

JWG Mandates: 1966, 1975 and 1999-2005

I. Mandate 1966 (from the seventh report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Geneva-Rome, 1998, p.3):

The JWG functions according to its original 1966 mandate as modified by the 1975 WCC assembly.

1. The JWG is a consultative forum. It has no authority in itself but reports to its parent bodies – the WCC assembly and central committee, and the PCPCU – which approve policies and programmes.

It undertakes its spiritual and pastoral tasks in a spirit of prayerful conviction that God through Christ in the Spirit is guiding the one ecumenical movement. The group tries to discern the will of God in contemporary situations, and to stimulate the search for visible unity and common witness, in particular through collaboration at world, regional, national and local levels between the RCC, the WCC, and the WCC member churches. This means giving attentive support and encouragement to whatever contributes to ecumenical progress.

The JWG initiates, evaluates and sustains forms of collaboration between the WCC and the RCC, especially between the various organs and programmes of the WCC and the RCC. Its styles and forms of collaboration are flexible, as it discerns similarities and differences which foster or hinder WCC/RCC relations. Concentrating on ad hoc initiatives, it keeps new structures to a minimum in proposing new steps and programmes, carefully setting priorities and using its limited resources of personnel, time and finances.

2. At present the JWG has 17 members, with two co-moderators. Its co-secretaries are a PCPCU staff member and the WCC's deputy general secretary responsible for relations with non-member churches. Most members are involved in pastoral and ecumenical ministries in different regions. Some are from departments of the Roman Curia and from the WCC units. The JWG also co-opts consultants for its particular tasks. The co-moderators, co-secretaries and four others form the executive, which oversees the JWG between its plenaries and prepares the agenda and materials for them.

II. Mandate 1975 (from *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, David M. Paton ed., 1975, pp.276-78)

CONTINUATION OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP

There continues to be the need for a forum enabling the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches to evaluate together the development of the ecumenical movement. Therefore a joint group with continuity of membership and sufficient breadth of representation from both sides should be appointed. As an instrument of the parent bodies it will be in close contact with them and accountable to them.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE JOINT WORKING GROUP

The Joint Working Group will primarily aim at discovering and assessing promising new possibilities for ecumenical development. It has the task of stimulating discussion on the ecumenical movement, seeking to be a challenge to the parent bodies by proposing new steps and programmes.

The Joint Working Group will endeavour to interpret the major streams of ecumenical thought and action in the Roman Catholic Church and in the member churches of the World Council of Churches. It will facilitate the exchange of information about the progress of the ecumenical movement, especially at the local level.

The Joint Working Group will seek to establish the collaboration between the various organs and programmes of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. In accordance with the principles and procedures of the parent bodies it should encourage the genuine development of any ecumenical collaboration. It should draw upon the insights gained from local experience to foster such collaboration. As in the past, it will remain a consultative group, not an operative agency. It may be empowered by the parent bodies to develop and administer programmes it has proposed when this is called for.

As the Joint Working Group seeks to initiate and help keep alive the discussion on the implications of the ecumenical movement in the Roman Catholic Church and in member churches of the World Council of Churches, it will seek the best means of communicating its findings and recommendations.

An essential aspect of its task is to share its findings with parent bodies.

EXPANDED RELATIONSHIP

The Joint Working Group will be in contact with a large number and range of ecumenical organizations and programmes, especially on the local level. It may call upon various offices and programmes of the parent bodies for assistance when special help is needed in certain areas in the process of collaboration. It will also seek information and advice from individuals and organizations which have particular ecumenical experience and competence.

FLEXIBLE STYLE

As the Joint Working Group seeks to meet the needs of the churches, the style of collaboration must be kept flexible. It must be adaptable to various and changing needs.

Therefore it will seek to keep new structures to a minimum while concentrating on ad hoc initiatives as they are required by the actual developments within the ecumenical movement. On occasion, of course, particular projects may call for some structural organization which will be set up after due authorization. Flexibility of style does not mean unplanned activity or lack of accountability. It rather means more careful attention to the setting of priorities and to the use of resources.

SUGGESTED STRUCTURES

On the basis of these general considerations the following is proposed:

1. The Joint Working Group shall be a group of approximately 16 members, some of whom shall be chosen from the staff of the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (and other organs of the Curia).
2. The Joint Working Group will normally meet once a year. Further, enlarged meetings could be held on occasion to deal with specific issues. Such meeting may be arranged to coincide with some important regional event when this is judged useful.
3. A small executive group of six members shall be responsible for the ongoing work between meetings and for preparing the meetings of the Joint Working Group.

III. Mandate 1999-2005 (from seventh report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, Geneva-Rome, 1998, p. 23):

The JWG recommends these specific priorities for the next period of its mandate:

ISSUE AFFECTING KOINONIA

The ecclesial consequences of common baptism. The implications of recognizing the common baptism of Christians on ecclesial communion and liturgical practice.

The ecumenical role of interchurch marriages. The ecclesiological implications of the sacrament of marriage between Christians of different churches and in their family life.

Local, national and regional councils of churches which have RC churches as full members. The practical and ecclesiological implications of membership of councils of churches, and their instrumental role in the growth of koinonia.

Church and church law. The impact of ecumenical agreements and dialogues on actual church legislation and on relations between ecclesiology and canon law/church law/church discipline.

COMMON CONCERNS FACING THE WCC AND RCC

The stances of conservative Evangelicals and Charismatic/Pentecostals towards the ecumenical movement and its present structures. The establishing of dialogue.

Christian fundamentalists: an ecumenical challenge? The impact of fundamentalism on the ecumenical commitment of churches and on the agenda of dialogue.

The place of women in the churches. The further recognition and integration of the gifts of women in church life and society, and the appropriation of the findings of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women on the life, structures and witness of the churches.

Ecumenical education. The development of appropriate ecumenical education for church members, students and clergy on the fundamentals of the Christian life in the search for the manifestation of the unity of the church within a pluralist society.