that the Church is constituted by both the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. Through Word and sacrament the Holy Spirit confers the grace of faith, which is at the heart of both justification and sanctification. A contribution that our convergence here can make to the overall ecumenical movement is to nuance the conviction that human beings are saved "by faith alone."¹²³ This expression should not obscure the fact that the Spirit makes use of means, such as audible spoken words and visible enacted rites, to impart the righteousness that comes by grace through faith. Significant differences remain between us regarding how we understand the salvific efficacy of Word and sacrament and regarding the number of the sacraments. Furthermore, the charismatic interplay between the prophetic voice of the whole community of the Church and the formally located voice of authority within the Church needs to reflect the nature of the community as a prophetic, priestly and kingly people, anointed as such by the Spirit received in baptism and nourished in the Eucharist. We have not taken up the question of what precise ministerial offices and structures are called for by Word and sacrament. These could

¹²³ It would seem that the words "faith alone" appear in the New Testament only in James 2:4, which claims that one is not saved by faith alone, without works. The emphasis on saving faith by the Pauline tradition finds a good expression in Ephesians 2:8 ("For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God")



serve as themes for future dialogue.

79. Finally, we discovered full agreement that the theological doctrine and reality of justification by faith and sanctification impels the Christian community to act on behalf of justice. The imperative for justice flows necessarily from justification and from the call of the whole Church to holiness. We especially considered how the celebration of the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper points to the need for the community to reach out to those in need. Here we noted that justice is closely allied to charity and mercy, both in the Scriptures and in the voices of the tradition. Differences remain on where each community locates formal authority. The process and structures of decision-making remain to be more fully explored, though this theme has already received some important initial treatment in the report of phase three of dialogue between our communities, *The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom*. Fortunately our present report has shown that there need be no tension between dialogue about traditionally divisive theological issues, such as the nature of justification, and collaboration in the work of justice. To our delight, we discovered that it is precisely theological agreement that can provide a basis for collaboration in promoting justice, peace and the protection of creation.
80. As we conclude this fourth phase of dialogue between the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Catholic Church, we members of the bilateral international commission unanimously encourage our two communities to continue on the path of dialogue. Each of the three previous paragraphs spotlights some issues which this phase of dialogue has shown to be in need of further discussion. Other issues to which this report invites us to give greater attention are the Eucharist, ordained ministry, and the exercise of authority. We believe that a most promising theme for dialogue which could lead to the uncovering of greater ecclesiological convergence between us could be a focus upon the nature of the Church as a prophetic, priestly and royal/shepherd people of God, a theme which is explicitly proposed both by Calvin and by the Reformed tradition as well as by the Second Vatican Council. Should a new bilateral commission be nominated, perhaps its first consideration might be to discern, in light of the foregoing paragraphs, what particular concern seems to call most urgently for discussion within our respective churches.
81. We also would suggest several concrete steps that can enhance the reception of the present report.
- The report ought to be made available to the various ecumenical offices

throughout our communities at regional, national, and local levels; the internet could be used for inexpensive and expedited communication to promote growth toward greater unity between our churches.

- Some collaboration in preparing catechesis on justification and sanctification, about which we share a significant consensus, could be developed.
- Efforts can be made at regional and local levels to agree to develop and make use of common certificates of baptism, noting that our churches fully recognize baptism when administered according to the mandate of Jesus in Matthew 28:19.
- Discussions about Reformed association with the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* can be continued and, if possible, lead to such an association, which would be important not only for our two churches but for the wider ecumenical community as a whole.
- Especially in light of Chapter Three of the present report, new initiatives for promoting justice, peace, and the protection of the environment can be fostered between our communities at various geographic levels.



Intra-Communion Discord as a Starting Point for Ecumenical Dialogue: An Introduction to *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling: The Hiroshima Report of the International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue*

Aimee Moiso

Ecumenical dialogue is often considered a place for Church representatives to discuss the differences that divide communions from one another. For that reason, a certain irony lies behind the most recent iteration of dialogue between the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the Anglican Communion: the two Communion came to dialogue in part out of a shared desire to examine the challenges of *intra*-communion discord. In other words, the common experience of struggles *within* our communions drew us toward deeper ecumenical relationship with each other. Having not met for formal dialogue since the publication of *God's Reign and Our Unity* in 1984, in 2011 the Communion prepared for a new round of discussion together just after the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council joined to form the WCRC in 2010, and as the Anglican Communion was working on the adoption of a Communion-wide covenant. Thus the question of what it means to be a communion and a shared recognition of the difficulties in defining and living out life in communion became the two focal points for the 2015-2019 International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (IRAD) process.

Shared challenges were not the sole impetus for renewing bilateral dialogue, however. In exploratory talks, Reformed and Anglican representatives also recognized that despite affirmation of *God's Reign and Our Unity* by the leadership of both Communion, more could have been done to ensure its reception and implementation at all levels. Meanwhile, recent ecumenical developments between Reformed and Anglican Churches at local and regional levels offered new insights and directions for dialogue. These included, among others, the 1991 Meissen Declaration between the Church of England and the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD, the Protestant churches of Germany), the 1999 Reuilly Declaration between the Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland and the Église Réformée (Lutheran and Reformed Churches in France), and the 2007 agreement between the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Presbyterian Church (USA). In the exploratory conversation, Reformed and Anglican participants also noted as reasons to renew dialogue the importance of the shared Reformation foundations of our two communions, as well as the need to speak and act together for mission, evangelism, and justice in a new century.

***Koinonia*: God's Unbreakable Gift of Life in Communion**

While the question of episcopacy and the mutual recognition of ministries between Anglican and Reformed churches continue to be sources of division and separation between our Communion in many parts of the world, in this round of dialogue the technical and doctrinal complexities of those topics were not the central consideration. IRAD chose instead to examine the nature and dynamics of communion as a way into other discussions about relationships within and among our Churches. "Communion" offered a different lens than that of "unity" through which to envision Christian community—a perspective that participants believed might help move us beyond impasses of previous dialogues, as well as providing insight into intra-communion conflict. IRAD came to appreciate deeply the richness of the New Testament term *koinonia* and its multiple connotations of fellowship, sharing, participation, and partnership, and chose to use this Greek word *koinonia* rather than "communion" in its report to offer the broader Churches this "fresh opening and renewed language about how to live together" (§xi).

Koinonia is not a new topic within the ecumenical movement, and IRAD's discussions align with and build upon previous work exploring the significance of *koinonia* for the unity and renewal of the Church. In IRAD's discussions, *koinonia* was a particularly fruitful concept because it enlivened conversation about the nature of diversity within a reconciled (or reconciling) body of Christ, the existence of conflict and disagreement in Christian relationships, and the responsibilities we have toward one another as members of Christ's body. Our discussions were often shaped by the question, "Can communion contain conflict, so that conflict loses its power to divide?" Put in theological terms, how might the gift and calling of *koinonia* encompass and even supersede the conflicts that arise among us, because we are already bound to one another in Christ? This question led to one of the significant findings of IRAD's final report, namely that "Despite the real pain of historical separation and manifold disagreement, the nature of *koinonia* as gift was never ours to possess alone nor deny to one another. ...Thanks to the abundance of God's gift, it is inappropriate and inaccurate to speak of having been 'in or out' of communion with one another" (§60).

Yet the simple acknowledgement that our Communion have experienced historical separation and manifold disagreement points to the reality that we have not experienced God's *koinonia* in its fullness. Though the gift itself is not broken, our ability to receive the gift has been and continues to be impaired and



incomplete. These two assertions—that the gift of *koinonia* has been given in fullness, but our reception of that gift has been impaired—lie at the theological heart of the IRAD report, and convict our Communion to continue toward full mutuality, shared responsibility, and life-giving solidarity that constitute participation together in the body of Christ. Though we may disagree with other Christians on matters of deep importance, in *koinonia* we are freed to learn from each other, trusting that conflicts themselves can be opportunities to see from different perspectives and to strengthen relationships through empathy with and receptivity toward one another. In *koinonia*, the abundant grace of God continually prompts our re-examination, repentance, and forgiveness, and renews our desire for reconciliation built on truth-telling. In *koinonia*, we cannot be satisfied with segregation and division: “God’s reconciliatory mission insists that we never close the door to the possibility of healing” (§34).

The Real-Life Significance of *Koinonia*

In addition to these intentional choices about focus and language, IRAD members deliberately chose to meet in five contexts around the world that would themselves contribute to our understanding and discussions of *koinonia*. IRAD’s first meeting in Kochi, Kerala, India, was hosted by the Church of South India, a united Church comprising Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist traditions. The very existence of this united Church stands as a testament to the power of God’s gift of *koinonia*, where the body of Christ is brought together across differences to encompass and celebrate the varied gifts of its members. In Cambridge, England, IRAD participants revisited the painful history that split Anglican and Reformed traditions in the seventeenth century, while also learning from contemporary congregations for whom such past distinctions are largely seen as “external” to the current life of the Church.

In Ballito, KwaZulu-Natal, in South Africa, and Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada, IRAD participants were reminded that legacies of racism and colonialism reverberate throughout society. Christian churches in post-apartheid South Africa still struggle over how to overcome life-denying systems of racial and economic injustice, and how to choose new patterns of relationship rooted in God’s truth and reconciliation to which we are called in *koinonia*. In Canada, Christian churches have sought to confess and journey toward repairing damage wrought by colonial oppression of indigenous people. Among other atrocities, many indigenous children were taken from their families and placed in church-sponsored residential schools to be “civilized” and “Christianized.” IRAD members listened to testimonies from survivors of these schools (who are

now adults), and heard how churches in Canada have engaged in the painful and complicated efforts to acknowledge, repent of, and consider reparations for what has been inflicted on indigenous communities by Christians.

The final IRAD meeting took place in Hiroshima, Japan, where the world's first atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945, killing an estimated 80,000 people instantly and tens of thousands more in the aftermath of fire and radiation. Together IRAD members visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Museum to bear witness to the devastation wrought by the bombing and to join with the people of Hiroshima in their commitment to peace. We also were blessed and moved to hear the personal testimony of survivor Keiko Ogura, who was eight years old when the atomic bomb fell on her city, and who has devoted decades of her life to ensuring that survivors' stories are heard and remembered. The destruction of Hiroshima during World War II "remains an iconic image of the human capacity to reject *koinonia*" (xx).

Each of these locations and contexts kept the real-life significance—and complexity—of the gift of *koinonia* in the forefront of our dialogue. *Koinonia* is not an abstract theological concept to be studied only as theory and hypothesis. Nor is *koinonia* a generic term describing some future of bland homogeneity and like-mindedness. The vibrant gift of *koinonia* given by the Triune God summons us to truth-telling about the difficulties of diversity in our communities, while also reminding us that that diversity itself is part of what makes the body whole (1 Corinthians 12). In a time of individualism and polarization, the gift of *koinonia* convicts us that we are interdependent with each other and the whole of creation, and that the *koinonia* we long for has already been offered to us. In a time of isolation and fear, the gift of *koinonia* calls us from places of safety to cross over to the "other side" to seek healing and reconciliation for others as much as for ourselves, and to work in concrete ways for tangible justice and liberation from oppression here and now. In a time of weariness and loss, the gift of *koinonia* reminds us that we are part of something larger than ourselves and our limitations, and that together our burdens are lighter, our vision clearer, our hope renewed, and our healing made possible through Christ, who draws us together in his body of love and grace.



***Koinonia*: God's Gift and Calling**

The Hiroshima Report of the International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (IRAD) 2020

Preface by the Co-Chairs

We are happy to introduce the report of the International Reformed-Anglican Dialogue (IRAD), which took place from 2015 to 2020. In accordance with our mandate, the commission reflected on the underlying nature of the Christian faith which the two traditions share, and explored the language of communion, informed by the biblical concept of *koinonia*. Our two Communion have been wrestling with what it means to be a communion within our own ecclesial tradition, and this has served as a point of mutual identification and connection in the pursuit of this dialogue.

We believe *koinonia* is grounded in life of the Triune God, in which we are invited to participate together. *Koinonia* is God's gift for the life of the Church, to be lived out responsibly in God's world.

The diverse contexts within which the meetings took place highlighted the plurality and richness of the traditions and cultures which constitute the Reformed and Anglican Communion and the need for dialogues to be rooted in specific places as well as at the global level. It is our hope that the work of this dialogue will be able to take forward this focus on both the local and the global settings of the two Communion.

The work of IRAD builds on the report of the predecessor body the Anglican-Reformed International Commission, produced in 1984, *God's Reign and Our Unity*. The 1984 dialogue helpfully influenced regional dialogues across the world, but was taken forward in a limited way internationally. Although the 1984 report urged the advancement of the work it had begun, there has been a thirty-one-year gap in the formal international conversation, between that report and the start of this new dialogue in 2015.

Two underlying factors influenced the current dialogue. The first was that, despite the helpful insights of *God's Reign and Our Unity*, the 1984 report was perceived as offering a more organizational and structural focus. The need was therefore identified to pursue a new pathway for the 2015 dialogue. The

second was the way in which the World Council of Churches since its formation in 1948 and ecumenical dialogues since the 1960s have given attention to the nature of communion. Reflection on the understanding of communion led to the significant development of the thinking about *koinonia* that is offered in this report.

We were blessed by our meetings happening in five different contexts. Each of these helped to shape our thinking, and to emphasize the need for attention to the contexts in which the churches find themselves and what can be learnt in specific contexts. For example, in Kerala, India, the unity of the Church of South India was seen as a gift which could be received more widely, and in Cambridge, participation in the shared worship of a local Church of England and United Reformed Church congregation was a source of celebration. (More detailed attention to each context is given in the Introduction to the report.)

After a journey sharing insights from Scripture, history, theology, and mission with regard to *koinonia*, IRAD concluded, 'We encourage our two communions publicly and consciously to recommit to deepening that unity we already share in the *koinonia* given in creation and uniquely renewed in Christ.'

The IRAD report covers three areas, and it is our hope that each will receive due attention as part of the whole. The first looks at the theological foundations of *koinonia*, including scriptural and historical understandings. The second examines understandings of ecclesiology in the light of *koinonia*. The third highlights the role of *koinonia* in terms of an understanding of mission.

The members of IRAD hope and pray that the conclusions can be taken up, and prayed about, reflected upon, and acted upon, locally, nationally, regionally across the Anglican Communion and the World Communion of Reformed Churches, for the sake of the fulfilment of God's *koinonia* in the church and the world. We invite people across each level of the churches' life to share their stories of *koinonia* with each other.

The significance of this work was brought home to us as the report was being finalized, when the coronavirus pandemic broke out. It has reinforced the need for different traditions to look at where they can come more closely together, for the sake of a suffering world. We are grateful for the work of IRAD, particularly in offering the insights on God's gift of *koinonia*, and how we can participate better together in this gift, and embody Christ's suffering and risen life more fully in God's world.



We were blessed on our journey by those who travelled part of the way with the dialogue team, but who, for a range of reasons, were unable to complete the mandate with us. These include the Most Revd David Chillingworth, the first Anglican Co-Chair, who made a significant contribution in the early years of the dialogue, and a range of other representatives from around the world who made helpful contributions during parts of the dialogue process. (The full list of names of people can be seen in Appendix 4 at the end of the report.) In each country in which we met we were grateful for the input from guests from that country. Each of these helped to create the sense of *koinonia* in our shared journey.

We give thanks for the support and hard work of the Co-Secretaries who serviced the dialogue, including The Revd Canon Dr John Gibaut, The Revd Neil Vigers, The Revd Dr Douwe Visser, The Revd Dr Hanns Lessing, Dr Aruna Gnanadason, and the support staff from the Anglican and Reformed Communion.

The Most Revd Dr Howard Gregory, Anglican Communion

Revd Dr Elizabeth Welch, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Introduction

When representatives of the Anglican Communion and the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) met in 2011 to discuss resuming formal bilateral dialogue, already both bodies had been reflecting internally on the meaning of a 'communion' and noted the potential fruitfulness of exploration of the subject together. This report of the 2015–19 International Reformed–Anglican Dialogue (IRAD) flows from a desire to deepen our Communion's understanding of communion, or *koinonia*, in light of new and emerging questions about the nature of Christian fellowship, because *koinonia* is the context in which all other ecumenical questions may be located.

In this dialogue, we have preferred to use the Greek term for communion, *koinonia*, which has enabled us to refresh and broaden our thinking about the Church and her mission. *Koinonia*—meaning communion, fellowship, sharing, participation, and partnership—refers to sharing together in a reality that is greater than ourselves and our own individual needs. The language of *koinonia* roots us in the New Testament, the early Church, and our different but shared experiences of the Reformation. Emphasizing *koinonia* offers the Church a fresh opening and renewed language about how to live together, encompassing unity and diversity within and between churches and in relationship with the whole of creation.

This report reflects on the nature of *koinonia* as God's gift and calling. The Anglican Communion and the WCRC have recognized a longing in the wider Church for an enriched and renewed way of life—particularly new ways to live and act together intentionally in *koinonia*. For many years the idea of *koinonia* has been a formative concept in the ecumenical movement. The Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in 1993 emphatically underlined its significance: 'This *koinonia* which we share is nothing less than the reconciling presence of the love of God. God wills unity for the Church, for humanity, and for creation because God is a *koinonia* of love, the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This *koinonia* comes to us as a gift we can only accept in gratitude. Gratitude, however, is not passivity. Our *koinonia* is in the Holy Spirit who moves us to action. The *koinonia* we experience drives us to seek that visible unity which can adequately embody our *koinonia* with God and one another.'¹

Despite the pause in formal dialogue between our Communion after 1984, this report builds on *God's Reign and Our Unity*, particularly the implications of the claim that in our baptism we are already made one body in Christ.² The members of IRAD hope that a focus on *koinonia* will bring the churches of our two Communion closer together in worship, fellowship, and mission, locally and globally; as we read in the First Letter of John: 'We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life ... that you also may have fellowship [*koinonia*] with us; and truly our fellowship [*koinonia*] is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete' (1 Jn 1.1–4).

IRAD's discussions about *koinonia* emerged not only from ecumenical concerns, but from the reality that both Anglican and Reformed Christians have been experiencing fierce internal struggles and threats of division within our respective Communion, as well as in society at large. In other words, the fullness of *koinonia* is not always what is experienced within and between churches; God's gift of *koinonia* is not always fully received. Our dialogue thus flowed from several questions: Can communion contain conflict so that

1 World Council of Churches, *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, Message from the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 3–14 August 1993, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/x-other-documents-from-conferences-and-meetings/message-from-the-fifth-world-conference-on-faith-and-order-1993

2 *God's Reign and Our Unity: The Report of the Anglican–Reformed International Commission, 1981–1984* (London: SPCK, 1984), §§47–61, www.anglicancommunion.org/media/104250/1984_aco_warc_gods_reign_our_unity.pdf



conflict loses its power to divide? What are the responsibilities and mutual accountabilities inherent in Christian fellowship? What are the broader implications of such an understanding of *koinonia*? Both the Reformed and Anglican Communion have grappled with these questions—as two separate communions, and together during these five years of dialogue.

The chapters that follow are responses to such questions. The first chapter, 'The Foundations of *Koinonia*', reflects on the shared scriptural and historical foundations of our two Communion, and in particular common affirmations of *koinonia*. The second chapter, '*Koinonia* in the Church', considers how God's calling to live in *koinonia* is manifested in Christian communities, but also how the gift of *koinonia* has not always been fully received or experienced in the Church. St Paul asked the divided church in Corinth, 'Has Christ been divided?' (1 Cor 1.13). This report recognizes that the Body of Christ, the Church, is wounded in its impaired reception of *koinonia*, but that Christ cannot be divided. *Koinonia* is thus a way of life and a continual calling to be in fellowship and communion together. The third chapter, '*Koinonia* in Mission', contemplates the wider consequences of *koinonia* beyond the Church—across humanity, and throughout God's creation in struggles for justice, peace, and ecological sustainability.

A. *Koinonia*

Drawing from the long ecumenical engagement with the meaning of *koinonia*, this report explores various aspects of *koinonia* in theology, ecclesiology, and missiology:

- *Koinonia* flows out of the interpersonal life of the Trinity into the personal relationality of human existence.
- *Koinonia* is scripturally complex and multidimensional; its essence is found in Old Testament covenant and prophetic theology, in the New Testament in the person and work of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, and throughout the early Church.
- *Koinonia* is rooted in worship, specifically in the proclamation of the Word of God through Scripture, and in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist.
- *Koinonia* leads to fellowship and dialogue within and between different churches and traditions, and works against lasting division and segregation.

- *Koinonia* has an eschatological dimension, as the Spirit leads from the past and present to a future of communion in fullness.
- *Koinonia* frames a missiological understanding of God's world as interconnected and interdependent.
- *Koinonia* encompasses accountability and responsibility for one another and all of God's creation. The social and moral dimensions of *koinonia* require life-giving stewardship of God's gifts.

B. The Dialogue

At every meeting, IRAD members were sustained by celebrations of Holy Communion in the Anglican and Reformed traditions, and by shared morning and evening prayer. This reiterated that lived *koinonia* flows from worship. IRAD's work was also strongly influenced by the contexts in which the meetings took place. Members were inspired and moved by the work of local churches and organizations. Moreover, IRAD members perceived the energy of lived *koinonia* in the joy and pain witnessed in each meeting location. These experiences led the discussion to shift away from trying to resolve questions of ministry in order to affirm *koinonia*, to instead affirming that *koinonia* is a gift already experienced in many ways, including standing together against the evils of the world. Within this understanding of *koinonia*, IRAD found vision and hope that might re-centre the conversation about shared ministry in the future. Rather than emphasizing classical 'faith and order' questions of unity, this report suggests an orientation towards more fully receiving and living the gift of *koinonia*—a trajectory that emerged in part from meaningful experiences of *koinonia* in local settings.

A Central African image offered by one of the IRAD members repeatedly provoked the commission's thinking: that of sharing a family meal. It is an image that carries multiple meanings and can be understood in many ways. In a family meal, there is one shared pot and one meal, and all sit at the same table—a vision of *koinonia*. However, there are times when family members disagree and do not communicate well. They can hurt each other. Some may choose not to share in the meal at all. Still, the family leaves the eating pot out for the one who might some day return to family fellowship. So also with *koinonia*. Communion may not be perfect, and reception of the gift can be impaired or rejected, but in the Church's calling to *koinonia* we repent of our brokenness and remain ready to receive one another in *koinonia* again.



This report on *koinonia* is presented to the Anglican Communion and the WCRC as an offering to wounded Church in its ongoing search for *koinonia*: 'How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!' (Ps 133.1).

Kochi, Kerala, India, October 2015

IRAD's first meeting took place in Kochi, India, hosted by the Church of South India (CSI). The formation of the CSI on 27 September 1947 is considered the beginning of the reunification of the fragmented Body of Christ in the region. The CSI brought together four major ecclesiastical traditions—Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist—to form a united church, which adopted governing and theological elements from all these denominations. The Church stands as a witness to *koinonia* in the fragmented society of India, where people are divided in the name of creed, caste, race, and region. Since the Anglican Communion and the WCRC are both in full communion with the CSI, both the Anglicans and Reformed members of the dialogue were 'at home' there.

Cambridge, England, August 2016

The second meeting of IRAD took place in the serene setting of Clare College, Cambridge, England. Within the English context, the historic memories of painful conflict and discrimination continue to echo in the lives of the churches today. In Cambridge, the members of IRAD attended the Eucharist at St Luke's Church, a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) between the Church of England and the United Reformed Church. Worshipping there, IRAD encountered a congregation for whom the distinction between Anglican and Reformed was an external one. At St Luke's, there was a simply one community, an expression of *koinonia*. This was illustrated by a song during worship, 'We are the Church Together', which was led by congregation members of diverse ages, levels of ability, walks of life, and countries of origin.

Ballito, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, August 2017

The third meeting of IRAD took place in South Africa, whose peoples and churches have suffered much from the experience of apartheid—itsself a denial, rejection, and distortion of God's call to communion. Visiting historical sites such as the Mandela Capture Site and Museum underlined issues of historical memory and the yearning for truth, justice, and reconciliation. The group also listened carefully to South African Christians participating in public spheres of democratic life, such as the young student leaders in the #FeesMustFall movement working against the commodification of education. Churches

continue to hold conflicting positions in post-apartheid South Africa—some actively supporting the status quo, some passively supporting the status quo through silence and complicity, and some actively struggling against life-denying realities and for more life-giving forms of communion in church and society. This raised the critical question of what it means to be a ‘responsible’ communion within and beyond our diverse contexts, a question with which our Communion must continue to wrestle.

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, September 2018

At the fourth IRAD meeting in Vancouver, Canada, the members of IRAD were welcomed by the Musqueam people, on whose land the group met. IRAD members heard the stories of Cree and Gitksan First Nations individuals who were formerly students at residential schools, and worshipped at The Longhouse Council of Native Ministry of the United Church of Canada in Vancouver. The Canadian churches continue a journey from colonial oppression of indigenous people towards reconciliation and healing. Hearing the experiences of First Nations people marked a new encounter with the effects of denied, distorted, and rejected communion on the part of the churches themselves. This deepened IRAD’s commitment to its theological reflection on *koinonia* to reflect the social and political call, challenge, and demand of God’s gift of communion.

Hiroshima, Japan, August 2019

For its fifth meeting, IRAD gathered in the city of Hiroshima, Japan. The city’s destruction by an atomic bomb during the Second World War remains the iconic image of the human capacity to reject *koinonia*. The group was deeply moved to hear atomic bomb survivor Ms Keiko Ogura share her experience of 6 August 1945. Together, IRAD members visited the Peace Park and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and bore witness to the devastation of the bombing. IRAD also worshipped at the Anglican Church of the Resurrection, and experienced the powerful hope embodied in Hiroshima’s commitment to peace and nuclear disarmament. This experience deepened IRAD’s commitment to *koinonia* as embodying peace-making in the Church and in the world.

I. The Foundations of *Koinonia*

A. Koinonia: Gift of the Triune God

1. *Koinonia* finds its origin in the dynamism of the life of the Triune God.



It comes to us as a gift. It overflows to us from the beautiful and holy truth of God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—love and grace in relationship. The Trinity itself manifests the personal interconnectedness of perfect unity and difference in abiding and caring community. The totality of creation, which embodies complexity and beauty, was deemed ‘very good’ by God the Creator (Gen 1.31). Within the diversity of the Body of Christ, *koinonia* is both gift and calling; we are formed into a new creation as one and many (2 Cor 5.17), a creation born of the reconciling power of Christ. As disciples of Jesus, we continually grow into God’s loving *koinonia*, bearing witness together as part of something larger than ourselves.

2. As is affirmed in *God’s Reign and Our Unity*, the ‘Church is sent into the world as sign, instrument and first-fruits of a reality which comes from beyond history—the Kingdom, or reign of God’.³ The Church is ‘a people in pilgrimage’,⁴ and we are on a journey, called by Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit, into the reign of God. Thus, full recognition and reception of the gift of *koinonia* and the unity of the Church is the goal yet to be reached. However, in this pilgrimage our Communion have shared worship together and received one another’s hospitality in Christ, and have encountered common scriptural and theological touchstones on the path.
3. All Christian thinking about the Church is necessarily rooted in how Christian communities have received the *mysterium fidei*, the mystery of faith. God is the object of our wonder and the source of all life, joy, and love. All of creation speaks of the glory of God, and revelation, principally in Scripture and through the historic common traditions and earliest doctrinal formations, is primary and fundamental to how we speak of God and God’s ways with the world. God’s own being is inseparable from God’s action and self-revelation, to the extent that we see, in the pages of Scripture, how from the first moments of creation God is establishing a dynamic relationship with that creation, rich in its intended variety, declared to be very good and commanded to be fruitful.

B. Scriptural Witness to Koinonia

4. In Genesis 1 it is at God’s will and command that the world springs to life. All creation is therefore in relationship with the divine life which brought it into being. Made in the image and likeness of God, humankind shares in

3 *God’s Reign* §29

4 *Ibid.*, §35

this dynamic relationship in particular ways, as responsible stewards who are commanded to be fruitful and multiply, and as agents of the divine gift of relationship both in the creation of new life and in community (Gen 2–3). This pattern of receiving and sharing in God’s own dynamic life is fundamental to the narrative of salvation history: it is the story of creation and redemption, of salvation and sanctification.

5. The Bible reveals this pattern of God’s engagement with the world in the act of creation and throughout the story of covenant and election— themes central to the ongoing theological lives and histories of both our traditions. Since the beginning of creation, God has sought covenant relationship with creation in order to establish community. Israel’s relationship with God is always defined by covenant (Ex 19.5, 24.3ff.; Josh 24.25). Covenant signifies this close relationship without compromising the truth that the entire relationship is based on the sovereign grace of God. God enters into covenant with individuals such as Noah (Gen 9.12–16) and Abraham (Gen 17), and with the Israelites at Mount Sinai (Ex 34.28); and into a new covenant that seals restoration from exile (Jer 31.31–37). God’s covenant involves the search for justice (Mic 6.8; Isa 1.17); God’s desire is to widen this covenant to bring all nations towards eternal communion (Isa 2.2–4, 60.3). The pattern is an all-embracing one, reaffirmed in the vocation of the people of Israel to be a priestly blessing to all nations. Through them all are invited on pilgrimage to Mount Zion, where they will discover how they, too, are citizens of Jerusalem and will find their origin and fulfilment at the heart of God’s limitless creativity (Ps 87). Covenant implies the idea of communion between God and human beings.
6. Covenant emphasizes the relational and communal aspect of life, including human relationships with each other and with all creation. Specifically, human beings do not live for themselves but in mutual commitment to each other and God’s created world. Likewise, ‘covenant’ is often an appropriate description of the relationship between God and God’s people even where the word ‘covenant’ (*berit*) is not used (e.g. Jer 7.23, 24.7, 30.22). In the Old Testament there is a close connection between covenant and steadfast love (*hesed*). The Lord keeps covenant and shows steadfast love and faithfulness (1 Kings 8.23; 2 Chr 6.14; Neh 1.5, 9.32; Ps 89.28), and calls God’s people to show hospitality and care for the widow and orphan (Deut 14.29), and for the stranger who resides in the land to be loved as oneself (Lev 19.33–34). Israel’s covenanted obligations are reasserted by the prophets as the foundation of social responsibility, or, as Anglicans and Reformed have learnt to say in this dialogue say, of ‘responsible communion’.



7. In the New Testament, *koinonia* is the fundamental unity of the Body of Christ, which is not corrupted by either the diversity of its members or the variety of opinions about the organization of the Church or engagement in its life. *Koinonia* is as complex and multidimensional as the Church itself. *Koinonia* is a divine *gift*, given to the Church by the grace of the Holy Spirit; a *challenge* that the Church is called to meet day by day; and an *eschatological reality* that will be fulfilled completely in the world to come (Eph 2.19–22; Rev 7.9).
8. This multidimensional reality of *koinonia* in the New Testament is expressed in texts of Paul: it is God who calls believers to *koinonia* with his Son, Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1.9), and brings them into the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13.13), which comes from God (1 Cor 2.12). Thus, the *koinonia* that is expressed within the community of the faithful flows from the dynamic vibrancy of the divine *koinonia* into the self-giving of the Church for the good of all creation. As the three persons of the Trinity are distinct and yet exist in perfect unity, the Church is many, yet one Body.
9. However, the scriptural witness also testifies to incomplete or inadequate receptions of the gift of *koinonia*, or even its rejection. The disobedience of Adam and Eve, the sin of Cain, the arrogance of power of the Babylonians, and the unfaithfulness of the Israelites in the wilderness and in the history of Israel (constantly denounced by the prophets) all show that humanity can refuse to hear God's call and choose not to receive and live out God's irrevocable gift. Such examples are not confined to the Old Testament. The *koinonia* represented by the collection for the Jerusalem church is diminished when members of the Corinthian community claim conflicting identities, some in Paul, some in Apollos, some in Cephas, and some in Christ (1 Cor 1.12). Their exclusionary boundaries prevented people from participating at the Lord's Table (1 Cor 11.17–22).
10. However, diversity does not in itself militate against *koinonia*. Care needs to be taken when constructing identities to ensure that the fundamental gift and call of God can be shared within and beyond the Body. In the reversal of Babel in the Luke-Acts Pentecost story, *koinonia* encompasses diversity rather than limits it, and opens particular cultures to one another so that in Christ we hear one another, 'each of us, in our native language' (Acts 2.8).
11. God's gift of *koinonia*, fundamentally given in creation and renewed uniquely in Christ, is a gift which is irreversible and unbreakable at the extremes of both divine self-emptying (*kenosis*) and human suffering. In the Scriptures, the gift continues to draw people into new relationships

of transformation even when it appears to be mortally threatened. The cosmic reconciliation effected through the cross and resurrection reveals that at the very moment *koinonia* appears to be broken (e.g. Jesus's cry of dereliction, the tearing into two of the veil of the Temple, etc.), a new richness and fresh unity is being unveiled. This communion is the irreversible achievement of Jesus's cross and resurrection, confirming the permanence of God's reign into which all are invited.

12. Our two Communion testimonies testify with the Church throughout the ages that the activity of the Triune God is most perfectly revealed in the gift of creation and in the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus and in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The *incarnation* is the renewal of God's covenant in creation and the election of Israel, and the healing of Adam's fall. The Gospels are full of accounts of how this gift is shared.
13. When Jesus is born and the shepherds hurry to Bethlehem, social boundaries are redefined. Jesus pursues his ministry of *koinonia*, notably through table fellowship with the outcast, with the unclean, with women, and with those from the traditional religious establishment who come to him in faith (Mk 2.13–17; Lk 14.1; Jn 12.1–3). Christ, whose new humanity inaugurates the last days (the *eschaton*) in which the healing of all creation is promised, is the agent of a restored *koinonia* for those who come to him.
14. The resurrection is a forward-looking, eschatological event that inaugurates the new creation. Paul's phrase 'in Christ'⁵ reminds us that the believer shares in this new creation by sharing in *resurrection* (Rom 6.1–5). The Risen Lord is frequently identified with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 15.45; 2 Cor 3.17). Through sharing this *koinonia*, those who proclaim Christ's death and resurrection become one Body for worship and mission. This points to the corporate salvation, which sees the embodiment of the divine perfection of humanity in a community of faith, the Body of Christ. As sign and servant of the coming Kingdom that Body becomes sacramental, as Christ is the ultimate Sacrament through whom the full riches of God's promises for the whole of creation are known and realized.

C. Theological and Historical Witness of the Church

15. The Anglican–Orthodox dialogue report *The Church of the Triune God* emphasizes the Trinitarian grounding of this complex reality: the communion manifested in the life of the Church has the Trinitarian

⁵ 'So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!' (2 Cor 5.17).



fellowship as its basis, model, and ultimate goal. Conversely, the communion of the Persons of the Holy Trinity creates, structures, and expounds the mystery of the communion experienced in the Church. It is within and by the Church that we come to know the Trinity, and by the Trinity that we come to understand the Church because ‘the Church is full of Trinity’.⁶

16. Our Communion drink deeply from the wells of the patristic period, reminding us that the biblical record has always been received and interpreted. John Chrysostom made a clear and necessary connection between *koinonia* and the Church: ‘Ekklesia [church] means assembly. It is not a name of separation but a name of unity and concord.’⁷ Or, as Augustine put it, the whole Christ is Jesus and his Body.⁸ Our dialogue, while delighting in particular gifts and in the individual believer’s encounter with the Risen Christ, is clear that this relationship—mystical and eschatological—is fundamentally with the Church, as Christ’s Body, of which each believer is a member (Rom 12.5; 1 Cor 12.12–27; Eph 3.6, 5.23; Col 1.18, 1.24). We receive the Spirit not simply as individuals, but as members of that eschatological community which is Christ’s Body.
17. Our dialogue has therefore avoided setting creation and redemption against each. The *koinonia*, renewed and intensified through Jesus’s incarnation, cross, and resurrection, and the work of the Holy Spirit, are what gives renewed life to creation itself. John Calvin, an influential theologian in both our Communion, asserts that creation testifies to God’s manifestation of perfection ‘in the whole structure of the universe ... [God’s] essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought; but on each of his works his glory is engraven in

⁶ *The Church of the Triune God: The Cyprus Statement Agreed by the International Commission for Anglican–Orthodox Theological Dialogue 2006* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2006), www.anglicancommunion.org/media/103818/The-Church-of-the-Triune-God.pdf, §3: ‘The communion manifested in the life of the Church has the trinitarian fellowship as its basis, model and ultimate goal. Conversely, the communion of the Persons of the Holy Trinity creates, structures and expounds the mystery of the communion experienced in the Church. It is within and by the Church that we come to know the Trinity and by the Trinity we come to understand the Church because “the Church is full of Trinity” (Origen, Fragment on Psalm 23.1, PG 12, 1265).’ See *Origenus ta heuriskomena panta*, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca, 12, ed. Jacques Paul Migne (Paris: Migne, 1862), p. 1265

⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers. 1st series, vol. 12, ed. Paul A. Böer (Carleston, SC: Create Space, 2012), 1.1

⁸ ‘Totus Christus, caput et corpus’ (‘the whole Christ, head and body’): see Augustine, *On the Epistle of John*, 1.2 (www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf107.iv.iv.html), and also Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, vol. IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, part 2: Jesus Christ, the Servant as Lord, trans. G. W. Bromiley, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London: T&T Clark, 2004), p. 59: ‘This people, this community, is the form of His body in which Jesus Christ, its one heavenly Head, also exists and has therefore His earthly-historical form of existence. It is of human essence—for the Church is not of divine essence like its Head. But it does not exist in independence of Him.’

characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none ... can plead ignorance as their excuse.⁹ Creation is shot through with God's creative and redemptive glory that calls humankind to Godself.

18. The reality that *koinonia* is a gift from the Triune God to be shared and lived out together is testified to in many ecumenical agreements. As *The Church of the Triune God* reminds us, the Church is not primarily a sociological phenomenon, but a gift of God the Holy Trinity.¹⁰ This gift is mediated through Christ and the Holy Spirit, and offered to the world so that all may believe and participate in the life of the Kingdom. As *God's Reign and Our Unity* testifies, this gift, the Church, is not an end in itself, but rather a 'sign and foretaste of the kingdom' and 'the first-fruits and sign of that promise which is for all mankind'.¹¹ God's covenant in creation, irreversibly renewed and intensified in redemption, comes to us through *koinonia*, God's fundamental gift which invites people into a transformed relationship of reconciliation, justice, and love.
19. Both our Communion recognize the call, in communion, to engage with the whole of Scripture in its diverse patterns. Through prayer, preaching, biblical study, and contextual reflections, we discern the will of God. Drawing on Scripture, tradition, and theological understanding, Anglican and Reformed Churches have much in common and share clear family likenesses. However, the challenge remains to engage the differences between the two families of Churches, and thus fully receive each other as gift. The work of this dialogue is a refreshed emphasis on God's gift of *koinonia*, which is both challenge and responsibility, in order to develop a deeper shared understanding of the Church and of mission. This is the context in which to consider further theological questions.

II. *Koinonia* in the Church

20. As Anglicans and Reformed have already affirmed together in *God's Reign and Our Unity*, our common baptism draws us into *koinonia* relationships with one another. We enter an eschatological and mystical relationship with Christ through the Spirit, which is a corporate form of sanctification, through which the baptized participate in the Lord's glory. 'Baptism means, therefore, the participation of believers through the Spirit in what Christ has done for us and continues to do for us as he shares with us his communion with the Father and his mission to the world.'¹²

9 John Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. I, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1960), book 1, chapter 5.1

10 *The Church of the Triune God*, §22

11 *God's Reign*, §§15, 17

12 *Ibid.*



21. Baptism is the initiation into a life of dying and rising with Christ (Rom 6.1–11; 2 Cor 4.7–15), sharing with him his ministry as the servant in the fellowship of his sufferings and the power of his resurrection, immersed in his liberating death where our sins are buried, where the ‘old Adam’ is crucified with Christ and the power of sin is broken.¹³ Baptism is the foundation of our *koinonia* in the Church, which embodies *koinonia* and points to a fuller *koinonia* in the Kingdom of God. ‘The one baptism is therefore our common incorporation into Christ, into this common life of shared worship and mission in him. It is the visible and effective sign and seal of that gracious work of the Spirit by which the Church is constituted.’¹⁴
22. Thus, we live in the dynamic embrace of God’s eternal movement towards reconciliation and *koinonia*. In our dialogue we have found significant convergence about the fundamental ‘givenness’ of this *koinonia*, and a remarkable unity in our common view that this gift of communion—perceivable in creation, witnessed to in Scripture, and revealed fully in redemption—is an unbreakable reality which springs from the vibrancy of the divine life itself. As our two Communion had already stated together in 1984: ‘If we are as realistic about baptism as the apostolic writers are, then we are already by our baptism one body, and the continued separation of our two communions is a public denial of what we are already in Christ.’¹⁵
23. The depth of this *koinonia* is revealed in mutual sharing, mutual recognition, mutual respect, and mutual belonging, in which unique gifts of individuals and groups are recognized and honoured as part of a larger whole (1 Cor 12). *Koinonia* is not merely a form of Christian behaviour or a spiritual exercise to be practised, but a relational way of being together in Christ, in whom we are being shaped ever more fully ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Cor 3.18). Christ is the hospitable host at the table where all are fed with compassion, love, and forgiveness, and where we are at home together as family rather than strangers. The very nature of *koinonia* as communion and relationship means it is a gift to be received, not only personally but as one within the Body, a fellowship in Christ across time in the communion of saints.

A. Liturgy

24. *Koinonia* is manifest in prayer and worship together. The primary purpose

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, §61

of the Church is the worship of the Triune God, which flows out in service to the world. Its liturgies are constitutive of its life—in particular in the preaching of the Word and in the Eucharist, or Lord’s Supper. This is fundamental to the Church’s life in Christ, to its proclamation of his death and resurrection, and to its participation in the divine *koinonia* and the commission to serve.¹⁶ In the breaking of bread we participate in one Body (1 Cor 10.16–18, 11.23–29).

25. *Koinonia* is experienced uniquely when we are one Body in the praise and worship of our Lord and Creator. Our common use of the Lord’s Prayer gives expression to our common life in Christ. The liturgies of the Church give expression to the sharing of people’s joys and sufferings, and to the support and care which members of the community give each other as they worship together.
26. *Koinonia* is also found in the apostolicity of the Church, expressed liturgically in Scripture, and in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. The Church, of which our Communion is a part, is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. These are also the marks of the *koinonia* in which we are caught up as we participate in worship. As Churches of our two Communion have affirmed together on several occasions: ‘We acknowledge one another’s churches as churches belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ and truly participating in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God.’¹⁷
27. The IRAD commission was particularly impressed by how this commitment to unity is being lived out in the united churches in South Asia, in which Christians from Anglican, Reformed, Congregationalist, and Baptist backgrounds are already united for decades. The dialogue started in 2015 with a meeting in Kerala, where the commission was hosted by the Church of South India, which regards the unity of the Church as a central tenet of its vision: ‘The Church of South India (CSI) affirms that the purpose of the union is to fulfil the priestly prayer of Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Church “That they all may be one, and that the world may

16 ‘Christ makes effective among us the eternal benefits of this victory and elicits and renews our response of faith, thanksgiving and self-surrender. Christ through the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist builds up the life of the church, strengthens its fellowship and furthers its mission. The identity of the church as the body of Christ is both expressed and effectively proclaimed by its being centred in, and partaking of, his body and blood.’ Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission, *Agreed Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine 1971*, §3, www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105215/ARCIC_I_Agreed_Statement_on_Eucharistic_Doctrine.pdf

17 The Meissen Agreement (1988) section VI, §17A i, www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/The%20Meissen%20Agreement.pdf. Cf. also the Reuilly Declaration (2001), the Agreement between The Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA) (2008), and the Columba Declaration (2016)



believe that you have sent me". And the Church of South India would become an effective instrument of God's mission so there will be greater peace, closer fellowship and fuller life in the Church and a renewed commitment for the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through word and deed.¹⁸

B. Nurturing the Life of *Koinonia*

28. In the Anglican and Reformed traditions *koinonia* is expressed in consultative leadership and collective discernment in different ways. We believe that the movement of the Spirit is perceived and received in the unity and diversity of synodal and conciliar assemblies.¹⁹ As a sign and servant of God's design for the world, the Church lives into its calling and being as *koinonia*, and offers itself as a community of compassion and justice shaped by the love of Christ for and with the world. The unity and *koinonia* of the Church are celebrated and nurtured, overseen and safeguarded by the ministry of oversight (*episcopate*), embodied in different ways in our two traditions signifying the Church's catholicity and apostolicity.²⁰ Our own church structures will need careful attention—even transformation and development through self-critique and aided by insights from other parts of the Body—to ensure that they are porous to the gift of *koinonia*.
29. In Christ, we are freed to love one another (Gal 5.1). In listening well to each other, we trust that seeing from a different perspective can be a way in which God speaks to us and builds up the community of the Church. In the diversity held together within *koinonia*, faithful attention to our differences prompts us to test and explore the limits of our vision, softens our pride and brittleness, and broadens our receptivity. Such relationship requires deep humility and self-giving that is continually open to conversion and change. Our Churches need to be formed in patience and respect for one another, not rushing to close down complex discussions or to resolve every disagreement artificially. Instead they need to renew our trust in the *koinonia* which is the irreversible

18 Church of South India, 'Vision', <http://csisynod.com/vision.php>

19 World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* (Geneva, 2013), §53, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-church-towards-a-common-vision

20 The Meissen Agreement, section VI, §17A iv: 'we acknowledge that personal and collegial oversight (*episkope*) is embodied and exercised in our churches in a variety of forms, episcopal and non-episcopal, as a visible sign of the Church's unity and continuity in apostolic life, mission and ministry'

achievement of the Paschal Mystery in the power of the Holy Spirit.

30. Jesus's ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing builds new kinds of community that surpassed social, religious, and economic boundaries. In this proclamation of the Kingdom Jesus reaches out relentlessly to those considered separate. Jesus invites us to share with him in this ministry.
31. Dialogue is a vital reality within and between Christian communities that creates a beautiful space in which we both give and receive, opening us to one another and enlarging our understanding of the ways God works. Dialogue thus deepens our *koinonia*. None of us holds complete knowledge of God or truth, and we find reassurance and courage in the opportunity to partner with others in our seeking. Here are the fruits of *koinonia*: we are freed to engage each other's traditions because our posture is already one of responsiveness to the other. We seek to learn of the work of the Spirit in the other's experiences and traditions.

C. Healing and Wholeness

32. Because *koinonia* is a radical and primary gift of God, we believe it has the power to transform conflict. As disciples, we carry an abiding hope for healthy, just, and whole relationships with others, as well as an earnest desire for reconciliation and the healing of divided and broken communities. We have considered in this dialogue whether *koinonia* can contain conflict so that conflict loses its power to divide. We are learning that difference and disagreement are not in opposition to the unity and catholicity of the Church. Even extremely demanding difference and conflict have the potential to teach us more fully about *koinonia* precisely because they demand empathy, deep listening, patience, and humility, which are also necessary for relationships that deepen and grow rather than fracture. Though conflict can be destructive, the gift of *koinonia* turns us away from a posture of defence and persuasion towards one of honest listening and a desire for mutual understanding. In the redemptive work of Christ, *koinonia* disarms destructive conflict. The fullness of *koinonia* amid diversity moves us beyond our fear so as to approach others with curiosity, openness, and compassion.
33. The empathy, deep listening, patience, and humility that are gifts of *koinonia* also reflect a decidedly ethical imperative: *koinonia* requires us to attend to who has not been fully included. If God's desire is to reconcile all things and God has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5.18–19), we must be willing to embrace those with whom we are not in relationship, and those who might otherwise be unnoticed or dismissed. There is an important space for the prophetic ministry of speaking truth. At the same time, aligning with God's reconciling ministry in the world



often requires us to ask for perspective from others and to repent for the limitations of our vision and understanding, for we see only in a mirror, dimly (1 Cor 13.12).

34. Furthermore, when relationships are damaged or broken, God's reconciliatory mission insists that we never close the door to the possibility of healing. We may have been the ones to walk away, or who have been left out, and yet we repeatedly offer hospitality, which is a mark of *koinonia*. *Koinonia* encourages us to cultivate the virtue of humility, which allows us to acknowledge where we have all fallen short. Likewise, *koinonia* does not allow us to be satisfied with division, or to be comforted by a sense of self-righteousness when division occurs.
35. Division is present within and between our ecclesial bodies. Ecumenical discussion has frequently spoken of how communion is 'impaired' between churches. This IRAD dialogue, however, prefers the language of how *koinonia* has been 'variously received' in the different traditions within and between our Communion. We fail to receive the gift of *koinonia* when we do not rejoice in the fundamental and unbreakable unity we have with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Though we affirm that God has created and willed diversity, we often see variety and difference as sources of disagreement and conflict, and thus as a hindrance to *koinonia*. Sometimes, in a desire to safeguard our understanding of the Gospel, we adopt positions of defence and rigidity that leave us unable to see the face of God in our siblings in the Body of Christ. Though all are born with a capacity for full and just participation in *koinonia*, too often we limit God's family to those who look like us, sound like us, or agree with us. In all of these our reception of the gift of *koinonia* is incomplete; though the gift is given, we do not accept it in fullness.
36. The Christian life requires ethical and moral responsibility, in which demands are laid upon our thinking and behaviour, our action and restraint (Rom 14.1–4). *Koinonia* strengthens and encourages that which is life-giving and seeks to overcome that which is life-denying, both within the Christian community and beyond. *Koinonia* may be enacted as 'responsible communion', in which belonging to one another is a call both to fellowship and to particular kinds of ecclesial relationship, including mutual responsiveness, shared interpretation, accountability, and solidarity. While our responsibility is to care for *koinonia*, power and position can be abused and voices unjustly silenced. Sinful behaviour is found both within the Church and outside it, for example, abuse, marginalization, xenophobia, and dehumanization—which cannot be tolerated anywhere. The temptation of a superficial pretence of 'unity', which masks unjust, coercive, or exploitative relationships or

communities, must be exposed and resisted.

37. We recognize the seriousness and complexity of the conflicts within the community of faith. There are personal fallout, high tensions over theological, social, and ethical matters, and the experience of longing for what is seen as life-giving (Jn 10.10) being denied or swamped by others. The stakes are high. There may be occasions where temporary separation seems necessary. But since *koinonia* is a divine gift, such separation can never be final, and the door has to be left open for re-examination, forgiveness, and repentance for all.
38. And yet, before they become causes of separation, conflicts can become opportunities for even deeper engagement and relationship, the seeking of greater understanding, a continuing in prayer and worship together as we await further clarity and wisdom. We bear 'with one another in love' (Eph 4.2). The gift of *koinonia* eternally and radically reaches out, always seeking to bring people in rather than keeping them out. The table fellowship Jesus shared with Pharisees, tax collectors,²¹ and Gentiles is an example of what *koinonia* requires of us: that we come to a table where all might some day eat together. The kinship we have in Christ's *koinonia* is a recognition of our mutual interdependence, participation, solidarity, and belonging, which so grips us that we are unwilling to say in absolute terms, 'I have no need of you' (1 Cor 12.21). In fact, in *koinonia*, any 'I have no need of you' is anathema, a denial of the very being of God who wills reconciliation and calls us into friendship, despite our finitude and fallenness. The reconciling presence of the love of God is the very nature and mission of God, because the Triune God is a *koinonia* of love.
39. Both our Communion celebrate *koinonia* as formational in its richness, in the embrace of its welcome, and in the joy of its abundance. The power of *koinonia*—both the experience and the absence of it—can cultivate an even greater longing for its fulfilment. We are formed and moulded by *koinonia*, such that our hope for God's reign itself becomes *koinonia*-oriented. Anything less than the fullness of relationship and reconciliation is simply incomplete. When we do not receive one another in *koinonia*, we experience the emptiness and loss as a wound, both individually and collectively. When we are divided from one another, we feel the pain of being wrenched apart from that to which we are to be connected. The maiming of the Body of Christ is sinful. A festering injury to the Body can be healed only with restoration, repentance, reconciliation, and the return of self-giving love, the ministry of Christ himself. Though some wounds run so deep as to be unhealable in a human lifetime, we do not

²¹ Lk 19.1–10



give up hope. We pray and work for the day when *koinonia* will be fully received as God desires, when the Church has grown into the full stature of Christ (Eph 4.13), and Christ will be all in all (Eph 1.23).

III. *Koinonia* in Mission

A. *Koinonia* for God's World

40. *God's Reign and Our Unity* described the Church 'as a pilgrim people called to a journey whose goal is nothing less than God's blessed Kingdom embracing all nations and all creation, a sign, instrument and foretaste of God's purpose "to sum up all things with Christ as head" (Eph 1.10). It is only in this missionary and eschatological perspective that the question of unity is rightly seen.'²² The gift of *koinonia* given by God in Christ empowers God's people to be a community of faith, hope, and love. In baptism Christians are grafted into the *koinonia* of the Body of Christ, who is the 'firstborn of all creation', 'through him and for him' everything has been created (Col 1.15-16). And as a result, Christians are called to lives shaped by the invitation to and challenge of mission (Mt 28.16-20). The implications of *koinonia* are life-changing and profound; in *koinonia*, it is impossible to ignore responsibility to and for one other. This 'responsible communion' points to the interconnection and interrelatedness of all God's creation, in which all have a part to play.
41. The Christian commitment to justice and peace comes from the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Sin is judged and found wanting, and the new horizon of hope is opened up through our repentance and faith. Human community can be reshaped by the bonds of love. Barriers of race, class, and gender will be crossed. There is good news for the poor, freedom for the prisoners, sight for the blind, and liberty for those who have been oppressed (Lk 4.18). To receive the gift of *koinonia* prompts proclamation in life and words of the love, hospitality, reconciliation, and justice that characterize the Triune God, as the Church is sent out without reserve to share in God's mission of reconciliation, which extends to all people and all of creation.
42. *Koinonia* is received and experienced in the worshipping and witnessing life of the Church in its manifold forms and expressions. This gift is for the sake of the whole world. The Church is sign and servant of missional *koinonia*, the missional life of God in the power of the Holy Spirit to celebrate life and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces. God summons the Church to participate in reconciliation, justice, healing, and peace for a wounded and divided creation. As a missional people, the

²² *God's Reign*, §14

Church seeks the transformation of the world by proclaiming God's loving presence, witnessing to God's justice and reconciliation, and bringing new and abundant life.

B. Living out the Missional *Koinonia*

Opening to Radical Hospitality

43. In embracing this *koinonia* the missional community will open itself to radical hospitality. Hospitality—extended and received—is a pattern of *koinonia* in the life and teaching of Christ himself (Lk 11.37–42, 19.1–10; Jn 12.1–2). This is a way of life into which Christians are drawn and from which we are sent. Following the example of Jesus, missional communities will be characterized by openness to receiving the neighbour, the stranger, and those who are frequently excluded by church and wider society. In seeing the world from the perspective of the margins and acting in solidarity with them, the missional community has a chance to become a witness to the *koinonia* that surpasses the divisions of a world torn apart by division, conflict, and exploitation.
44. God's hospitality extends beyond humanity to all creation (Ps 24.1). The Gospel is good news for the whole of creation and every aspect of life and society. *Koinonia* is calling as well as gift, summoning us to nurture the interconnectedness of our common home: a gift meant for the care and well-being of all (Gen 1; Ps 8). Living out God's *koinonia* precludes the commodification and exploitation of all creation. Creation glorifies the Creator, who is the author of this web of *koinonia* between and among humanity, the natural world, and the whole creation.

Embodying Justice

45. The *koinonia* that the living God gives to the Church likewise embodies the justice and righteousness of God.²³ Life in *koinonia* manifests the interdependence of all spheres of human experience, including the spiritual and the political, the personal and the public, the domestic and the civic. God's *koinonia* is just, and human injustice is a denial, distortion, and rejection of *koinonia*. It is an imperative to defend and uphold just relationships for the well-being of humanity and all of creation.

23 In the Accra Confession (2004) the WCRC confessed: 'We believe that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Gen 9.8–12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Is 55.1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners and calls us to put justice for the "least of these" (Mt 25.40) at the centre of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hos 2.18ff)' (\$20)



46. The call of *koinonia* is to act justly (Mic 6.8). Missional *koinonia* entails courageous participation in life-affirming action in and for humanity and all of creation. Justice is served through discerning God's will in creation and God's intention for the world. This necessitates paying careful attention to contextual nuance and the specificity of culture and place. *Koinonia* is not abstract but is experienced in particular lives and situations as Christ's call is heard afresh in every age.
47. *Koinonia* compels us to see and embrace those who are most in need (Mt 25.40). Within societies, there are multiple 'centres' of power and many who are pushed to 'margins'. Those in the centres often have their rights, freedoms, and individuality affirmed and respected, while others are excluded from justice and dignity. Threats to life are particularly acute for those on the margins. That any person or community would be relegated to margins is itself an indication that *koinonia* is distorted and has yet to be fully received.
48. Yet *koinonia* is not an expression of charity from the powerful to the powerless. It is a manifestation of communion with God, humanity, and all of creation. In contrast to prevailing social patterns, in life together in *koinonia* the experiences and perspectives of people on the margins are valued, lifted up, and considered transformational for the whole. This is a profoundly important theological insight; it is not simply an incorporation of marginalized persons into existing systems and structures. Those at the margins become witnessing agents of life-transforming *koinonia*.²⁴

Affirming Life

49. *Koinonia* is especially tangible in communities that open themselves to participating in God's life-giving mission together. As churches acknowledge their frailty, woundedness, brokenness, fear, and pain, they open themselves to hear more fully what God is saying. Often our sisters and brothers in Christ are the ones who prompt us to repentance and deeper faithfulness, leading us into healing so that our life in mission is renewed.
50. God also speaks to the Church from voices outside its own structures in the midst of national and global upheavals. At the same time, the temptation for the Church to covet, exercise, and align itself with life-

24 We gratefully receive the language of the 'mission from the margins' from the chapter 'Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins' in Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva, 2012), §§36–54, https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes/@@download/file/Together_towards_Life.pdf

denying power and influence can raise serious questions about the integrity of ecclesial critique of power systems. Moreover, the ability of the Church to speak truth to power can be compromised.

51. Life-denying socio-economic and religio-political forces challenge the Church to engage in cathartic processes of repentance, remoulding, and transformation. Through *koinonia* Christians participate in a communion of wounded and broken people who respond to God's gift of grace. As sign and servant of *koinonia* the Church offers ministries of healing even as it recognizes its own woundedness and vulnerability (2 Cor 12.9).
52. Even so, the Church's reception and subsequent offering of *koinonia* to the wider world has been and continues to be compromised by hypocrisy as we fail to participate faithfully in the ministry of Jesus. For many this is a scandal. As sign and servant of God's *koinonia* Christians are called for the good of the Church and the world to transcend the walls we build around ourselves. The call to repent and the need to deepen commitment to missional *koinonia* is thus imperative as a summons to truth. Dialogue leads to renewal in the *missio Dei*,²⁵ as together with Christ we bear witness to truth (Jn 18.37).
53. It is critical for mission that the Church finds ways to attend to conflict without allowing it continually to divide. The Church is called to demonstrate in meaningful and practical ways that differences in contextual identity and lived experience must not compromise the affirmation and reception of God's gift, *koinonia*. Missional *koinonia* transcends false and life-restricting barriers and emphasizes the oneness of God's gift, which is a foretaste of the abundant life promised for all creation.

C. Crossing to the Other Side

54. In every time and place missional *koinonia* must be expressed in relevant and contextual ways as part of the Church's faith, hope, and love. Missional communities are challenged to move beyond mere maintenance of their structures and institutions and to engage together in life-giving ministry and mission, so that the world may believe (Jn 17.21). Entering more deeply into *koinonia* together compels followers of Jesus into courageous missional engagement that crosses dangerous frontiers with moving feet, open minds, and growing hearts, affirming that we are interconnected and one in the Body of Christ, entrusted with

²⁵ *Missio Dei* literally 'the mission of God', captures the sense that before any arrogation by the Church of its driving purpose, it needs to own that the very being and mission of the Church is subservient to God's mission—the sending of the Son, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Cf. World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, I.A.1



the precious treasure of the Gospel.

55. The Gospel of Mark speaks of Jesus calming the storm and crossing the Sea of Galilee to the other side (4.35–5.21). This faith-driven encounter has many lessons from which we may learn. Entering into *koinonia* with Jesus, walking in the way of the cross, means repeatedly ‘going over to the other side’, wherever that may be. We encounter our own vulnerability and fragility (Heb 13.12–13) and discover in *koinonia* the source of our own healing. Mission goes beyond the physical healing of wounds and seeks reconciliation and restoration of fullness of life in the faith, hope, and love that one day all will share the same table.
56. This missional journey is frightening and destabilizing, and takes the disciples into new, unfamiliar environments across the sea where they encounter people who are demonized, stigmatized, and marginalized. But in Jesus’s gift of peace, their faith is renewed, and they recognize the unrestricted capacity of his power. The gift of faith stirred up and renewed in the disciples gives them the confidence to enter the unknown and witness Christ’s liberation and healing of those held captive by death. In this way, *koinonia* is realized in God’s world.

IV. Summary of Our Findings for Use in Our Two Communion

A. The Good News of *Koinonia*: A Message of Hope to a World Torn Apart by Division, Conflict, and Exploitation

57. Anglicans and Reformed assert strongly that *koinonia* is a gift of God for the whole of creation. It is a participation in the divine life, through which we encounter the eschatological gift of the new creation even in a world torn apart by division, conflict, and exploitation.
58. This *koinonia* is God’s gift uniquely renewed in Jesus Christ. The Church, as the Body of Christ, is called in a particular way to be sign and servant of the Kingdom of God. Together, our Communion celebrate the goodness of creation and God’s gift of salvation which is offered to the whole world.
59. Together our Communion believe that this abundant, life-giving *koinonia* inspires a sense of gratitude in the life of our Churches. Even in situations of conflict, great danger, marginalization, secularization, or persecution, the irrevocable gift of *koinonia* inspires joyful confidence in all the churches as they seek to share the relational abundance of Christ with those around them.

B. *Koinonia*: A Gift and a Calling for the Whole Church

60. The gift of *koinonia* has strong implications for the Church's life and health. Despite the real pain of historical separation and manifold disagreement, the nature of *koinonia* as gift was never ours to possess alone nor to deny to one another. There are profound implications for how we speak of one another, and of our Churches' sharing in the same *koinonia*. Thanks to the abundance of God's gift, it is inappropriate and inaccurate to speak of having been 'in or out' of communion with one other.
61. In receiving the divine gift we recognize God's calling to testify to the gift of *koinonia* in the life of the Church, to share the gift of *koinonia* in our mission to the world. The sharing of this gift is an act of proclamation and mission, obeying the Lord's call to make new disciples. Our two Communion also witness to the current incompleteness of the Church's life. This is sometimes due to our partial reception of the divine gift itself. It is also because the whole truth belongs to the whole Church, so while our Communion are united in the fundamentals of the Gospel, each will need to be open to insights which emerge from the other for the integrity of the whole Body of Christ. Our Communion testify together that Christian communities are frequently called to witness to the Lord's power revealed in human frailty, vulnerability, and weakness. Thus we are to be people of reconciliation, healing, and renewal.

C. *Koinonia*: A Gift and a Calling for the Anglican Communion and the World Communion of Reformed Churches

62. Together our Communion affirm that *koinonia* summons all Christians to work wholeheartedly for the flourishing and protection of the whole of creation. As we celebrate life in its diversity, it is central to the Church's vocation to resist and transform all life-denying forces—social, cultural, economic, environmental—and to promote reconciliation and healing to a wounded and divided world.
63. In *God's Reign and Our Unity* our two Communion have agreed that:

Anglican and Reformed Churches seek together ways in which all forms of discrimination which devalue persons may be eliminated. As a step in this direction we urge our Churches around the world:

- a. to work together to overcome those barriers which exist between privileged and under-privileged, black and white, male and female;



b. to share their human, spiritual and material resources with those in need.²⁶

In this report we want to reaffirm this commitment and call upon our two Communion to base their cooperation upon the Lund Principle that the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches has already formulated in 1952: 'Churches ... should ... act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.'²⁷

D. The *Koinonia* between Anglicans and Reformed

64. In *God's Reign and Our Unity* (1984) our two Communion already have agreed on the following:

- If we are as realistic about baptism as the apostolic writers, then we are already by our baptism one body, and the continued separation of our two Communion is a public denial of what we are already in Christ. Moreover, there are consequences beyond these ecclesiastical ones. In the one man Jesus we see our common humanity taken up, redeemed and given back to us so that we can share it together—Jew and Gentile, man and woman, slave and free, rich and poor, white and black. Fidelity to our baptism commits us to affirm in word and practice the full, equal and God-given humanity of every person, to embody that affirmation in our public and political life, and to oppose and resist all that denies this shared humanity.²⁸

65. In reaffirming this statement of faith, we encourage our two Communion publicly and consciously to recommit to deepening that unity we already share in the *koinonia* given in creation and uniquely renewed in Christ. Such recommitment has practical implications for how we visibly work together in mission for the life of the world. Since *God's Reign and Our Unity* a number of local theological agreements have been achieved by member Churches of our two Communion. Alongside the lived experiences of our united member churches, particularly in India, the Meissen and Reuilly agreements are perhaps the most notable of these. This commission believes that such agreements might be studied and acknowledged at an International level as statements which belong

²⁶ *God's Reign*, Recommendation 8

²⁷ *Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, Sweden: August 15–28, 1952* (Faith and Order Commission, 1952), p. 6

²⁸ *God's Reign*, §61

to both Communion, as encouragement and further stimulus on the journey towards full, visible unity.

Appendices

Even as 'communion' has been a topic of ecumenical significance in recent decades, the question of what it means to be a communion has also been of particular importance within the Anglican Communion and the WCRC. Discerning how to live faithfully as communions that wrestle internally with conflict and division, as well as how to deepen *koinonia* within and between our traditions, have been driving forces behind this dialogue. These appendices offer context out of which our Communion come to these conversations.

Appendix 1: Anglican Developments

66. Since the mid-1980s the Anglican Communion has seen a numerical growth. It has almost doubled in size, from 47 million Anglicans in 1980 to 86 million Anglicans worldwide in 2016. It is worth noting that the increase in Anglicans has been uneven, with remarkable growth in the global South and serious decline in the global North. Consequently, the number of provincial Churches has increased during this period, from twenty-eight to forty. Just as global Christianity has witnessed a shift of the centres of gravity from the North to the South, so has global Anglicanism in terms of both numbers and influence. This period has also seen a rise in local leadership in the provincial Churches. This shift is reflected in the numbers of provinces from the global South that are represented at the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), and the Primates' Meeting.
67. Another significant demographic development in this period is associated with ongoing patterns of global migration. Migration within provincial Churches and migration between provincial Churches from different parts of the world have given the Anglican Communion a rich and diverse experience of multiculturalism locally as well as globally.
68. A significant example of such growth and maturity is the Communion's self-understanding in terms of mission. A vital rallying point for mission across the Anglican Communion has been the *Five Marks of Mission*, first developed by the ACC in 1984. The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement on mission which expresses the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic/integral mission:
 - To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom



- To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers
 - To respond to human need by loving service
 - To transform unjust structures of society, challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation
 - To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth
69. The *Five Marks of Mission* need to be understood as dynamic and should be subjected to review from time to time. While Anglicans may experience disagreement in many areas, the Five Marks have won wide acceptance across the Communion. The strength of these Marks is that they link doctrine with justice and peace and hence they say something fresh.

Appendix 2: Reformed Developments

70. Until 2010, the Churches of the Reformed tradition (including Presbyterian, Congregational, Waldensian, other First Reformation, United, and Uniting traditions) were organized in two international confessional groupings, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (itself a union in 1970 of the Alliance of Reformed Churches and the International Congregational Council) headquartered in Geneva; and the Reformed Ecumenical Council with headquarters in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. These bodies merged in 2010 to become the WCRC.
71. The WCRC now consists of 233 member churches (uniting churches of the Waldensian, Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational and United and Uniting traditions) in 107 countries, and more than 100 million members. Its central office is in Hannover, Germany. The WCRC describes its mission as ‘called to communion, committed to justice’.
72. The current WCRC discourse on communion was shaped by the debates on racial segregation in South Africa and on economic injustice. In 1982, the General Council of the (then) World Alliance declared a *status confessionis* on apartheid—declaring apartheid sinful and its theological justification heresy. Two member churches were suspended. In 2004, the World Alliance adopted the Accra Confession, which rejected ‘the current world economic order imposed by global neoliberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God’s covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life’ and called for ‘covenanting for justice’. Both debates were guided by the example of the Barmen Declaration of

1934 that had responded to the heresies of the Nazi state in Germany in the form of a confession, which appealed to the Evangelical (Protestant) churches of Germany to stand firm against Christian accommodation to National Socialism.

73. Several members of the WCRC have adopted the Confession of Belhar as a central guideline for their understanding of Communion. The Confession was adopted by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa (today the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa) in 1986. In the heydays of apartheid the Belhar Confession was a commitment to the belief that unity is ‘both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ’, and therefore rejected any understanding of Christianity that absolutized ‘either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation’.
74. When the World Alliance and the Reformed Ecumenical Council came together as the WCRC at the General Council in Grand Rapids in 2010, they confessed that the unity of the new Communion was based on the oneness in Christ, which had to be received as a gift that had to be proven in working through the ‘obstacles in communication’: language barriers, dominance, hierarchies, lack of engaging the grassroots level; but also ‘different theological and hermeneutical perspectives’.

Appendix 3: Anglican–Reformed Conversations

75. While the Reformation movement initiated in Switzerland by John Calvin predates the English Reformation, the two traditions were in close contact and cooperation. Though the ecclesiastical order proposed by Calvin was not adopted by the Church of England, his theology was highly influential. Early leaders such as Calvin and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer corresponded with one another. Reformed refugees were welcomed in England, including their ordained ministers, while at other times English refugees were welcomed in Calvin’s Geneva. In short, the relationship between British Anglicans and European Reformed Christians was good. Later, the relationships between Anglican and wider Reformed traditions became strained in the British Isles. Ecclesiology, structures of ministry, and liturgy were at the heart of the matter. This division led to the English Civil War with the abolition of the Book of Common Prayer in 1645, the abolition of episcopacy in 1646, the execution of King Charles I in 1649, and the adoption of a Presbyterian polity throughout the Interregnum period. With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, within an almost Anglican counter-reformation movement, the inheritors of Calvin’s



tradition were persecuted in England. From the seventeenth century, this significant break between Anglican and Reformed traditions was exported around the world.

76. The eighteenth century brought change. Anglican and Reformed Churches have since then worked together in various societies and councils all over the world. In some places, they have united with other Churches, such as in the CSI (1947) and the Church of North India (1970), and elsewhere entered into a covenant (Wales). In 1981 the Anglican Communion and the (then) World Alliance of Reformed Churches gathered for formal dialogue. This international commission discussed obstacles to union between the two traditions, and its findings were published the report *God's Reign and Our Unity* (1984). This report did not use the concept *koinonia*, but the Trinitarian understanding of the nature of the Church is clear, and the implications of this ecclesiology point towards an understanding that all baptized share a degree of communion. After the publication of the report, the Anglican Communion and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches had a break in their ongoing bilateral dialogue. However, this does not imply that our two traditions have been out of communion or *koinonia* during the period from 1984 to the convening of this commission. In the light of the givenness of *koinonia*, the 'old' language of being 'in' or 'out' of communion loses its power and is no longer valid. Our report aims to illustrate this more fully.
77. Over recent years, local conversations have happened in many places, including the Meissen Declaration (1991),²⁹ the bilateral agreement between the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA) (2008), *Unity, Identity, and Mission* (2012–15),³⁰ and *Called to Unity in Mission* (2016).³¹ The restoration of a formal dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the (now) WCRC is welcomed and must consider the developments that have happened in both world communions, as well as in the world at large, since 1984.
78. The formation of the CSI on 27 September 1947 is considered to be the beginning of the reunification of the fragmented Body of Christ. It brought together four major ecclesiastical traditions—Anglican, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist—to form a united Church, which principally adopted governing and theological elements from all of them. The Church stands as a witness to *koinonia* in the fragmented

29 Between the Church of England, the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the German Democratic Republic, and the Evangelical Church in Germany.

30 Between the Church of England and the United Reformed Church, England.

31 Between the Anglican Church of Canada and the United Church of Canada.

society of India, where people are divided in the name of creed, caste, race, and region. Since the Anglican Communion and the WCRC are both in full communion with the CSI, both the Anglicans and Reformed members of the dialogue were 'at home' in India.



The Relevance of Ecumenical Dialogues in Times of Crisis: An Introduction to *Called to God's Mission: Report of the International Dialogue Between Representatives of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Representatives of the Pentecostal World Fellowship*

Setri Nyomi

The year 2020 has been a very strange year. In many spheres of life, the known ways of engaging in life were challenged as people and nations all over the world struggled to make sense of the uncertainties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. In many countries, the doors of church buildings were closed to corporate worship for many weeks, and some for months. How do we engage in God's mission in times such as this? Would different Christian world communions/church families engage in God's mission in similar fashion or there would be marked differences? Even before the COVID-19 event invaded our lives, the world has experienced many challenges and changes. Do these affect the views of the different Christian world communions on God's mission in similar ways?

Within the Ecumenical movement, there are those voices that would criticize spending energy on dialogues between or among church families when there are urgent justice issues to address to lead towards transformation in the world. There are also those who would see the church dividing issues around which bilateral theological dialogues have usually taken place in the past as issues important to only the global north because the problems were largely created there (many of them specifically in Europe). These critical views are important in any ecumenical work today as they push any engagement in dialogue to be question their relevance. When the world goes through a phenomenon such as the COVID-19 pandemic, we have even more reason to ensure what is relevant to our times.

Called to God's Mission

The third in the series of dialogues between the Reformed and Classical Pentecostals took place from 2014 to 2020 and it was focused on the topic "Called to God's Mission." While the theme was decided long before COVID-19, the final drafting took place in March 2020, when COVID-19 was gathering momentum around the world. It was probably the last meeting hosted by the WCRC in Hannover before international travel came to a halt for several weeks.

The final report came out on Easter 2020 when many churches in the world were under “lockdown.” The question of how the two families of churches engage in God’s mission even in changing times therefore took on different dimensions in meaning.

The report of the dialogue covers the four subheadings under which the dialogue took place:

1. Mission and Salvation
2. The Holy Spirit and Mission
3. Mission and the Unity of the Church
4. Mission and Eschatology

Mission and Salvation

The Mission and Salvation section responds to the question “How does our understanding of the nature and scope of salvation influence the way we think about and practice mission?” Reformed and Pentecostals could agree together on a number of key affirmations ranging from the time-tested statement on what constitutes salvation to the fact that salvation cannot be understood merely in terms of only “this worldly” or only in terms of “other worldly” terms or only in “future terms.” Thus, the report affirms that “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.”

At the same time the paper reports that “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.” While there are common affirmations, the report also points to some nuance and emphasizes differences in how Reformed and Pentecostals talk about salvation. For example, the Reformed emphasize the closeness of justification to justice while Pentecostals use “holistic salvation” to include paying attention to the “least of these” or the less privileged in society.

The Holy Spirit and Mission

The Holy Spirit and Mission section addresses the question “How do we view the issue of power and the role of the Holy Spirit when we speak about mission?”



Both the Reformed and Pentecostals affirm that any view of the work of the Holy Spirit must be understood within the context of the Holy Spirit. It is in this sense that those who engage in God's mission experience the giftings and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in engaging in God's mission.

Here again, the report points out some differences in emphases. This statement in Point 43 of the report illustrates the heart of the differences: "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." The report also points out that both traditions have made mistakes in the past in their engagement in mission, including views of power that entangled some missionaries with colonial powers.

Mission and the Unity of the Church

In the third section, Mission and the Unity of the Church, the guiding question is "In what way does the unity of the church impact the nature and effectiveness of mission?" Both traditions affirm how doing mission in disunited ways is a scandal for a people who are called to be united in our proclamation of the Word of God. Therefore, it points towards the value of working together in God's mission. The effectiveness of Christians in carrying out our common task of bearing the Good News to all is enhanced when we can respond to the gift and the calling of Christian unity even in our diversity.

Mission and Eschatology

The section on Mission and Eschatology considered the question "How do our views of eschatology affect our practice of mission?" The report articulates the variety of views on how reflections on the end of history impact our engagement in mission among both Pentecostals and the Reformed and came to the conclusion that as followers of Christ we share one hope, and we pray together in this hope: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So while we live waiting for God's surprises, our mission includes participating with joy and thanksgiving in mission that reflect signs of the Kingdom—the sick are healed, captives are freed (Luke 11:12), and the Good News is preached to the poor (Luke 4:18-19).

The Way Forward

The main sections of this report reflect the affirmations that both families can make together, some nuanced differences that one can glean, and the common grounds in both church families.

The Way Forward section provides some helpful recommendations on what churches in both families can do with this report—building on the outcomes to strengthen relationships in local areas. These are the commitments that the participants in the dialogue deem possible for both Christian world communions. They come from a conviction that outcomes of dialogues should not simply remain entombed in documents; rather, they should be the basis of visible actions to provide flesh to the commitment to God’s mission in ways that affirm our unity in Christ.

The dialogue participants acknowledge that we cannot possibly do everything in a six-year dialogue. Therefore, there is unfinished business. There are issues that we simply were not able to discuss fully. The four issues identified under “Issues for Further Agreement” are:

- 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.

Some of these were touched on in the report, but not addressed fully. It is hoped that one day these discussions would take place to bring further clarity to the importance of Reformed and Pentecostals in dialogue.

The Relationship between Pentecostals and Reformed

The relationship between Reformed and Pentecostals before the three series of dialogues that have been embarked upon could be described as being characterized by “social distancing,” where Pentecostals and Reformed felt they must be distanced from one another to maintain their spiritual health. This third dialogue in the series demonstrated much progress. Therefore, while social distancing has become the new normal as a result of COVID-19, this report demonstrates that in this series the Reformed and Pentecostals



can embrace one another, engage in mission together, and move beyond any social distancing. In commitment to God's mission, things the Reformed and Pentecostals can affirm together are much more than the ones in which we can point to differences. Even the differences that are pointed out have been seen as not church-dividing in nature.

We cannot write away the few differences between both church families too quickly; there remain areas of difference in which further work is necessary. In some areas, we can simply agree to disagree. However, we can be thankful to God for the areas of common agreement and strengthen our working together in God's mission.

The Relevance of the Reformed-Pentecostal Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century

Does this report demonstrate the relevance of the Reformed-Pentecostal dialogue to the twenty-first century? Even if the only measuring rod we use is how it attends to issues of justice and societal transformation, the answer to this question is affirmative. The emphasis on justice being an integral part of mission and the specific inclusion of justice in each section of the report demonstrate clearly that in this dialogue both families affirm the importance of these issues to mission. Herein lies its significance to the twenty-first century.

In addition, the report reflects the fact that the relevance is not simply from the global north perspective. The Pentecostalist influence in the global south is very strong. The report will therefore be seen in the global south as a helpful document with which we can navigate the sometimes turbulent waters of Reformed-Pentecostal relationships.

To conclude, I return to another image from the COVID-19 era. The two families of churches need to respond to the question of how can we "go and make disciples" or engage in the mission of transformation together when the slogan is "stay at home and be socially distanced." If "stay at home" means rigidly staying within the comfort zone of each of our families and not wanting to interact with one another, this report points to a healthier option of embracing one another as Reformed and Pentecostals for the sake of being more effective in the *Missio Dei*.

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

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. ¹⁷Indeed, 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.
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 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

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>.

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
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

² WCRC JDDJ Association §16.

³ WCRC JDDJ Association §17.

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.



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 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

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.

understanding of our calling into mission and our common witnessing.

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 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

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>.

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

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 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

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.

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



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. 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 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 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.

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.
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 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 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 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

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.

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



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 forms and rituals. There are churches that appear to be freewheeling, 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).

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; 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 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 (*apocalypsis*) 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

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

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

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 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. 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.
- 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.

Will “Justification and Sanctification” Preach? Homiletical Offerings from *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice*

HyeRan Kim-Cragg

Introduction

The well of Christian doctrines such as justification and sanctification is deep and old. But this doctrinal well has never been static or unchanging. Its purpose and role has been evolving as it seeks to provide the living water to quench the thirst of the faithful.

In every era reflecting concrete contexts and addressing the real lives of diverse people and communities, Christians doctrines have served as a body of teachings that model the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

Despite their significance, Christian doctrines have been underappreciated and underutilized in preaching. As a result, these doctrines seem distant to the daily lives of the faithful. They often fail to make a direct impact on the life of Christians in general and the Reformed family in particular. This represents a loss of a theological and intellectual resource that could help Christians in the struggle to address issues of dehumanization, division, and discrimination.

In this regard, engaging the ecumenical dialogue examining such central doctrines as justification and sanctification captured in the Report of the Fourth Phase of Catholic-Reformed International Dialogue, *Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice* (“the report” when referred to hereafter), may potentially bear a life-giving fruit and help rekindle the role of doctrine in Christian life. The report emphasizes the following message: It is dialogue and not division, and ecumenism and not parochialism that God requires of us.

The following reflection will highlight some key points of the dialogue that relate to the doctrine of justification and sanctification in tandem and then suggest sermon ideas and illustrations.

A close relationship between Justification and Justice

The report (§7) states:



"In Jesus Christ the "setting right" which is accomplished in God's work of justification calls and commits the justified to the work of justice in the wider world."

Justification by faith and grace is partly about one's status before God. To paraphrase the Barmen Declaration, knowing that we are justified before God through Jesus Christ grants to one a sense of dignity and purpose that replaces the sinful inclination to judge others. The report (§14) acknowledges the doctrine of justification as the gift of Protestantism:

"The Reformed tradition developed its understanding of justification initially in the 16th century, in agreement with Martin Luther's emphasis that Christ alone is our righteousness, which we receive by faith alone and not through any works of our own. John Calvin even called justification "the main hinge on which religion turns."

The report (§56) further notes a close relationship between justification and justice:

*"The very similarity between the words "justification" and "justice" in almost all languages invites Christians to reflect upon whether and how the realities they express are related. The New Testament makes use of the very same word—*dikaïosynē*—to express both the quality of upright behavior and the state of being freed from sin through the mercy of God."¹*

How will "justification" preach?

Sermon idea: The COVID-19 era has exposed economic injustice, social alienation, political oppression, racism, sexism, and abuse of the environment. Christians are called to preach uncompromising commitment to ensure the innate and sacred dignity of all persons, creation and the land, with an appreciation of the rich array of differences in the human and created

¹ The noun *dikaïosynē* can be translated either as "justice" or as "righteousness." In the New Testament it can express simply the quality of upright behavior, as in the verse "unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). A central theme of Pauline theology, however, is to employ this word in his reflection about the relation between faith and the works of the law: "But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe" (Romans 3:21-22). For its part, the noun "justification," in today's vernacular languages, refers either to God's activity of reconciling sinners to himself or to the experience of being reconciled to God. Paul uses this verb (*dikaïûn*) to express God's gracious saving action in Christ: "Therefore since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

experience. It is imperative that preaching denounces forces which demean, distort, and dehumanize the sacred dignity of persons and creation and that nurtures our capacity to approach the divine. This role of preaching is in line with the core Gospel message of justice. The sermon can illuminate this inseparable connection.

A sermon illustration example: Suppose your child were to ask you, “Dad, Mom, what do I have to do to be your child?” Is there some law, some deed, some program you could propose? Perhaps the first thing you would have to do would be to weep that the question could ever be raised. But what could you say? What do you have to do to be my child? “Nothing. Just listen. Believe me. You are my child, I love you, I will never let you go.”²

Preaching doctrines or doctrinal preaching need not be dry and distant. The excerpt above is from a sermon of Gerhard Forde. It shows how preaching justification can be animated and accessible. The preaching is based on Romans 3: 28: “For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law” (NRSV). This rather abstract verse from the letter to Romans conjures an intimate conversation between a child and a parent.

Suggested biblical texts for preaching justification: Along with the obvious texts in Romans (5: 18-21), Luke 4 :18-19 (this text can be connected with justification, justice, and jubilee), Leviticus 25 (proclaiming the God of Jubilee who redeems all in bondage) and texts that deal with “the Kingdom/realm of God” in all four Gospels may be used for preaching justification.

Justification and Sanctification as “Double Grace”

Justification in a nutshell means “acceptance, belonging, recognition, and inclusion” owned and claimed by God despite who we are.³ There is no one no system or power that can take that God-given claim about one’s dignity away. Out of this unconditional love of God can arise a new inner identity that is not dependent on acceptance by the dominant culture. No matter what the society normalizes, or how it puts one down, this inner identity can enable one to live with dignity and purpose. With this new identity comes a sense of hope for a different future. However, this realization of justification does not remove

2 Gerhard Forde, *The Captivation of the Will*, cited by James Childs, Jr., “Doctrines and Biblical Texts,” in Paul S. Wilson, ed., *The New Interpreter’s Handbook of Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008), 452.

3 Sang Hyun Lee, *From a Liminal Place: An Asian American Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 101.



the pain of marginalization and oppression. To remove marginalization and oppression, one must work painstakingly and diligently practice a new kind of life. That is where the doctrine of sanctification comes to the fore. According to John Calvin, the report (§17) cites:

“Christ has given himself not only to deliver us from sin and death and restore us to favor with God, but also to regenerate us by his Spirit, so that we may live a new life of love and righteousness.⁴ In virtue of our union with Christ through faith we therefore have received a twofold benefit (duplex gratia), namely, justification and sanctification.”

How will “sanctification” preach?

Sermon idea: We are forgiven by the grace of God but we are still sinful. The report (§19) captures this human fallibility well:

“Though the power of sin is broken, we have still to pray for forgiveness for the sins that we daily commit as those who are both righteous and sinful (simul iustus et peccator). We have constantly to die (mortificatio) to sin in order that we may live (vivificatio) to God in the power of the risen Christ” (cf. Romans 6:11).

Justification enables the innate goodness of people. Sanctification affirms that this goodness requires constant practice if one is to resemble Jesus Christ. In short, we are redeemed yet we are still in need of redemption, and we must practice righteousness. That is why sanctification as the attainment of Christlike-ness requires a daily discipline and constant dedication. The doctrine of sanctification affirms the cherished value of human dignity and calls for the dismantling of the systematic oppression that deprives us of human goodness.⁵ The sanctification is a lifelong process and is never complete. We are “becoming” like Christ.

A sermon illustration example: When I was a child, I often had a toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother, she would give me something that would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother—at least not until the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not go was this: I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she

4 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.3.1., 592-93.

5 HyeRan Kim-Cragg, “What Are People For? In Christian Life, Discipleship, and Ministry,” in Don Schweitzer, Robert C. Fennell, and Michael Bourgeois, eds., *The Theology of The United Church of Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2019), 206-207.

would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist the next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from my pain, but I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists; I knew they would start fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. Our Lord is like the dentists. Dozens of people go to him to be cured of some particular sin. Well, he will cure it all right, but he will not stop there. That may be all you asked; but if you once call him in, he will give you the full treatment.⁶

C. S. Lewis poignantly illustrates the teaching of sanctification with the analogy of Christ as dentist. The full treatment of the toothache is similar to the goal of sanctification, being whole and healed! However, Lewis's understanding of sanctification is aspirational, knowing fully that we will never be perfect. But we are assured that in completely trusting Jesus Christ will we approach perfection and wholeness.

Suggested Biblical texts for preaching sanctification: Along with the obvious text from Ephesians 5: 25-26 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Matthew 7: 15- 20 would be a good text to choose as it underscores the importance of the character of Christian works "by their fruit they will know" who the followers of Jesus are. John 13: 35 would also be a good passage to preach on as it clearly makes a connection between sanctification and discipleship: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Here sanctification is relational and communal in addition to contributing to personal edification.

⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: G. Bles, 1952), a revised and amplified edition with a new introduction of the three books, Broadcast talks, Christian behaviour, and Beyond personality, chapter 9.



Can *Koinonia* Heal the Depredations of COVID-19?

Continuing the Dialogue with *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling*

Yvette Noble-Bloomfield

The reports *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling, Justification and Sacramentality: The Christian Community as an Agent for Justice and Called to God's Mission* encapsulated the discussion and work of the dialogues between the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and the Pentecostals, respectively. Each dialogue placed emphasis on a critical area of the theology and calling of the WCRC and the particular ecumenical partner and interrogated the key components that comprised the commonalities and divergencies. These current dialogues have followed the path of the historic nature of the previous dialogues which contributed to ecumenical relationship and stimulated much theological discourse.

The lifespan of these current dialogues varies and certainly predate the urgency of the now as the church and the world grapple with the exigencies of COVID19.

Deep condolences and prayers are with the 43,979,777+ persons confirmed positive and with the families of the 1,167,124+ persons who have died as a result of this virus as of October 28, 2020. The inability to breathe; the suffering and pain; the acute shortage of bed spaces and test kits; the struggles of not being with family in the final moments of life; the limitations on burial rites and rituals accompanied by the restrictions or lockdowns; the economic and social costs; the challenges to mental health, education, technology, travel; and the closure of places of worship and the stagnation of progress in some areas of society *inter alia* have attended the world during these ten months.

The lens of this review will be in the form of the question "Can *koinonia* heal the depredations of COVID-19?" How does this dialogue report inspire and orient our churches in the ongoing work of responding to the crises unearthed by the COVID-19 pandemic? The *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling* dialogue will be briefly interrogated in this paper for the contribution it can plausibly make to the life of the member churches in the Communion as they encounter and live with the implications of COVID-19. How can member churches respond adequately in this new paradigm based on the process, discoveries and results of this dialogue?

COVID-19 Has Not Invented Anything New

COVID-19 has brought to the front and center the issues and circumstances that have plagued humanity for centuries. COVID-19 has become the call to those of the Reformed faith to perhaps search for the meaning of *“Ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda secundum verbum Dei”* in this century. The question to ponder is, perhaps, “Is COVID -19 the harbinger of the new reformation?”

If the Church is to be the guide for the world, then the Church must understand and interpret the issues that have been brought to the fore by the pandemic. For any ecumenical dialogue, the critical question remains: Does it provide a crucial roadmap that can enlighten the work and ministry needed at this time and what are the new learnings of significance in these days?

- What then are some of the broad issues unearthed by COVID-19 that need to be urgently interrogated and resolved? Can the dialogue help the Church to remain a beacon of hope and a light to the dark and troubled world? The list of issues below is not exhaustive and is in no particular order of importance or urgency, as all areas need critical attention. These are some of the issues that the member churches in North America and the Caribbean Region must grapple with in this era, but they are indeed issues that the entire world needs to address.
- Inequity in access to health care, including government policy and management, cost, testing, bed space
- State of mental health and psychological disorders
- Institutionalized racism
- New universal socio-cultural trends
- Education about and access to technology; realities of the digital world
- Economic instability, including unemployment and losses of business and industry
- Ecology and the issues of climate change
- Availability of sanitation and clean water
- Political leadership and power plays
- Faith, theology, eschatology, and worship



There is no doubt that the Church has had to pivot since the onset of the pandemic, yet the theology, ministry, and mission anchored in the dialogue must enable a prophetic voice to rise with healing in its wings. This prophetic voice is essential not only in ways that are aspirational and imaginative but within the hard-core struggles of the lives of people and the church.

This is especially vital when one recognizes that within the Church, debates have been energized by the atrocities of slavery and racial segregation, as well as economic and ecological injustice. Sadly, even within the ecclesiastical space we have noted levels of injustice. The north-south divide and theological impatience within ecumenism must be healed if the notion of *koinonia* is to be of aid to the world.

***Koinonia* for the world today**

Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling, the Anglican-Reformed dialogue offers the gift of communion with a declared preference for the Greek term, *koinonia*, "which has enabled us to refresh and broaden our thinking about the Church and her mission."¹ The Church and the world can benefit from the notion of *koinonia* as outlined in the dialogue in the following manner: "fellowship, sharing, participation, and partnership—refers to sharing together in a reality that is greater than ourselves and our own individual needs. Emphasizing *koinonia* offers the Church a fresh opening and renewed language about how to live together, encompassing unity and diversity within and between churches and in relationship with the whole of creation."²

This concept of life together for the benefit of all in this COVID-19 era could and does augur well for humanity if it moves beyond imagination and ecclesiastical idealism. As the struggle towards *koinonia* within the ecclesia continues, how can the concept be used to help the world today?

Can the world, in its response to the pandemic become a place of common care and grace? Does the table of fellowship have equal space for all? The challenge is for the one to see the value and worth of the other and to create a space of welcome and true hospitality. In this era, there is the need for allowance so that the least and the greatest can dwell together and benefit from the resources available. How can *koinonia* inform how resources are shared and managed? The Church needs to be that voice of challenge and reminder as she leads by example in the nurturing of true fellowship. It is more than a maxim that to enjoy

1 *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 2020), XI

2 *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling*, XI

koinonia there must be acceptance of the other.

Of particular interest to me is this note, “At the fourth IRAD meeting in Vancouver, Canada, the members of IRAD were welcomed by the Musqueam people, on whose land the group met. IRAD members heard the stories of Cree and Gitksan First Nations individuals who were formerly students at residential schools and worshipped at The Longhouse Council of Native Ministry of the United Church of Canada in Vancouver. The Canadian churches continue a journey from colonial oppression of indigenous people towards reconciliation and healing. Hearing the experiences of First Nations people marked a new encounter with the effects of denied, distorted, and rejected communion on the part of the churches themselves.”³

“God wills unity for the Church, for humanity, and for creation because God is a koinonia of love, the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This *koinonia* comes to us as a gift we can only accept in gratitude.”⁴

The reminder and theme throughout the dialogue is that “Koinonia flows out of the interpersonal life of the Trinity into the personal relationality of human existence.”⁵

This koinonia must then be the hallmark of the Church and must take its cue and understanding from the covenant to be made amongst human beings. “Covenant emphasizes the relational and communal aspect of life, including human relationships with each other and with all creation. Specifically, human beings do not live for themselves but in mutual commitment to each other and God’s created world.”⁶

Will COVID-19 Be a Bridge Builder for the World?

Can the concept of koinonia as espoused in the dialogue become an agent of change, the type of catalyst that can help to facilitate the healing needed in the racial and ethnic issues that COVID-19 has unearthed?

Within some societies, the death rate from the disease seems more intense among the poorer class and those who are normally not of the predominant race and are usually marginalized. Is this a justice matter? Most certainly!

³ *Koinonia: God’s Gift and Calling*, XVIII

⁴ *Koinonia: God’s Gift and Calling*, XIII

⁵ *Koinonia: God’s Gift and Calling*, XIX

⁶ *Koinonia: God’s Gift and Calling*, 5



Especially so when the mounting cases and deaths are direct results of improper governing policies and the denial of the deadly nature of the disease.

An article entitled “Deadly Discrimination: ‘An unbelievable chain of oppression’: America’s history of racism was a preexisting condition for COVID-19”⁷ was published by *USA Today* on October 20, 2020. In this six-part series, *USA Today* investigated how systemic racism is driving high death rates during the pandemic. It begs the question of the ancient struggles, one of which, racism, is brought to life in dialogue. It highlights the need to strive for justice—as although of the past, there are new versions, such as the referenced in the above article documents emerging during COVID-19.

The struggle of minorities has been epitomized in the cry, ‘Black Lives Matter,’ which was magnified during the pandemic, although its genesis was discriminations that preexisted the pandemic and unfortunately may remain a reality long after the pandemic. The movement walked stridently and ably but sometimes was forced to limp by those for whom “no life matters.” Masked and unmasked protesters, male and female, old and young, radical and conservative, black, brown, and white staggered across cities and television screens and dominated social media during this pandemic. Where was the Church? Is *koinonia* applicable to the cries of this movement and racial discrimination? In some cities the clergy and laity with conviction led and accompanied the marchers, provided hospitality, and allowed access to spaces and resources .

Was it sufficient? Can the Church take its cue from the actions of the clergy and laity who stood shoulder to shoulder with protesters and who shared in *koinonia* with the most vulnerable? The dialogue points to the fact that, “As disciples of Jesus, we continually grow into God’s loving *koinonia*, bearing witness together as part of something larger than ourselves.”⁸ We are called to embrace and to walk with the sorrowful and the dying.

The participants in the dialogue came face to face with what happens in a world where *koinonia* is absent; they recognized that persistent effort is needed to right the wrong. The participants noted as such the biblical resistance to God’s gift of *koinonia*, “However, the scriptural witness also testifies to incomplete or inadequate receptions of the gift of *koinonia*, or even its rejection. The

7 Alan Gomez, “‘An unbelievable chain of oppression’”: America’s history of racism was a preexisting condition for COVID-19 (USA Today, October 12, 2020), <https://www.usatoday.com/in-depth/news/nation/2020/10/12/coronavirus-deaths-reveal-systemic-racism-united-states/5770952002/>

8 *Koinonia: God’s Gift and Calling*, 1

disobedience of Adam and Eve, the sin of Cain, the arrogance of power of the Babylonians, and the unfaithfulness of the Israelites in the wilderness and in the history of Israel (constantly denounced by the prophets) all show that humanity can refuse to hear God's call and choose not to receive and live out God's irrevocable gift."⁹

We cannot give up hope even as these questions are asked: How and who will right some of the wrong emerging in the pandemic? Who will ensure adequate health care and access for all? Who will challenge those who are seeking to profit from the lives of the most vulnerable? Who will speak truth to power?'

Disobedience, anger, and arrogance still prevail and have been made visible in the throes of the pandemic, but we cannot lose hope. The Church still has the time and opportunity not only to offer the much-needed pastoral care for families that are hurting and grieving but also to properly pray, challenge, and influence national leadership so that the health and non-health issues magnified by the pandemic can begin to heal.

In the Cayman Islands to date, (October 28, 2020) there have been—thanks to the grace and goodness of God—only one death and two-hundred-thirty-nine cases of COVID-19. Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID-19 tests are available upon request to all citizens and the health services and government leaders have kept the population informed and safe throughout the difficulties of these months. However, there is a significant economic fallout due to the closure of borders, as tourism is the second largest industry in the Cayman Islands. The preservation of live vis-à-vis economic viability remains a deep debate.

It is also worth noting that the daily government press briefings were held in the presence of the clergy and lay leaders and opened with their prayers. Ministers and lay leaders found the creativity and skill sets to reach out by broadcasting live-streamed worship services, by engaging congregants and others via virtual Bible studies, prayer meetings, and seminars as well as counselling and pastoral care.

Eschatological questions have been asked by the faithful and the fearful in this time and the church has had to respond with hope and grace. The deep concern remains for children and youth whose secular and spiritual growth and development are experiencing gaps and setbacks.

9 *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling*, 8



Hope in the gift of *koinonia*

Hope is taken from the fact that “*Koinonia* is not merely a form of Christian behaviour or a spiritual exercise to be practiced, but a relational way of being together in Christ, in whom we are being shaped ever more fully ‘from one degree of glory to another’ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Christ is the hospitable host at the table where all are fed with compassion, love, and forgiveness, and where we are at home together as family rather than strangers. The very nature of *koinonia* as communion and relationship means it is a gift to be received, not only personally but as one within the Body, a fellowship in Christ across time in the communion of saints.”¹⁰

Can *koinonia* heal the depredations of COVID-19?

“Because *koinonia* is a radical and primary gift of God, we believe it has the power to transform conflict. As disciples, we carry an abiding hope for healthy, just, and whole relationships with others, as well as an earnest desire for reconciliation and the healing of divided and broken communities.”¹¹

¹⁰ *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling*, 19

¹¹ *Koinonia: God's Gift and Calling*, 26

Reformation Day Today: On Being *Evangelisch* Together Impulses from the Catholic-Reformed Dialogue

Margit Ernst-Habib

In former times, Reformation Day was celebrated in many Protestant churches around the world as an occasion for joy, for gratitude, for remembrance, but also for reflection on what makes us “Protestant”—over against the Roman Catholic Church. And even though Reformed churches do not trace their own history and identity back primarily to Martin Luther’s works and ministry, many did and do join in celebrating an event in the history of the Christian church that opened up a chasm between two major branches of the One Christian Church. As part of these celebrations, one central claim and source of pride used to be that Reformation movements supposedly focused again on the Good News, a focus—many Protestants claimed—had been lost or at least had disappeared from view in the Roman Catholic Church. Protestant churches, including Reformed churches, in German-speaking countries and regions even use the term “*evangelisch*”¹ as a self-designation, declaring themselves to live and proclaim faithfully according to euangelion, the Gospel. And, to be sure, this act of self-designation and claim of alignment with the Gospel was to be understood as a kind of distinction from the Roman Catholic Church, which was thus declared to be non-*evangelisch*. For centuries, these demarcations were set as in stone, and the chasm was seldom bridged.

My deliberations on the relevance and theological impulses of the Catholic-Reformed dialogue for our churches and theology today were due on Reformation Day 2020, indeed a very appropriate day and occasion to reflect on our identity and tasks in our various contexts. The year 2020 found Reformation Day in a time of turmoil all over the world as well as in Reformed churches within the European context: COVID-19 is not only killing thousands, threatening the livelihood of a great number of people, undermining solidarity and communal consensus, but also dividing society and furthering disunion. Racism is a lived and experienced reality for people of color, even at the hands of police or other public institutions, while others benefit from systems of (white) supremacy. Refugees and immigrants are drowning in the Mediterranean Sea or are forced to lead miserable lives in overcrowded refugee camps at European borders,

1 The English term “evangelical,” though, has a different connotation and does not provide an adequate translation for “*evangelisch*.” In general, “*evangelisch*” is translated into English by using the term “Protestant,” thus losing the connection to the Gospel.



while many in Europe are just watching. Populist and nationalist narratives join hands with misogynist and xenophobic mindsets, creating an atmosphere of hatred, distrust, and egoism. Unfortunately, this list could be extended even further, but these few examples will suffice.

Together re-oriented towards God

When Reformed churches ask themselves what it means to be *evangelisch* in this time and context, what it means to live and proclaim their faith according to the Gospel, a mere celebration of events and times long gone is not enough, maybe even counterproductive. Reformation Day can no longer be (if it ever could) a day of celebrating what makes us Reformed or Protestant Christians. In particular the dialogue with the Roman-Catholic church offers here the highly relevant and inspiring impulse, in that it reminds us that no church can be “Christian” by itself², and, as I would maintain, challenges us even further: Reformed churches cannot be *evangelisch* by themselves or with Protestant churches only. Reformation Day today provides, instead, an occasion of re-orientation not towards the past, but towards the God confessed not only within Protestant churches, but towards the God confessed within the *One Christian Church*. Reformation Day is indeed a gift and a task, as it has always been, to understand all churches as ex-centric in the sense that their center does not rest in their own identity, institutions, history, or even confessions of faith. Reformation Day calls all churches to be re-formed by the work of Christ’s Holy Spirit in being re-oriented towards the Holy One, not to demark and celebrate boundaries between different Christian traditions.

Sanctification by the Grace of the Spirit

This shared understanding and testimony, though, represents, as the Catholic-Reformed dialogue reminds us passionately, only the first step on the way of Christian pilgrimage. Living and confessing *coram Deo*, praising God for God’s loving work of bringing us back into God’s community and covenant of costly grace, thanking God for God’s gift of *justification* by faith is indeed a shared understanding of who we are and the basis for following Christ for all

² See, for example, §74: “Together we affirm the hope, expressed in our earlier dialogue, that our articulation of the church’s ministerial and instrumental role, in total dependence on the Spirit of Christ and directed toward God’s kingdom, can make a contribution to Christian unity that reaches beyond our own communities. The ecumenical movement as a whole may be understood as participation in the movement of the Holy Spirit, who calls and inspires us to seek the kingdom of God together, and to commit ourselves to one another. If churches find new ways to give shape to this mutual support and accountability, then we pray that the result will be greater visibility for the church as sign and instrument of God’s kingdom.”

Christians, may they be Catholic or Reformed.³ But the communal testimony does not end here; despite all that still separates and differentiates Catholic and Reformed theologies, the General Conclusion points out that the participants of the dialogue did find “a very substantial agreement that *justification* and *sanctification* cannot be separated.”⁴ Being justified and being sanctified in order to live faithfully accordingly to the Gospel, to live *evangelisch*, is part of what John Calvin had called the “double grace” of God⁵: the gift of justification and sanctification bound together in and by the work of the Holy Spirit. With the words of the statement: “This means that justification will make possible and lead to the fruits of virtuous action. The justified believer enters into a journey toward that holiness to which he or she is called by the Lord and enabled by the grace of the Holy Spirit.... Justification and sanctification are brought about by the Holy Spirit by means of Word and Sacrament.”⁶ Thus, one of the central conclusions of the Catholic-Reformed dialogue points, maybe somewhat surprisingly for some, to a shared center not only of Catholic and Reformed theology, but of Catholic and Reformed spirituality and Christian life: the understanding of sanctification, as being made holy for living a life according to the Gospel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, provides a common ground and fundament for those two churches for journeying together.

Justification and the Imperative for Justice

And there is a third, sometimes ignored or forgotten step: from recognizing substantial agreement on justification by faith and the holy bond of justification and sanctification, the statement moves churches and theologies even further by proclaiming: “We discovered full agreement that the theological doctrine and reality of justification by faith and sanctification *impels the Christian community*

3 Cf. §77: “The teaching that human beings are saved by grace through faith and not through works... does not serve as a reason for division between us regarding the meaning of salvation by faith and the importance of good works.”

4 §77.

5 See John Calvin, Inst. 3.11.1 and 3.16.1.: “Christ was given to us by God’s generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ’s blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ’s spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.... Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ’s righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also.... Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom he illumines by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies.”

6 §77f.



to act on behalf of justice. The imperative for justice flows necessarily from justification and from the call of the whole Church to holiness. ...To our delight, we discovered that it is precisely theological agreement that can provide a basis for collaborating in promoting justice, peace and the protection of creation."⁷ So here is a central message from the dialogue that gains a particular force these days, that may help us understand *being Reformed* in a broader and deeper way: the Christian community is called to act together on behalf of justice, is called to collaborate in promoting justice, peace, and the protection of creation. Being *evangelisch*, then, means taking Reformation Day seriously as a call, everyday anew, to act on behalf of justice, and to do so with all the partners God provides, but especially those who do share in this substantial agreement of who God is and who we are called to be.⁸ We are *evangelisch* together with the Roman Catholic Church as well as with other Christian churches (and maybe even with partners outside of the Christian Church as we recognize the Holy Spirit working in and through them, too). We are *catholic* together with those partners in that we are re-oriented toward our God of grace, re-formed into followers who want to serve this God of grace by serving the world God so loves.

This is, of course, more easily said than done. How do we become agents of justice; how do we define justice and injustice?⁹ Being *evangelisch* together, then, is an ongoing task and call, based on the Good News we share. It is from here that we *discern*, where injustice is corrupting the world God has made good. It is from here that we *confess* together who our Just and Holy God is and how God's work of justification and sanctification impels us to act together. It is from here that we *witness* with words and deeds that God's reign has already begun in Jesus Christ as a counter-reality to the realities of sin and death we are seeing all around us and even inside us. In that sense, we are sanctified to become "Protestants" together: protesting against what Karl Barth had called

7 §79, emphases added.

8 Cf. §57: "The God of the Bible is a God of righteous mercy who takes human misery to heart, entering into it and overcoming it from within. God establishes justice for the innocent who are threatened, the poor, the alienated and the oppressed. God stands unconditionally and passionately on their side: 'he has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly' (Luke 1:52). God's concern for us in our distress cannot be taken seriously without assuming responsibility for all those who are poor and wretched. The believer is summoned to accompany and defend those who suffer wrong. Conformity to Christ means attending to the needs of those excluded by society. The poor, the marginalized and the victimized, together with the whole groaning creation, require the special attention of the Christian."

9 Cf. §56: "Justice is a complex reality, having various meanings depending upon the perspective from which it is viewed. But we found the greatest convergence about it by starting with the revelation of the loving and graceful God, who expresses justice-seeking action in all facets of the lives of human beings and of creation."

the “Lordless Powers”¹⁰ and giving witness (*pro-testare*) to the God of Life. Being *evangelisch* together is hard work, but also a joyous, joy-filled and hopeful endeavor, and it is a gift of grace to know and experience that churches from the Reformed and Catholic tradition are willing to walk and work together.

This, then, is a new kind of Reformation Day for *both* traditions, one which aims to bridge the chasm, which aims to focus not on demarcation lines and what separates us, but on the Holy One who binds us together to serve and collaborate in promoting what the Hebrew Bible knows as *shalom*. Together we receive and give thanks for the double grace of the Holy One: the assurance of forgiveness in justification *and* the mighty claim upon our whole life in sanctification. These last words actually come from one of the most important faith documents for Reformed churches all around the world, the Theological Declaration of Barmen. In 1934, the Declaration confessed the gospel of who Jesus Christ is for us—and in particular its Second Thesis remains one of the most compelling summarization of what the Good News mean for the Christian life, for being *evangelisch* together. In a way, it also sums up what the Catholic-Reformed dialogue explicates in more than eighty sections, and brings into focus the center of Christian identity and Christian life—proclaiming the joy of the Good News for today:

2. “Christ Jesus, whom God has made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” (1 Corinthians 1:30)

As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so, in the same way and with the same seriousness he is also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures.

10 Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV,4. Lecture Fragments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 217–237



***Koinonia*, Mission and Justice:**

A Triangular Conceptual Framework for Ecumenical Dialogues

Jooseop Keum

All ecumenical dialogue is *contextual* whether it is a bilateral or multilateral. There is no “pure” theological dialogue since all doctrines and concepts are the products of particular time, people, and culture. If one fails to read the faces and stories of people behind a theological statement, if one cannot read the signs of times at the dialogue table, we are not able to answer to the question, “Dialogue for what?”

Ecumenism must by all means be *dialogical*, since it is the participation in the *koinonia* as dialogical nature of the triune God. “But it must be prophetic as well, since, at bottom, there can be no real dialogue when truth is not expressed and clearly articulated.”¹ Therefore, how the Church should engage in *prophetic* dialogue is decisive to pursue a dialogue that is meaningful and relevant. The three reports are significant achievements of the Reformed dialogues. Therefore, churches, theologians, and Christians should receive and wrestle with the texts to translate and apply them into our ministerial and missional policies, programmes, and actions.

Towards a Triangular Framework

How can we connect the three documents together? I found the three key concepts to be “justice” in the dialogue with Catholic, “*koinonia*” with Anglican and “mission” with Pentecostal. Since it is one of the aims of this issue of the *Reformed World* to introduce and read the three texts together, we are challenged to construct a triangular dialogical framework, too. This unique triangular approach will be a result of the concern of the ecumenical dialogue for WCRC today. It is of interest that the notion of *koinonia* was brought into the question of the relationship between churches and communions at the moment when the ecumenical movement is confronted with the increasing self-centered claim of confessionalism. In this context, it is significant to go beyond a doctrinal question of justification to the notion of justice through the contribution made by the Reformed participants. It is also important to note that the Pentecostal

¹ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2004), 398

dialogue is highlighting mission as transformation with a strong pneumatological approach.

Therefore, to my view, any future ecumenical dialogue should not restrict its attention to traditional issues in the past. It should look forward rather than backward in choosing the themes for dialogue. It needs to intentionally concentrate primarily on the contextual and prophetic aims of dialogue, which inspires solidarity in doing justice and partnership in God's mission. The reason behind taking *koinonia*, justice, and mission together is clearly that the church's first concern should be how the Christian community can best serve suffering people in the wider community, not how it can secure its own institutional rights within the political system. We need to develop our dialogues further to call each other to a more passionate and costly concern for the outcast, the underprivileged, the persecuted, the despised in the community and beyond the confessional communions. Therefore, I refuse to separate the church's dialogue, its service to the community, and its social and ecological responsibility.

The reports of three dialogues need to emphasize more and further articulate the perspectives of gender, interfaith, and ecology. I believe that these three issues should be transversal perspectives to guide all future dialogues. Without them, it will be difficult to engage in any meaningful dialogue with the current generation.

Receive the Holy Spirit

According to the Gospel of John, the Jewish leaders conspired to kill Jesus for the first time after Jesus had healed the person who had been waiting for thirty-eight years by the pool of Bethesda. They said, "He has broken the Sabbath" (John 5:1-18). However, the system of Bethesda, which allows the one who can run first to take everything (healing), should be broken. The structure which prohibits the suffering people to take hands and walk together into "the stirring water of life" has to be transformed. The system of Bethesda, named as "the house of mercy" but which has no mercy at all, has to be demolished even on the day of Sabbath. From there, Jesus Christ takes up the cross, and builds up a new temple—a community of hope among us. But, this hope is a threat for the privileged who keep their power and money with the doctrine and hierarchy of the Sabbath. So they crucified him. Following the crucifixion of Jesus, we are told that "the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19).



In today's world, disciples of Jesus are locked down due to the pandemic and many other reasons to be afraid. Division, fundamentalism, violence, and discrimination are all on the increase everywhere in the world. In our socio-political cultures, the darker side of human nature is overwhelming. We could easily be tempted to lock the doors, distancing ourselves and concerning ourselves only with self-preservation. The gospel, however, leads in a different direction. Jesus came and stood among the disciples saying: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so I send you" (John 20:21). Hiding behind locked doors was not their calling. Instead, they were sent on a mission modeled after the mission of Jesus. Finally, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22).

For the first time in church history, most of the churches in the world, regardless of confessions and regions, have not been able to physically assemble to worship in sanctuaries. The traditional mode of being the Church, participating in God's mission, acting *diakonia* and liturgy based on physical presence, are dysfunctional in the context of an epidemic. Furthermore, people are not expecting any larger responses from the churches to the current challenges, rather anxious that religion might become a centre of spread of the virus. However, people are worshipping online, focusing on spiritual health and the disadvantaged, creating virtual communities of caring and supporting. How is the Church and her mission going to be renewed in the COVID-19 world? There should be a "new normal" in our ecumenical dialogue, too. Simply the "old normal" will not work at all in the "new normal" amidst global crises. Therefore, I suggest focusing our future dialogue more on pneumatological dimension for empowerment to tackle the current challenges. As the WCC report *Together Towards Life* states,

Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do, and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God's grace.²

From Mountain to Valley

Many of us are familiar with the analogy that God is like the top of a mountain

² Jooseop Keum, ed, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 4.

and there are many paths that lead to the truth. However, why do we imagine only *climbing* up the mountain as a true way of religious discipline to find the truth or truths? Would it not be possible to suggest a pilgrimage of *climbing down* from the *mountain* to the *valley* where people are living? As long as we are staying on the mountain (very few on the top), we cannot meet, listen, dialogue, and work together with the people, including people of other faiths who are struggling to survive in their daily life because the mountain is too high for ordinary people to climb and too narrow for them to stay on the top. In fact, it is in the valley, not on the top of the mountain where we can meet people and engage in dialogue. It is in the valley where we can *live in* a community and where we can *live out* the truth of what we believe in.

The proclamation of the Good News is not climbing up to the mountain but rather going down to the valley. An authentic ecumenical dialogue is not a self-satisfactory intellectual play. We are called to follow the direction of Christ's journey from *logos* to flesh, from the Mount of Transfiguration to the valley where he was net by a sick boy. In order to do so, we need to pay a particular attention the language used by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si*. It is simple and easy to understand, but full of inspirations. We also need to seriously reconsider how to communicate our Reformed ecumenism with the digital generation.

Transformative Ecumenism

A group of young theologians who gathered together as an International Theological Colloquium for Transformative Ecumenism reflected as follows:

The ecumenical movement is in crisis—a deep crisis painfully felt everywhere. It is a crisis brought by a prophetic bankruptcy in terms of the movement, an intellectual bankruptcy in terms of the ecumenical spirit and vision, and a moral bankruptcy in terms of the leadership. The ecumenical movement is no longer strongly rooted in the people and it does not speak a prophetic voice which echoes in the realities of people's struggles for life. The ecumenical movement no longer produces a new and heart-beating vision for the church and the world that are deeply divided and wounded. The ecumenical leadership has suffered from bureaucratic and business-oriented mindedness that lacks the sense of calling and devotion.³

³ *International Theological Colloquium on Transformative Ecumenism* (Pocheon, Korea: 2012), <http://www.miraeforum.org/20>



It is painful to listen to the criticisms of young theologians. But there is a proverb in Korea, “A good medicine is bitter.” Since we are living in a troubled and broken world and facing internal challenges within the ecumenical movement, we should reimagine its fresh vision and rejuvenate it. Transformative Ecumenism as a faith-driven movement towards justice and life requires a shift of location—in hermeneutical as well as in geographical terms: from the board rooms to the streets and from dogma to life. Life and lives matter, therefore Transformative Ecumenism is a calling towards a celebration of life in its fullness with people in the concrete contexts and communities. To conclude, I would like to suggest the following five themes for future dialogues:

- *Status confessionis* on climate change and ecological diversities
- Reimagining ecumenism as a movement from the margins beyond institutionalism
- Nurturing a spirituality of the interconnectedness of life and solidarity of hope
- Exploring theologies of life and fostering partnerships among the vulnerable
- Shifting the centre of ecumenism from Eurocentric to world Christianity

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